

LIFEWORDS

Lifewords Prayer, March 2021

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Matthew 11:28 NIV

Some of us carry a physical tiredness from ill health or too much work. Others are worn down by anxiety – thoughts and worries racing around our minds. Or we're overburdened with information, by the cycle of bad news. Or our hearts are weary from being broken, from not feeling loved, from not seeing our loved ones. For some of us, we feel lethargic from boredom, the mundanity of life.

There's been a lot to carry these last 12 months. Some of us have struggled. For many it has been a hugely devastating time. And yes, others of us are fine, we manage, we carry on. But even then, at times, it hits us – the enormity, the uncertainty, the lack of control, the relentlessness, the loss.

But here in the middle of it all. Before it began, and continuing on after it's all a distant memory, is Jesus. Holding out his hand, offering us his shoulder to lean on, asking us to off-load it all. "Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life," he says. "I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly" (Matthew 11:28 The Message).

This month let us reflect on the hope we have in the resurrected Jesus, and the life he offers us for mind, body, and soul.

Welcome to the March edition of Lifewords Prayer. This month we have news about our Easter resources, an update about Choose Life in Brazil, reflections on mental and spiritual wellbeing, and stories from Australia. Please join us as we pray.

28 February – 6 March

Sharing good news this Easter

We are currently in the season of Lent, reflecting on and preparing for Easter. This year, we have a range of print and digital resources to help you in your personal and collective journey, and to share with others.

- Originally designed for Lent, but usable any time of year, our *Long Story Short* resource takes us on a journey through the entire sweep of the Bible narrative in just six weeks, or twelve episodes. Each episode can be read in about 15 minutes, either alone, out loud, or as a group, and is a brilliant way to get an idea of the context of Scripture, and the story the Bible tells of God and humanity. Pray for our individual and collective Lent journeys. Ask God to teach, challenge, inspire and surprise us as we take time to pray, reflect and respond.

- Our Easter resources help us focus on Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection, the impact he had on those who witnessed these events, and the hope and salvation offered to all as a result. New for this year and based on the animations that have been so popular, *The Easter Journey* follows Holy Week and the journey from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday. *Day Three: Believe the Women* uses Bible verses and compelling illustrations to tell the story of the women who followed Jesus. *Witness Easter Voices* gives us space to discover what Easter truly means to us using a short and simple introduction to the events leading up to Jesus' death and resurrection. *One Friday* details Jesus' last days, and the fear, betrayal, forgiveness that he experienced, using the 14 Stations of the Cross. Pray for us as we engage with and share these resources with our friends, families, and communities. Ask God to speak to us, grow our faith, and help us as we reach out to others.
- This year, we introduce a new digital resource for *Day Three: Believe the Women*. This compliments the print resource and focuses on the women and the days following Jesus' death. Also available are *The Easter Journey* animations that walk us through Easter week and help us focus and prepare for the joy and hope of the resurrection. Easter is a time of new life and hope, pray that after a year of confusion, despair, loss and isolation that we would experience change, restoration, salvation, and a new start as we look to Jesus and his triumph over death.

Browse and order from our Easter range at www.lifewords.global/shop/topic-seasonal/occasion-easter/

7–13 March

Choose Life in Brazil

In 2017 we piloted our Choose Life programme in Brazil. Now, three years on, the team in Brazil are working with partners to bring the curriculum-based resource to more young people.

- After a successful trial in Brazil, the production process for Choose Life resources was able to begin. This has meant three years of translating and producing the resource for a Latin American context, together with putting together the communication and infrastructure for training and roll-out of the programme. Give thanks for a successful pilot programme for Choose Life in Brazil, and for all the work that has gone into getting the resource ready for a new context.
- During the pilot programme in 2017 the team saw children who were living in communities affected by crime, drugs and violence discover an alternative world-view through the values of the Bible. Speaking at the time Clenir dos Santos, from Lifewords, said: "In observing the lessons I saw a real enthusiasm from the children for a different way of thinking. They were excited and talkative, offering their ideas and keen for more lessons. For these children guns and violence are an everyday reality but Choose Life is offering them a new path, one which they are walking with enthusiasm. Instead of death they are focussing on life and hope." Praise God for the impact Choose Life had on young people three years ago. Pray that as new partners implement the programme that more and more people would be transformed, and be part of bringing change and new life to their families and communities.
- "We are making a dream come true by offering Choose Life to our partners in Brazil," says Cleisse Andrade from Lifewords Latin America. "However, there is still

a lot of work to do before it can be offered to children: our partners need to prepare and study the material, together with organising the activities. Also, we need the booklets to arrive in a timely manner, as the postal service has not yet normalised [due to the pandemic], taking longer than expected for orders to arrive in Brazil." Please pray that God would strengthen the teams of partner organisations and that face-to-face classroom activities can be resumed as soon as it is safe to do so.

