



The Millennium Development Goals Prayer Guide for Children

The Millennium Development Goals are eight promises, agreed in 2000 by 189 nations. They set out the ways that the world needs to change by 2015, increasing justice and equality. How much they do or don't succeed will have an enormous impact on the children of the world.

2010 marks 10 years since the promises were made and there are only 5 years left to make them reality. Prayer and practical action are both needed to overcome the spiritual and economic forces behind poverty.

The prayers and background information set out here are designed to help children and adults pray about eight basic issues of poverty outlined in the Millennium Development Goals.

The prayers will culminate on Sunday October 10, 2010 (10.10.10) when 100 million Christians around the globe will pray and promise together to declare God's love for all in desperate need and to take action.

There is a global children's prayer available at www.micah2010.org for schools, family services and kids groups. There is also an all-age prayer for churches.

At the end of this prayer guide, there are some suggestions about activities that will help children think about the MDGs related to their own lives. Please adapt them and use as creatively as you want in the lead-up to 10.10.10

Goal 1

Stop extreme poverty and hunger

Poverty is at the root of many of the problems facing children today. It stops parents from providing the nutritious food their children need, damaging their physical and mental development. It makes families vulnerable to traffickers, who trick them with stories of brighter futures for their children abroad. It limits children's ability to fulfil their potential, by making it impossible for them to go to school.

Poverty drives many families to move to the cities

to work. But conditions are often worse than in the countryside, in overcrowded slums with poor sanitation and housing.

Pray

Pray for the millions of children who do not get enough food to eat and whose families struggle to survive. Ask God to inspire action in our leaders so 500 million people can live more hopeful lives in the next 5 years.

Pray for poor families to understand the risks their children face from traffickers. Help them to know the truth about trafficking. Pray that living conditions in slum areas improve, with governments committed to providing water, electricity and safety. Pray for children to be protected from ending up on the streets, where they face many dangers.

Activity Idea

We all know what it is like to be a bit hungry. But most of us are only hungry for a short time before we have some food. Many children around the world are hungry every day. They never really have enough nutritious food to eat.

If you were hungry every day, what effects would that have on your body and health and mind? When you have your next meal, pray for children who do not have enough to eat.

Goal 2

All children finish primary education

When children go to school, they learn skills like reading, writing and maths which prepare them for adult life. Primary education equips children to earn a living in the future, helping them move away from poverty and subsistence.

Many children miss the opportunity to go to school: 218 million children are engaged in child labour, there are school fees in many poor countries, access to schools is often difficult for children in rural villages and it is hard for some families to keep their children at school for more than a few years. So there is lots to do to make sure that universal primary education is achieved.



Pray

Pray for schools to be set up in rural communities and for resources like books, paper and good training for teachers to be available.

Thank God for the volunteers and churches who work hard in many places to provide schools and preschools.

Thank God that the number of working children is going down, and pray that this trend would continue. Pray for children who do work to be kept safe and treated fairly.

Activity Idea

Ask a child to read aloud about Rowena, Sylvester and Blessing.

Rowena: My name is Rowena. I live in the Philippines. I was very little, about 3 years old, when my big brothers first took me to the garbage dump to collect anything that could be recycled and sold. My Dad is in prison because he stole some things. My brothers and I have never been to school.

Sylvester: My name is Sylvester. I live in Uganda in an area where there is fighting. One day when I was seven, some men snatched me from outside the village and forced me to join a rebel army. We hide and fight. I have not seen my family for three years. I do not go to school.

Blessing: My name is Blessing. I live in South Africa. Both my Mum and Dad died from a dreadful disease called AIDS when I was 10 years old. I have 6 younger brothers and sisters to look after now and there is no time for school.

Discuss together why it might be hard for Rowena, Sylvester and Blessing to get to school.

Next Monday morning if you are fortunate to be getting ready to go to school, please thank God for the opportunity you have and pray that children like Rowena, Sylvester and Blessing will be able to go to school.

