



IJM

**ENCOUNTER
JUSTICE:
A LENT JOURNEY
OF PRAYER**



IJM

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WELCOME

'To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world.' – KARL BARTH

Welcome to Encounter Justice! We're delighted that you have chosen to join us in praying for justice throughout Lent.

As an anti-slavery and anti-violence organization, International Justice Mission (IJM) sees first-hand the brutal reality of injustice around the world. We know how important prayer is and how it can bring light into the darkest places. Right now, 50 million people around the world are trapped in slavery and one in four is a child. Praying for an end to slavery has never been more urgent. That's why our staff dedicate an hour of their working day to prayer every single day.

God is at work powerfully in his world, and he responds to the prayers of his people. We pray to a God of righteousness and justice, who calls us to 'act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly' with him (Micah 6:8).

Praying for justice issues – including the issues of modern-day slavery and violence – can often feel overwhelming, and it can be difficult to know where to start. So, this Lent, we're inviting you to journey alongside Christians across Canada, reflecting together on six prayers in the Bible and how they teach and inspire us to pray – both personally and corporately. And we're excited to see how God will move powerfully in response to the prayers prayed through this resource! A movement of Christians praying for justice is building around the world, and we're delighted to have you join us.

This is a resource for small groups and individuals. Throughout the resource, we will be sharing stories of the real-life outworking of prayer in some of the world's darkest situations, praising God for miraculous breakthrough and answered prayer that IJM has seen around the world. We hope and pray that it will encourage you in your prayers this Lent and beyond.

'Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance. It is laying hold of his willingness.' – MARTIN LUTHER

As a conclusion to this journey, for Holy Week, we've prepared short daily devotionals to be sent straight to your inbox. We anticipate times of deep learning and prayer as we follow Jesus to the cross and into the resurrection.

You can learn more about IJM's work by following us on social media – **@IJMCA**. If your church or small group would like to learn more about IJM's work around the world and how they can partner with us longer term, visit [IJM.ca/lent](https://www.ijm.ca/lent)

Thank you so much for praying for justice with us this Lent – until all are free.

Joash Thomas

Joash Thomas

National Director of Mobilization & Advocacy, IJM Canada

P.S. It's our joy to bless and equip the church in praying for justice this Lent. If you enjoy and are inspired by this resource and would like to contribute by supporting the work of International Justice Mission Canada, please visit [IJM.ca/give/lent](https://www.ijm.ca/give/lent)



INSTRUCTIONS

For Individuals

OUR prayer for YOU is that this resource sparks a fresh view of our Saviour's love in your life. Use a journal for the reflection questions or simply sit in the presence of our loving Father as you contemplate each session.

For Small Group Leaders

We're so grateful to you for taking time to plan, prepare and lead your group in these sessions. We're praying for you, and hope that the notes below will help as you journey through this resource.

Ahead of starting, please briefly introduce your small group to IJM so that they understand why this Lent prayer journey, and the stories included, focus on issues of justice.

Inspired by our Christian faith, IJM is a global organization working to stop slavery and violence – including modern slavery, violence against women and children, and police abuse of power. We work with partners around the world to:



Bring people to safety and support survivors with trauma-informed care.



Bring perpetrators to justice.



Help local law enforcement strengthen justice systems.



Scale our work to protect people from ever experiencing slavery and violence in the first place.

Thanks to the faithful prayer and support of people around the world, we've worked with authorities to bring over **80,000 people** to safety from slavery and violence, and seen slavery reduce by **up to 86%** in places where we've worked.



Instructions for Small Group Leaders Cont.

As you start this journey, we recognize that all small groups are different, so we've deliberately not offered a specific structure for your time together. Instead, we've provided you with a selection of suggested questions: you're welcome to pick and choose which ones to use depending on your group and the amount of time available.

Small groups are a key time to share personal prayer requests, but as you journey together, please also encourage your group members to pray for wider situations as you engage with the resource – we've offered some suggestions to help you do this in an informed way.

To run these sessions, you'll need:

- **This resource**
- **A Bible**
- **A device with an internet connection (optional)**

We'd encourage you to pray to start each session and make everyone aware that some of the IJM stories contain details of people who've been abused. These stories are all clearly indicated, and if these will be difficult for members of your group to hear, please feel free to skip over these questions.

We're praying for you as you lead these studies, and trust that God will work powerfully through your prayers over the coming weeks. We're so grateful for you!



