

AN INSIDER'S GUIDE TO **PRAYING** FOR THE **WORLD**



- COUNTRY-BY-COUNTRY PRAYER GUIDE
- INSPIRING FAITH STORIES
- ON-THE-GROUND INSIGHTS
- UP-TO-DATE MAPS

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To Max and Gaylene Munday—
for they hold in their hearts the world
and see it through eyes of faith

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INTRODUCTION

An Insider's Guide to Praying for the World is a journey to see what God is doing in people and places around the world. When I first began as Global Ambassador for the World Evangelical Alliance, I landed in lawless Somalia. I shouldn't have been there, but after leaving, I wrote a report to our then Secretary General, Geoff Tunnicliffe, that found its way into many email boxes. That was the first story of what became dozens of dispatches.

My literary agent, Mark Sweeney (he had published my first book in 1983), saw these dispatches as a way to encourage people to pray. His rationale was this: In our Western countries, so much captures and holds our attention that we rarely think of, let alone pray for, other countries. Thus began this joyful adventure.

I can thank Janet Sweeney for helping me see that critical to each chapter is the travel that you and I are making together. I just happen to be the one on the ground in these many countries—seeing, hearing, and feeling the dynamics of human life in a myriad of circumstances. But this is a journey that we take together. As your eyes and ears, I listen to and observe the work of the gospel as it upends societies, transforms people, and calls the most unlikely into service. In seeing and listening, our hearts then are turned to our Father, and in our conversation of prayer, we intercede on behalf

of peoples and nations, ministries and vocations, doing what the Lord himself asked us to do: “Pray to the Lord of the harvest.”

Most chapters are focused on an entire country. But as I prayed for the world, certain peoples, missions, and needs surfaced that fit within our global praying. You’ll note a chapter that covers the beginnings of World Vision—a window that provides a glimpse of ministries that care for children and communities. When I traveled with Ron Nikkel to prisons, I was reminded of Jesus’ prayer and our inclination to forget those in prison. You’ll also see a couple of countries that I just couldn’t keep to one chapter. Demographic information was drawn from a variety of sources, including *Operation World*, a marvelous resource on each country. The statistics presented here are not meant to be comprehensive, and in many cases they are estimates, which explains why a country’s religion percentages, for example, may not add up to 100 percent.

I encourage you not to rush through this book. Feel the texture of ideas, listen to the heartbeats of those God is using, and observe the societal struggles of so many different countries. Verses from the Bible will help to root you in the place or people we’ve just visited. Then, as we read the prayers together, allow the intensity of our requests to be felt. The Lord wants, and indeed invites, us to ask of him, so let’s ask boldly. Let’s put the needs before him with what the older Bible translations call “importunity,” meaning “insistent solicitation and entreaty.”

I want to thank Carole Streeter for her editing and consultant skills in drafting this book. Lily, my wife, joined me on many of these travels, and together we witnessed God at work.

Now, as we walk together, may our hearts be filled with feeling, seeing, and being. As we see what the Spirit of God is doing in people and places, let’s join them in prayer. Andy McGuire, of Bethany House Publishers, asked what I would like to see from this book. It is this: that as you read, it would cultivate in you stronger habits of praying for countries other than your own, becoming acquainted with ministries and people you hadn’t known, and then being generous in support and care for those who walk the roads of ministry in these many lands.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK FOR PRAYER

Each of us has our own daily patterns, habits, and inclinations. Prayer is a personal and often private discipline that we configure in ways that fit our personality, schedule, and interests.

Some of us pray on our own, within a marriage setting, with a friend, or as happens increasingly, in a prayer or study group. As you take up *An Insider's Guide to Praying for the World*, here are some suggestions on how you might use it.

As you scan a chapter, you will see how it is laid out. First, it really matters that we locate the country. Some of them will be new to you, and their locations are often obscure. Next is a brief background to the country, since each nation has its own realities that impact life and spiritual well-being.

The dispatches, written after I visited each country, come from the backpack of my travels, exchanges, interviews, and observations. From this, a Bible portion is chosen to put our prayers in the wider context of God's message. From each topic and country, I've identified several items for prayer as a way to focus on a person or a need.

I had wondered about writing the prayers, but I came to realize that this was something you and I will be doing together. As I wrote each prayer, I would feel another person saying the prayer with me. The language used is quite ordinary. It's for us to read with understanding and passion, speaking to our Father, who listens with joy when he hears his children trust him with their inner desires and requests.

