



## Why Pray?

### Historical Precedence

**History shows us that prayer for the Armed Forces has been effective in the past. A few stories from 1940 will serve to illustrate this:**

On 10 May 1940 Hitler launched his forces against France, the Netherlands and Belgium, reaching the English Channel on 21 May. The British army, along with French and Belgium forces, numbering over 380,000, found themselves trapped and encircled, and the only out was a full scale evacuation from Dunkirk. Churchill was advised that only 20-30,000 men could be evacuated. The situation was so serious that King George VI called for a National Day of Prayer on 26 May to pray for deliverance, and people flocked into churches across the land.

The results were truly miraculous. The waters of the Channel were the calmest for 30 years; this allowed an armada of boats from warships to rowing boats to rescue 335,000 men in 9 days. Then there was a curious decision made by Hitler to hold his troops back and not attack the trapped British army. Thirdly, the Luftwaffe was stranded in Flanders, hemmed in by a furious storm. Finally, when some German aircraft did manage to attack, Allied casualties were very low. The withdrawal from Dunkirk has been well documented and on the BBC website it is described as the 'miracle' of Dunkirk. Churchill himself called it 'a miracle of deliverance.'

Everything now hinged on the war in the air. The Battle of Britain commenced – within weeks of intense combat in the skies over southern England, the outnumbered fighter squadrons of the RAF were in serious trouble. Aircraft and pilots were being lost at a rate far in excess of replacements. Defeat in the air appeared inevitable, opening the way to invasion. But, aided by its revolutionary radar-assisted control system, they kept going. Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding was asked: "What are your plans for defeating an overwhelming number of the German Air Force?" He replied, "I believe in God. And then there is radar."

Hitler suddenly ordered the Luftwaffe to switch its attack to London, and this saved Fighter Command. For the Germans it was a catastrophic blunder. Fighter Command built up its strength. Dowding later said, "By mid to late September, we were all right for aircraft. I think it was because we had faith." The King had expressed the wish that Sunday 8 September 1940 should be fixed as a National Day of Prayer. There was a tremendous response. At a crowded service in Westminster Abbey, the final prayer began, "Remember, O God for good, these watchmen, who by day and by night climb into the air. Let thy hand lead them, we beseech thee, and thy right hand hold them."

By 10 September the RAF had still not been destroyed and abnormally bad weather for the time of year caused Hitler to postpone his invasion plans. Douglas Bader later said, "The 15 September 1940 was the day that the battle was won. It was a Sunday." By the time Sunday worshippers were leaving their churches, the routed German air armada was in full flight. In the afternoon, Air Vice-Marshal Keith Park commanding 11 Group was asked what fighter reserves were available. Park replied, "There are none." Ten minutes later, the action ended. Another miracle had happened. On 17 September, a teletype message clacked out from the German Supreme command postponing the invasion of Britain 'until further notice'.

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*"I will make you strong if you quietly trust in me."*

*- Isaiah 30:15*

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## Why Pray?

### A Biblical precedent

There are many references in the Bible to kings, prophets and military leaders praying for God to deliver them in time of need. See, for example, 2 Kings 6: 8 – 18. Elisha declared to his servant, when the king of Aram had surrounded the city of Dothan with an army of horses and chariots, "Do not be afraid, those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

### Current situation

In recent years the British Armed Forces have seen the most intense fighting in decades during Operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Although the numbers of troops stationed there has decreased dramatically, there are still a number servicemen and women based in key locations helping to provide stability and training for local troops. There are also troops stationed around the world meeting other needs, such as those who took part in providing support for the Ebola outbreak in West Africa last year. At the same time, our Armed Forces, along with everyone else in the public services and elsewhere across the economy, are being asked to face cut backs in both funding and numbers of personnel.

- The Royal Navy and Royal Marines have personnel, ships, aircraft and submarines across the globe, including the Gulf, West African waters, the Mediterranean, the South and North Atlantic, the Caribbean and the Far East.
- The Army is actively engaged in operational duties across the globe, with many troops deployed as part of multinational forces. The work ranges from peacekeeping to providing humanitarian aid, from enforcing anti-terrorism measures to helping combat the international drugs trade.
- The RAF is actively engaged in operational duties across the globe, including Afghanistan, areas of the Middle East, Ascension Island, the Balkans, Cyprus, Diego Garcia, Falklands, Gibraltar and Nevada. The work ranges from peacekeeping to providing humanitarian aid, from enforcing anti-terrorism measures to helping combat the international drugs trade.

## WHAT SHOULD WE PRAY FOR?

- Those on Operations: Please pray for those deployed around the world:
  - ⇒ In dangerous situations like Afghanistan
  - ⇒ For God's protection over them and for them to be brought safely back to their loved ones.
  - ⇒ For wisdom, compassion, great skill and strength.
  - ⇒ For those who have to make life and death decisions, often in a split second.
  - ⇒ That God would use them to protect the vulnerable and to overcome evil, to bring peace and justice and stability, that through them the world will be a safer and better place.
- Families: Please pray for service families:
  - ⇒ So often living under enormous pressure and anxiety.
  - ⇒ For all who have loved ones deployed; those who are anxious for their safety or fearful of a knock at the door which brings bad news.
  - ⇒ Those for whom family life is difficult without the support of their deployed loved one.
  - ⇒ Children who are confused or unable to understand their parent's absence.
  - ⇒ Those who are moving house yet again or those for whom family life is simply made so much more complicated by the conditions of service life.
  - ⇒ For strength to continue and an ability to trust in God.
  - ⇒ For those being made redundant, especially if it was unexpected and unwanted and for those who are fearful of the future.

# Why Pray?

- Remembrance: Please pray for those injured and the bereaved:

- ⇒For healing for those with serious and life changing injuries that they will be able to come to terms with what has happened and for them to be able to find new fulfilment and fullness of life.

- ⇒For complete healing for those mentally scarred and traumatised.

- ⇒For those who have been bereaved that they will be filled with God's strength and surrounded with His comfort and peace.

- Government/Decision makers:

- ⇒Please pray for our government and our military leaders that they will be given them wisdom, insight and understanding beyond their natural abilities.

- ⇒That they will act with integrity, humility and with right motives. That they will act in a Godly way.

## Prayer of Protection over our land:

**O Lord God Almighty, we worship and bless Your Holy Name. We bring the British Isles before You. Have mercy on us and forgive our foolish ways. Come to our aid, Father. Cause Your will to be done among us. Come, Lord Jesus: You alone are the Way, the Truth and the Life. May You be honoured and glorified in our nations. Come, Holy Spirit: refresh and revive us again. Draw us after You and let us run together. In Jesus' wonderful Name. Amen Finally, please pray that the Holy Spirit will hover over our Armed Forces and guide them in all that they think, do and say – so that God may be glorified.**

*Please note that a 30 Day Guide to praying for our Armed Forces may be obtained by emailing the office of the Armed Forces Christian Union [office@afcuk.org](mailto:office@afcuk.org)*