To find out more about Choose Life visit www.lifewords.global/projects/choose-life/

14–20 March

Looking after our mental health

Lifewords booklets, *Little Book of Chaos* and *Inspiring Prayer*, are proving helpful for churches and individuals living through the Covid-19 lockdown. These resources encourage us to examine our mental wellbeing, and find space for our spiritual and emotional life.

- With full lockdown not expected to lift for some months, our lives remain constricted by the physical, emotional and spiritual “walls” around us. Mental wellbeing and self-care have become high priorities for all age groups – especially young people. Everyone, everywhere, has been going through loneliness or loss, anxiety or despair: no-one is immune from these experiences. “1 in 4 of us will suffer from mental health problems at some point in our lives,” says Elizabeth King, from Lifewords. “The pandemic has impacted people’s mental wellbeing in many forms – panic attacks, self-harm, eating disorders, suicide – and young people are especially affected. These resources offer the Bible’s life words as a source of comfort, and hope – so vital in these days.” Give thanks for how the Bible helps us navigate the challenges and struggles that we may face. Pray for those of us who experience mental health issues, that we would turn to the life-giving words of Scripture to find peace, hope and comfort.
- Our spiritual health is vital as well, and many have found that prayer is a real comfort in these times. “Prayer is something that the Bible invites us all to engage with, connecting our inner thoughts and our everyday lives with God’s perspectives,” explains Matt Currey, UK Development Manager. “*Inspiring Prayer* opens a door to experience prayer, and perhaps find that it lifts hearts and minds to a Greater Love when all around seems so confusing.” Give thanks for how prayer deepens and strengthens our relationship with God. Pray that we would continue to seek times with God for connection and inspiration.
- As the lockdown continues and as we deal with the after-effects of the pandemic over the coming months and years, many of us will have ongoing mental health issues. Pray that we would be challenged and inspired to reach out to those we know who are struggling and to seek help for ourselves when we need it. Both of these resources are designed to use individually, or to be shared with our churches, small groups, friends and neighbours – pray that we would continue to reach out to those we share our lives with and to bring comfort and good news.

To order *Little Book of Chaos* and *Inspiring Prayer* visit www.lifewords.global

21–27 March

Australia

Lifeworlds teams all over the world have been working hard over the past 12 months to adapt to the Covid-19 pandemic. Here is an update from our team in Australia:

- “The past few months have seen much of our work in Australia return to normal as Covid restrictions have eased and many of our churches, partners and missions have returned to operation,” says Dan Hardie, Lifeworlds Australia Director. “Orders have remained slower than a normal year, though we saw a good response to our Christmas appeal and many partners reconnected with us.” Give thanks for the way Australia has been able to resume some normality. Pray for the Lifeworlds team as they deal with the after-effects of the pandemic, and as they seek to resume and grow their work.
- Pam and John Hodge from Sydney wrote to Dan to share how they were using Lifeworlds resources: “John and I wanted to write to say thank you so much for your wonderful resources. We run a seniors group at The Salvation Army, Hurstville, and with lockdown our seniors are really missing the fellowship of meeting together. We have done three mailouts to them during this lockdown period. The first being an Easter booklet, *Day Three: Believe the Women*, then the great new *Daily Strength*, and just this week we posted out *Finding Hope*. Your resources are really impacting the lives of our group. We have had phone calls this week thanking us for *Finding Hope*. One lady told us that she really needed it. Another lady in hospital was pleased to receive it, and shared her faith and her booklet with the lady in the next bed. Another carries it with her all the time.” Praise God for Pam and John, and for their ministry to older people. Pray that the resources they send out would be a comfort and solace to those that receive them.
- Martin Lambert, from the Scouts in New South Wales said: “I organise camps for about 250 young people during the summer. On the Sundays, we take an hour for a church-service parade, similar to what the soldiers would have done during the Great War. We want the scouts to reflect and remember, knowing God is with them and that the heritage is strong. Your WW1 commemoration gospels are perfect for such reflection, and we can take readings, prayers and reflections from all different parts. It is a perfect tool for us.” Give thanks for how the WW1 John’s Gospels are being read by young people. Pray that Jesus’ words and actions would inspire them to love and serve God, and bring healing, hope and new life to others.

Thank you for praying with us! Your partnership in prayer is vital to all that we do as we share the Bible’s life words around the world. You can make a donation to our work online at www.lifeworlds.global, by post, or by calling 020 7730 2155.