

The Struggle in Prayer



We are called to pray and intercede in all circumstances:

Philippians 4:6 – *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*

Ephesians 6:18 – *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 Lord's people.*

The question that arises in our hearts is “*Why does one prayer get answered and another is not?*” Greg Boyd outlines a number of variables we should be aware of (see [here](#) for more information and in Greg’s book **Is God to Blame?**). Here are some reflections on this drawing from his outline:

1) God’s Will: we know that praying in God’s will is important; so knowing his promises, his mission, his love for our world is vital. 1 John 5:14 – *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.* However, we need to be wary of attributing unanswered prayer to God’s will as this implies no other variables exist and can make faith fatalistic and

God appear unconcerned, unapproachable and non-negotiable.

2) The faith of the person being prayed for: there were times that lack of belief and lack of faith hindered the outworking of Jesus' power. Mark 6:5-6 – Jesus' healing ministry seemed limited because of unbelief. Conversely there are many stories that indicate healing where there was no belief. I have seen Christians hurt by accusations that "if only they believed more then healing would come". Again we need be wary of attributing this variable alone to unanswered prayer.

3) The faith of the people praying: the story of the friends of the paralysed man lowering him to Jesus through the roof comes to mind (Luke 5:20). We can recall stories when the faith and love of friends intervening in prayer and action brings about change. In many ways the role of Micah Network's prayer focus is to draw on the network as a group of faithful friends bringing the needs of one another and on behalf of our hurting world to the Lord. Hear these words: "When Jesus saw their faith he healed their friend..."

4) Persistence of prayer: change takes time and like any project we set out to do, there are different stages, hours of labour. Prayer is often just like this (Luke 11:5-8). For change to take place many hearts need to be challenged and circumstances evolved. Persistence is key and a hard discipline to practice in our quick access society. We will see some prayer points arise over and over again in our monthly focus – we encourage one another to not stop praying. For example: for the IAS staff held hostage in Somalia.

5) The number of people praying: Paul invites prayer support from the churches so as to ensure he has the boldness and insight to fulfil

his ministry (Ephs 6:19ff; Col 4:3ff). The importance of solidarity and combined prayer is key. It is not that the prayer is louder and so God hears us, but rather that our love and unity breaks through strongholds.

6) Human free will: God will never override each person's free will to choose. However, praying for our loved ones to come to faith is influenced by prayer because strongholds are broken, lies exposed, truth heard. (2 Peter 3:9)

7) Angelic free will: both angelic and demonic beings (e.g. 1 Thess 2:17ff – Satan hinders activity). These spirit beings have free will according to what the Bible shares about them.

8) Spiritual strongholds: depending on the presence and number of principalities and powers in a given area (Luke 11:24ff indicates that numbers makes a difference).

9) Presence of sin: when we allow sin (known disobedience) to be in our lives we limit our authority and impact. See the example from Joshua 7:10–11. Greg Boyd uses the following example: no one would be surprised if God told an abusive husband that prayer for his wife's love is useless until he stops abusing her!

Extracts and points drawn from [Greg Boyd's article from Renew](#). Comments and Reflections added by Sheryl Haw

Reflections



What gives us confidence to pray is that:

- God promises to hear us
- God's love for us and for his world
- Jesus intercedes for us and invites us to join him
- God's promise to never leave us.
- God calls us to intercede and join him in his mission, of which prayer is an integral part.

**May we continue to unite in prayer, with integrity of heart and mind, in confidence and assurance!
Amen**

Standing in the Gap



As we look at our world let us not only intercede for critical issues of concern but let us also consciously speak blessing and hope over the land.

Africa



Africa: 58 countries containing up to 2,500 ethnic groups. Population: 1.2 billion.

Foreign debt: thank God for the progress made in reducing a number of countries debt totals; many countries still spend more funds servicing their debt repayments than on much needed investment on health and education. **Pray** for wisdom of governments as they allocate resources, so that health, education, agriculture and clean water receive priority attention.

Foreign aid: thank God for the amazing generosity of nations and individuals responding to needs in Africa over the years; though not all aid is helpful and much funding is wasted. **Pray** for increasing awareness of all engaged in aid on how to support economic and infrastructural improvements so as to reduce aid demands.

Blessing and Hope: Lord, what a beautiful continent is Africa, rich in resources, with great potential and opportunity. Thank your for the amazing response to your Gospel and the growth of your church. We pray for life and health for the people and for a united commitment to eradicate poverty. Lord, bless the land with increasing agricultural production.

