

BGR Seven Day Prayer Guide for HIV/AIDS

Those living with HIV/AIDS deal with humiliation, secrecy, isolation and death on a daily basis. One who works among these hurting people in South Africa said that poverty is their friend and death is their neighbor. What sad words! 42 million people are currently infected with HIV; another 14,000 people become infected every day. That is reason enough to pray.

Because we are people of faith, we are called to create an environment of hope, concern, and care for people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. This prayer guide has been written to increase our understanding and compassion for people suffering with HIV/AIDS. It is written to remind us of our responsibility to keep them in our prayers.

Interspersed with the guides for prayer will be facts about HIV/AIDS and how it is affecting the world. Some myths about HIV/AIDS will also be listed. **WORLD AIDS DAY is December 1.** Will you commit to pray through this guide during the holiday season? Will you pray for hope, for healing, and for a cure? Will you ask God to put an end to shame and prejudice? Will you pray for justice to ease the conditions of hunger and poverty that encourage the spread of this deadly disease?

This prayer guide is designed to be used in correlation with the packing of BGR In-Home Care Kits. As your church or group buys, gathers, and packs the buckets, it can be used to direct specific prayers concerning items in the buckets. Please feel free to copy any portion of this prayer guide as the need arises.

REASON TO PRAY: 28 million people have died from AIDS since the epidemic started; another 8,000 die every day!

MYTH: HIV/AIDS is mostly a disease of homosexual men.

FACT: HIV/AIDS is primarily spread by heterosexual sex. HIV/AIDS now infects as many women as men worldwide.

"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for everyone: for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." 1 Timothy 2: 1, 2

DAY ONE:

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) causes AIDS. It gradually destroys certain blood cells that are important to the immune system. People may have HIV for long periods of time before significant damage is done to their immune systems and for AIDS to develop.

AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) is that condition at the ending phase of the HIV infection in which an individual's immune system is so deteriorated that various infections and cancers are easily allowed to enter the body.

BGR has chosen a 5 gallon plastic bucket to house the contents of the IN-Home Care Kit. Why is the bucket so important? It is a uniform way for BGR to ship the items. All of the buckets being the same size and color (white) make it easier to pass through customs.

Once the bucket is distributed, it can be used:

- for storage of the contents or other personal items away from inclement weather
- to store food away from rodents and insects
- to carry and store clean water
- for washing clothes or for bathing
- as a place to sit

Prayer Points: These buckets will be delivered in appropriate ways to those in need. Will you pray for the ones delivering the buckets? Ask God to give them an extra measure of grace as they walk into difficult situations and face the stagnant smell of inevitable death. Pray for the ones receiving the buckets. Pray that the items in the bucket will be used in ways that will best minister to them. Pray for those who are giving their time and energy to care for the sick ones. Pray that they would not grow weary of doing good.

REASON TO PRAY: 15 million children have been orphaned due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic; another 6,000 are orphaned each day.

MYTH: HIV/AIDS is mostly an African problem.

FACT: Found in every country in the world, HIV infections are growing most rapidly in countries outside of Africa, including India and Russia.

“Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth! Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains! For the LORD has comforted His people and will have compassion on His afflicted.” Isaiah 49:13

DAY TWO:

HIV/AIDS is one of the world’s most deadly communicable diseases. Overtaking malaria, it has become the number one killer in Africa. Many patients have fallen victim to discrimination because of how it is spread. It has also led to the creation of many organizations which have helped the world understand about sexual health and gender relations.

Some people with HIV experience a flu-like illness lasting a few weeks at the time of initial infection. This illness goes away on its own. Next comes a period of time during which the individual is well and may not have any more symptoms for years. Eventually, HIV overcomes the body’s immune defenses and symptoms begin to occur.

Prayer Points: There are several items in the BGR In Home Care Kit that will provide comfort for those in the last stages of AIDS. Sheets and towels must be scrubbed effectively to eliminate germs. A SCRUB BRUSH will help make this chore much simpler. Pray that as the linens are washed and scrubbed clean, God will bring His cleansing to the patient and the whole household. LATEX GLOVES will not only protect the patient but will also protect the caregiver. As the caretaker puts on these gloves, ask God to allow him/her to be HIS HANDS. Pray that the patient will sense God’s hands of comfort and compassion on him/her in this time of need.

REASON TO PRAY: 25 million children will be orphans by 2010 because of AIDS. Africa has 12 million AIDS orphans.

MYTH: HIV/AIDS spreads mostly because of poor moral choices.

FACT: Women are often infected by their husbands. Children most often contract HIV by being born to HIV+ mothers.