Encourage your small group members to continue your Lent prayer journey together by receiving our daily Holy Week Devotionals direct to their inbox. This is a great way to stay connected in the run up to Easter! Consider creating a group chat through a platform such as WhatsApp to share encouragement, prayers, and reflections.

Your small group can sign up at [IJM.ca/lent](https://ijm.ca/lent) or by scanning the QR code opposite.



MAKING JUSTICE PERSONAL

NEHEMIAH 1:4-11

LEARN:

Although they are separated in our modern Bibles, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah used to be one single book, Ezra-Nehemiah. These books chart the story of the Israelites returning to their land after the exile to Babylon (2 Kings 24-25) to rebuild the temple and the city, and to get right with God.

This prayer is right at the beginning of the Book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah was cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, meaning he was in a position of influence as a companion and confidant of the king. However, this does not mean that approaching the king with a request to leave and go back to his home city – as Nehemiah is about to do in this passage – would have been an easy ask. Nehemiah was likely risking his life by doing this.

But Nehemiah was devastated to hear that the walls of Jerusalem were 'broken down' and its gates 'burned with fire' (v. 3). City walls were incredibly important to keep communities safe, and Jerusalem having no city walls made it very vulnerable to attack. The 'Jewish remnant who had survived the exile' (v. 2) were in danger and when Nehemiah heard news of this, he wept. This is where we begin our reading today.

READ:

NEHEMIAH 1:4-11

INSIGHT: In this passage, Nehemiah is confronted with an issue of injustice which deeply moves him.

Today, injustice is happening all around us, and it touches all of us even if we're not aware of it. Shockingly, many of the everyday products we use here in the Canada have forced labour in their supply chain – everything from clothing to coffee and chocolate.

Nehemiah's response was to pray, which in turn inspired him to act. How do we respond to issues of injustice like slavery in our world today? Read Adhir's story (page 9) and consider how Nehemiah's prayer can inspire your response to what you read.

DISCUSS / JOURNAL:

1. This prayer is a summary of Nehemiah's prayers over the period that he fasted and prayed for.
 - a. If someone were to write a summary of your prayers for the last three months, what would they include? *Only share your answers with the group if you are comfortable to do so.*
 - b. What does this show about you, others, and the world?

SESSION ONE

2. Nehemiah was safe and secure in his position as cupbearer to the king, but when he heard that his people were in danger, he was deeply upset and willing to risk all he had for the sake of his people. It says in v. 4 that Nehemiah, 'sat down and wept' and that he, 'mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven' for 'some days.' Nehemiah made this issue of justice for his people personal to him.
 - a. What are the justice issues in our world today that deeply upset you? How do you feel when reading stories like Adhir's?
 - b. How have you made personal sacrifices to take action on these issues?
If there are no issues that upset you, or that you have found yourself making sacrifices for, perhaps you could pray that God starts to move your heart and draw your attention to issues of justice today.
3. In verses 6b-7, Nehemiah takes the time to confess not only his own sin but his people's sin as well.
 - a. Do you think we should do the same with regards to the sins of others / structural and institutional sins? In a globalized world, how easy / difficult is this?
 - b. Read Adhir's story (overleaf). Global supply chains mean that we often purchase items which may have been produced by people who are trapped in exploitative situations. How should we understand our participation in unjust systems in light of this, and what can we do about it?
4. In v.8, Nehemiah reminds God of his promises to his people. This is something we often see happening in the Psalms as well.
 - a. Do you often pray in a way that seeks to remind God of his past actions and promises? Why/why not?
 - b. What promises might you want to remind God of as you pray for issues of injustice in the world today?
5. What does this prayer teach us about God?
 - a. Is there anything that you find challenging or that raises questions for you?
 - b. Is there anything that encourages you?
6. How can this prayer help us when we pray against dark situations such as modern-day slavery and violence?

PRAY:

As you pray together this evening, try to do so in the style of Nehemiah's prayer:

1. Acknowledge God's character
2. Confess sins – self & others
3. Remind God of his promises relevant to your petition
4. Request

SESSION ONE

ACT:

Read more about Canada's Modern Slavery Act and the steps being taken to address slavery in supply chains: www.ijm.ca/news/canada-modern-slavery-act-becomes-reality.

ADHIR'S STORY

Many of the clothes we wear day-to-day have forced labour in their supply chain. Adhir was exploited in order to make shoe soles in a factory in South Asia.

As you read Adhir's story and become more aware of unjust systems that touch our lives, consider how Nehemiah's response can inspire you.

