



31 DAYS OF PRAYER FOR INDIA

INTRODUCTION: NEVER ALONE

In a country that's home to a billion people, it's hard to imagine how anyone could feel alone.

And yet, that's exactly how many of our brothers and sisters in India feel. Christians make up a tiny minority here – less than five per cent of the population at the time of writing. A Christian who has decided to leave the traditional faith of their community and follow Jesus could be the only Christian in their family, or in their village. If they live in a rural part of India, perhaps they are the only one who believes in Jesus for miles around.

Being alone makes you an easy target. Although Church history suggests that the Gospel came to India in the first century, these believers are told that Christianity is a “foreign faith”. They are accused of angering the gods of their community by not taking part in traditional rituals, of bringing bad luck to the village. In areas with anti-conversion laws, they are accused of doing something illegal.

Disinformation campaigns about Christians have led to severe persecution and mob violence. Isolated believers are rejected by their families and communities, refused work, kicked out of their homes, beaten up, imprisoned – sometimes even killed.

These aren't isolated incidents. Hindu extremists' goal is to wipe out Christianity from India. They use anti-Christian propaganda and lies, stirring up others to take aggressive actions of discrimination and violent persecution.

While Open Doors local partners hoped that the Covid-19 lockdowns would lead to fewer attacks on Christians, this sadly was not the case. Christians were even more isolated and many lost all their income. And many believers were physically attacked because of their faith last year in India. Alongside violent attacks, many more Christians in India also experience discrimination – and this can be just as deadly. Thousands of believers were denied government food aid during the Covid-19 lockdowns because of their faith, and would have starved to death without help from Open Doors local partners. This is why your prayers and support are so vital. You are enabling Open Doors local partners meet with our brothers and sisters to pray with them, to provide them with practical support, and to encourage them that they are part of a worldwide family that cares about them.

And this year, Open Doors is working to expose the lies that are the root of the persecution that Christians face, and combat them with truth. At the end of this prayer guide, you can find out more about how to speak out for your persecuted brothers and sisters as part of Open Doors' Impact India campaign. Or visit our website at **www.standfortruthindia.co.za**.



Despite the persecution they face, many of our brothers and sisters are courageously holding on to their faith in the face of the fiercest persecution. New believers often speak of the miraculous healings they have seen when they prayed to Jesus. They have seen Him working in power, they know that He is real – and they will not leave Him.

As you pray for your Church family in India this month, we know that God will hear. And knowing that believers around the world are praying for them will help our brothers and sisters in India to know that they aren't alone, however they may feel.

*Names have been changed throughout for security purposes.
Photos are illustrative unless otherwise captioned.*



WEEK 1

LIES AND THE TRUTH

"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

JOHN 8:32

Part of the reason why persecution against Christians in India has been rising is because of the lies that are spread against Christians there. Disinformation campaigns about Christians have led to severe persecution and mob violence. Open Doors' Impact India campaign aims to change this by exposing the lies and combating them with truth.

This week, please join us in praying against these lies, and that the truth will help to free our brothers and sisters of persecution.



DAY 1

LIE: “India is a Hindu state – Christians don’t belong there.”

TRUTH: The Indian Constitution recognises in Article 25 that “all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion.” Christians in India have a constitutional right to practice their faith.

READ ACTS 10:34-35

Then Peter began to speak: “I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism, but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.”

PRAY:

- Praise God that people from every nation, including India, are able to put their trust in Jesus.
- Pray that God will strengthen those who are working to protect the right to freedom of religion or belief in India.
- Christians in India who have low levels of education often don’t know that they have the constitutional right to practice their faith. Open Doors local partners provide advocacy counselling for them, so that they know how to stand up for their rights if they face false accusations. Pray for courage for Indian Christians as they stand up for their rights.

DAY 2

LIE: “Christianity is a foreign religion.”

TRUTH: Christianity has been present in India for many centuries. Christian tradition states that Christianity arrived through Thomas, one of Christ’s 12 disciples, in the first century. He is believed to have travelled to southern India, ending his days in Tamil Nadu. His legacy can still be seen today in the tradition of the “Thomas Christians”.

READ GENESIS 22:18

“And through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”

PRAY:

- Praise God that, since the very beginning, He had a plan to bless every nation, including India.
- Pray that Christians will not be made to feel like outsiders because of these lies about their faith, but will find a sense of belonging in knowing that Christians have been in India for almost 2 000 years.



Christians in south India praying together.

DAY 3

LIE: “Indians are not allowed to convert to any religion apart from Hinduism.”

TRUTH: While some of India’s states do have anti-conversion laws, they have been designed to prevent religious conversions that are not voluntary in nature, and so carried out by “forcible” or “fraudulent” means or by “allurement” or “inducement”. There is no law that prevents someone from changing their religion voluntarily.

READ ROMANS 10:9

If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

PRAY:

- Praise God that, no matter what the law of a country may say, anyone can put their faith in Jesus.
- Extremists sometimes force new Christians to take part in a “Ghar Wapsi” ceremony, which means “homecoming” and refers to the return to Hinduism. Pray that God will give new believers the courage and strength to resist the pressure to leave Jesus.
- Anti-conversion laws are frequently used to harass Christians who are taking part in normal activities that are part of their faith, such as holding a prayer meeting or attending a church service – the extremists falsely claim they are forcing people to convert as part of these actions. Pray that these laws will be repealed, or that a deterrent will be put in place to prevent false accusations.



DAY 4

LIE: “Indian people who become Christians are no longer Indian – all true Indians are Hindus.”

TRUTH: Sadly, this is an idea that has been promoted by Hindu extremists who believe in an ideology called “Hindutva”. This is the idea that India should be purified to include only those who are able to call India both their father land and their holy land. Under this theology, Indic religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism are considered “Hindutva”. Indian Christians (and Muslims) are accused of having allegiances that lie outside India.

