

# Prayer targets

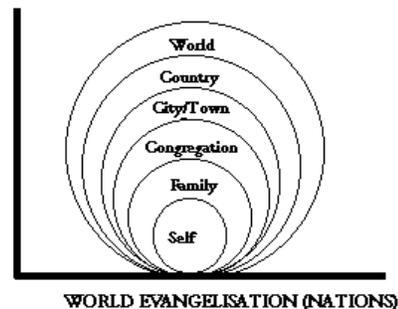
It is important to consider the extent of that for which we have to pray. We have to understand what the extent of our task of spiritual warfare is. Consider for example: Ephesians 6:18 where it is written: "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints." Note the word all. Read this verse prayerfully and the Holy Spirit will reveal to you something of the vast extent of our prayer task.

There are a specific number of issues that will always form part of our prayer agenda. This does not mean that we will be able to pray for all these matters every day. However during the course of a week's prayer cycle these issue should feature in your prayers in some way or another.

I would like to suggest that you make use of the principle of six concentric circles as indicated in the diagram on the following page. It provides a practical method of praying for a large variety of matters ranging from personal revival to world evangelization.

In summary it looks like this:

- Self
- Family/Relatives
- Congregation and spiritual leaders
- Town/City
- Country/Government/Unreached groups in the country
- World/Unreached groups and specific countries. Large unreached human blocks, such as the Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Atheist groupings (including followers of humanism and materialism)



Intercessors may use these circles as a point of departure. For the sake of argument one may take another circle every day and pray extensively for the matters that are relevant there.

Consider for a moment a war situation. Once war has been declared, the strategic targets are identified immediately. These selected enemy strongholds are attacked and conquered first of all.

Such strategic targets have to be taken at all cost if any real progress it to be made. Of course it is true that the enemy will also have his own counter strategy and will therefore concentrate on specific targets as well.

The two most important prayer targets which are currently prayed for all over the World are:

- World-wide revival (fullness) and
- World evangelization (fulfilment)

Remember the diagram on the previous page. In each of the six circles we can pray for revival

(fullness) and in five of the six circles we can pray for World evangelization (fulfilment) There is a direct relationship between revival (experiencing the fullness of God in the Church) and World evangelization (fulfilment of the Great Commission). The spiritual development of an individual, prayer group or congregation that for example places too much emphasis on revival and not enough on evangelization, will be distorted and unbalanced. The opposite, however, is equally true.

In the following paragraphs I would like to elaborate somewhat on certain strategic prayer objectives or targets.

## **1. Pray for yourself**

It is essential that each and every intercessor must pray for himself. Forgiveness should be sought for sins that have not been conquered yet and we must pray for spiritual power, personal equipment and growth. Although this is often the case, prayer for oneself should never be neglected.

## **2. Pray for the spiritual workers**

I can hardly think of a group that is more important to pray for than spiritual workers and leaders.

From statistics of the spiritual casualties among spiritual workers and leaders it is clear that we are dealing with an extremely direct and aggressive attack from the devil here. This has particularly been the case over the past 20-30 years and all indications are that the intensity of the fight in this sphere is increasing. Satan uses specific methods of attacking spiritual workers.

2.1 He tries to prevent people whom God has called for permanent spiritual work from obeying their Godly commission. He tempts them through enticing offers, high salaries, important positions and in numerous other ways to disobey God. Matthew 9:37-38 states: "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest therefore to send out workers in His harvest field." However, on closer examination of the Greek word for "send out," the actual meaning of the word is to "force out", to squeeze / squash / press out", or "to throw out". The Amplified Bible therefore puts it like this: "So pray to The Lord of the harvest to force out and thrust out labourers into His harvest."

2.2 A second method applied by Satan is to make the spiritual labourers dejected and tired. By means of fruitless labour, ridicule, stony hearts, illness and frustration he attempts to discourage the spiritual worker and get him to quit. It is a known fact that virtually 50% of all workers who report for mission work leave the field within one year. (People who have declared themselves available for a single year's work have not been included in this figure.) We should pray for this matter. Pray that the Lord will engrave the words of 1 Corinthians 15:58 in the hearts of all spiritual workers:

"Therefore my dear brothers stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain." We have to pray for deliverance and relief from the pressures and trouble that spiritual workers have to deal with daily (2 Corinthians 1:8-11).