Adhir grew up in a village in South Asia. When he was 17 years old, a man came to the village promising good job opportunities in a big city. Living in poverty and hopeful of better futures, Adhir and 15 other boys decided to go with him – leaving their village for the first time.

The boys were brought to a shoe sole factory and not allowed to leave. Trapped in slavery, they were forced to work 16-hour days and frequently subjected to violence. Many of the other boys were just 14 years old.

Adhir recounts, *"We worked with rubber soles which had to be dipped in strong and pungent chemicals. All of us lived in a small room within the factory building and there was just nowhere to go."*

As the days turned into weeks, Adhir managed to secretly contact his family on a hidden mobile phone. They in turn contacted a child abuse hotline, and Adhir's case was passed on to IJM's team.

IJM worked with law enforcement, local government, and another local organization to bring the boys to safety from the factory. IJM staff who went on the operation described the facility as "appalling," and "heart-breaking."

One staff member recounts, *"It is still vivid in my memory: Adhir whispering, 'Will you take me from here?'"*

Safely back in his hometown, Adhir and the other boys were able to join a two-year aftercare program supported by IJM, receiving trauma-informed counselling and ongoing training to help them re-enter society. Right from the beginning, Adhir wanted to share his story to prevent others being abused in the future:

"I want to make sure that no one from my village ever falls into that trap again."

Today, Adhir lives a life of which he couldn't have dreamed: he is free from exploitation, has completed his education, and has a stable job in a hospital.

"I have had the opportunity to learn so much from the people I work with and have received so much respect and appreciation, it is overwhelming... My family is so happy with my progress in life."



IN THE BELLY OF THE WHALE

JONAH 1:17-2:10

LEARN:

The Book of Jonah opens with God telling Jonah, a prophet, to go and preach to the people of Nineveh. Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria, who were Israel's enemies. Jonah was told to go and preach against Nineveh's evil, but he didn't want to and so ran away, getting on a boat travelling in the opposite direction.

God sent a storm, and the boat was in great danger of sinking. Eventually (after they cast lots about who was to blame!), Jonah came clean to the sailors that he was the reason for the storm. The sailors repented and threw Jonah overboard. Jonah began to sink, and God sent a fish to come and swallow him, saving him from drowning. It is here that we pick up the story.

READ:

JONAH 1:17-2:10

INSIGHT: In this passage, Jonah is praising God for answering his cries for help when he was about to drown. He prays in desperation for God to rescue him, and God sends a fish to swallow him whole.

God still answers prayers today and brings people out of the most hopeless situations. Ruby* is a survivor of online sexual exploitation, a crime where children are sexually abused for sex offenders to watch online. Unlike Jonah, Ruby found herself in a dark and seemingly hopeless situation through no fault of her own. But, like Jonah, Ruby knows the life-changing power of answered prayer.

Read Ruby's story (page 12) and consider how it can encourage us as we pray in the face of seemingly impossible situations.

DISCUSS / JOURNAL:

1. Share a time when you have seen miraculous answered prayer, like Jonah speaks of in v. 2.
2. Despite many examples of miraculously answered prayer in the Bible and throughout our lives, sometimes we can pray for something for years and it feels like God is not answering.
 - a. How do we come to terms with the difficulty of unanswered prayer?
 - b. How do you think God might be at work even when prayers aren't answered the way we feel they should be or want them to be?

SESSION TWO

3. This prayer is said by Jonah when he is not yet out of danger – he has gone from drowning to being trapped in the belly of a whale.
 - a. Do you ever praise God when he has not yet, or only partially, answered your prayers in the way you hoped?
 - b. How can you continue to pray even amid difficult situations?
4. In v. 8, Jonah speaks of 'worthless idols' and those who cling to them.
 - a. What do you think are 'worthless idols' in today's world to which people might be tempted to cling?
 - b. Which do you find most alluring?
5. What does this prayer teach us about God?
 - a. Is there anything that you find challenging or that raises questions for you?
 - b. Is there anything that encourages you?
6. How can this prayer help us when we pray against dark situations such as modern-day slavery and violence?



PRAY:

Using Ruby's story as a springboard, spend some time in prayer for those who are survivors of online sexual exploitation. Some prayer points are listed below to help you.