But Indian Christians don’t see themselves as any less Indian because of their faith, and many work to serve their communities and Indian society.

READ JEREMIAH 29:7

“Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”

PRAY:

- Pray that, as India prospers, India’s Christians will also prosper. Pray that God will use India’s Christians as a blessing to the nation, and that the nation of India will bless its Christians in return.
- It is not only Christians, but also Muslims and other religious minorities who are affected by this “Hindutva” ideology. Pray for protection over India’s religious minorities.



DAY 5

LIE: “Christians pay poor people to become Christians.”

TRUTH: Because many of those who are coming to faith in Jesus are poor and have low levels of education, Hindu extremists often claim they must have been paid in order to convert (which is illegal in some states). However, Open Doors partners often hear that what has actually led new believers to faith in Jesus is miraculous healings and the spiritual satisfaction they receive in Jesus.

Ankita is one of them. Her son had been very sick, and despite visiting many doctors, no one could help him. She says: “It had already been a few months and we were losing hope for recovery from the medicines. I then decided to bring him to the church for prayers even though we were Hindus. We made him lie on the floor and everybody prayed over him. By the end of the last prayer of the service he was completely healed; we praise God!”

READ PSALM 30:2

“Lord my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me.”

PRAY:

- Praise God that He is moving in power in India, and drawing many to Himself through miraculous healings. Pray that this may continue.
- Pray for those who have been falsely accused of paying people to become Christians, that their names will be cleared.
- Pray for protection for those who are boldly sharing their faith in Jesus, despite the risks that they may be accused of forcing others to convert.



DAY 6

LIE: “Members of indigenous tribes can’t become Christians.”

TRUTH: In India there are “scheduled areas” in 10 states that have predominantly tribal populations. The law states that every village in a scheduled area should have a “Gram Sabha”, a village-governing body. The role of the Gram Sabha is to preserve the traditions, customs, and cultural identity of the people, safeguard community resources and resolve disputes.

The Gram Sabha cannot overrule the constitutional rights of the members of their tribe, and cannot stop someone from becoming a Christian. However, some Gram Sabha’s have tried to stop people from practicing faiths that aren’t the traditional faith of the tribe.

READ PSALM 6:4

“Turn, Lord, and deliver me; save me because of your unfailing love.”

PRAY:

- Ask God to help believers from tribal backgrounds who have faced rejection and discrimination for leaving their traditional faith.
- Pray that the laws that are there to protect traditional cultures and traditions will not be abused to persecute Christians or other tribal people who choose to change their faith.



DAY 7

LIE: “There will be no Christians left in India by the end of 2021.”

TRUTH: A leader of a large Hindu extremist group has stated that this is their goal. This may help to explain why the persecution against Christians has been increasing since this goal was first shared in 2014.

While many Christians have faced discrimination, violence, and some have even faced death because of their faith, the courage of our Indian brothers and sisters shows that the Church will not be destroyed.

In one recent incident, an evangelist, Ravi, was killed because he refused to stop sharing his faith with others. When Open Doors partners met his wife, Sumi, she shared: “If needed I will die for Jesus, but I will never leave Him. I will continue living here, and will continue the ministry of my husband.”

READ PHILIPPIANS 1:21

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

PRAY:

- Praise God for the courage of our Indian brothers and sisters like Sumi who are remaining faithful to Jesus, despite facing the most extreme persecution. Ask God to protect them and give them strength and comfort.
- Pray that the plans of the extremists to destroy the Church in India will be thwarted at every turn, and that these extremists might even encounter the love of Jesus and turn to Him.
- Your prayers and support are helping the Church in India to survive under the most extreme persecution, providing practical help, training and encouragement through Open Doors local partners. Ask God to help these partners to reach those who are most in need of help.

WEEK 2

LIES LEAD TO ACTION

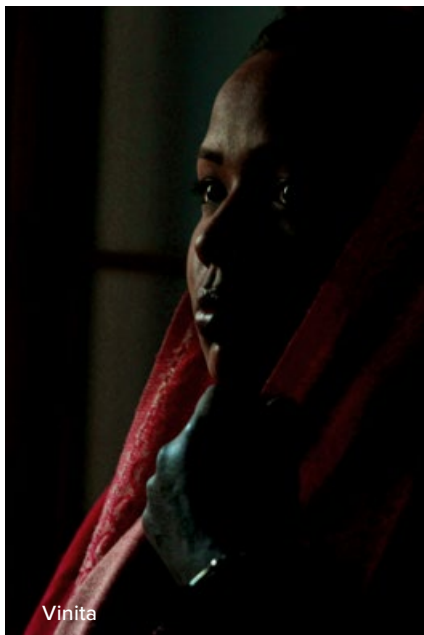
"Though the arrogant have smeared me with lies, I keep your precepts with all my heart."

PSALM 119:69

Sadly, as lies about Christians have been spread by extremists in India, Christians have faced increasing levels of persecution at the hands of those who have been deceived. This week, join us in praying for protection, comfort and strength for our brothers and sisters who have faced discrimination and violence, which have continued throughout the Covid pandemic.

DAY 1 – VINITA

Please pray for Vinita and her family. Vinita is a believer from India in her mid-20s. She runs a small shop in her home, and her husband works in a factory. They have a baby girl, who is a year old.



They have faced constant harassment from their community since they came to faith in Jesus. Vinita says, “I tried to share the Gospel to many, but they did not listen. They spoke badly to me saying, ‘You are worshipping a foreign God instead of our god and goddesses.’”

Recently, the persecution became more violent. One day, when Vinita was praying in her home with her pastor and his family, Hindu extremists barged in and began to attack them with metal rods. They threw Vinita’s baby girl on the ground – thankfully, the child survived with just scratches on her legs. But Vinita and the others were more seriously injured. To make things even worse, when they got to the government hospital, the medical staff refused to treat them because of pressure from the Hindu extremists.

