

CALL UPON THE LORD

PRAYER GUIDE



OpenDoors

International Days of Prayer
for the Persecuted Church

1-8 November 2020

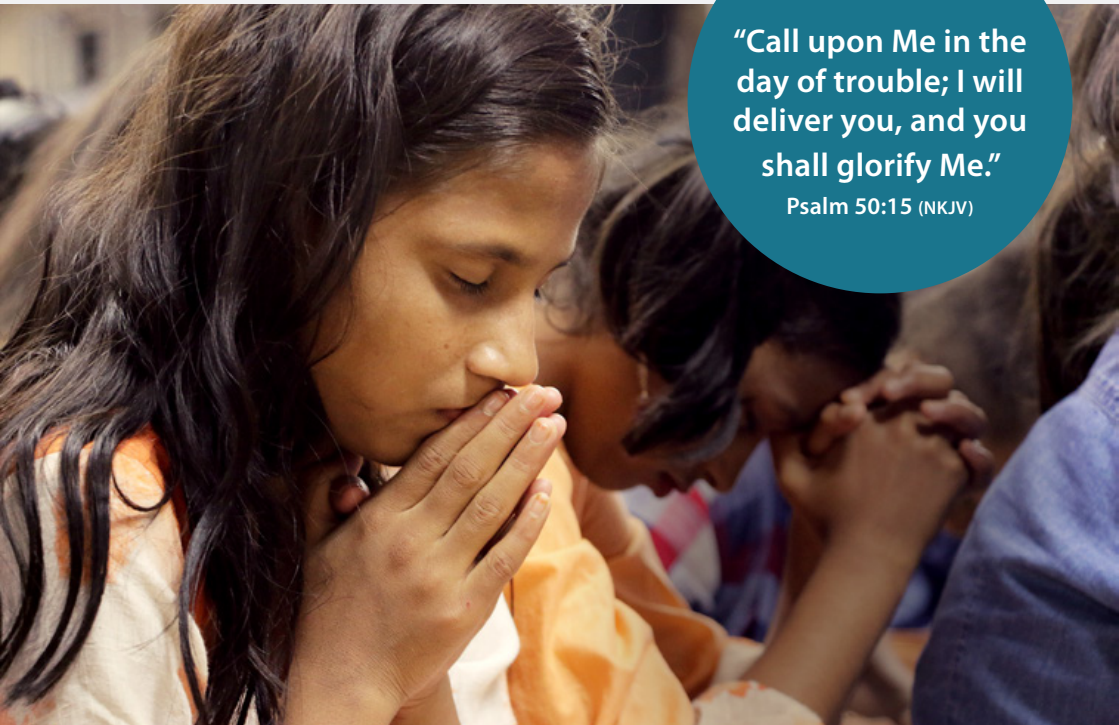


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Persecuted  But never alone.

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**“Call upon Me in the
day of trouble; I will
deliver you, and you
shall glorify Me.”**


Psalm 50:15 (NKJV)

Thank you for downloading Open Doors *Call upon the Lord Prayer Guide*. We pray that your prayer life will be ignited as you pray through this guide.

Why Call upon the Lord Prayer Guide?

We're living in a challenging time. At the beginning of this year, no one could have predicted that our world would be battling a pandemic and that subsequently we would be battling in our everyday lives. We've had to get used to a different way of life, which has been a struggle among everything else we're dealing with. As we try to get through this year, our persecuted family continue to face persecution, which has been made worse by the pandemic.

Looking at all that is taking place right now, we, at Open Doors, believe in the power of prayer. And in this time it's imperative that we call upon the Lord for our persecuted family and for one another. He is the only one that can deliver us. So, we've come up with this prayer guide, to help you in praying for our persecuted family and for one another in this time and during our **International Days of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP)** from 1-8 November.

We pray that you will be strengthened in your prayer life and encouraged by the stories in this guide as you pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters during IDOP. We believe that as we call upon the Lord together and as we pray for one another, God will deliver us! 

THANK YOU

Fighting is done on our knees

The coronavirus is still among us, and chances are we will need to co-exist with it for a long time. While we've had to navigate life anew in the wake of the pandemic, our persecuted brothers and sisters have had to continue to contend with persecution which has increased as a result of the pandemic. With many persecuted Christians being last in line when it comes to assistance from the government and when aid is distributed. At Open Doors, we've had to look at how we can best assist them to survive this new environment.

