

LIFEWORDS

Lifewords Prayer, September 2020

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

Matthew 7:24–25 NIV

For so many of us, all over the world, the year so far has been one of change, upheaval, confusion and pain. For some the challenges have been relatively small – a shift in day-to-day life with families adapting to working from home and home-schooling; new ways of socialising, shopping, doing church. Others have faced great danger, suffering and poverty as the global pandemic has stripped away security, health, and basic provisions. Each new development of the pandemic, together with government responses and directives, has felt like a tremor that shakes our existence – whether a small, almost indiscernible shake, or a huge shift in the fabric of our lives. This year has seen us dealing with huge amounts of change and uncertainty.

In Matthew, Jesus talks about the house that is built on sure foundations. He urges us to listen to his teaching about how we should live, the things we should focus on and prioritise, and to act upon it. Because it is this that will be our foundation when we face a difficult situation or when our whole world is turned upside down. When we listen to Jesus and follow him we are less easily buffeted or uprooted by life’s storms.

This month we are praying for ourselves and for others, asking God to help us prioritise a strong foundation in our lives. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus and be rooted in his teaching so that we can stand firm when we are faced with uncertainty and crisis.

Welcome to the September edition of Lifewords Prayer. This month we remember our young people, get an update on Lifewords global work, hear a story from a former prisoner in Kenya, pray for Pavement Project plans, and find out more about the Ninefold Path. Please join us as we pray.

30 August – 5 September

Young people

As school-aged people in the UK finish their summer holidays and return to school or prepare for university, let's pray for them after all these months of upheaval.

- In the UK, and in other countries too, school-aged children have experienced months of school closures, home-schooling, and exam cancellations. Together with missing out on formal education and time with friends, some vulnerable children have gone without a safe place away from unstable and sometimes violent homes. Give thanks and pray for safety as most UK children return to school this month. Pray for schools, teachers and staff as they prepare to receive children into a new context, with extra safety measures in place. Pray for parents as they prepare their children and themselves for a new term.
- In Australia, Dan Hardie, Lifewords Director, spends some of his time counselling adolescent young people. "There is increased anxiety and academic stress for many," he says, "as even the HSC (final year) exams are under threat." All over the world young people will have felt the effects of the pandemic, both on their communities and the wider world, and on themselves as individuals. Pray for them as they grapple with what has happened this year, ask God to protect their physical and mental health. Pray for the best possible outcomes for those who are and were unable to take examinations and progress to the next phase of their education or working life.
- Annette Ward from Cullumpton in Devon, UK, ordered copies of *Inspiring Prayer*, *Little Book of Faith*, and *Little Book of Help* to give to the young people in her church over the summer holidays. Give thanks for churches and other organisations who have been helping young people, especially with the stress and uncertainty surrounding exam results. Pray that God's Word would have been a solace and source of hope for young people, and that they would trust in God for their futures.

6–12 September

Responding to the pandemic

As the world continues to react and respond to Covid-19, at Lifewords we are working hard to keep sharing good news.

- "Brazil is our top concern in terms of distribution," says Jarek Jankowski, Bible Resources Director. "We have been receiving orders from the country for several months now, but are only able to send small mailings of below 1kg. Hundreds of bigger orders are waiting, and the backlog is growing as new orders are coming on a daily basis." Please pray for Brazil, that the postal system there would return to normal quickly and safely. Pray too that the Lifewords office in Poland can send the backlog of orders and that people who are waiting for Bible resources in Brazil would receive them very soon.
- Jarek continues: "Other Latin America countries have been affected in a similar way. One of them is Colombia, where the problem is two-fold: not only are we unable to send our resources there, but due to a tough situation in the country people are permitted to leave homes only a couple of times a week for essential purposes. So even if the postal system worked normally, it would be difficult to do any outreach work in Colombia under current circumstances. A tough situation for our partners there and – even more – for those who need the message of hope and restoration." Pray that the lockdown measures in Columbia would make a

huge difference to the spread of the virus there. Pray too that while people are restricted to staying at home that they would find new ways of sharing good news through virtual forms of communication.

- This Christmas we have a new resource that reflects a year that has been characterised by contrasts: pain and healing, despair and courage, oppression and justice. *The True Light* – a new Christmas animation, booklet, and digital campaign – reminds us of the hope we have in Jesus. Give thanks for the steadfast hope we have as we remember Jesus being made flesh and experiencing life as a human. Pray for this new resource as text, design and production are finalised over the next few weeks.

Visit www.lifewords.global/get-involved/give/ to make a donation so that the Bible's life words can be made freely available around the world.