Your prayers and support enabled Open Doors local partners to take them to a private hospital and pay for their treatment. Your support is also providing advocacy help as they file a case against their attackers.

READ PSALM 32:7

“You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.”

PRAY:

- Vinita says, “Pray for my daughter and my whole family that we may be safe. We live in fear that they might do something to us. Pray, as they still threaten us, that the threats will stop.”
- Ask God to protect our brothers and sisters in India from violent attacks.

DAY 2 – GAURAV

Gaurav is a church leader. He was active in sharing the Gospel, and he was threatened several times by extremists and local people in the area, telling him to stop. When he refused, he was falsely accused of using fraudulent means to make people convert to Christianity, and imprisoned for four months, along with two of his friends.

When they were finally released, it took them three years to prove their innocence. Gaurav says: “Meanwhile, my friends and I had no proper jobs. We were viewed as criminals by our community and no one wanted to associate with us. I worked hard on the little farming land we had and sought some temporary jobs here and there.

“Open Doors partners helped to cater to our needs and provided all the needed guidance in the court procedures. Finally my two friends and I were proved innocent. We thank the Lord for everyone all over the world who is praying for people like us in India.”

READ JOHN 8:36

“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

PRAY:

- Praise God that Gaurav and his friends were able to clear their names. Ask for God’s continuing protection and blessing on them and their families.
- Pray that God will protect our brothers and sisters in India from false accusations.
- Pray for strength and encouragement for those who are in prison, and for provision and comfort for their families.
- Pray for wisdom for Open Doors local partners as they support believers facing these challenges.



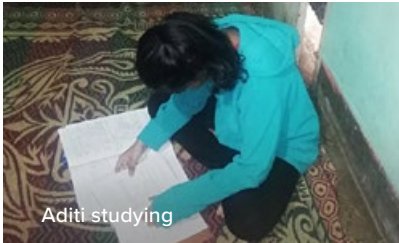
DAY 3 – ADITI

When Aditi (16) and her family came to faith in Christ, they faced many challenges.

She says: “When we chose to become Christians, the people in our village began to mock us for embracing a foreign faith.

They refused to have any dealings with us.

My family was very poor and since we lived as a joint family with other relatives, we relied on the other members for financial support. After me and my parents embraced Christianity, that support was taken away.”



Aditi’s father was left isolated during the harvest, and none of his neighbours would come to help him in the fields. Even his attempts to hire men from the village

for daily wages proved unsuccessful – no one in the village wanted to associate themselves with people who had converted to Christianity.

Aditi was about to abandon her studies, as her family couldn’t afford to pay for her education any more. But your support and prayers have enabled Open Doors local partners to help. Aditi’s father says: “We thank you so much for your initiative with which we were able to pay my daughter’s school fees. God bless you all and let God lead you forward.”

They still face many challenges, but they are relying on God. Aditi’s father says: “Often when I felt discouraged, I spent time in prayer. It was then I gained courage to trust in Him; it’s true that we need courage to trust in God. And that courage comes through prayer.”

READ PSALM 34:19

“The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles.”

PRAY:

- Ask God to bless Aditi as she continues with her studies.
- Pray that God will provide for all the needs of Aditi’s family.
- Pray that God will change the hearts of their relatives and neighbours, so that Aditi’s family will have the support of their community once again.
- Pray for other Christians who are facing exclusion by their communities because of their faith, that God will help and comfort them.

DAY 4 - SURAJ

Suraj leads a church of around 200 people in his village. Since starting the church a few years ago, he has been constantly monitored by Hindu extremists, angry that his church members have left their traditional faith.

Finally, the extremists decided to take action. Suraj shares: “While visiting a nearby village, the Hindu extremists stopped me and took me to a secluded place. They beat me for three hours. They then threatened me, telling me to close the church or else I would have to face worse consequences.

“No one came to my rescue. I reached my house severely wounded. Later, with the help of a friend, I went to hospital.”

When an Open Doors local partner heard what had happened to Suraj, they helped to pay his medical expenses, thanks to your prayers and support. Despite his brutal treatment at the hands of the extremists, he says: “I forgive them since they do not know Christ and are not aware of what they are doing.”

READ PSALM 25:20

“Guard my life and rescue me; do not let me be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.”

PRAY:

- For continued healing for Suraj.
- That God will change the hearts of the extremists who have been targeting Suraj and draw them to Himself.
- For protection for Suraj and his family.
- Pray for others like Suraj who have faced violence because of their faith in Jesus. Pray that God will heal them and comfort them.



DAY 5 – PRAVEEN AND SHANTI

Praveen (45) and his wife Shanti (42) came to faith after Shanti was healed from an illness when a pastor prayed for her.



Praveen and Shanti in their shop.

However, their relatives were angry about their new faith, and asked them why they had chosen to follow a foreign God. When they refused to stop following Jesus, Praveen's relatives stole some land that he had inherited. Praveen had wanted to sell the land so he could clear the debt he had built up paying for Shanti to be treated before she was healed.

Despite this, he says: "The peace that I have now, I could not find anywhere else. God has delivered us, and we as a family believe that the land will come back to us as we are praying constantly."

Your prayers and support have helped Praveen and Shanti to run a small shop so they can meet the needs of their family. Shanti says: "I am so grateful for the kind help."

READ JOHN 10:10

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

PRAY:

- Please pray that their small shop will continue to be fruitful.
- Praveen and Shanti have also asked us to pray for their relatives, that one day they will know Christ and experience His love. Praveen believes that one day, he will be able to say the words of Joshua 24:15 as his own: "As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."
- Pray that their relatives will have a change of heart, and that they will give back the land that they stole from Praveen and Shanti.

DAY 6 - SAMEER

After Sameer finished studying at Bible college, he started a small church in a remote village. Soon it grew to over 50 members, and they built a thatched hut where the believers could meet together.

