

Child in the midst



Prayer for children at risk



World Weekend of Prayer

Prayer Resources

Feedback from last year's World Weekend of Prayer indicates that more than half the people who join us in praying for children at risk are themselves under the age of 18, many of them young children. This year we are pleased to make available the following resource which is aimed particularly at helping children engage with the issues covered in the 'Child in the midst' prayer guide. Feel free to use it in your church, with your family, or in any other setting you find appropriate.

We would love to keep in touch with you and find out about how you're praying and if the resources are useful; and we invite you to join the Viva Community group around children praying for children at risk. Entitled 'The Roar', it is a way we can connect with each other and share ideas and resources as we encourage children to pray and intercede on behalf of children at risk.

Please visit www.viva.org/pray.aspx to find out more.

We hope you find these ideas useful and look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks

The Viva Prayer Team



The child in the midst who needs a family

Picture the scene...

'Anna is two years old. Because her parents died when she was a baby, she has to live in an orphanage. At the orphanage, each staff member has to look after eight children, so they do not get nearly as much attention as if they had parents to care for them. Anna's hair is thin and straggly, and her body is covered in scratches, because she has learnt that pulling her hair out and scratching herself are the only ways to get any attention. Even though she is still so young, Anna knows that she needs to be looked after by someone who can give her all their time and attention, but sadly she has no-one to give this to her.'

Discussion pointers

Anna has learnt to get attention from her caregiver by pulling her hair out and scratching herself.

In what ways do you seek attention, from a parent, a teacher, or someone else?

Do we need to seek attention from God? Why? Why not?

Key Bible verse: Isaiah 49:15-16: *"Can the mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me."*

Spend a while explaining what this verse means:

- Your parents sometimes call you the wrong name, but it doesn't mean they have forgotten who you are
- The Bible says that God is even less likely to forget you than your mum or your dad – He has written your name on the palm of His hand
- God has not forgotten Anna either – if only she knew it!

If Anna did know how much God loves her and thinks about her, how might this change her life? How could she learn about God and His good plan for her life?

This may lead you on to talking about the fact that when someone steps into her life and gives her some attention, she can begin to understand about God and His love.

Prayer

- Pray that children who need families will be matched with families that want to love another child
- Let the children pray whatever they feel is right for children like Anna who need a family
- Pray for Christians to step into the lives of each child and help them feel God's love and attention through their loving words and actions
- Pray that these children recognise God's care and intervention in their lives, and that this would make them want to trust in God and believe that he cares about their situation
- Pray that you will remember that God has engraved you on His palm!

Wrap-up activity

You could draw a big handprint, and get all the children to write their names on it. They could write Anna's name too, and the names of as many of their friends and family as they can think of. Then let the children use a washable marker and write a message on their palm to help them remember to pray for the child in the midst who needs a family.



Picture the scene...

'Joseph is 12 years old, but his life has been very tough, and his face is hardened so he looks much older. His dad drinks too much, and when he comes home, he often hits Joseph. His face and his whole body are battered and bruised. Because of what his father has done to him, Joseph is scared of being hurt by other adults, even those who try to help him. He is angry that all of these bad things have happened to him, and he glares at you through his swollen eyes.'

Discussion pointers

Explain that, sadly, there are many children around the world who suffer violence like Joseph. Although God's plan for each person's life is a good plan, this can be forgotten when a child is hurting because of violence.

Key Bible verse: Psalm 91:4: *'He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.'*

Ask the children what they think this verse means:

- A baby bird finds complete refuge under the wings of the parent bird
- This is like God placing a big, protective wing over the boy who has just been beaten by his father