Goal 3

Girls and boys have equal treatment and rights

In many cultures, girls don't have the same opportunities as boys. People can assume that they don't need to go to school, as their future role may be in the home rather than the workplace. But whether or not they eventually go out to work, girls need to learn so that they are empowered to make their own decisions, find employment if they choose, and eventually bring up their own children to be healthy and educated. Globally, 20% of primary-aged girls are out of school, compared to 16% of boys - but the difference is far greater in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Boys and girls are equally valuable in God's eyes. The Bible says that "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27).

Pray

Please pray for families and communities around the world to recognise that boys and girls are equally important and to value the role that girls and women play in society.

Pray for all girls to get the chance to go to school, learning skills that will help them be healthy and fulfilled.

Activity Idea

Make a cut-out of a child-shaped outline. In the middle, write "*God created human beings, making them to be like himself. He created them male (boys) and female (girls) and blessed them. Genesis 1:27*". Down one side, write or draw good things about boys. On the other side, write or draw good things about girls.

Pray that you and your friends would always appreciate boys and girls. Thank God for all the aspects of God we see in each other.



Goal 4

Reduce the numbers of children dying

Every day, 27,000 children die because of hunger or preventable disease. Children under five are the most vulnerable, and the goal for 2015 is to reduce their mortality rate by two-thirds. Drinking clean water is vital, as so many diseases can be passed on through contaminated water sources. Having enough healthy food is just as important, as children need good food to grow and develop, and fight off infections. Good medical care can stop minor health problems becoming more serious, and routine vaccinations protect children from measles and other potentially life-threatening diseases. It is wonderful that UNICEF was able to vaccinate 1 million under-5s in Iraq in 2008.

Pray

Pray for the health of little children so that they all reach their fifth birthday. Pray for the simple but important things that can be done to protect children - regular health checks, mosquito nets that can stop malaria, good food to stop malnutrition, education for mums about breastfeeding and clean water to drink.

Thank God that vaccination programs can protect children from diseases like measles.

Activity Idea

Do you have birthday cakes or special birthday foods on your birthday? Every birthday is special but sadly many children around the world die before their fifth birthday. Nearly all these children's lives could be saved with some simple measures. Put five candles on a cake and as you light each candle, pray

1. for children born today that they would grow up healthy and cared for
2. that all children would have someone to care for them and love them
3. Thank God for parents and other adults who care for children. Pray that they would have love, wisdom and resources to be good carers.
4. Pray that children around the world would have the opportunity to grow as Jesus did- to be strong, full of wisdom and blessed by God (Luke 2:40).

Goal 5

Improve health for girls and women who are pregnant

In the poorest parts of the world, mothers frequently die in pregnancy and childbirth. When mothers are unhealthy during pregnancy, their babies can be born underweight and weak. Without a skilled midwife or birth attendant present, babies are much more likely to contract diseases like tetanus at birth, or be harmed during delivery. Last year over 60 million women gave birth without any help from a skilled attendant.

Children who lose their mothers are very vulnerable, often having to take on adult responsibilities too early, caring for siblings and earning money to support themselves. But it does not have to be like this.

Pray

Pray for more midwives to be trained, so that all women can have a skilled attendant with them as they give birth. Pray for communities to value girls and women so they can be healthy in pregnancy. Pray for protection for all children growing up without their parents. Pray that they would find support from their extended families, communities and governments.

Activity Idea

Discuss all the ways mothers love and care for their children. Ask the children to give a "thank you" hug to all the mothers in their school, Sunday school or church. Pray that mothers in all countries would be healthy and have good care when they have babies.





Goal 6

Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

HIV/AIDS affects millions of children around the world. Last year, around 500,000 died of the disease, and already 15 million children have been orphaned by it. A key way to fight the spread of the disease is through education, as many young people are unaware of how it is passed on, and how they can protect themselves.