However, local extremists were not happy about the growth of this church, and began to threaten Sameer and the church members. Things came to a head when it was time for local elections to take place. The Hindu extremists accused Sameer and the Christians of embracing a “foreign” religion, and said that they were persuading people to vote against their Hindu political party. Then they burned down the hut that the Christians had built. “I was shocked. I felt afraid to further continue the ministry,” Sameer says.

Open Doors local partners met with Sameer to pray with him and encourage him. They also helped the church to build a new place to meet. Sameer says: “It greatly encouraged our faith to know that there were others standing with us. Despite the incident, none of the believers turned their backs on their faith. In fact, since the church hall is bigger, even more people come to our church.”

READ PSALM 66:12B

“We went through fire and water, but you brought us to a place of abundance.”

PRAY:

- For Pastor Sameer and his church members, as they continue living in the same village where their church was burnt down. Pray for their safety.
- They also face exclusion and pressure from their community. Pray that they will be able to stand strong in all their faith.



Pastor Sameer and his church members.



Tara had to go through isolation in her own home because of her faith.

DAY 7 - TARA

15-year-old Tara lives in the same house as her family, but is completely rejected by them because of her faith in Jesus.

She came to faith after a friend invited her to church, where she could receive prayer for healing from an illness. “My sickness was healed. It was then I started believing in Jesus. I found peace that I had never known – everything in my life started making sense.”

When she told her family, they warned her not to talk to anyone else in the house and to stay in her small room. “I cannot touch anything in the kitchen of the house. The rest of the members of the house say: ‘Everything, even water, would become impure if you would even touch it.’”

Before Open Doors partners met her, Tara had been working as a daily wage labourer to pay for her basic needs, such as food, and her school fees. Since then, Open Doors local partners have helped her get admission to a boarding school away from her village and supplied some of her basic daily needs. However, she had to return to her family home during the Covid-19 lockdowns.

READ MATTHEW 19:29

“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.”

PRAY:

- Tara says: “Please pray for my family, that they may know the Lord soon and accept me. I really miss them.”
- Pray that God will strengthen Tara’s faith and bring her encouragement.
- Pray for other young people like Tara who are the only believers in their families, and face persecution from their relatives. Pray that they will be comforted by the love of their Heavenly Father, and their global Church family.

WEEK 3

YOUR SUPPORT HELPS THE CHURCH SURVIVE

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

MATTHEW 25:35-36

While extremists may be using lies and hatred to encourage discrimination and violence against Christians in India, your prayers and support are helping Open Doors local partners to provide practical help, training and encouragement for our persecuted brothers and sisters. This week, join us in praying for the work of Open Doors local partners as they respond to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic – and the rising violence against Christians.

DAY 1 – COVID-19 AID

During the Covid-19 lockdowns in India, many of the poorest people couldn't go out to work, leaving them with no supplies to live on. The government provided aid for

some of the poorest families, but Christians were frequently overlooked. One of them, Aarti, shares: "We were so discouraged when they ignored us while distributing relief aid to all in the village."

Thanks to your prayers and support, Open Doors local partners were able to provide Aarti and her family with vital food aid. She says: "I thank the brothers for travelling this far and blessing us with groceries in our hour of need."

At the time of writing, your prayers and support have provided over 126 000 believers in India with vital food aid during the Covid-19 pandemic.



Aarti carrying relief aid brought by Open Doors local partners.

READ PSALM 111:5

"He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever."

PRAY:

- Praise God that Open Doors local partners were able to reach so many believers with emergency supplies during the Covid-19 lockdowns.
- Pray that God will soften the hearts of those who discriminated against Christians during this crisis, so that another time they will help the Christians if they need it.
- Ask God to continue to provide for believers who are in need.



Orphaned at the age of 15, Sitara has faced a lot of challenges in life because of her Christian faith. Open Doors partners got in touch with her 2 years ago and have been helping her and her siblings ever since.



DAY 2 – EMERGENCY AID

Nikhil is just 18 years old and he was beaten up by his brothers and kicked out of his home by his family because of his faith.



Nikhil receiving vital food aid from Open Doors local partners.

His pastor explains: “Nikhil comes from a high caste. His father and his brothers are esteemed in society but his Christian faith was creating a very embarrassing situation for them. Christianity is falsely regarded as a foreign religion which only poor people would embrace in return for money or material benefits. It was embarrassing that a boy from such a high caste would choose Christianity, hence they beat him.”

Thankfully, his pastor was able to let him stay in the church, and Open Doors local partners were able to provide him with vital food aid. Nikhil says: “I thank God so much for my pastor and all of you who supported me. My own family disowned me

but now you are my family. You stood by me in my desperate painful situation. I am so grateful.”

READ PROVERBS 18:24

“One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”

PRAY:

- Pray that God will continue to provide for Nikhil’s needs and help him to complete his studies.
- Pray that he will remain strong in his faith, despite the challenges that he has faced.
- Pray also that God might soften the hearts of his family members towards him, and that they too might come to faith in Jesus.
- Pray for other believers who suddenly find themselves rejected by their families and communities because of their faith, that God will help Open Doors local partners to reach them with emergency help.

DAY 3 – MEDICAL CARE

Do you remember the story of Vinita, who we prayed for last week? Preetha is the wife of the pastor who went to pray with Vinita when they were attacked by Hindu extremists. They attacked Preetha with a metal rod until she was unconscious, and nearly cut off half her hand. She was in a very serious condition. When she was taken to a government hospital, the medical staff refused to treat her because of pressure received from Hindu extremists.