- Pray for the ongoing recovery of children who have experienced online abuse.
- Over 1,000 children and young people are now safe thanks to the work of IJM and partners, however online sexual exploitation has a lasting impact. Pray for the ongoing protection of children who have been brought to safety, that they would continue to heal in freedom.
- Pray for survivors of online sexual exploitation who are bravely speaking out to help protect other children. Please pray for survivors like Ruby*, who are now choosing to speak out in media and with governments around the world. Pray that their experiences and expertise help to bring an end to online sexual exploitation.
- Pray for increased engagement from countries like Canada in tackling the growing demand for online sexual exploitation.

SESSION TWO

ACT:

This week at home, listen to [Ruby's podcast](#) (The Fight Of My Life: Finding Ruby) on Spotify, Apple Podcasts or your favourite podcast provider.

RUBY'S STORY

Please note that this story contains descriptions of sexual violence.

Ruby is living proof that God answers prayers today and brings his people out of the darkest situations.

After the death of her parents, Ruby was tricked by traffickers who offered her a job in a computer shop.

But when she arrived, Ruby was trapped and locked up in a house with a guard outside. She was sexually abused live over the internet for sex offenders around the world to watch online.

"Everything told to me by the trafficker was a total lie... I did disgusting shows every night, every day. It was like being trapped in a dark room without any rays of light."

One day she attempted to escape and was threatened with a kitchen knife.

"At that point, I had lost all hope of escape. I felt imprisoned and powerless, without a fight. I cried and prayed the entire night, 'Lord, if you're real, get me out of here!'" Ruby recalls.

The very next day, IJM and local police brought Ruby and five other girls to safety. The traffickers were arrested and eventually sentenced to 15 years in prison.

Ruby is free and safe today. She has experienced so much freedom that she has forgiven the perpetrators – even praying for them at the back of the courtroom after their conviction.

Now Ruby is a survivor leader. Since 2017, Ruby has been interviewed by local and international media where her advocacy to end the online sexual exploitation of children is heard and amplified.

She received the 2021 Women of the Future Award South-East Asia, and in 2022, IJM released a [six-part podcast series](#) telling her powerful story.

"I am a living testimony of God's immeasurable love. Indeed, we have a great God who is able to turn each of our painful stories into powerful testimonies. [...] Every time I share my story, it empowers me," said Ruby.



Share this experience with others in your small group or church family by encouraging them to join you in prayer with our daily Holy Week Devotionals direct to their inboxes. Visit [IJM.ca/lent](https://www.ijm.ca/lent) or scan the QR code to sign up now.



THE MAGNIFICAT

LUKE 1:46-55

LEARN:

This is one of the most famous songs in Christian history, sung by Mary about her pregnancy and the coming of Jesus as the Messiah. It takes place right after Mary meets Elizabeth her cousin (mother of John the Baptist) and Elizabeth feels John, 'leap for joy' in her womb (Luke 1:44). Prior to this, Mary had been visited by the angel Gabriel who had told her she would bear a son, 'called the Son of God' (1:35).

This song contains many references to the Old Testament Psalms and prophetic writings, as well as the history of the Jewish people, which shows that Mary was very familiar with the scriptures. There are themes of, 'mercy, hope, fulfilment, reversal, revolution, victory over evil, and of God coming to the rescue at last' (Tom Wright, Luke for Everyone).

READ:

LUKE 1:46-55

INSIGHT: In this passage, Mary is a first-hand witness to God doing the impossible, and her immediate response is a hope-filled prayer for the future, as well as a prayer of deep thankfulness for God's past actions.

One of the reasons that Mary – and Christians today – can hope in God's promises of restoration and justice being fulfilled is because of his past actions and faithfulness. This song, for example, contains lots of examples of how God's actions have changed situations for those who are downtrodden, hungry, and living in poverty.

When considering difficult or impossible situations, how can we use God's actions in the past – like IJM's work in the Dominican Republic (detailed on page 14) – to fuel our prayers for similar outcomes in the future?



DISCUSS / JOURNAL:

1. When was the last time you, or someone you know, celebrated wildly? What had caused that celebration?
2. How many of Mary's declarations do you see as having already happened, and how many do you think are still to come?
3. In verses 51-53, Mary declares some bold things about the status quo, and people's place in the world.
 - a. What is your response to these?
 - b. Are they fair? Why/why not?
 - c. Do you long for a world like this? Why/why not?

SESSION THREE

4. Mary's prayer is a prayer of thanks to God for his marvellous deeds in history and in her own life.
 - a. Do you find it easy or difficult to remember to thank and glorify God for the marvellous deeds he's performed in your life, community, and the world? Why?
5. What do these prayers teach us about God?
 - a. Is there anything that you find challenging or that raises questions for you?
 - b. Is there anything that encourages you?
6. How can this prayer help us when we pray into dark situations such as modern-day slavery and violence?

