

Pray for the World: A New Prayer Resource from Operation World

Available April 2015

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978-0-8308-3686-4

Patrick Johnstone is well known and respected as researcher and author of the first six editions of *Operation World*. Patrick also wrote *The Church Is Bigger Than You Think* and *The Future of the Global Church*. Patrick is married to Robyn, and together they serve as pastors-at-large to the WEC missionaries in Europe.

Patrick Johnstone Reflects on a Half Century of *Operation World*

It was fifty years ago in 1964 that I wrote the first edition of *Operation World*. That first edition has been followed by six subsequent editions. The 2010 edition was the first one after the hand-over to my successors. The first edition was just thirty pages long, but each edition has grown in the quantity of information provided. By the 2010 edition, *Operation World* was almost one thousand pages long and no longer a handbook! Molly Wall and team have courageously tackled the task of preparing a paraphrased edition. We believe this will enable many more to obtain a copy and for this edition to be translated into other languages. The aim is to multiply passionate, informed prayer for the evangelization of our needy world, and for the readying of the church, the bride of Christ, for the soon return of our King Jesus.

I look back over these fifty years with awe and astonishment at all God has done through the prayers of his people. When I went out to Africa in 1962, evangelical Christians were a marginalized minority in the worldwide Church. There had been fifty years of sowing the gospel seed in times of war and difficulty, but the global harvest had not really begun to be reaped. Then followed a further fifty years of astonishing growth. It began first in Africa during the 1960s, then in Latin America in the 1970s, East Asia in the 1990s, and, in recent years, came the first significant people movements to Christ in parts of the Muslim world. Few realize that this was a global awakening of staggering size and extent because it was also a time of stagnation and decline especially in Europe and also in the wider Western world. I believe the massive increase in intercession for the world from Africa, Asia and Latin America is a major factor in this awakening. Evangelical Christianity has moved to center stage in the world of the twenty-first century.

Yet how needed such a book as this is today! There is still much to be done if we are to see the fulfillment of the words of the Lord Jesus that this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world to all nations so that he may return with the global church complete with people from every race, tribe, people and tongue who will worship him. We will never reach every part of humankind unless there is passionate, urgent, Satan-binding prayer to raise up, sustain and enable harvesters to have the right strategies and close walk with Jesus to bring in the lost. This book gives a picture of every country of the world and the state of the church and the lost. May it stimulate much-informed prayer that receives answers!

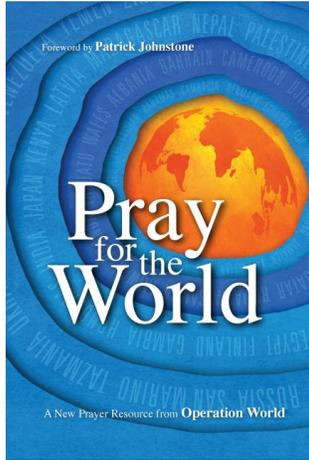
—From the foreword by Patrick Johnstone

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For decades, *Operation World* has been the leading resource for people who want to impact the nations for Christ through prayer. Now the research team of *Operation World* offers *Pray for the World*, an accessible resource to facilitate prayer for the nations even more.

How to Use *Pray for the World*

Pray for the World is a book to be used, not to be filed away on a bookshelf. Keep referring to it. Use it with those you lead or spend time with. You can encourage and inspire others with what God is doing around the world.

For Use in Your Home

Pray for the World gives so many encouragements, and tells of areas where the church has grown incredibly. These can give us hope in our own situations.

1. Pray through the world in a year. The Prayer Calendar gives you a country to pray for every day of the year. When you turn up a country, you can know that you are joining with a large chorus of prayer around the world for that specific country. Perhaps focus on *only one or two* items that the Holy Spirit lays on your heart. Why not mark items covered in prayer, and later you can make note of God's answers?

2. Keep the book near your television, radio, newspaper or computer. When news comes of major events in a far-off land, find out the spiritual situation. Turn secular news into informed spiritual prayer!

3. Use it together with missionary prayer letters, or mission agency magazines and websites. This book will give a wider context and perspective to the stories and updates shared in these valuable resources.

4. Read a small section at family time (devotions, meals, while you travel) and pray for the country of the day.

5. Use the book as a source of fun, informative quiz games. This is a favourite activity of the OW team!

For Use in Your Church

Missions and prayer for the world should be at the heart of every fellowship. Use Pray for the World with all ages, in large and small groups, as often as possible.

1. In a small group, or at a prayer meeting. Read the information on one country ahead of time, and choose just a few pieces of information to share with the others. For example, you might share the population, the largest religion, the number of Christians and one key prayer point.

2. During a worship service. When we pray with others, agreement is powerful! Encourage everyone to appreciate the high value of prayer. It is not a dry duty, but an awesome



privilege. As children of the living God, we can come before him on behalf of the nations of the world, and we can expect to see him act! Give a little background information to set the context, then focus on one key area for prayer.

The Operation

World researchers asked Christian leaders in every country, “How should the body of Christ throughout the world be praying for your country?” Their responses provide the prayer points in this book, with specific ways your prayers can aid the global church.

For more information visit www.operationworld.org.

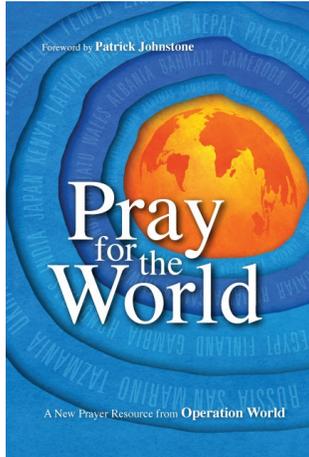
3. In church bulletins and magazines. Use quotes from relevant sections of the book in your church publications to gain interest and stimulate prayer. (Please cite the source!) Make use of maps, pictures, videos and presentation materials that relate to the country.