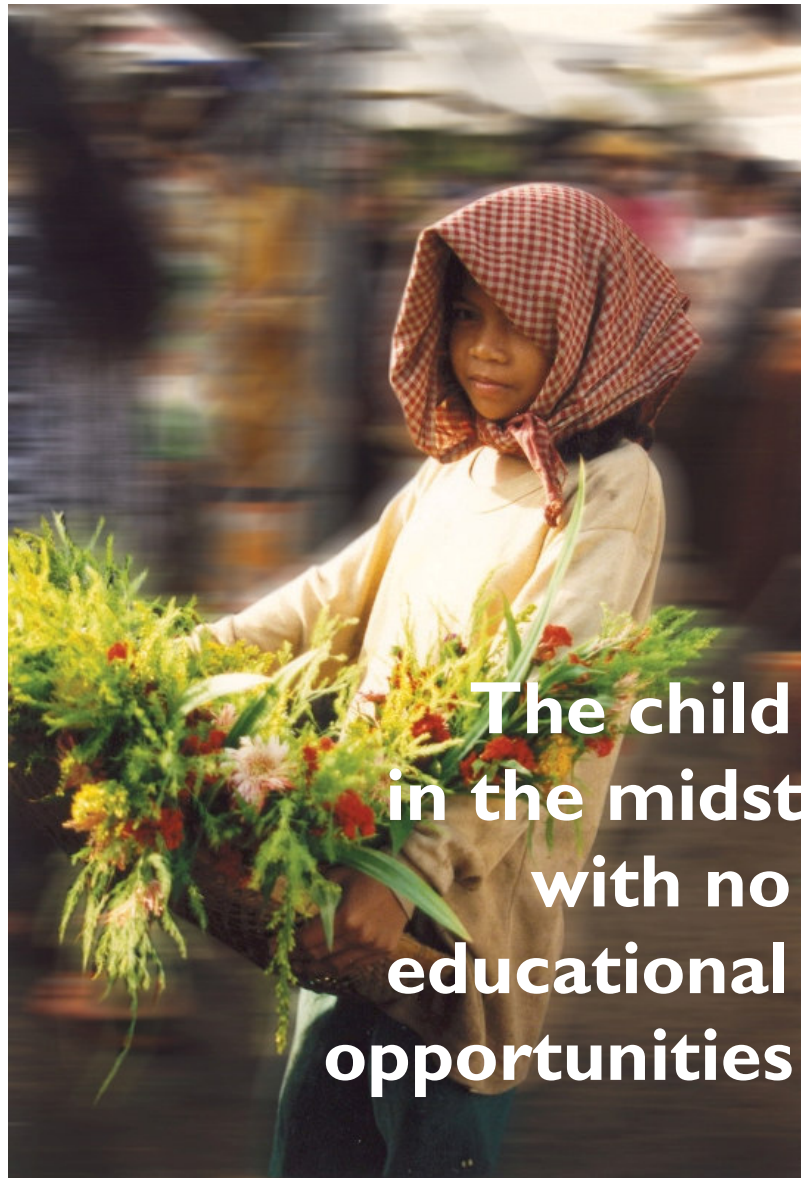
How do you think Joseph would feel if he knew that God was protecting him like this? What would happen to his glare? How would the time spent 'under God's wing' help him remember that God has a good plan for his life? What helps YOU remember that God has a good plan for YOUR life? When are some of the times you need to remember that God shelters you under His wing?

Prayer

- Pray for the child in the midst who suffers violence, and pray that children like Joseph would encounter God's peace and gentleness. Ask that they would feel God's comfort cover them like the feathers of a protective wing
- Pray for some of the children you know who have 'hardened faces' or might experience violence at home. Ask God to give you opportunities to tell them about God's love and good plan for their lives
- Pray that you will remember the beautiful picture of finding peace and shelter under God's protective wing

Wrap-up activity

Let the children draw a picture that might be influenced by what God spoke to them or a picture He showed them while praying. Also, suggest that the children draw a picture of God's protective wing covering a child who is a victim of violence.



The child in the midst with no educational opportunities

Picture the scene...

'Fatima is a small girl, probably only 9 or 10 years old. She is standing on the street in the middle of a bustling and busy city, holding a scrap of paper in her hands. She does not know what she is doing there, because she cannot read what is written on the paper. She has been sent away from her parents' home in the country, and just before she left, they handed her the paper to show to someone in the city. If she was able to read it, she would realise that her parents have sent her to the city in the hope that she will be able to find work and earn the money that will provide for a better future. She eventually finds work of sorts, which means that she can survive, but because she is working all the time she cannot go to school and get the education that she needs.'

Discussion pointers

Talk about the fact that many of the children in the group can probably think of much more interesting and fun things to do than go to school. Ask them to name a few of these things. Explain that, even though Fatima is not going to school, she is not doing any of these fun things instead, but is having to work.

Can you think of a job that you can do without having to know how to read, write or count? What types of work would you have to do?

Explain that God plans for each person to have a hope and a future, but without an education, it is almost impossible to achieve this. Fatima has given up hoping and dreaming of a good future, because she is just trying to survive.

Key Bible verse: Psalm 103:1-5: *'Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits – who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies you desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.'*

Explain that children can often feel like they are stuck in a pit because they are not educated. Education is a ladder to help them climb out of their pit.

How can children like Fatima receive help? What are some of the way they might learn that God wants to redeem them from the pit? How can they be helped educationally and spiritually? How do you imagine yourself in the future – as a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher? How different would your life be if you had to leave school today to earn a living? Would you still trust and believe in God? What would help you remember that God cares about you?

Prayer

- Pray for opportunities for unschooled children to receive some form of education. Ask God to give creative ideas that will enable children to learn even if they cannot attend a regular school.
- Pray Psalm 103:1-5 by personalising it with your name. As you find the word's 'my' and 'your' in the verses, put your own name in place of those pronouns, e.g. '...who redeems Nancy's life from the pit.'