PRAY:

Spend some time praising God for making the impossible possible. We've included some recent, ground-breaking results from IJM's work in the Dominican Republic (below) to remind you that nothing is impossible for God.

ACT:

Watch [this short video \(ijm.ca/jewelleryrescue\)](https://ijm.ca/jewelleryrescue) of survivors of slavery in South Asia celebrating that they are free to go home.

GOD AT WORK IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Please note that this story contains descriptions of sexual violence.

IJM has seen a miraculous 78% reduction in the prevalence of commercial sexual exploitation of children in Dominican Republic.

Back in 2014, sex trafficking of children in the Dominican Republic was a rampant crime. One in 10 people trapped in exploitation were children.

In collaboration with local authorities, IJM started out by focusing on bringing children to safety and supporting survivors to heal, ensuring perpetrators were held accountable for their crimes, and strengthening local governments to investigate and prosecute those cases.

Fast forward to 2019: IJM shifted its focus to strengthening the local justice system and its capacity to deliver justice independently, to enable lasting change.

Thanks to years of persistent work and faithful prayers, we've now seen the overall prevalence of commercial sexual exploitation of children **reduce from 10% in 2014 to 2.2% in 2022** – an incredible 78% reduction.

This remarkable change means that children won't ever have to experience the horror of sexual exploitation

SESSION THREE

that Liana* suffered. Liana's mother forced her to meet men who abused her. When Liana tried to refuse, her mom threatened to kill her.

Liana was brought to a safe house run by IJM partners. IJM's aftercare team provided Liana with counselling and trauma-focused therapy, and she began a long journey of healing.

When the woman was arrested, IJM's legal team took Liana's case and worked with local prosecutors to put the traffickers on trial. Liana's mother was eventually sentenced to 15 years in prison.

"With therapy, I've been able to overcome what happened to me," Liana says confidently. ***"I think I have a big future ahead of me."***



THE LORD'S PRAYER

MATTHEW 6:5-13

LEARN:

This passage comes in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) – a sermon Jesus gave on the side of a mountain to his disciples and the gathered crowds. It is probably the first big bit of teaching that Jesus gave in his ministry, and it covers a variety of topics, including (but not limited to) loving your enemies, divorce and remarriage, false prophets, and not worrying.

The Sermon on the Mount is about Jesus announcing God's kingdom, what it's going to look like, and how to live in it. It presents an upside-down kingdom of repentance and family, showing people how to love God, love one another, and love their enemies. Jesus makes it clear that he is not about to overthrow the teaching of the Torah (Jewish laws) but instead to fulfil it through his life and teachings. It's full of plenty of challenging teaching, some more difficult to follow than the rest!

This section on prayer comes between Jesus' teaching on giving to those who are in need, and how to fast.

READ:

MATTHEW 6:5-13

INSIGHT: This passage encourages us to pray for God's kingdom to come and his will to be done here on earth. What does God's kingdom look like? What is God's will? Jesus' ministry in the gospels gives us an answer to these questions, and Jesus himself said that he comes to, 'proclaim good news to the poor, freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, and to set the oppressed free' (Luke 4:18-19). To pray for God's kingdom to come is to pray for all these things to occur.

But in the face of evil – the thing that we pray to be delivered from in v. 13 – this can seem complicated. How can we do this? Angela's story (on page 18) is one example of someone being delivered from an evil situation, and God's will being done on earth.

When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we are praying for people like Angela around the world, and we know that change is possible because of the power of God.

SESSION FOUR



DISCUSS / JOURNAL:

1. Which parts of the Lord's Prayer do you find hardest to pray or understand? Why do you think that is?
2. In v. 8, Jesus says that 'your Father knows what you need before you ask him'.
 - a. Why do you think it's still important for us to pray?
 - b. How can this knowledge help us in our prayers?
3. When we pray for God's kingdom to come (v. 8), what do you think it is that we are praying for?
4. We are told by Jesus to pray for God's will to be done (v. 8).
 - a. What does God tell us his will is? Some passages you might find helpful to help you understand this are listed below:
 - Exodus 20:1-17
 - Amos 5:21-27
 - Micah 6:8
 - James 1:27
 - b. How might that understanding of what God's will is inform our actions today?
5. In v. 13, Jesus teaches us to pray that we might be 'delivered from the evil one'. Where do you see 'evil' in the world today?
 - a. With that in mind, what might it look like to be 'delivered from the evil one'?
 - b. How do IJM stories such as Angela's (overleaf) help us understand the presence of 'evil' in the world, and God's deliverance from it?
6. How can this prayer help us when we pray about dark situations such as modern-day slavery and violence?