Being people of prayer, we've spent many hours praying before God and asking for His grace, wisdom and guidance in this time.

In Open Doors we have a saying: *"Work as if everything depends on you and pray as if everything depends on God."* In other words, we work with the skills and understanding the Lord has given us, yet, we realise that outside of God, we can't do anything. We need Him to come through for us, so we pray.

Open Doors founder, Brother Andrew, once said: *"Fighting is done on your knees."* On one occasion he shared this:

"We often say that prayer changes things. But in the first instance, prayer doesn't change





anything. Except: it changes you. Of course, God answers our prayers, but the first thing prayer changes is me. And that's very necessary, because by our nature:

**...we want to pray, but don't get involved;
...we want to pray, but don't want to change;
...we want to pray, but it shouldn't cost us too much. Certainly not time.**

That's why we need to pray. But what should we pray? There's an old song by a Dutch guy named Johan Bos. He sings: 'Lord, forgive my dry eyes.' Praying is suffering with another person. A few years ago, I read in the Gospels about Jesus' request to His disciples when they came to the garden of Gethsemane. He knows He will be arrested, tortured and killed. He prays by Himself and returns to His sleeping disciples. And He says: 'So, could you not watch with me for one hour?'

My heart began to cry when I read this. Of course, we have to watch with our persecuted brothers and sisters at night. At night, when it's dangerous. At night, when you have to face your problems. That's when you need prayer the most. We have to be faithful in our prayers. In the measure that we are faithful, they will be strengthened in their faith."

After Brother Andrew was done speaking, he looked at his audience and asked: "Can we still watch one hour with those who are going through difficulties? Or is our prayer nothing more than a "post scriptum" after dinner?"

Challenging words, especially in this crisis. Can we stay awake for an extra hour to pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters during IDOP? And can we watch with those people so bravely fighting the virus, whether in the hospital, in the lab or in the body?

Fighting is done on our knees, in prayer... First, God will change each one of us, then the world.

“Please pray for us”

See how prayer strengthens your brothers and sisters

When we ask our persecuted family what we can do for them – their number one request is “Please pray for us!” So let’s continue standing together in prayer for our persecuted brothers and sisters. You’re making a difference as you lift them up to the Lord!

Here’s how prayers are a huge source of comfort and strength to many believers in spiritual battles...



“I thank you so much for always caring about us. This has been one of my strengths (to keep going) because God sends you to pray and keep checking on us.”

– Novita, mother of Alvaro who was injured in a bomb blast in Indonesia



“You helped me; I will help others too. Thank you for your prayers and support Open Doors.”

– Ayub, Uganda



“Your support and prayers result in the growth of the Kingdom. The Church in Iran is still alive, even though church buildings are closed, even though a pandemic is terrorising our country.”

– Salomeh*, Iran

*Name changed and representative image used for security reasons.



Creative ways you can pray

Be inspired by these ideas to pray for your brothers and sisters in Christ, on your own and with others during IDOP.

Join one of the Open Doors prayer meetings being hosted across the country

Join a special prayer event and invite your family, friends and church community to pray with you for our persecuted family and for one another. Send an email to southafrica@od.org for more information on your nearest prayer meeting.

Use magazines and newspapers

Cut out stories on countries where Christians are under fire for their faith. Pray for the situation in that country, the leaders and Christians – that in those countries “every knee should bow... and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Philippians 2:10-11).

Light a candle

As you light a candle or candles and pray for those on the front lines of the

faith, pray that the light of Christ will shine in their lives and countries, and that the darkness will not be able to overpower it (John 1:5).

Create a prayer wall

Ask God to show you how you can pray for your embattled brothers and sisters. Write down those prayers. Create a prayer wall in your home. Add new prayers as God leads you.

Do a prayer walk

Take a walk through your garden, the beach, hiking trail or walk past a mosque or temple or as you exercise, and pray for the salvation of those in our country and also for the many persecuted Christians who are imprisoned and in hiding for their faith. Pray that one day they'll be free to walk boldly in their faith without fear.