For Use in Prayer Days, Conferences, Concerts of Prayer, Prayer Journeys and Other Prayer Venues

The original purpose of Operation World was to provide information for prayer conferences that focused on the world. Below are a few guidelines for prayer-session leaders:

- 1. Be brief.** Remember that people are gathered to pray. The aim is not to impress others with information, or to share so much that they feel confused about how to pray.
- 2. Be personal.** We do not mention individuals for prayer in the book, but rather give the overall situation in a country. Personal information on individual workers you know or support and specific situations connected to your prayer group should be used together with *Pray for the World* prayer points.
- 3. Be selective.** Too many facts will be hard to remember. Carefully select just a few items for prayer that will stay with believers long after the meeting.
- 4. Be careful with statistics.** Too many figures make any report very dull! This is why the statistical sections are in a smaller type. Choose the statistics that specifically apply to the prayer items you mention.
- 5. Be dependent on the Holy Spirit.** The burdens imparted by the Holy Spirit inspire others to pray in the Spirit, and move them into God’s will for their lives. This could mean commitment to intercession, financial giving, or going to a particular area or people for which prayer has been made. The Holy Spirit has guided many Christians into specific missionary service as a result of prayer with *Operation World*.

– Taken from the Introduction



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Molly Wall (MEd, Oklahoma City University) is a researcher, editor and program director with Operation World, a ministry of WEC International based near London in the UK. She is one of the principal catalysts and researchers behind the latest edition of *Operation World* and *Pray for the World*, informing Christians worldwide how they can pray for the nations.

An Interview with Molly Wall About Operation World and *Pray for the World*

Why has *Operation World* been such a significant resource over the years?

Molly: The “why” is not ever an easy one to answer when it comes to spiritual matters! What we do know is that as we talk to believers around the world to get information about their country, we encounter many who have engaged with an edition (or multiple editions!) of *Operation World* somewhere along their journey. The OW team began to see that quite to our delight, at least for this season, this resource has been a tool or vehicle through which God speaks. It would seem he calls, guides, challenges, encourages and envisions his followers as they sit down to read about his world—his peoples—and to pray. We have no count, but the number of missionaries, mission leaders, prayer movement leaders and others who name their use of *Operation World* as a key step in directing or even changing their path must be well into the thousands, from all around the world. And as with individuals, so also the impact extended in cases with mission organizations or even Protestant mission-sending movements in countries like Brazil and South Korea.

I think its unifying work is sometimes overlooked but also significant. Believers who may disagree over many issues can join together in prayer for the nations, and find agreement in seeking God’s intervention for a particular need. Even if just our Facebook followers, and those who get the daily emails, all regularly pray that would be tens of thousands of people from all over world agreeing in prayer for a specific country each day of the year. And how many more through the prayer calendar in *Operation World* (in English, and in its translations) and now even more so through *Pray for the World*?

How did *Pray for the World* come about?

Molly: Even before the latest edition of *Operation World* was out the door, we knew we wanted to see this information make its way into the hands of the growing church around the world. Could this prayer handbook have a similar impact, on an even wider scale, if more people had access to it in their own country, or even language? Would we even dare to believe God might use it to fuel the fires of intercession around the globe, and even to give rise to a new wave of global mission?

What is unique about this resource?

Molly: We imagined a smaller prayer handbook—a paraphrased or abridged version of the 2010 edition of *Operation World*. The shorter length, written with simpler English, was designed specifically for non-native English speakers, and for translation, but with the hope it would also appeal to a new audience of native English speakers looking for something simpler and more concise. As a publishing project, OW is large, complex, technical and

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The *Operation World* prayer handbook (now in its 7th edition) is widely regarded as the definitive guide to praying for the world. Operation World is one of only two Christian centers that compile comprehensive statistics on the religions, Christian denominations and mission agencies across the globe. Molly Wall came aboard the Operation World team in 2009 after seven years at the US Center for World Mission in Pasadena, California, where she served as a curriculum developer and researcher.

www.operationworld.org

costly. *Pray for the World* could allow publishing houses around the world to offer a version of OW that was affordable and accessible within their own markets. And those who desire the fuller picture, and more of the core statistical information, can hopefully still find a copy of *Operation World*.

How do you hope people use *Pray for the World*?

Molly: Operation World resources are tools for prayer, more than anything else. Our goal is to help believers come before God in prayer, to see his kingdom advance in every country of the world. Everything else about our work is secondary to this. So, we hope many more thousands or hundreds of thousands will join in following the daily prayer calendar (to pray through the world in a year). We hope pastors and leaders will use it as they lead prayer gathering and meetings, to inform people for focused, specific prayer for the needs of the nations. And given the smaller size, we hope that some people will read it through for an overview of the nations and God's work among them!

We hope it also serves to inform the global church on God's work around the world. In the early church, the apostle Paul and his small team shared the needs of the churches as they traveled from place to place. Believers could rejoice and thank God together for answers to prayer, and also share in the burdens and challenges faced by their brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the region. We see *Pray for the World* as a sort of modern-day means of helping the global body of believers continue to both rejoice together, and to share burdens in prayer for one another. Just as in the early church, we trust that Spirit-guided prayer leads to action and practical helps.