PRAY:

Consider v. 13, which prays that we would be 'delivered from the evil one'. Spend some time praying God's protection over those who are vulnerable to exploitation, and for freedom for those who are currently in situations of abuse.



ACT:

If you'd like to receive regular stories and prayer points from IJM to help you pray for God's kingdom to come, sign up to receive our prayer emails at www.ijm.ca/get-updates.

ANGELA'S STORY

Please note that this story contains references to sexual violence.

Angela's story is an example of the presence of evil in the world today. As you read her story, consider how you can pray against the evil of sex trafficking and how you can help bring light into the darkest places.

When Angela* married young, she never thought she'd find herself trapped in an abusive relationship.

But the abuse she suffered from her husband led Angela to become desperate for a better life. When she began speaking to a man called Robert* online, who said he really cared about her, he seemed like her way out of her abusive marriage.

Robert promised Angela that he loved her and wanted to marry her. He asked her to move to London with him, where he said they would both work and live with his sister for a while.

Angela trusted Robert and went with him to the UK. But when they arrived, Angela realised Robert was not who he said he was. She was taken to a house where she was forced into commercial sexual exploitation.

Angela was alone in a foreign country, trapped with a man who had betrayed her and was now exploiting her for money. She decided she had to escape.

One day, Angela took her chance to jump from a balcony into the yard below, where she climbed a fence and made it to a main street.

Afraid and desperate for help, she asked passers-by to call the police. When they arrived, the police took her into safe custody. Angela bravely provided descriptions that helped them arrest the suspect.

Since then, Angela has returned home to Romania. IJM – and her local church community have supported her with housing, heating, food and therapy sessions to help her heal from the past.

Don't forget to encourage your small group members or church family to sign up to receive daily Holy Week Devotionals direct to their inbox. Visit [IJM.ca/lent](https://www.ijm.ca/lent) or scan the QR code now.



DREAMING DREAMS

DANIEL 2:17-23

LEARN:

The Book of Daniel takes place after Babylon's first attack on Jerusalem (2 Kings 24), where a group of young Israelite men 'from the royal family and the nobility' (Daniel 1:3) were taken back to Babylon to serve in the king's palace. Daniel – along with his three friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah – are among them. In Daniel 1, we read of Daniel and his friends adjusting to their new situation and setting themselves apart from others by refusing to eat food from the king's table.

Chapter 2 begins with King Nebuchadnezzar having a dream which greatly distresses him, and demanding that his 'magicians, enchanter, sorcerers, and astrologers' (v. 2) not only tell him the meaning of his dream but the content of the dream itself. Obviously, this is impossible, but Nebuchadnezzar gets so angry that they can't do it that he orders the execution of all his wise men – including Daniel and his friends. Daniel then goes to the king and asks him for more time, so that he can interpret the dream himself. Nebuchadnezzar agrees. It is here that we pick up the story.

READ:

DANIEL 2:17-23

INSIGHT: Daniel's prayer in this passage reveals some deep truths about God's sovereignty, and how he sees and knows all that goes on in the world – even those things that are hidden in darkness. This is a reason for Daniel to praise God, as God chooses to reveal the secrets of Nebuchadnezzar's dream to Daniel.

Often, issues of injustice and violence happen in secret and darkness. Abusers, like the man in Jaki's story (page 21), threaten their victims to keep the abuse hidden. God calls his people to help bring these issues into the light so that justice can reign.

How can an understanding that God already knows what lies in darkness, and that contained within him is light, encourage us in our prayers about these dark issues?

DISCUSS / JOURNAL:

1. When faced with a difficult situation, Daniel's first response is to ask his friends to pray with/for him. How often do you ask friends to pray with and/or for you? Why?