2.3 Another method used by Satan in his attack on the spiritual worker is to obscure the Word of God from him and undermine his confidence and freedom to preach the Word of the Lord. In Ephesians 6:19 Paul asks that the believers will pray for him also that he will fearlessly

make known the mystery of the Gospel and that God will give him the words to do so. Pray for the spiritual worker that he will be able to proclaim the mystery of Christ clearly (Colossians 4:2-4).

2.4 Satan often sends evil and malicious people to cross the path of the spiritual worker with the aim to frustrate him and make his work difficult. In Romans 15:30-32 and in 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2 Paul asks the believers to join him in his struggle by praying to God for him and to pray that he may be delivered from wicked and evil men who oppose and try to hinder the proclamation of the Gospel.

2.5 The Bible clearly teaches that Satan attacks the spiritual worker directly. This is evident from Ephesians 6:10-18. The armour of God should be put on for the explicit reason that the spiritual worker may take his stand against the devil's schemes. According to Colossians 4:12 we should pray that the believer may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.

2.6 We should pray for the spiritual worker that he may receive spiritual power so as to be filled by and anointed with the Holy Spirit. Paul prays for the congregation in Ephesus in Ephesians 3:16-19 that the Lord will strengthen them through His Spirit in their inner being, so that Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith. He also prays that they may be rooted and established in love and that they may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. We can and in fact should, verbally pray this prayer for our spiritual workers.

### **3. Pray for the church/congregation**

Ephesians 6:18 states that we should pray for all the believers.

"... Be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints." Intercession for congregations is a commonly discussed topic. However it is my opinion that Christian very seldom pray for their fellowship. Church members have simply never learnt to pray really intensely for their respective congregations. If as many prayers for congregations are prayed as is claimed, the church would not be in the state it is at present. We shall have to pray with a greater sense of purpose and with greater intensity for the activities within each congregation. This applies all the way down - from the minister's preparation of his sermon, church council meetings, Bible Study and youth gatherings - to the children who are gathering socially.

### **4. Pray for funds**

Another of Satan's strategic targets is funds. No spiritual work can be done without money. Finances should be one of the prayer targets in prayer warfare. Pray against the forces of evil that impound funds by making people stingy and by channeling the money of Christians as well as non-Christians to meaningless and worldly goods. Pray that The Holy Spirit will work in the hearts of believers and non-believers to make funds available for spiritual work. It is simply a fact that millions of rand are currently needed to get the work done.

Pray for believers to start giving their tithes. Who should give? Everybody, the unbelievers too. God will bless the unbeliever who gives his tithe. Pray that children, the elderly, all those who earn a salary or own a business, will give their full tithes. Pray that churches, Christian organizations and institutions that receive money will also start giving their tithes. People who die without a cent, who go bankrupt and suffer a constant need for money, are often those who did not give their tithes. Of course there are many others who also have financial problems or who for example are not wise custodians of the money that has been entrusted to them but that is another issue. Psalm 37:25 contains an important message for the righteous - those who

obey The Lord (also in giving their tithes) and who pursue the truth:

"I was young and now I am old yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging for bread."

## **5. Pray for the destruction of the strongholds of the devil**

When for example we pray for the opening up of a new mission field or for an area where the Gospel has not yet made a break-through, we need to discern the demonic strongholds in that area, situation or person's life and to pray specifically against them.

## **6. Pray for open doors**

In 1989 a door was opened to close on a billion people who could previously never be reached freely by the Gospel. These are the people in the countries behind the so-called Iron Curtain. The door to them opened after years of prayer and spiritual warfare against the strongholds of communism.

Consider for example the 1,3 billion people in China and the one billion people in Muslim countries - all of whose doors are still closed to the Gospel. At the moment Christians are launching a prayer onslaught against the strongholds of Islam. After many years of prayer the Lord recently opened the doors to Albania, the first so-called atheist country in the world and now the Gospel may be preached there freely.

More than 1,5 billion people are being trapped in Buddhism and Hinduism. There are numerous other closed groups, which means that such groups cannot be reached with the Gospel. However, according to the Great Commission the Gospel must be taken to all people.