13–19 September **Kenya prison story**

Thank you for praying for our work in Kenyan prisons. The team in Nairobi visit inmates, offering hope for the future and sharing God's love. Here is Luiza's story of restoration and salvation:

- Luiza was in prison for killing another woman, and was facing a death sentence. She was in a dark place and felt utterly hopeless. "For the first six months in prison, I did not want to talk to anyone and I somehow lost touch of reality as guilt and self-condemnation were eating me alive. Depression set in and I became angry with everyone and everything." As a result of this behaviour, Luiza was transferred to a segregated part of the prison, a section that rarely received visitors since most of the inmates were considered violent and dangerous. However, one evening, two of the Lifewords Kenya team visited Luiza. Give thanks for the Lifewords prison ministry in Kenya. Praise God for the access the team have, and for the way they are able to build relationships with inmates.
- "For some unknown reason, I found myself wanting to stay and listen to them even with all the horrible feelings I had," says Luiza. "They told me about the unconditional love of God and his unwavering care for everyone, no matter what they have done. They then shared a booklet showing us the love of a Father who received his son back home without focusing on what he had done. I had not heard about the Father's love we were being told about. That evening, I made the decision to become a Christian. I then experienced extraordinary peace which I could not explain, and for the first time in six months, I found myself smiling. I cried my heart out and at the end of it all, I felt lighter and joyful." Give thanks for how everyone can have a relationship with God through Jesus. Praise God for Luiza's transformation and the healing she received.
- After three days, Luiza was moved back to a normal cell. She continued to attend Christian group meetings and her faith grew. After serving 18 years, she appealed her case. Her conviction was changed to manslaughter and she was sentenced to 15 years. Since she had already served 18 years in prison, she was immediately released. "Thank you Lifewords for coming into my life when I desperately needed you," says Luiza. Give thanks that God's power transforms lives and gives us hope for the future. Pray for Luiza, that she would grow in faith and continue to experience God's love, healing and hope.

20–26 September

Pavement Project goes online

During the global coronavirus pandemic, Pavement Project trained workers were prevented from counselling with the green bag due to social distancing guidelines. The green bag games and stories have always been told in person, but the pandemic called for a new solution.

- Last April the Pavement Project team tested an online version of the counselling process. The results were very positive with a 95% rate of improvement in self-esteem of the person being counselled – the same as with face-to-face meetings – so online counselling was rolled out into more regions. Give thanks for the adaptability of the green bag counselling process and for the way in which workers have been able to continue their work with vulnerable children and families.
- “We had 18 workers cleared to help children from 9 years old, young people, and their relatives,” says Clenir dos Santos, Pavement Project Director. “For some time now, we have known that the green bag methodology also has a transforming effect on adults, leading them to Christ. We believe that it was a very important tool in the coronavirus crisis, when parents were also facing great difficulties – many had lost their jobs, were struggling with the children full-time at home, were mourning, and were themselves facing the fear of dying or losing their loved ones.” Praise God for the way in which the Bible’s message of hope and healing has been used with people struggling as a result of the pandemic. Pray that those who have been counselled would know God as their rock and foundation in times of crisis and trauma.
- The Pavement Project team is continuing work on the green bag app, which is being developed so that even more people can be counselled. Current work includes translating resources for recipients and workers, developing training resources, and exploring how to deliver workshops online using platforms such as Zoom. Please pray for the ongoing work of Pavement Project, especially as the team adapt to new contexts for training workers and delivering counselling sessions.

Visit www.lifewords.global/projects/pavement-project/ to find out more about Pavement Project.

27 September – 3 October

In the latest issue of *Interact* magazine you can read about the Ninefold Path and how it is designed to help us explore and understand our lives, and be part of bringing healing, hope and justice to our world.

- The Ninefold Path reflects a desire to see change and restoration in a world full of imbalance and inequality. The invitation to see things differently is captured in Jesus’ opening to the Sermon on the Mount: the beatitudes. Through the Ninefold Path we are invited to explore these words of Jesus and how we might apply them to our daily lives. Praise God that the Bible shows us how to live and how to serve others.
- The Ninefold Path Learning Lab and Notebook offer an experiential journey that takes the user through the “nine beats” of the sayings of Jesus known as the beatitudes, exploring how these statements relate to struggles and opportunities in our lives. These resources can be used individually or in a group, in person or online, and are adaptable to different contexts and timetables. Pray for

individuals, groups and churches who are using these resources at the moment. Pray that more and more people would take up the challenge to explore God's Word in this way.

- The coronavirus pandemic has caused many of us to think more deeply about our lives, communities and the wider world. "As we've done these groups during Covid-19, we've noticed that the beatitudes name current life struggles and people feel invited to consider another way they can navigate these difficulties," says Mark Scandrette, co-author of the Ninefold Path Learning Lab and Notebook. Pray that as we explore the Bible and reflect on its message for our lives that we would repent, change, and start to respond to the needs of our communities and wider world.

Visit www.ninefoldpath.org for more information, to order resources, and to access free online and video content. A new edition of the Notebook is now available at the lower price of 5 copies for £15.

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.

In the midst of the coronavirus crisis our resources are still available, our stock is good and our distribution still operational. Please bear with us, as naturally there may be some element of delay as postal services are impacted, but in so far as we can every order is still being processed.

We encourage you to visit our website and social media, where you will find up-to-date information on our resources. In coming weeks, we will be looking to add to online ways of serving, encouraging and equipping you during this season. We want to provide you with Bible resources that will help you, help your friends and neighbours and community, and help your church to navigate these uncharted waters.

You can also make a donation to our work online at www.lifewords.global, by post, or by calling 020 7730 2155.