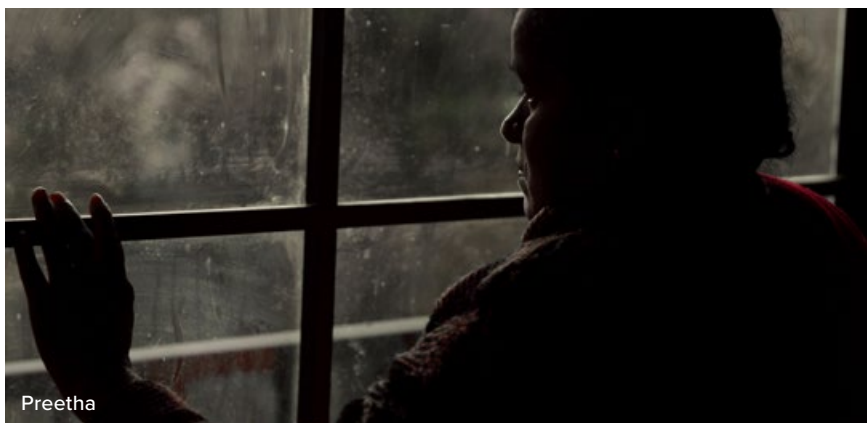
Your prayers and support enabled Open Doors local partners to take her to a private hospital and pay for their treatment. Preetha says, “Had Open Doors partners not helped us, I would have died. I want to say thank you, not just to God but also to His people who have helped us. My heartfelt gratitude.”

READ PSALM 107:20

“He sent out his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave.”

PRAY:

- For Preetha’s continued healing. Her hand has been permanently damaged, and still causes her pain.
- Preetha also asks us to pray for their attackers: “Pray for the persecutors who oppose God, that they may know the love of God.”
- Without help, Preetha may have died. Praise God that Open Doors local partners reached her in time. Pray that they will be able to reach others who are in need of urgent medical treatment.



Preetha

DAY 4 – LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT

Sumitra is a believer from the north of India. One of the biggest challenges facing her is social exclusion; she could not get work in her local community because of her faith, and her family struggled to survive. “We could barely manage to have meals twice a day,” she says.



Sumitra working at the chips production unit.

With your prayers and support, Open Doors partners helped to create a small cottage industry making chips, providing an income for Sumitra and other Christian families who were denied work because of their faith.

Sumitra says: “I am now able to fulfil the needs of my family. My financial status is much better now. I am now self-sufficient and no longer jobless. I want to thank all Open Doors partners for helping us in so many ways. The way they stood with us during our hard times is amazing. I thank you for bringing happiness in my life.”

READ PSALM 146:7A

“He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry.”

PRAY:

- Please pray for Sumitra and the other believers in her community, that God will continue to use this cottage industry to bless them and provide for their needs.
- Pray also that God will use them as a witness to their neighbours who refused to give them work, and that they will shine as lights in their community.

DAY 5 – BIBLE DISTRIBUTION

Thousands of believers in India have received digital Bibles, thanks to your support and prayers. “I am so glad to receive this digital Bible. I am really blessed because of this, since I cannot read properly,” says Deepa. She is able to listen to the Bible as an audio book, which is a huge help for believers like her who have low levels of literacy.

These digital Bibles are also a vital tool for believers who have to be discreet when they read the Bible because of the risks they face for their faith. Deepa shares: “I listen to the digital Bible secretly.” Another believer, Akshay, shares: “I can easily hide it when there is a security issue.”

Rajneesh, another believer who received a digital Bible, shares: “Through this digital Bible device I learned several Bible stories which I earlier had never learnt about. I also shared about it to others. Thank you for encouraging us to become more faithful to the Lord Almighty.”

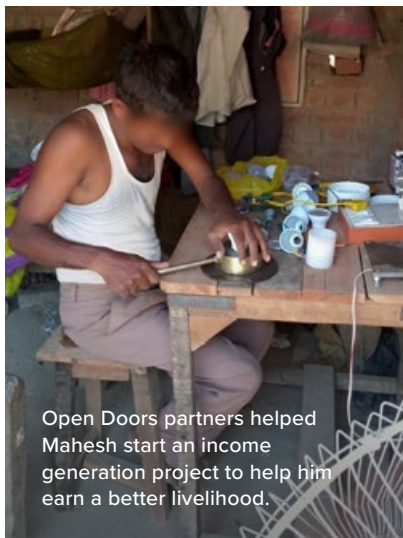
READ PSALM 119:105

“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.”

PRAY:

- Pray these Bibles would be a blessing to each believer who has received one.
- Pray that God would use His Word to strengthen their faith and bring them encouragement.





Open Doors partners helped Mahesh start an income generation project to help him earn a better livelihood.

DAY 6 – ADVOCACY TRAINING

Mahesh is a pastor in his 50s. He is married with four children and he leads a small church.

He and his church members have faced a string of false accusations by Hindu extremists, and they have been arrested after being accused of forcefully converting people. But after receiving advocacy counselling through Open Doors local partners, Mahesh is better prepared to deal with these kinds of accusations.

He shares: “It was as if God had heard our prayers and opened a way for us. I attended the program with great interest and learnt a lot. Not long after attending the program, our church was again opposed by the locals and the police were involved. The people tried to make it a legal matter. But now I was well educated on how to deal with it and thus talked to the authorities boldly, quoting my rights.

“Apart from being able to stand and tackle various false allegations in the best possible manner, we were also able to share the Gospel to many of those who opposed us. I praise God that he was leading us the whole time.”

READ PSALM 119:154

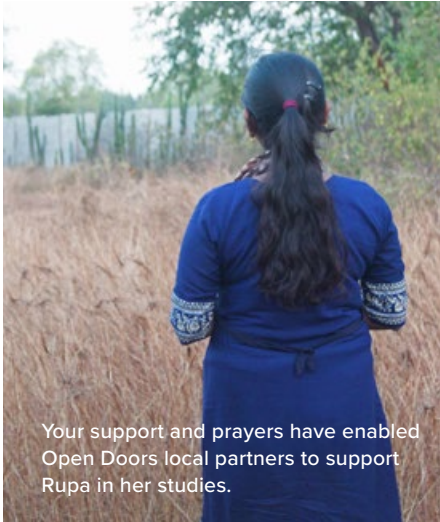
“Defend my cause and redeem me; preserve my life according to your promise.”