Praying on Your Own—Some Suggestions

1. Review the country, getting in mind its location and something about its character and dynamic. In most chapters you are located in a country, so it matters that you focus there.
2. I encourage you to underline in the dispatches. It's your copy, so you can make notes on the pages for future reference. Read it carefully, noting people, places, issues, and events. Feel free to use the Prayer Journal pages in the back of the book or your own notebook.
3. Before moving on to the Bible passage, ask, "What surfaced in the dispatch? What do I want to think about further?"
4. Bible verses. After several readings, ask, "What dots can I connect between the dispatch and these verses from the Bible?"
5. Items for prayer are written to help you be specific in your prayers. You will note other items in the reading of the dispatch, so add those to this list.
6. Prayer: This is what you and I do together. But after this prayer, go on with "And Lord, in addition, I pray . . ." Expand your prayer to include others you know and care about, and items that will surface as you read a chapter, a Bible verse, or even as you pray.

Praying in a Group—Some Suggestions

1. Once you've read the demographics, take a moment with the group to talk about the land and its people. But keep this to

- no more than a few minutes. It is here that time can be lost, and you want to focus on prayer.
2. Assign different paragraphs of the dispatch to those in the group. You can give each person a number, and he or she can read that section. Again, it's your copy, so underline for future reference.
 3. Before moving on to the Bible verses, ask the group what surfaced for them.
 4. Read the Bible verses. Since the readings are short, have them read twice by different people. After reading, ask what dots they might connect between the dispatch and the verses.
 5. Note that the items for prayer are to help you make your prayers specific. Invite the group to also mention other items for prayer that they will want to include when the group does its go-around of praying.
 6. Prayer. You may want to ask each member of the group to pray and then conclude with the written prayer. Or you might begin with the written prayer and then continue with your members praying. As you expand your prayer time, give opportunity to add those people and issues that caught the attention of your members earlier. But here is what is most important: Pray for those people and places linked to the country you are praying for, allowing the Spirit to catch you up in intercessory prayer.

Blessings to you as we join hands in prayer across the globe.



1

SOMALIA

Sometimes One
Needs a Warlord

Somalia has gone through tragic periods of devastating wars and terror. Today, lawlessness grips the country. Piracy on the high seas extorts huge sums. Al Shabab, a militant group affiliated with Al Qaeda, exercises considerable control in central and south Somalia.

Drought hit hard in 2011, and famine followed. It has been said that while drought is an ecological disaster, famine is a politically induced disaster. Christian aid groups were forced out and exploited by Al Shabab.

The Africa Union Army controls much of Somalia's capital, Mogadishu. Yet Somalia continues as an unruled land, even as the world community attempts to help them establish a working government.

Location: an African country bordering the Indian Ocean, northeast of Kenya and southeast of Ethiopia

Population: 10 million

Religion: Muslim 99%

Dispatch

I really should not have traveled to Somalia, a war-torn country run by pirates and warring tribes. I had been appointed as Global Ambassador for the World Evangelical Alliance at the same time a massive famine broke out in northeast Africa, affecting up to 11 million people.

In this country, driven by harsh religion (93 percent of its girls are circumcised) and its men and family clans at war, women and children are left on their own in refugee camps, where they fight for food and search for places to lie down. The walls of their shacks are thin, hardly able to keep out the blowing sand. When their

children pick up dysentery or a contagious infection or disease, these mothers plead for help.

I had gone to east Africa, encouraged by a promise that I would be flown by a relief agency to the Dadaab camps. When I arrived, my travel plans fell through. In Nairobi, I was briefed on the violence in the Mogadishu area and the vast numbers fleeing violence, drought, and famine. The morning news reported that Al Shabab, a terrorist group that controlled much of Somalia, had been pushed out of Mogadishu. We decided to try to visit the city. Aiah Foday-Khabenje, the African head of the Evangelical Alliance of Africa, and I got visas along with troubling warnings. We still set out into a country that was out of control.

Mogadishu

After we arrived in Mogadishu and were waiting in the terminal to get through immigration, a French photojournalist asked why we were there. I fumbled with an answer. Then he asked who was looking after us. I replied we had not figured that out yet. In rough language he said, “You’re an idiot. I work in dangerous places, but this is the most dangerous city in the world. Don’t leave the airport.”