Pray for Latin America

1-2 November



Pray

Fast facts

- Christianity was brought to Latin America by the Spanish and Portuguese conquerors of North, Central, and South America in the 16th century.
- The majority of Latin Americans are Christian.

Persecution

Over the years, Latin America has seen an increase in violence with drug lords and guerrillas running rampant. Today it's one of the most violent regions in the world with its high levels of crime and execution killings in some countries. In these countries in the region, Christians are subject to this violence because of their faith in Christ. In places like Colombia and Mexico, their Gospel message and ministry work is seen as a threat to the activities of guerrillas and other criminal groups. And in indigenous areas, they face rejection and punishment for leaving their communities' traditional beliefs.

COVID-19 impact

In a region where most health care systems are in a very fragile state and where many people live in precarious social and economic conditions, the presence of the coronavirus causes even greater concern. COVID-19 has already impacted pastoral activities and programmes carried out by Open Doors and its partners in Colombia and Mexico.

- Pray for protection for Christian leaders who risk their lives to share the Gospel with those vulnerable to being recruited by criminal groups and those on drugs.
- Pray for the protection of children in the region, including Christian children who are targeted by criminal groups to join their rankings.
- Pray for God's guidance for Open Doors and our partners in how to encourage and meet the needs of persecuted Christians in the country, especially with the added pressure of the pandemic.



Pray for the Middle East

3-4 November

Fast facts

- The Middle East is the birthplace of Christianity and home to some of the world's most ancient Christian denominations.
- The population of Christians used to be about 20%; now it's 5%.

Persecution

Currently, the Church is under severe pressure with Believers from a Muslim Background facing even more pressure as their conversion is seen as bringing great dishonour on their families. In places like Iraq and Syria, Christians face increased marginalisation, and many are choosing to leave to ensure a more certain future for their families. In many of the countries in the region it's illegal to leave Islam so Christians must keep their faith a secret. In other countries, they may face discrimination, harassment, police monitoring and all sorts of intimidation by authorities, their families, communities and extremists.


COVID-19 impact

The coronavirus pandemic has deepened the plight of our persecuted brothers and sisters living in war or conflict. As governments battle to protect their populations and economies, countries with already disadvantaged populations, where people have limited access to clean drinking water, adequate nutrition and sanitation, shelter, health care, and education face even more difficulties.



Pray

- Pray that the Church in the Middle East will grow despite the restrictions and dangers it faces for its Christian beliefs.
- Pray that the Church finds ways to support believers amid the difficulties, especially the elderly and isolated.
- Pray for continued grace and wisdom for our partners working in the region as they see how they can continue to serve persecuted Christians.



God will raise up people to pray

Alexander Ogorodnikov spent years in a labour camp in the former Soviet Union because of his faith. Everything in the camp was meant to hurt him and destroy him. The heavy labour, the inhumane schedule, the food rations, the lack of sleep. *“Everything worked towards that one goal,”* Alexander told Open Doors, *“that you became a slave with animal instincts and that in nothing you looked like the image of God.”*

But the most difficult thing was the fact that he felt completely forgotten. Not once did he receive a letter, not even from his wife and son. Then the guards locked him up in a cell with a broken window. Alexander was certain he'd freeze to death.

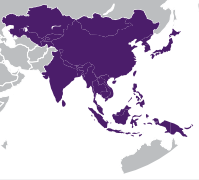
“That’s when I even felt forgotten by God. Had I suffered all those years for nothing? In my desperation I began to cry out to God. Usually I prayed silently, but now I screamed at Him. ‘God, have you abandoned me?’ And then it happened.”

What Alexander discovered only many years later was that that night, God gave many people a dream to pray for a certain “Alexander”. They woke up and prayed for him.

And Alexander, thousands of miles away from those who prayed, began to feel warm. *“It wasn’t the heat of a stove, but the warmth of a mother who presses a child against her chest. I also felt a hand on my shoulder. It made me intensely happy.”*

The next morning, the guards were astonished to see Alexander alive. He survived thanks to the prayers of faithful believers. *“To them I want to say, your love gave me indestructible hope.”*

If you're feeling isolated, exhausted, forgotten even, rest assured that God will raise up people to pray for you. For He has said: *“I will never leave you nor forsake you”* (Hebrews 13:5).