Asia & Middle East



Asia and Middle East: 50 countries containing up to 4,860 ethnic groups. Population: 4.5 billion.

Demographic shifts: thank God for the improved health access and economic well-being of many countries; the gender bias in a number of countries (favouring males) has created a significant deficit in women placing trafficking, prostitution, wife buying, abduction on an ever increasing rise. **Pray** for governments to act in changing policy, improving protection and dealing with perpetrators.

Urbanisation: thank God for the new industries and opportunities evolving throughout this continent; just over 43% of the population now live in cities many with populations over 10 million. **Pray** for the poor and homeless in cities often neglected and abused – may the churches in each city mobilise to reach out and love in practical ways.

Blessing and Hope: Lord, thank you for the rich diversity of people. Here, where ancient civilisations inform our present, may we learn from history that you alone are the author of life and truth. We pray for an outpouring of your Spirit on this continent and the raising up of the prophetic voice of your church to speak truth and hope into the nations.

Latin America



Latin America: 22 countries containing 951 ethnic groups: Population: 0.6 billion.

Catholic revival: thank God for the increasing vitality of the Catholic Church in which Scripture is being re-read and holistically responded to; the new Pope coming from Latin America is demonstrating an exciting change in responding to the poor and in reconciliation. **Pray** for revival and a refining of faith that is deeply rooted in the Gospel and lived out in fullness and in community.

Drug hub: thank God for the more united approach to dealing with drug trafficking; realities of demand and financial gain have increased the efficiency of drug cartels. **Pray** for a stronger and more effective approach to removing drug production as well as the need to focus on the increasing appetite for drugs.

North and South



In next month's prayer focus we will stand in the gap for our remaining continents – let's pray now for the relationships between North and South – that it will not be a them and us relationship but a move towards "us". Lord we pray for repentance, forgiveness and restoration of relationships.

Critical Situations



As we hear so many instances of disturbing news we are compelled to cry out to God for justice and mercy, for intervention and resolution. Let us pray together for:

The abducted girls in Nigeria, their families and the perpetrators.

The Christian woman in Sudan sentenced to death for her faith; for her husband, children and the government of Sudan.

The families of the two raped and ganged girls in India, the police and justice system, the perpetrators.

The children and families in the South Korean ferry disaster, the crew and the divers as they continue the search and salvage work.

Malaysian flight still missing – for the families and search crews – God please show us what has happened.

For mine victims in Turkey, their families and for the mine owners.

For the conflict in Ukraine and the lives lost, injured and at risk.

For the up and coming world cup in Brazil – an opportunity to raise awareness of poverty, inequality and abuse as well as for Brazil to unite and benefit from this event.

For the young gunman's victims and their families in the USA, and for his own family.

Persistent Prayer



Please continue to pray for the safe return of the three IAS staff held in Somalia. It is not too late to send a letter to the Kenya Embassy in your country ([see previous special prayer focus](#))

Micah Network

Up and coming:

Malaysia: Asia Regional Consultation in partnership with ISUM: Signs of Hope in the City: 28th June to 2nd July

Cameroon: Integral Mission Conversation: 11th to 12th July

Bangladesh: Integral Mission Conversation: 8th to 9th August

Transition

The transition task force begins meeting to prayerfully consider the strategy and focus of the newly emerging “**Micah**” as we explore the process, stages and structure resulting from the decision to bring Micah Network and Micah Challenge together. **Please pray for God’s voice to be heard and for wisdom and prophetic insight to guide these discussions.**

Loida Carriel

Loida is the director of Paz y Esperanza in Ecuador and took over chairing the Micah Network Board in April from Isaac Anguyo (Here is Life, Uganda). Please pray for her as she picks up this challenge, especially at a time when transition is being discussed.

Loida’s youngest son is currently unwell requiring significant support, frequent trips to the hospital. **Let us take time now to pray for his recovery and for a special protection and covering of Loida and her family.**

Solidarity

We all go through times of financial struggle. Micah Network receives many e-mails asking for help financially to fund important projects, cover vital gaps, to respond to particular needs. We often wrestle before God on this issue – why is it so tough to resource much needed work? Let us

join together and reflect on the 9 points in the devotion and pray for a breakthrough for one another.

Beware – God will also challenge each of us to stand in solidarity with one another!