"For the needy will not always be forgotten, nor the hope of the afflicted perish forever." Psalm 9:18

DAY THREE:

What are the long-term effects of HIV? When the body's immune system is no longer able to defend against HIV, the individual may contract any number of infections, such as tuberculosis, pneumonia, fungal and yeast infections, and intestinal infections. Several types of cancer can also occur at this stage.

Prayer Points: Sores develop in the mouth that makes swallowing difficult. This causes the lips to dry out. There can also be sores on the lips. LIP BALM has been included to help bring some relief. Will you pray that the one using the lip balm will also discover the Balm of Gilead that can bring eternal comfort? Skin rashes or flaky skin may also appear. PETROLEUM JELLY acts as a barrier, keeping dirt and germs out of the affected area. It can also be used as a skin moisturizer. Will you pray for the one who will use this item? Pray that as the petroleum jelly is applied, it will be a soothing solace to the sick one. Ask God to use this item as a barrier to keep out opportunistic infections.

REASON TO PRAY: 2.9 million people died from AIDS last year; nearly half a million were children under the age of 15.

MYTH: Plenty of money is being spent on fighting HIV/AIDS.

FACT: While a great deal of money is being spent by governments, private organizations, and individuals to fight HIV/AIDS, much more is needed.

"I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted and justice for the poor." Psalm 140:12

DAY FOUR:

No treatment has yet been found that can eliminate HIV infection or cure AIDS. Antiviral medications have been introduced which can reduce the amount of HIV in a person's system and postpone the onset of AIDS. The antiviral medications used to treat HIV are very expensive, and some strains of HIV have become resistant to them.

Prayer Points: Clipping the nails can be difficult. NAIL CLIPPERS can be used by the caregiver to clip the nails of the sick one. Will you pray for that God would give the caregiver increased patience and compassion, as well as a large portion of kindness? TOOTHBRUSHES and TOOTHPASTE are basic

things that can bring a sense of freshness to the patient. Pray that the caregiver will be gentle, especially since the mouth may be full of sores.

REASON TO PRAY: 4.8 million people were newly infected with HIV last year. That's 14,000 a day!

MYTH: Antiretroviral medications (ARVs) are widely available.

FACT: While ARVs are becoming more available, they are still difficult to find in many rural areas and in some countries. Both drugs and systems to distribute them are needed in many poor countries.

"If you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry, and satisfy the needs of the oppressed then your light will rise in the darkness." Isaiah 58:10

DAY FIVE:

AIDS is the biggest threat to Africa's development. The reason is the large numbers of people in key roles who are dying: teachers, farmers, health-workers, and young professionals. Sub-Saharan Africa is by far the region most affected by HIV/AIDS. Over a five-year period, 53% of staff illness in Ethiopian firms was AIDS-related. In Burkina Faso, 20% of rural families have cut back their farming activities because of AIDS. The UN says that school enrolment in Swaziland has fallen 36% due to AIDS, largely because girls are frequently taken out of the classroom to care for sick relatives. 12% of that country's teachers are infected with AIDS. 70,000 new teachers will be needed by 2010 to replace sick and dying instructors.

Prayer Points: Cleanliness and sanitation are important in controlling conditions which increase symptoms of AIDS. WASH CLOTHS and a BATH TOWEL can make this job easier. Pray that as the patient is bathed, he/she will sense the cleansing in a deeper way. Diarrhea can be one of the most difficult symptoms to cope with. A VINYL MATTRESS PROTECTOR can shield the mattress from body fluids. Fresh BED LINENS can bring much comfort to irritated skin or feverish bodies. Pray for the protection of the patient – from infections and depression. Pray for the protection of the family during these difficult days. Pray for the protection of the caretaker as he/she gives care to the patient.

REASON TO PRAY: 70 million deaths from AIDS are estimated in the next 20 years!

MYTH: A cure exists for HIV/AIDS.

FACT: While there are treatments to prolong life, there is no cure. Many scientists are working on a cure but few believe there will ever be one way to effectively cure someone because the virus constantly changes.

"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8

DAY SIX:

Sub-Saharan Africa is more heavily affected by HIV and AIDS than any other region of the world. Since the beginning of the epidemic more than 14 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS. In the absence of massively expanded prevention, treatment and care efforts, it is expected that the AIDS death toll will continue to rise. Sub-Saharan Africa faces a triple challenge:

- Providing health care, antiretroviral treatment, and support to a growing population of people with HIV-related illnesses.
- Reducing the annual toll of new HIV infections by enabling individuals to protect themselves and others.
- Coping with the impact of over 20 million AIDS deaths, affecting orphans and other survivors, communities, and national development.

Prayer Points: As you finalize your buckets, pray that the one who is ill would be encouraged through your generous gift. Pray that their pain and suffering would be much less because of the items you have provided for them.

