

International Women's Day: How to Pray for Women Around the World

Today is International Women's Day, according to the United Nations, and the theme is "A promise is a promise: It's time for action to end violence against women." The U.N. estimates that 200 million women around the world are missing because of 'gendercide,' the practice of aborting baby girls. More than 50,000 female children are aborted every day in Asia, according to Gospel for Asia (GFA).

There are many Christian organizations reaching out to women in need, including Gospel for Asia, Project Mordecai (led by *Charisma* columnist J. Lee Grady), Project Lydia, a program founded by missionaries Cliff and Julie Pash, to name just a few. While the U.N. is highlighting the plight of women today, here are some specific ways we can pray for women around the world.

Pray for Justice

"Because of their subjection to violence at the hands of men, and endurance of inhumane treatment with impunity, many women in these cultures are not willing to go public about it," said K. P. Yohannan, founder and president of Gospel for Asia. "This makes it more urgent for us to reach out to these suffering people with hope and freedom."

"Women Reaching Women" is Gospel for Asia's answer to the dilemma, sending women missionaries to minister to women in India's most unreached areas—villages, slums and leprosy colonies. "In the heart of this culture, women missionaries are taking hope to desperate, abused and lonely women through literacy programs, childcare information and basic medical education," said Yohannan. "In all of this, mercy and love are

paramount motivations.”

Ministry to widows is increasing through “Women Reaching Women.” In a society where widows are often blamed for the death of their husbands—regardless of the actual cause of death—many of them are abandoned, turned out of their homes and even murdered.

Women missionaries are dealing with widows living on the footpaths of busy streets or beneath overpasses, equipping them with tailoring skills and sewing machines or simple vegetable carts to provide a means of making a living, all supported by GFA donors.

“The best way to minister to women in India is through other women,” said Kristi Olson, Minneapolis-based success strategist for women in business, and one of GFA’s newest “Women Reaching Women” ambassadors. “It’s such a privilege for us to speak for those who have no voice and to raise awareness of these dedicated women missionaries on this International Women’s Day.”

In Uganda, many women are left as widows when their husbands die from tuberculosis or AIDS; or are abandoned by husbands who leave them for younger women. Most of these women are left with children and no money to take care of them. The Pashes’ ministry, Project Lydia, has helped provide financial support for these women.

Pray that God would “Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy; free them from the hand of the wicked” (Ps. 82:3-4). Pray for governments to respond to the needs of widows and orphans in their land; and for God to deliver the weak and the needy from the hand of wicked leaders.

Pray for the Abuse to End

J. Lee Grady founded the Mordecai Project to confront all forms of abuse, including domestic violence, female

infanticide, denial of education to girls, forced prostitution and sex trafficking, female genital mutilation, mistreatment of widows and honor killings. He has mounted a crusade to empower women to discover their God-given spiritual gifts and ministries, and he also informs and educates the church about the plight of women around the world.

In his column, "Why We Must Confront the Global Abuse of Women," Grady reminded us of the widespread acceptance of abuse and mistreatment of women.

- Between 25 to 50 percent of all women in the world have been abused by their intimate partners. From 40 to 70 percent of all female murder victims worldwide are killed by an intimate partner. (In the U.S., where domestic cruelty is illegal and police protection is available, 25 percent of women have suffered some form of domestic violence.)
- Cruelty to women is rampant in the Middle East, where women are forced to veil themselves, forbidden to drive and banned from walking alone. In Pakistan, angry husbands are known to throw acid in their wives' faces—causing permanent disfigurement. In Syria, Jordan and Iran, women who dare to disagree with their husbands become victims of "honor killings."
- In many parts of the world, girls are denied education because they are viewed as inferior. There were 185 documented attacks on schools and hospitals last year in Afghanistan, all attributed to Taliban extremists who oppose the education of girls.
- Mistreatment of women is widespread in Africa, where widows are legally displaced by their families and left with no protection. Hundreds of thousands of girls in Uganda, Kenya, Somalia, Malawi and other nations are butchered sexually in a barbaric practice known as female genital mutilation. And in South Africa, girls as young as 12 are sold as "wives" to older men who have

the AIDS virus. (The men believe that having sex with a virgin will cure them of the disease.)

- Injustice against women is horribly cruel in Asia, where millions of girls are aborted or abandoned at birth because of their gender. If they are fortunate enough to survive their earliest years, they can become child brides at the age of nine or 10. Millions of girls in Asian countries, some as young as six, are illegally trafficked all over the world. The price for their sexual favors can be as low as 50 cents.

Pray that God would stop the abuse through us! Pray that the church would be the voice for the voiceless in these nations. And pray for provision for the organizations that have taken on this cause so close to God's heart.

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