Wrap-up activity

Draw a picture of children climbing out of a pit. Think about some of the people who might help the child out of the pit and draw them in the picture.



The child in the midst who suffers through hunger or poverty

Picture the scene...

'Paola is sitting on the dirty ground, swamped by clothes that have never fitted her or been washed, and which are full of rips that she does not even notice any more. She is tiny, and so weak that she can hardly lift up her head. She looks like she is about four years old, but you are shocked when she tells you that she is seven. In her whole life, she has never eaten a proper meal, and she does not know what it feels like not to be hungry. Her skin has gone dry and turned a dull yellow colour because she simply cannot afford the food that would make her body strong and healthy.'

Discussion pointers

Paola suffers from not having food. Explain that, while some of the children in the group may have missed a meal once in a while, Paola hardly ever eats anything. Ask the children to try to imagine what this must feel like. Explain that there are millions of children who face this situation. If the child is fortunate enough to attend a school, it is impossible for them to concentrate on schoolwork or listen to the teacher if they are hungry. Many children need to work so they can earn a little money to buy food. Life is difficult for children living in poverty and having a hungry tummy makes life even harder. These children might think that they aren't loved or something is wrong with them because they don't have food to eat like other children.

Key Bible verse: Matthew 6:26: *"Look at the birds in the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"*

Talk about the meaning of this verse, how birds can be seen all around the world, so any child could understand the picture that Jesus gave of how God takes care of the birds

Explain how, in many situations, children living in poor conditions are looked down upon by other members of the community.

How would this make the child feel? How would it make them feel to realise that God values them? How does it make YOU feel to know that God values you?

When are some times that you do not feel valued by others? Is there a time when you are not valued by God? How might a hungry child come to know that other people value him or her?

Prayer

- Pray that children living with hunger and poverty recognise that God's love for them does not depend on the amount of food or money they have – they are valued for who they are!
- Pray that generosity will overwhelm people who come into contact with these children, and that the children will recognise that God is taking care of their needs
- Pray for opportunities to share your food and money with children living in situations of hunger and poverty

Wrap-up activity

Draw a picture of God's love being poured out on a hungry, poverty-stricken child; encourage the children to think very creatively and practically about what that looks like.



The child in the midst affected by loss and death

Picture the scene...

'Tariq is sitting shyly, while a few of his younger brothers and sisters try to climb up onto his knee. On the ground beside him, a baby is crawling around. Tariq lifts the baby gently by the arm and helps him to stand on his feet. Although Tariq is only 13, he is now the oldest person in his family. His mum, his dad, and all his other older relatives have died because they fell sick with HIV/AIDS. So now it is his job to look after all his little brothers and sisters. His eyes are tired as he gazes at you, and you can tell that he cannot cope with all the pressure and the demands that are being made of him.'

Discussion pointers

Talk about how hard it is to imagine what it must feel like when someone that you love and depend upon dies.

Have you ever had a pet that has died? Or maybe a relative? What did it feel like?

Discuss what it would feel like to be left in charge of your younger brothers and sisters because all your older relatives had died. Explain that many children around the world face this hardship, and that they not only have to cope with the grief of their loss, but also the huge responsibility of looking after themselves and their siblings.

Key Bible verse: 2 Corinthians 1:3-4: *'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.'*

Write this verse on a piece of paper, put the paper in a small box and gift-wrap the box. Tell the children that the gift is a gift from God. Ask one of the children to unwrap the gift and read the verse.

When has God comforted you?

Explain how, when a person feels comforted, they can then turn around and comfort someone else who needs encouragement and comfort. Because the person understands

what it is like to be comforted, they can go and share comfort with other hurting people, so the gift keeps on being passed around.
Have the children pass the gift to someone in the room and continue until everyone has received the gift.

Prayer

- Explain that our prayers can also be like gifts, and that, whenever we pray for a hurting child, we are giving them the gift of taking their need to their heavenly Father. Pray for (give gifts of prayer to) the child in the midst affected by loss and death
- Pray that grieving children will feel God's comfort and love extended towards them through the care and help they receive from people around them
- Pray for children to have courage and strength to bear the responsibilities of caring for siblings. Ask God to send helpers and caregivers to surround these children with love and hope
- Pray that you will have opportunities to speak words of comfort and show actions of love towards children who have suffered loss of someone in their family. Ask God to give you the right words to say when you are comforting someone.

Wrap-up activity

The Bible says that God saves our tears in a bottle (Psalm 56:8). Design a bottle that might hold the tears cried by a child who lost both parents.