



MONTHLY PRAYER UPDATE



Prayer and Fasting Opens Hardened Hearts

(First-hand testimony from a sensitive country, the names have been changed)

Ilsa is a retired English teacher and a Prayer Coordinator of a Regional Team. This 60-year-old prayer warrior runs an NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) Educational Center in a local village. She has the heart of a mother for every child and adult that comes to her center. There are 2,500 people living in the village. Ilsa distributes shoeboxes at her center and teaches The Greatest Journey discipleship program combined with English and dance classes. Everybody in the village respects "Aunt Ilsa."

After an Operation Christmas Child Outreach Event (shoebox distribution) last year, a little boy ran into his house with big eyes and a smile from ear-to-ear, and joyfully proclaimed to his father, "Hooray, daddy! Jesus is our Lord!" His father, who serves as religious leader in the village, got really angry and told his son to "shut up and never go to Aunt Ilsa's Educational Center again." When Ilsa heard about that, she choked her tears back and immediately contacted all her prayer partners. She called "her army" to pray and fast. The next week, the father brought his little son to the Center and asked if he could, please, observe The Greatest Journey lesson about the "Prophet" (he was referring to Jesus Christ). After the lesson, the father was invited for a cup of tea at the teacher's room. He accepted the invitation with reservations, and after chatting about the weather and "present day morals" he cleared his throat and said: "Thank you very much. You are teaching these boys and girls the right things."

"I believe," says Ilsa, "that the time will come, when the whole family will be saved! Why am I so convinced? One of the boy's aunts was my English student and she listened to the Word of God and prayed with the other kids. Now she works abroad to support her family. Every time she visits her village she pays me a visit. When this young boy proclaimed "Hooray, daddy! Jesus is our Lord!", it was a blowup in this house! This brought salvation into the house of this religious leader who then became a "man of peace." When I talk now with the father at the parents' meetings, sometimes we discuss spiritual questions and he agrees that only Isa (Jesus) has the keys of Hades and of Death."

The Supernatural Activity of Prayer

Renewing our minds with the Word of God is vital to cultivating a dynamic, growing personal prayer life. The Bible repeatedly reminds us of the power of our prayers and that prayer is a supernatural endeavor that engages the spiritual realm. In fact, the Apostle Paul exhorted believers to not only be aware of the spiritual realm but to focus on it as he stated, *“while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”* (2 Corinthians 4:18). Several other passages in God’s Word also encourage us to look beyond the natural realm, *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*(Ephesians 6:12) and God’s Word also directs us, *“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”* (2 Corinthians 5:7).

In 2 Kings chapter 6, a servant of the prophet Elisha was given the amazing privilege of being able to see with his own eyes the kind of activity and warfare that goes on in the spiritual realm. The servant and Elisha found themselves surrounded by the horses and chariots of the Syrian army in the city of Dothan. Elisha sensed the servant’s great fear so he prayed and asked God to allow the servant to see past the natural realm into the spiritual realm so he could be greatly encouraged by God’s mighty army that was present, *“And Elisha prayed, and said, “Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.”* (2 Kings 6:16-17). In Daniel chapter 9, we are shown a powerful example of how our prayers cause things to happen in the spiritual realm as we see God dispatching the angel Gabriel in response to the prayers of Daniel. As the angel explains to Daniel, *“O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision.”* (Daniel 9:22b-23).

Another powerful picture of how our prayers engage the spiritual realm can be found in Revelation chapter 5. The Apostle John is given a glimpse of the throne room of God and one of the things he reports seeing before the throne is our prayers, *“Now when He (the Lamb) had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.”* (Revelation 5:8) Think about it! Our prayers are so precious to God that He keeps them in golden bowls in heaven and they are like a fragrant offering to Him. Be greatly encouraged saints, praying is a supernatural endeavor and as God’s Word shows our prayers are not natural, they are supernatural and they engage and cause things to happen in the spiritual realm. Yes, renewing our minds with God’s Word is vital for us to continue cultivating a dynamic, growing personal prayer life

Operation Christmas Child International Prayer Requests:
From our Affiliate Offices and Partner Ministries

Week 1: June 1-8 Australia

- Please thank our Heavenly Father with us over the churches, schools and participating groups that partner with Operation Christmas Child by packing shoeboxes. Also, please join us in asking the Lord Jesus to stir the hearts of more groups to partner with us in this Great Commission ministry.
- Praise God over the safe return of all those who participated in our recent Vision Trips to Cambodia and Fiji and for all they were able to see and experience of God's mercy and movement in these countries.
- Please pray that God will send forward volunteers that he has called to Operation Christmas Child and that we would be equipped to serve and support them well.
- Please join us in praying for several state and regional conferences that are taking place over the next couple of months. Pray that God's presence would be experienced and that the volunteers attending will all walk away refreshed, re-energized and on fire for Operation Christmas Child.

Week 2: June 9-15 Canada

- Praise God for providing a new Southwest Ontario Regional Manager only seven weeks after the position became vacant!
- Praise the Lord with us over how He provided exceedingly more Connect volunteer prospects than we expected during our recent National recruitment Campaign.
- Please pray for the Holy Spirit's perfect wisdom and discernment for our Field Manager's as they recruit, select, equip, lead and develop our precious volunteers.
- Pray for the Spirit's unity and favor on all of our country's regional teams and protection from the schemes of the enemy to disrupt and divide.

Week 3: June 16-22 **Japan**

- Please join us in praising our Heavenly Father for the 13,527 Gospel opportunities (shoebox gifts) that were packed and collected in 2017.
- Praise God for the renewed national partnership He provided once again with a national Christian bookstore chain.
- Please join us in seeking the Lord to raise up the right person for the position of Regional Coordinator in Kanto.
- Please pray for the Holy Spirit to open doors to more local church connections, especially in Tokyo, Nagoya and the Osaka area.
- Please pray that God will provide the people and pieces for a more effective prayer network.

Week 4: June 23-31 **Germany**

- Praise God for the six successful Regional Connect Conferences, where volunteers were able to hear and see the impact of Operation Christmas Child in receiving countries and in the German-speaking world.
- Please join us in asking the Lord Jesus to call and raise up staff members we urgently need at Operation Christmas Child.
- Please pray that God will touch the hearts of many volunteers who are needed and who would love to serve on Area Teams.
- Please ask our Father to provide suitable locations for central processing of all shoebox gifts.

Forward this e-mail to a friend who you think would be interested praying for or learning more about the ministry of Operation Christmas Child.