Finally, after interrogation, an immigration officer said we couldn’t leave the terminal without protection. In time we were introduced to Amir. As we walked out of the terminal, a parked truck with five soldiers with AK-47 guns awaited us. Here was twenty-four-hour protection. Amir, a warlord with his own hundred-man army, owned a highly secured hotel in the center of the city.

He escorted us to his souped-up truck. We drove streets lined with bombed-out buildings and shattered marketplaces—devastation in all directions—and worked our way through a maze of concrete roadblocks into the backyard of his hotel.

Soon we were heading to a camp on the edge of the city, where I saw women arriving with children. They were loaded with all they could carry. With no men in sight, the women scrounged to

find a small patch of ground where they could assemble a hut, built with anything they could find. Thousands upon thousands of these huts dotted the camps.

Walking through one camp, I saw a woman crying, her head covered, sobbing into her hands. Our aide-de-camp, in hushed tones, said, “Sir, she has lost two children, and an hour ago she lost her third.”

“From what?” I asked.

“Hunger.”

Later in the afternoon, back at the hotel, we wandered out to an open area protected by walls and steel gates. Men were sitting around playing cards, chatting, and waiting. It was Ramadan, and no food could be eaten until sundown. Many senior government officials and ministers lived in the hotel, where they were safe. It was also close to their parliament building. My warlord friend introduced me to several officials.

“This is Brian, the crazy Canadian.”

“Why are you here?” a cabinet minister asked, looking up from his card game. “I thought Canadians were cowards. . . . You only come to Kenya, not Mogadishu. You are the first Canadian I’ve seen in years. Thank you for coming. But why are you here?” It was time to tell him the real reason.

“I’m a Christian, and while I know you have a terrible reputation worldwide of pirating and killings, I’m here to tell you that God loves Somalia and he loves Somalians.”

I’ve preached many sermons about God’s love, but in that moment a breeze seemed to blow through the courtyard. Men of different faiths and cultures, we were connected by a few simple words. The atmosphere changed. We were now brothers.

When entering the airport for our flight back to Nairobi, I noticed a young Somali working the metal detector and wearing a T-shirt with the English statement “This Is True.” I asked him if he knew what his shirt read. In clear English, he responded, “Yes, I do know.” I pushed him further and asked about the “John 3:16” reference also on the shirt. Not only did he quote the verse, he briefly shared his testimony. Here in the face of unrelenting

Christian opposition, this young man was not fazed by his vulnerability. His faith was strong, and it was public.

As we waited for our return flight, the immigration officer who had earlier arranged our security came to say good-bye. I found myself wrapped in his muscular arms, not once but three times. What our broken verbal languages didn't communicate, body language made up for. On my writing pad he wrote his name and phone number, asking me to contact him on my next visit.

Somalia is a country of such enormous needs that one almost wonders where to begin to pray. What never ceases to surprise me is that in the darkest of places, the Spirit is at work. Countries plagued by oppression, war, brutality, or famine, while seemingly hopeless to us, do not turn away the face of our Lord. God's economy relies on our faithfulness. Investment of prayer activates the Spirit to be in places where we can't go.

TODAY'S READING

Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. . . . The LORD will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest. Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.

Psalm 85:10–13

ITEMS FOR PRAYER

- Pray for women and children caught between hostilities, and their need to survive.
- We need our global community to see that amidst desperate challenges come opportunities to demonstrate true Christ-like compassion. Pray for Christian aid organizations, that they will be given safe and open opportunities to minister to Somalis, bringing medical, educational, nutritional, and spiritual life.
- Pray for strength among Somalia's very few Christians, that they will be protected with wisdom, grace, and courage in their service.

- During this time of intense need, pray also for Somalis attempting to rebuild a functioning government.
- And let us not forget the many Somalis living in other countries. Pray for them as they deal with the horrors and hurts of their past.

PRAYER

Father, in this country of Somalia, where sorrow and tragedy seem the lot of so many, I pray there will be rain for harvest, peace to bring an end to the unceasing inter-clan warfare, and opportunity for the development of a stable government. Regardless of religion, these are people whom you love and for whom you gave your life. May young men and women be found who will learn of this love and with joy give witness to others of their faith, even as this young man in the airport was willing to give his. Bring your special blessing to Somalia. Amen.