SESSION FIVE

2. When Daniel's prayer is answered, what is the first thing he does?
 - a. How often is this your first response when God answers prayers?
 - b. Does this change if there is more of a time-pressure?
3. 'The test of our spirituality does not lie only in the fervency of our prayers in times of crisis, but in the wholeheartedness of our worship when God acts in grace. [...] Relief unaccompanied by worship is never an adequate response to the mercies of God.' – Sinclair Ferguson, *The Preacher's Commentary Vol 21: Daniel*
 - a. Do you agree with this statement? Why/why not?
4. What does this prayer teach us about God?
 - a. Is there anything that you find challenging or that raises questions for you?
 - b. Is there anything that encourages you?
5. Read Jaki's story (overleaf). In v. 22, it says that God, 'reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him'. When you consider the darkness of modern-day slavery and violence, and especially Jaki's story, how does this verse encourage or challenge you?
6. How can this prayer help us when we pray for dark situations such as modern-day slavery and violence?

ACT:

Learn more about Jakelin's resilience and courage in overcoming the effects of sexual abuse.

www.ijm.ca/stories/jakelin. Please note that it contains descriptions of sexual violence.

PRAY:

Spend some time in prayer for Jaki and other survivor leaders of the [Global Survivor Network \(globalsurvivornetwork.org\)](http://globalsurvivornetwork.org) who are working to influence authorities to see an end to slavery and violence. Pray that as more survivors join local survivor networks, they would be empowered in the movement to stop violence and protect people in their communities and around the world.

Don't forget to encourage your small group members to sign up to receive daily Holy Week Devotionals direct to their inbox. Visit IJM.ca/lent or scan the QR code now.



JAKI'S STORY

Please note that this story contains descriptions of sexual violence.

Jaki experienced some of the greatest darkness a child can experience. But once the abuse was brought into the light, Jaki was able to obtain justice and begin fulfilling her dreams.

When Jakelin was a child, living at home in Guatemala, she was abused by the very person who was meant to look after her – her father.

For years, Jakelin suffered repeated sexual assaults in silence, afraid of what would happen if she told anyone what he was doing to her.

But one night, Jaki's mother discovered the truth. Together, they fled their home to seek refuge in a church.

Despite their fear, Jakelin and her mom wanted to fight for justice. Their case was referred to IJM, who walked alongside them throughout the legal process for over a year.

With IJM's support, Jaki found the strength to testify in court and to break the silence she had suffered in for so long. Her bravery led to justice – the abuser was sentenced to eight years in prison.

"Because of the help we received we aren't stuck in the past. We are able to move forward," Jaki said. "I feel good to be who I am. I don't have to hide behind anyone."

Today, Jaki is passionate about helping other survivors fight for justice. In 2019, Jaki became a founding member and a leader of the Global Survivor Network, a group of survivors shaping and leading the movement to protect people from slavery and violence.

And in 2020, she enrolled in law school, motivated by her desire to show that justice is possible for others like her.



PAUL'S PRAYER

EPHESIANS 1:3-23

LEARN:

The Book of Ephesians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church in the city of Ephesus. You can read about Paul's time and ministry in Ephesus in Acts 19. Ephesus was a huge and influential city where plenty of Greek and Roman gods were worshipped, but whilst Paul was there many people became Christians. These are the people to whom Paul is writing this letter, some years later, whilst he is in prison.

The first half of Ephesians is about the gospel story, and this prayer – which in the original Greek consists of one long sentence! – is written in the form of a doxology, a liturgical form of praise to God. It tells the overarching story of the gospel, covering topics such as God's sovereignty, our adoption as Christians, God's power and love, Jesus' kingship, and the Holy Spirit as a down payment for God's future promises.

The prayer has a lot of content – some of it quite theologically complicated! – but it perhaps makes the most sense if you consider the words of the prayer spilling out of Paul's mouth in praise, and then being transcribed as one long sentence. When you read it as a group, consider getting one person to do just that.

READ:

EPHESIANS 1:3-23

INSIGHT: This beautiful prayer from Paul for the Ephesians is an expression of Paul's delight in the truth of the gospel, and how it inspires hope and faith-filled action in those who believe. It also expresses the kingship of Jesus over all things, and his 'incomparably great power for all who believe'. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is 'for us who believe'!

We can often feel small and powerless in the face of systemic injustice and powerful oppressors, like David Makara did when he was shot by Kenyan police officers and accused of a crime he didn't commit (read David's story on page 24). But when we pray, we're praying to a God who ultimately holds all power and has done remarkable things in the lives of many – including David. We know that we can pray in the power of the Spirit, to King Jesus, with hope and faith.

As we conclude our sessions on praying for justice, how can the truths included in this passage encourage and equip you in your prayers in the future?