Pray for Asia

5-6 November

Fast facts

- Missionaries were first sent to Asia in the 1850s but the Church didn't develop a lasting presence in the region for another hundred years.
- In 2019 experts said that Christianity in Asia is facing its biggest threat since the rise of communism.

Persecution

Three main religions exist in Asia, namely Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. Many adherents to these religions see Christianity as a threat to their beliefs. In Muslim majority countries, leaving Islam is seen as dishonouring the family. In India and Nepal where there's a Hindu majority, leaving Hinduism is seen as deviating from the faith of their ancestors. In Buddhist majority countries, a Christian is seen as bad luck, which will upset the spirits. Such views have resulted in Christians being disowned, discriminated against, attacked and even killed.

COVID-19 impact

When the pandemic hit, it forced countries to close their borders and brought societies and economies to a standstill, many day labourers and others with low incomes got into immediate trouble. Christians in Asia were hit twice as hard and, in many countries, they've been deliberately left out of aid distribution.



Pray

- Pray for persecuted Christians in Asia, especially now in this time of increasing persecution and need.
- Pray for wisdom and guidance for Christians to be salt and light among their families and communities.
- Pray that our partners will be protected in the spiritual battles and spiritual oppression in a very spirit-laden environment as they serve persecuted Christians in the region.



Pray for Africa

7-8 November

Fast facts

- There has been a Christian presence on the African continent for nearly as long as people have considered themselves followers of Jesus Christ.
- According to a Pew Research Centre report, by 2060 six of the countries with the top ten largest Christian populations will be in Africa.

Persecution

The African continent has seen a dramatic surge in violence against Christians in the last few years. Islamic militancy in Africa is part of a broader, global ideological current. Groups taking inspiration from the so-called Islamic State (IS) have over the past year claimed the lives of thousands of Christians on the continent. Although mostly not as big and bold as the Islamic State, these groups are bolstered by their links to like-minded organisations inside and outside Africa.

COVID-19 impact

In places like Ethiopia and other sub-Saharan Africa countries, Christians have been struggling to find enough food because they're expelled from their communities and aren't allowed to work. They're now doubly vulnerable due to the restrictions and the impact of the pandemic. In a region where many countries already have an overstretched health care system fighting ongoing diseases like malaria, measles and the current Ebola outbreak, COVID-19 adds to the pressure.



Pray

- Pray for the Lord's protection and guidance over the persecuted Church in Africa as well as spiritual and physical nourishment during this time.
- Pray for church leaders and Open Doors – that God will give us godly wisdom and insight in how to best assist, serve and encourage believers in Africa.
- Pray for our African leaders and governments on all levels – that they will use their power and voices to assist all citizens of all religions.

Pray for one another

Richard J. Foster, a Christian theologian said: *“By means of intercessory prayer God extends to each of us a personalised, hand-engraved invitation to become intimately involved in labouring for the well-being of others.”*

As we interceded for our persecuted family in Christ over IDOP, it's important that we also intercede for our loved ones, communities and country. It's been a rough year for all of us. Many of us have been severely affected by this pandemic jobwise, healthwise and perhaps even spiritually.

Pray

- Pray that the Lord will provide in all the needs of those who've lost their jobs and comfort those who've lost loved ones as a result of the pandemic.
- Pray for good health for our loved ones, colleagues, neighbours and family in Christ in Southern Africa, especially those who are the most vulnerable among us.
- Pray for wisdom and guidance for our governments as they try to move our country forward following the extended lockdown.
- Pray that we, as the Southern Africa Church, will be a shining light of Christ's love and hope during this time.



You can make a difference

COVID-19 has resulted in increased persecution against Christians. In many closed countries where governments and non-profits give out emergency aid to the needy, Christians are usually overlooked. In one instance 18 Christian families were told by authorities: *“You are Christians and your God shall take care of your family! The government is not responsible [for] your families!”* In some countries, Christians are asked to renounce their faith in exchange for food and basic supplies.

Today, you can help our brothers and sisters stand strong for the cause of Christ. With your gift of R150 or more you will help provide them with essential food and basic supplies. Showing them that they are never alone! Visit www.opendoors.org.za/covid to strengthen them.