One 20 foot shipping container can hold approximately 720 In-Home Care Kits. As containers are filled they will be shipped to various countries to be distributed by local partners in appropriate ways. Pray that your kits will travel well from the USA to their destinations with no problems or delays in customs. Pray that as each container arrives, its contents will be delivered efficiently and that they will reach the most needed areas.

REASON TO PRAY: Globally, one child dies per minute of HIV/AIDS.

MYTH: If I'm not HIV+, the disease doesn't affect me.

FACT: The high rate of HIV/AIDS infections is causing instability in many countries and reversing the progress made in development. It is also causing a worldwide tuberculosis pandemic. Every community is affected. A pandemic affects everyone even if not immediately recognized.

"Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart." Col. 4:2

DAY SEVEN:

The option of treatment for the majority of people living with HIV/AIDS in Africa seems impossible. High costs, demanding treatment schedules, and the lack of even basic health care are all barriers. There are also the challenges of the declining number of health professionals, poor patient follow up and the availability of HIV/AIDS drugs. Even though many people have already died from HIV/AIDS, there is still a hope.

Prayer Point: Pray that the treatments will be made available to even the most destitute. Ask God to give those affected the patience to meet the trying schedules of treatment. Pray that God will give BGR wisdom as to what part we are to play in these challenges.

BGR is about connecting people in need with people who care. You are the people who care! We pray that as your group packs these In-Home Care Kits you will sense the reality of God's presence and that His Spirit will bring a unity among you that will be unsurpassed. We pray that this act of kindness will spur on other acts of kindness right in your own neighborhoods. We are the Body. Our hands should be reaching. Our feet should be going. Our words should be teaching. Our love should be showing that there is a WAY!

Other interesting facts:

- Two in every three persons in the world living with HIV/AIDS, and nine in every ten children born with HIV infection are in the sub-Saharan Africa region.

- In 1998, wars in Africa killed 200,000 people. AIDS killed 2 million people on the continent. AIDS is the leading killer in sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, in Africa, HIV and AIDS pose a far more serious threat to soldiers than their dangerous profession. In most countries, infection rates in the military from sexually transmitted diseases are generally two to five times higher than the rates in comparable civilian populations. Overcrowding, violence, rape, despair and the need to sell or give away sex to survive contribute to a significant increase in HIV infection among refugees in the camps. People are six times more likely to contract HIV in a refugee camp than in the general population. Africa is home to more than 4 million refugees.
- Life expectancy at birth in southern Africa, which rose from 44 in the early 1950s to 59 in the early 1990s, is set to drop back to 45 in the next 10 years because of AIDS. In some countries, it is even lower. Using different modeling methodologies, researchers estimate life expectancy in Zimbabwe to be between 30 and 35 years in the 21st century (US Bureau of the Census; Gregson et al., 1994). Significant reductions in life expectancy due to AIDS imply an increase in the numbers of orphaned children.
- East and primarily Southern Africa present the most alarming statistics. Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe hold the hardest hit populations.
- AIDS impacts children directly and indirectly. According to UNAIDS, by the end of 1999, 570,000 children were infected. 90% of the infections in children are acquired in vertical transmission of HIV infection, which may occur during pregnancy, at delivery or post-partum through breastfeeding. The main patterns of HIV transmission in Sub-Saharan Africa are through heterosexual contacts, and by mother-to-infant transmission. On the other hand, the HIV infection has indirect effects on children who are affected by but not infected with HIV.

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- The HIV epidemic in South Africa : www.uct.ad.za
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Can my prayers make a difference? I ran across an article in "Pray!" magazine about a man who, in the early 1970s was challenged to pick out one country and commit to pray for that country every day for 25 years. This brave man took the challenge and decided to enter into an agreement with God to pray for the country of Uganda every day for 25 years. When this prayer journey started Uganda was going through a horrible genocide. Faithfully he prayed through the reign of Idi Amin who ruled with an iron hand and slaughtered almost 300,000 men, women and children. After Idi Amin was exiled, the next dictator of Uganda was Milton Obote who was not better and killed over 100,000 Ugandans. After Obote, the AIDS pandemic struck Uganda full force with a 25% plus infection rate that was climbing higher each consecutive year. National Geographic Magazine said that Uganda could possibly be wiped off the face of the earth as a country. Still this man prayed. After 20 years of faithful prayer, things began to change as Uganda voted in leaders who had some moral principle. The people of Uganda began to seek God. Today Uganda is the only country in sub-Saharan Africa that has experienced a downturn in AIDS infections. Was the change in Uganda the result of that one man's prayer? Well, my guess is he started a snowball that gained momentum as it rolled through the years until Uganda couldn't help but change. My challenge, and yours if you choose to accept it, is to what will I devote my prayer?

“The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.” James 5: 16b – 18 (ESV)