DISCUSS / JOURNAL:

1. The book of Ephesians was written whilst Paul was in prison. (How) does knowing this change your reading of this prayer?
2. Look at the use of the word 'power' in this passage, particularly in v. 19. Power is one of the great themes in the book of Ephesians, and Ephesus itself was seen as a place of great power at the time Paul was writing.
 - a. What is your response to power generally? Do you like the idea of having power, or does it scare you?
 - b. Read David Makara's story (overleaf). What is your response to this abuse of power by the police? How do you think God feels about this?
3. How do you think God's 'incomparably great power for us who believe' works itself out in our lives today?
 - a. Gary Haugen, founder & global CEO of IJM, says that 'fundamentally, justice has to do with the exercise of power. To say that God is a God of justice is to say that he cares about the right exercise of power or authority. God is the ultimate power and authority in the universe, so justice occurs when power and authority is exercised in conformity with his standards'. Do you agree? Why/why not?
4. In v. 22, Paul says that 'God placed all things under his [Jesus] feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.' This is an encouraging sentiment, but one which can often feel distant and hard to grasp. How can we understand and be encouraged by this in the light of the world's brokenness?
5. What does this prayer teach us about God?
 - a. Is there anything that you find challenging or that raises questions for you?
 - b. Is there anything that encourages you?
6. How can this prayer help us when we pray against dark situations such as police abuse of power and violence?



PRAY:

Read the passage through again, aloud, as a group. After a time of silence, spend time saying short, one-sentence prayers of thanks to the God who has 'blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ'.

SESSION SIX

ACT:

Continue journeying in prayer with IJM for the coming months by signing up to receive our weekly prayer emails at www.ijm.ca/get-updates.

DAVID MAKARA'S STORY

David knows the terrible effects of the abuse of power – but also the ultimate power of God.

After a drunk gang of Kenyan police officers shot him and left him for dead, David managed to drag himself across the street to a hospital where he collapsed and lost consciousness.

He remembers thinking, *“I was afraid I would die in the dark.”*

Doctors and nurses stopped the bleeding and saved David's life – but only after amputating his right hand.

When the police officers who had attacked him realised that David was still alive, they burst into the hospital, threatened the staff, handcuffed David to his bed, and charged him with a violent crime that he did not commit which could have put him in prison for life.

David thought there was no hope for his future. But with the tireless support of IJM's lawyers, the charges were dropped, he was released from prison and the police officers were arrested instead.

Inspired by the help he received from IJM and the desire God had placed on his heart to help others, David studied law and now runs his own law practice, representing people in marginalized communities. Today, he also stands alongside other survivor leaders in the Global Survivor Network, advocating for all to be safe from violence.

“I can now use my freedom to do something about such pains that are still existing in people's hearts.”



DAILY DEVOTIONALS FOR HOLY WEEK

We've loved journeying with you and your small group this Lent. For Holy Week, we will be turning our focus to personal prayer. If you'd to share the experience with others, encourage your group members or church family to sign up for Holy Week Devotionals direct to their inboxes from Palm Sunday onwards:

IJM.ca/lent.

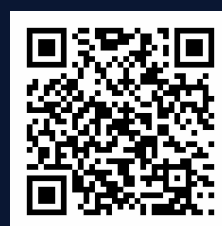


THANK YOU!

Thank you for joining us this Lent as together we've joined in prayer for justice around the world. We're so grateful for your ongoing support; we hope and pray that this resource has equipped and inspired you in your prayers.



If you've enjoyed this resource and been inspired by the work of International Justice Mission, we'd like to invite you to support us financially. You can do so by visiting IJM.ca/give/lent or scanning the QR code opposite.



Thank for praying and journeying with us, until all are free.

The IJM Canada team

GO DEEPER WITH IJM

- Find out how your church or small group can partner with us at www.ijm.ca/get-involved/churches
- Follow us on social media: @IJMCA
- Continue to pray for justice with IJM's weekly prayer emails: www.ijm.ca/get-updates



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INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION is a global organization that protects people in poverty from violence. IJM partners with local authorities to combat slavery, violence against women and children, and police abuse of power. IJM works to bring people to safety and support survivors with trauma-informed care, hold perpetrators accountable, and help strengthen public justice systems so that people are protected from ever experiencing slavery and violence in the first place. IJM has 40 offices across 27 countries worldwide.

Learn more at IJM.ca.

** To protect survivors, we have included photos that do not depict actual victims where appropriate. Consent gathered for all images.*

All Bible references from New International Version.