PRAY:

- Pray that the false accusations against Mahesh and the other believers will stop.
- Pray that God will bless Mahesh and the members of his church, and use their courageous witness to draw many others to faith in Him.
- Pray that God will continue to use the advocacy training provided by Open Doors local partners to strengthen Christians in India, and enable them to defend themselves against false accusations.

DAY 7 – EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

When Rupa felt God calling her to follow Jesus and serve Him, her father was extremely angry and refused to support her. But with the help and prayers of brothers and sisters from around the world, she has been able to continue her studies.



Your support and prayers have enabled Open Doors local partners to support Rupa in her studies.

She says: "I fall short of words to thank the organisation that has come forward to help me. I am very much grateful for the sponsored support towards my studies and pray every day that God's blessings be upon His people.

"I desire to be involved in children and youth ministry after I complete my studies. Even now I involve myself in ministry with the local church and share about Christ to anyone I meet. No matter how my father reacts, I will continue to serve God. I believe there will come a day where my father will rejoice over my decision as my Heavenly Father rejoices."

READ MATTHEW 6:33

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

PRAY:

- Praise God that, despite her father's anger, Rupa is seeking God's kingdom first.
- Pray that Rupa's prayers will be answered, and that her father will also come to love the Lord and delight in his daughter's desire to serve Jesus.
- Pray that God will bless Rupa's studies, and lead her as she seeks to be involved in ministry.
- Pray for other young people who are being supported in their education by Open Doors local partners. Pray God will bless them in their studies and help them to use what they have learned to serve Him.

WEEK 4

THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

JOHN 1:5

Despite the suffering experienced by Christians in India from persecution and the pandemic, they are shining as lights in the darkness, and have not given up hope for the future of the Church in India. Be inspired this week by the faith of our brothers and sisters in India, and join in with their prayers for their country.

DAY 1 – RAJU, PRAYING FOR HIS PERSECUTORS

Raju was holding a prayer meeting at his house when Hindu extremists came and beat him and his wife. Their injuries were so severe that they had to be taken to hospital. It could have been easy for Raju to feel hatred towards his attackers – but he didn't.

He explains: "A few months after we faced the attack, one of the main leaders of the group that assaulted us died in an accident, and the other leader fell very sick. Many of the villagers began to talk about this – some said that our God was punishing them.

"However, at that time, instead of feeling hateful and revengeful towards them, God put compassion for them in my heart. I was able to go the hospital and pray for that sick leader. He said nothing but bowed his head in prayer as I prayed with him. He didn't become a Christian but I feel God had spoken to his heart."

READ MATTHEW 5:44

"But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

PRAY:

- Praise God for Raju's courageous witness to his persecutors.
- Pray for Raju's attackers, that God might be at work in their hearts and draw them to Himself.



Raju and his wife praying together.

DAY 2 – SANNA, LIVING A GOOD LIFE AS A WITNESS FOR CHRIST

Sanna and her family came to faith after her mother was healed of a terminal illness. At first, they faced severe persecution from their community. Sanna says: “For two full years, we were prohibited to visit other houses, and if they found out we had, we had to pay a fine of Rs. 10 000.” This was the equivalent of two month’s salary in Sanna’s village. “Those two years were like a trial for us.”

Since then, things have improved, but are still difficult. An Open Doors partner explains: “The village people could see through the life of this family that Christians are good people. This led them to remove the penalty previously imposed on Sanna and her family. However, they still need prayers as Sanna and her family are still not completely accepted in the society. There is still a lot of discrimination and mental stress.”

Sanna says: “There is a song I really love: ‘I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back’. This song always encourages me to always walk in Christ despite all difficult situations.”

READ MATTHEW 5:16

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

PRAY:

- Praise God that the witness of Sanna’s family has changed the hearts of their community.
- Pray that God will continue to be at work, and that one day soon Sanna’s family will be fully accepted by them.
- Pray for strength, encouragement and provision for Sanna and her family.
- Pray that the faithful witness of believers in India will help to change the minds of those who oppose them.

DAY 3 – KUSUM, LEADING HER PERSECUTORS TO FAITH

When Kusum's husband died, her community, including her in-laws, said it was her fault because she refused to give up her faith in Jesus. When her five-year-old son died a few years later, they blamed her faith once again. Kusum explains: "The villagers didn't allow me to bury my son. They said: 'You brought this curse upon your family! Because of your faith, your husband and your son are dead!' In the end, I was allowed to bury my son on the outskirts of the village. I was all by myself. Nobody was allowed to help me."

The persecution she has faced, on top of her grief, has been severe. Her father-in-law once came to her house with an axe, threatening to kill her.



For five years, Open Doors local partners have been walking with Kusum thanks to your support and prayers. She has never given up her faith in Jesus and slowly, over the years, things have changed.

Kusum shares: "Due to my Christian faith, I faced a lot of persecution from my in-laws and the villagers, but now many villagers are coming to Jesus in my village. Since the Covid-19 lockdown, 10 new families have come to Christ!"

Most of the people from Kusum's village who came to faith in Christ were sick, and were healed after coming to the church.

"My in-laws used to persecute me a lot, but now they believe in Christ. Many times, they used to come to my house to kill me. I always used to pray for them. The Lord heard my prayer and now they have become believers. Everyone is coming to faith except my father-in-law – although he's also been learning about the Christian faith. He also now asks me to pray for him."

READ PSALM 34:15

"The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry."

PRAY:

- Praise God that he has heard Kusum's prayers and brought many in her community to faith, even those who used to persecute her.
- While some have come to faith, there are others in Kusum's community who still persecute the Christians. Pray that they too will be drawn to faith in Christ.
- Pray that God will continue to strengthen and protect Kusum and the new believers in her village.