## **7. Pray darkness away**

Read 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 and Ephesians 2:2-3. The darkness that has engulfed our world and that is destroying people's lives is caused by sin, the spirit of evil in people's minds and the effects on humanity of the large world religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism Islam, Shintoism, etc. This obscuring influence of sin and the powers of evil should be prayed away. Wherever there is darkness, i.e. wherever the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and his reign of truth and peace have not been established, the darkness has to be penetrated until Jesus is everything in everybody.

## **8. Pray for the believers**

It is clear from Ephesians 6:18 that we have to pray for all believers / saints on all occasions. We have to pray for their spiritual growth, knowledge and insight, their sensitivity to God, their living faith, and that they will take their stand against evil and be powerful witnesses for Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit and the truth.

## **9. Pray that the Gospel will spread rapidly**

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2. Over the past 2000 years the Gospel has reached only half of the World's population. (This of course does not mean that half of the World's population have been saved). At present (1995) there are still 6 000 unreached groups in the World. At the rate that the Gospel is currently being presented to the World it will take literally hundreds of years before all have heard the Good News. The Gospel simply must spread more rapidly. People

have to get the opportunity to hear that Someone paid the price for their sins 2000 years ago.

## **10. Pray for kings, rulers and all those in authority**

According to Paul, intercession should first of all be made for kings and all those in authority so that we may live in peace and quiet and preach the Gospel (1 Tim.2:1-2). Heads of state are precisely the people who have an enormous effect on the spreading of the Gospel. Therefore we should pray for all those in prominent positions. In 1 Tim.2:3-4 Paul very clearly states why this is necessary - it is essential so that people may come to a knowledge of the truth and we may live a peaceful and quiet life. Pray for the politicians, municipal administrators and public servants in authoritative positions. Pray for their redemption and that the Lord may govern their thoughts and decision making.

"I urge then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone - for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all Godliness and holiness" (1 Tim.2:1-2 NIV)

## **11. Pray for the redemption of all people**

Read 2 Peter 3:9. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the Gospel for sinners. It wishes to show people how they can be eternally reconciled with God. One of the objectives of prayer should always be the redemption of the unsaved. To me the redemption of people remains the primary aim of prayer warfare.

## **12. Pray for all mission work and evangelization**

A lack of prayer support is one of the reasons why mission organizations in many cases make so little progress. Large expenditure is incurred to arrange evangelization campaigns and a lot of time and energy is spent on preparations - often with a meagre harvest of people surrendering their lives to Christ. Why? We do not pray enough and we do not pray in the right way.

## **13. Pray for the 10/40 Window**

Since the early 1990's the concept 10/40 Window has become a common term among Christians who are taking the Great Commission of Christ in Matthew 28:19-20 seriously. The 10/40 Window is an imaginary belt between 10 and 40 degrees north latitude from West Africa across the Middle East and Asia to the east coast of Japan. Within this imaginary window there are 62 countries. Of the 6000 groups worldwide that have not been reached by the Gospel more than 97% fall in the 10/40 Window. More than 80% of the World's poorest people live in this belt and the main headquarters of the World's greatest non-Christian religions (Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, etc.) are all situated within this Window. The 50 most unevangelized cities in the World (less than 3% Christians) fall within the 10/40 Window.

Christians all over the World are currently focusing their prayers increasingly on the 10/40 Window. In October 1993 more than 20 million Christians across the World prayed for spiritual break-through among the unreached groups. Some of these groups, for example, the Kurds in Northern Iraq consist of 25 million people with only a few thousand Christians among them. In north western Pakistan there is a group of 15 million people (approximately 50 different tribes) among which there are no more than 30-50 Christians. Several other examples can be mentioned to emphasize the need in these countries.

- Pray for the 62 countries within the 10/40 Window.

- Pray for the large mega and gateway cities within the 10/40 Window.
- Pray for the children with the 10/40 Window.
- Pray for the poor and destitute with the 10/40 Window.
- Pray for the breaking of demonic strongholds within the 10/40 Window.
- Pray for more workers to the 10/40 Window.
- Pray for open doors to countries with the 10/40 Window.