

Prayer for peace, hope and justice

I don't know about you but I am finding the progressive slide into anarchy, especially in certain segments of our population, quite depressing and, at times, frightening. The judiciary is being attacked both verbally and physically and the seat of government too is decaying and being assaulted. Added to this is the increasingly vocal alignment of a group of people posing as the insightful and true leaders of the people. Jesus announced that he came to bring good news to the poor, to help people to see and to bring freedom to the captive and the oppressed. Many, many of the 1994 dreams, that so many believe were God-facilitated, are lying in tatters. Yet, as with Elijah in his time of deep despair when he believed he was the only one left who was walking in integrity with God, he was shown that there were a few hundred others who had not succumbed to the slide into godlessness that was sweeping across his nation. If you follow too much media, you can often feel like Elijah, but unlike Israel at the time, there are millions in the country who still hold onto integrity, who still have hope and who have every intention of playing their part. Please join me as we pray into this.

Ever-loving and super-powerful God, you have over the centuries, watched, I am sure, with both deep joy and immense sorrow the rise and fall of nations. Millennia ago, you gave us a ten-point blueprint of your ways that, when followed, leads to the freedom and new vision that you came again in Jesus to re-instate. Your ways are truly wonderful, better than fine gold and sweeter than honey, as the psalmist sang, and how we long for them to be more manifest on earth, especially here, in and around us at this time. I want, with my family here today, to bring to you three specific deviations from your blueprint that so many have departed from; covetousness, stealing and lying. Some are already very far down this road but I want to pray today for a massive hand-break on those who are at the beginning of being lured down the wrong fork in the road.

You warned us of the danger of yearning for what we see others have that we are now convinced we need. We have before us the clear example in the Zondo commission of what happens when this initial seed is given room to grow; the deeply offensive end result of the pursuit by some of what others had that it suddenly seemed possible to acquire as well. Yet, we confess that we too are not exempt from this same human tendency. Under constant bombardment in the media, communal shopping spaces and even in our social interaction, we too are pushed to covet. We may resist at times but at others, we succumb and take or buy more than we need. Loving, forgiving parent, we ask for your forgiveness as well as your assistance in pulling up the handbrake right now before this potential slide gains momentum. We pray too right now for those we know, both socially and in leadership who also need to be stopped in their tracks.

And when coveting is allowed free reign, it spawns a seed of adjustment of our priorities before it grows to the next level; stealing, another clear deviation clearly stated in your blueprint. Many words have become commonplace in the media to describe the new normal amongst some corporate and political leaders – 'grotesque', 'obscene', 'industrial-level', 'eye-watering' and many more. In the end, consequences will be reaped but, for now, we ask you to shine a light on where we too may have allowed the first seeds of this too take root. Show

us God where covetousness has shifted our priorities and caused us to steal from your best intentions in the stewardship of our resources.

Finally, when in trouble, the easiest way out of it in the short term is to reframe the truth, better known in the language of your blueprint as lying. And yet again, we have seen on public display, what happens when covetousness and theft are allowed to run amok; lying at levels that could well use all the adjectives already mentioned. Not only has this been to the highest courts in the land but also to the nation at large, with zero interest in the consequences for those being lied to and the far-reaching consequences. We have seen the rise and fall of one industrial-level liar, Bell Pottinger, the seeds of whose lies have still taken deep root in our nation. Oh God, we pray for many more such collapses and thank you again pray for ongoing strengthening for the body of courageous truth-tellers, the journalists and whistleblowers, who keep shining light into some very dark places. And yet again, we bring this closer to home, to ourselves. Please give us courage too, not only to identify our own falsehoods but also to stand for truth, even if it may cost us. In the face of threat, we know that we sometimes slightly reframe the truth and then call it a white lie, while at others we stay silent in the face of others' lies and in so doing join them. Oh loving and forgiving God, we look up to you with huge respect and ask you not only to strengthen those already caught in webs of lies to turn again towards the truth, but also to strengthen us to do the same.

In all this, we acknowledge your brilliance in how you designed us and how you have provided the perfect guide for us to flow in that design. Thank you for both mercy and power, that truly provide a way for us to realign our lives towards your best intentions for us all. Loving God, we have much to call out to you about at this time in our land. Please hear our prayers and supplications, summed up in the all-encompassing lines of the prayer for Africa

God bless Africa and all the world,

Guard our children, Guide our leaders,

And give us peace. Amen

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