DAY 4 – PASTOR RAMAN, STANDING FIRM

Pastor Raman was in his church when the building was set on fire by a group of young people who were bribed by Hindu extremists. He explains: “I tried to escape from the church, but when I did, some burning wood fell on me.”



Pastor Raman [right].

Thankfully, he has now recovered from his injuries, and your prayers and support have been able to provide him with practical aid, as well as a new sound system for the rebuilt church.

Despite this terrifying incident, Raman is committed to the ministry he feels God has called him to – planting churches in the villages around his town. “I know it can be dangerous. I also know that I might die. But I am not afraid.”

READ JOSHUA 1:9

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

PRAY:

- Praise God for the courage of believers like Raman, who continue to serve the Lord despite violent attacks. Pray for protection for Raman and others like him.
- Ask God to bless Raman’s ministry and give him wisdom as he seeks to plant more churches in his region.
- Raman’s church has a strong children’s ministry. Hundreds of children came to a Children’s prayer meeting to learn more about Jesus. Pray that Raman’s church will raise up the next generation to be strong believers.

DAY 5 – AMAN, PRAYING FOR HEALING

Aman is a pastor in his early 30s from India. His family came to faith after God healed his mother of a terminal illness. Since then, his family have led so many others from their village to faith in Christ. However, the village authorities asked Aman and his family to leave and began to threaten them.

But when a girl from the village became ill, Aman and his family were called to pray for her – and she was healed! “From that one incident the whole village witnessed the power in the name of Jesus Christ,” Aman says. “Since that incident the opposition was greatly reduced.”

READ PSALM 34:8

“Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.”

PRAY:

- Praise God that the people in Aman’s village were able to see for themselves the healing power of Jesus. Pray that many more will come to faith through miracles like this.
- While the persecution being faced by Aman and his family has reduced, it hasn’t gone away completely. Pray that God will protect them and provide for their needs.
- Open Doors local partners have helped Aman and some of the other believers to start a small business making LED bulbs, as many members of the community were struggling to make ends meet. Ask God to bless this small business.



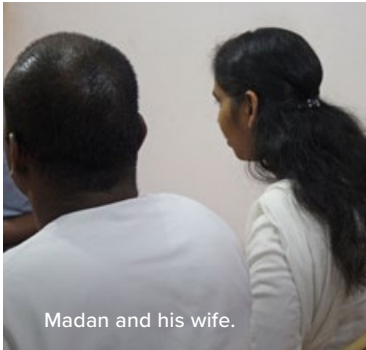
Aman in the process of making an LED bulb.

DAY 6 – MADAN, A MODERN DAY SAUL

Madan is now a pastor – but he once persecuted Christians.

He shares: “My life was very different before I knew Christ. I was a renowned goon in my area. Since I was 13 years old I became addicted to alcohol. As I grew, I got into a gang and we used to take money to beat people, even kill people.

“That was also the time when I really hated Christians because I heard they offered money to lure people to leave their original culture and tradition. Whenever I came across any Christians in my area, I used to beat them and abuse them using filthy language.”



Madan and his wife.

Eventually Madan ended up in jail for various crimes he had committed. While he was imprisoned, someone gave him a Bible and told him about Jesus. When he got out of prison, he started going to church.

“My life was totally transformed. I started reading the Bible and I felt God speaking to me and directing me, saying He would make everything new!”

Madan now leads in a church in an area that is extremely opposed to Christians – he has received many threats and beatings. But he isn’t afraid – in fact, he says: “There are always more miracles and healings when there is more persecution.”

READ MATTHEW 5:10

“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

PRAY:

- Praise God that no one is beyond His reach – even those who persecute Christians!
- Pray that there would be many more stories like Madan’s, of those who once persecuted Christians but end up coming to faith.
- Pray that God would continue to work through Madan, and that God would protect him and strengthen him.

DAY 7 – KIRTI, CONSTANTLY PRAYING FOR HER PERSECUTORS

Kirti is a young widow. Her husband was killed by extremists for refusing to give up his faith in Jesus. This happened a few years ago, and Open Doors local partners have been in regular contact with her since then, providing her with practical support and encouragement.

Kirti was shunned and blamed for her husband's death. But slowly, God has softened the hearts of her husband's family.

"Earlier, my father-in-law had persecuted me a lot because of my faith, but now they are staying with me because there is no one to take care of them. Before, they used to say to me that because of my Christian faith, my husband was killed.

"My father-in-law did not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He used to drink and persecute me, but I constantly prayed for his salvation. I thank God because he has started believing in Christ."

She continues: "During the Covid-19 lockdowns, many new people also became believers in my village. I spent much time in prayer during lockdown. Many villagers came to my house for prayer for their illnesses and God healed them all. Now, many new people from my village have also started believing in Jesus."

READ PSALM 118:21

"I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation."

PRAY:

- Kirti recently shared this prayer with an Open Doors local partner. Use it as a basis for a prayer of your own:

Life-giving God, I thank you and pray for all those people who supported me in my difficult times. God, bless all of them, meet all their needs.

I pray for those people who are facing persecution for being Christians in many ways. Lord give them courage so that they can face this persecution.

May your Church grow in every country, that many people may be saved and dedicate their lives to you. All those who persecute Christians and oppose them, they should also be saved. I pray for the salvation of all the villagers in my village.

I pray for the servants of God, those who go to many villages to share the word of God – God, keep them safe and fulfil all their needs.

*Help all of us to live life according to the Word of God stated in the Bible.
Amen.*

WEEK 5

THE PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS

"I call on you, my God, for you will answer me; turn your ear to me and hear my prayer."

PSALM 17:6

In the final three days of our month of prayer, we would like to share the prayer requests of three of Open Doors local partners. Join them in their prayers for their fellow believers, and for India – as they work in a context of violence, suspicion and face the consequences of the global pandemic.

DAY 1 - RAJESH

Rajesh is an Open Doors local partner who has been supporting persecuted Christians in India for over a decade, thanks to your support and prayers.