Babies can be infected with HIV in the womb, during birth or through breastfeeding. Providing the right drugs for HIV-positive mothers can halve the number of babies infected in this way.

Sleeping under insecticide-treated mosquito nets can prevent children contracting malaria, but often these are unavailable or too expensive for families to buy. It is also important to teach families how to recognise malaria's symptoms, and provide the medicine they need to treat children at home.

It is very encouraging that The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and malaria has helped to deliver 88 million insecticide-treated bednets to protect young children from malaria.

Pray

Please pray for an end to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Pray for effective communication and education, and for healthcare which can protect unborn children from the disease. Pray that people living in relatively unaffected parts of the world would not ignore the issue of HIV/AIDS, but help to provide education on prevention and support for people who have the disease. Pray for protective nets to be made accessible to ALL vulnerable families in areas where malaria is common.

Activity Idea

Your church might want to have a lesson for all children and teenagers about HIV/AIDS prevention, so that they know facts about the disease. It is important to be honest with children about the disease.

Please pray for children you know who have lost a mum or dad to HIV/AIDS, that they will be supported by the church and know God's care.

Goal 7

Care for the environment

Poor sanitation and dirty water damage children's health as well as the wider environment. The aim is to halve the number of people worldwide who lack access to basic sanitation and clean water, by 2015. Governments need to address these issues at the national level, through good water treatment schemes and infrastructure like pipes. Local communities can also work together to bring change: hygiene education can promote hand-washing and ways to avoid contamination, and building wells and latrines can have a huge impact on health and quality of life.

Diseases as "harmless" as diarrhoea cause many thousands of deaths amongst children each year, and safe water would prevent these lives being wasted.

Pray

Pray for sanitation to be a priority for governments, particularly in China and India where 1.5 billion people lack adequate facilities. Thank God that levels of access to clean drinking water have improved dramatically since 1990. Give communities confidence to work together on projects.

Pray for protection for families who still have to drink water from unsafe sources, and pray that each of their communities will soon have a local water supply. Pray that all people would value God's creation and care for it.

Activity Idea

God asks us to care for His creation so that children today can enjoy its beauty when they are grown up. Think of 3 different things you and your family can do to look after God's creation eg, use water carefully, plant trees in your community, recycle your rubbish, grow vegetables in your family garden, walk or cycle to school instead of having your parents drive you.



Goal 8

Make fair global rules for development

Governments and international groups have the responsibility to support the most vulnerable people. They can help reduce poverty and hardship in the long-term, making a difference to generations of children as they grow up.

Poor countries are sometime trapped in debt. Reducing or cancelling the debts of the poorest countries often enables these nations to spend money on services for children, like healthcare and education.

Making sure that trade systems are fair is another important role for governments. Good trade rules mean that small poor farmers and businesses can sell more goods and become stronger economically. This brings security for families, job opportunities for young people and more tax income for the governments so they can focus on the needs of their people.

Pray

Please pray for the world's powerful countries to keep their promises to cancel debt. Pray that the money saved will be invested wisely by poorer nations, so that children benefit. Pray for wisdom for national leaders, as they decide on trade and aid policies which will affect the poor. Pray that they would look beyond their own countries' interests and consider the implications for the rest of the world.

Activity Idea

Discuss together what rules the children have in their family, at school, in sport, in their country. Why do we need rules?

Sometimes there are international rules that all countries agree to. Can you think of any? Older children might be able to think of rules about the rights of children, rules about crime and rules about buying and selling things.

We need rules and laws to protect small or weak countries, rules to make sure countries are just and rules to punish greed. Please pray for leaders to make rules and laws that reflect God's justice.



All statistics from UNICEF
(www.unicef.org)

This prayer guide is adapted with kind permission from an MDG prayer guide produced by the Viva Network, an international network of Christian groups working with children at risk. www.viva.org

See also the activities described in the "The Global Children's Prayer", "The BIG Promise" and "The BIG Handover".