Rajesh asks us to continue to pray for encouragement for him and others who are serving persecuted believers. "If you're not encouraged, you will become numb, so pray that the Lord encourages us every day, and gives us new visions to reach out to the persecuted Church."

When asked about his hopes for the year ahead, he says: "I think this will be your hope also – a Covid-free world!"

But he also feels that the end of the pandemic will bring a sense of responsibility to many. "If God gives us a Covid-free world, our responsibility will increase in the world. If we are free, we have to act more, we have to work hard."

He says that whatever comes in the months ahead, he is putting his trust

in God. "We have a God who is all powerful and beyond any difficulties – and above any pandemic. In all this uncertainty, God is for certain."

READ EPHESIANS 2:10

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

PRAY:

- For encouragement for Rajesh and others who are serving persecuted believers in India.
- For an end to the Covid-19 pandemic, and wisdom for India's leaders to know how to bring the pandemic under control among such a huge population.
- That as Covid-19 restrictions around the world are lifted, Christians will make the most of their freedoms to share the love of God with those around them.

DAY 2 – HEENA

Heena has been an Open Doors local partner for several years. She has been involved in helping believers in need of urgent aid, particularly during the Covid-19 lockdowns.

She shares: “This is often a question which I ask myself – suppose we were not there, what would have happened? It is, of course, very difficult to imagine.

“But we depend on the Lord. Obviously it’s because of their faith that the believers are getting this help, and we are just a channel.

“So often the feedback I get is, ‘You really are an answer to our prayers. We really pray, we had really been praying for this support.’ They will be crying most of the time and they will be saying, ‘Our God is faithful and your presence has made this evident to us. Your presence with us has strengthened our faith.’

“So many times people share with us that they’re almost on the verge of giving up their faith, but the support has strengthened them and brought them into a new, strengthened relationship again with God. So our help, thanks to all the supporters, is something which is really strengthening them. And it’s proving crucial. God is really using this work.”

READ MATTHEW 21:22

“If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”

PRAY:

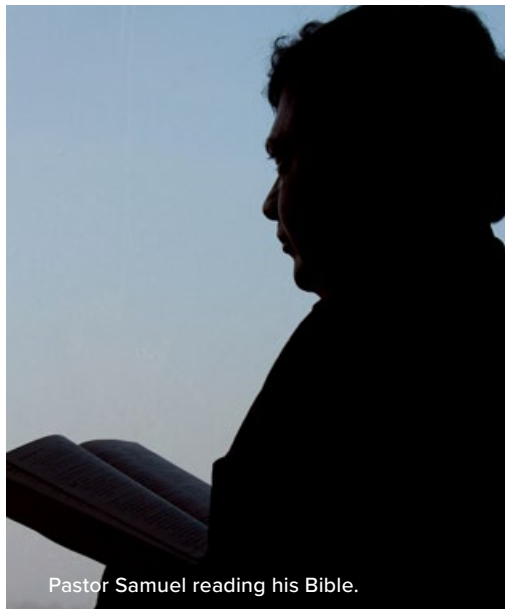
- Praise God for using Open Doors partners like Heena as an answer to the prayers of believers in desperate situations.
- Pray for wisdom and energy for Open Doors local partners to be able to reach those who are in the greatest need of help.



Christians receiving urgent relief aid.

DAY 3 - PASTOR SAMUEL

Pastor Samuel is an Open Doors local partner in India. His team have continued to serve persecuted Christians during the Covid-19 crisis, bringing vital food aid to those who were denied government support because of their faith, as well as doing their usual work of helping believers facing discrimination and attack. Their work can be risky, but he shares that your prayers and support have helped him and his team to keep going.



Pastor Samuel reading his Bible.

“My dear brothers and sisters, we were all able to do what we are doing only because you are praying. You are praying so that our team can go and visit those people and support them. Because you are supporting, we were able to be there to help those people. We were able to go and encourage those people. We can go and are able to take risks, being in those difficult areas at difficult times to support those people. It's only because you are praying, we were able to do that. We could take those risks and boldly stand to support our brothers and sisters in crisis.

“Thank you so much for all your prayers, all your support, everything that you are doing for the persecuted Church.”

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:26

“If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured every part rejoices with it.”

PRAY:

- Pastor Samuel says, “My dear brothers and sisters, the persecuted Church in India needs your prayers. Please continue to pray for the persecuted Christians in India.”
- “Please continue to pray for our partners and team who go boldly to those places and risk their lives to support the persecuted Christians in those difficult areas.”
- “Please continue to pray for the persecutors, who are persecuting Christians. May they be able to know the love of the Lord, and be able to respond to the Lord with faith.”

WHAT NEXT?

Thank you for walking with your Indian brothers and sisters in prayer this month. Just knowing that there are believers around the world praying for them is a huge encouragement for our Church family. Sagar is a pastor from India who has faced much persecution. He told us: "I was greatly encouraged when I learnt that when we go through persecution, not only does the local church pray for us, but also the believers all over the world are praying for us. This knowledge gave me immense strength and joy."

If you would like to continue your journey with your persecuted Church family, visit our website www.standfortruthindia.co.za, email us at southafrica@od.org.za or call (+27) 11 888 9362.





Here are three things you can do now:

KEEP PRAYING.

Sign up for emails or follow our social media channels for more ways to pray for our persecuted Church family.

GIVE.

You may wish to give a gift, or perhaps you would like to hold a fundraising event, or take on a sponsored challenge to raise vital support for your persecuted brothers and sisters.

SPEAK OUT.

Watch and share the moving film of Vinita's testimony. Write to your MP and share the shocking report by the London School of Economics (releasing 1 July 2021) into how extremists are using lies and propaganda to stir up violence. Get involved in our social media campaign by sharing the short video clips and tag politicians, influencers and newspapers. Use the hashtag #StandforTruthIndia



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