

MONTH OF PRAYER FOR AFGHANISTAN

WEEK ONE

Since the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan last year, it has never been more dangerous to be a secret Afghan believer – and our persecuted church family there are crying out for us to join them in prayer.

It can be hard to know how to pray, but we serve a mighty God who hears our prayers and draws near in the darkness. This month, we invite you to join with the church in Afghanistan as we pray four of God's biblical names over their people and nation. All names have been changed for security reasons.

El Roi THE GOD WHO SEES

"I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken." PSALM 16:8

Day 1

Saad is a secret believer who has decided to remain in Afghanistan with his wife, Fatimah. On the night the Taliban returned, Fatimah gave birth to a daughter. "When the Taliban took control, it was everything we feared," Saad says. "That night, I felt someone step into my memories and try to snuff them out, to speak fear to me." Today, pray that secret believers in Afghanistan will not let fear of the Taliban dictate how they live. Ask God to give them courage.

Day 2

Sharifullah is a traditional craftsman – and a secret believer. He had been including Christian symbolism in his art, but when the Taliban came, his livelihood was closed down. "Signs of joy have been painted over and replaced with Taliban slogans, which are a far cry from hope," he says. Many believers who have chosen to stay are unsure of the future; their livelihood and education hang in the balance. Ask God to strengthen their faith as they do their best to survive under new leaders and in the midst of an unstable economy.

Day 3

The Taliban notoriously treat women harshly and prevent them from going to school. "There is a complete cloak

of silence around any kind of violation of a woman's space and dignity," a local source tells Open Doors. "If the situation persists and worsens, Afghan women will no longer be able to bring the hope and enlightenment of education to future generations." Lift all Afghan girls and women up to the Lord today. Pray that opportunities to grow and thrive would not be snatched away from them.



Day 4

Pray for Open Doors partners who meet with and minister to Afghan refugees in neighbouring countries. "As Christians, I think we should be open to accept suffering people, but what if radicals come among them? We need wisdom and leading from God in this," shares our partner Hamad. "Of course, as Christians we don't reject refugee people, but accept and serve them." Ask the Lord to sustain them and give them energy and capacity for the work.

Day 5

Samad is a Muslim man who fled Afghanistan to a neighbouring country. After meeting with our partners who supported him and shared

the gospel with him, he admitted that he had become disappointed in Islam because of the Taliban. At the moment, he is still searching for his family as they were separated during the takeover. Praise God for Samad's seeking heart. Pray that he will open his heart to Jesus and that he will be reunited with his family.

Day 6

Now the Taliban is back in power, there are reports of people, including Christians, who randomly disappear. Said Farishte, a young Christian woman from the Gulf, shares: "Many of us live in fear of being kidnapped... Knowing I am God's beloved reminds me that, no matter what someone does to me, the church will not forget me because Jesus will not forget me." Ask God to protect these missing believers and pray for God's presence to give comfort to the loved ones they've left behind.

Day 7

Desperate locals – including Christians – have tried everything to leave Afghanistan. A field partner in the region says: "Like all citizens, Christians are afraid. They might want to stay in Afghanistan but stay hidden and serve Jesus in secret. Or it might also be that they would like to escape but they can't – all of these scenarios are happening." Ask the Lord to protect believers attempting to flee – pray for provision of food, transport and favour in on their dangerous journeys.



Jehovah Shalom

THE GOD OF PEACE

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you... Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” JOHN 14:27

Day 8

With Afghans in diaspora, the opportunities for the church all over the world to come together and welcome them have multiplied. Today, pray for all the church communities reaching out to Afghan believers, that they will receive the refugees with genuine warmth. Pray that the refugees will assimilate well into their new lives, and that, through the testimony of the church, they will know and accept Christ's gift of salvation.

Day 9

Since the Taliban came to power, the extremist group ISIS-Khorasan (IS-K) have launched several bomb attacks in public spaces – for them, the Taliban is not ‘extremist’ enough. However, the Taliban

themselves are known for their brutalities and their terrifying brand of Sharia (Islamic law). One believer from the region says, “How we survive daily, only God knows. He knows because He has been kind to dwell with us. But we are tired of all the death around us.” Ask God to put a stop to the violence that has become the norm in Afghanistan.

Day 10

Living in such a hostile environment has made fear and anxiety a constant companion for Afghan locals. Aside from the relentless violence and threats of extremist attacks, secret believers face much higher stakes: their faith in Jesus alone can have them killed. Pray for secret believers to find rest in Christ. Pray that they will surrender their worries to Jesus, and fully entrust their future to him.

Day 11

Islamic groups across Asia have been inspired by the Taliban's victory. And extremism, especially in South East Asia, could be on

the rise. Muslim hardliners in Bangladesh have also been strengthened in their resolve; so much so that they've publicly declared that they'll travel to Afghanistan to join the Taliban's ranks. Ask the Lord to confuse their plans – pray that extremism will not spread as a result of the Taliban's newfound rule.

Day 12

“The [Taliban] soldiers are not committed to human dignity,” says local believer Fatimah. “Their eyes are looking all the time at how to have power and how to demean anyone who wants to think and dream.” It may seem unlikely that members of extremist groups could ever turn from their ways, but nothing is impossible with God! Ask the Lord to transform the hearts of the Taliban and IS-K today. Pray that they will be reconciled to Jesus and will finally find God's peace.

Day 13

The trauma of war and sudden change can be difficult

for children to adjust to. “The children are our hope,” says a local Open Doors partner. “Now they are at a loss, they have no schooling, and their future is unknown. Pray that they will know Jesus growing up. Pray for God to fill the hole in their hearts left by war, and that they would be made whole in Him. Pray for opportunities for them to continue with their education.”

Day 14

After the Taliban takeover, local journalism dwindled in Afghanistan. Because of the lack of reliable news sources in the country, fake news has been proliferating around the world about what goes on inside the country. Much of this unverified information also concerns Christians, causing undue panic and alarm. Pray that only the truth about what goes on in the country will come out. Pray against censorship and misinformation and ask God to preserve the stories of His people.

“The children are our hope” – please pray for Afghan children to know God's love





GLIMPSES OF GOD'S VICTORY IN AFGHANISTAN

HOW YOUR PRAYERS HELP OUR PERSECUTED
CHURCH FAMILY TO OVERCOME

“For the Lord your God is He who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you the victory.”

DEUTERONOMY 20:4

The world has been shocked by the tragedy unfolding in Afghanistan. But even though the current situation for the Afghan people is heartbreaking, God assures us that the battle is His.

In Exodus 17, Moses and Joshua led the Israelites in a battle with the Amalekites. When Moses held up his staff, Joshua and the Israelites won the battle below. When Moses lowered his arms, the Amalekites won. When Moses grew tired, Hur and Aaron held up his hands, one on each side, until Joshua's army completely defeated the

Amalekites. Moses then built an altar to the Lord and called it Jehovah Nissi – ‘The Lord Is My Banner’ – because the Lord went before them and gave them the victory.

Hana*, an Open Doors partner in the Gulf region, describes how, despite the challenges, she has seen glimpses of God's victory in Afghanistan:

“In the last 20 years, persecution has continued. It has spiked; it has not gone down; it has not decreased. There has been little or no space in the conversation for religious freedom. Those

who have believed in Jesus and follow Christ have been persecuted for their faith. Yes, persecution has been on the rise, but so has access to knowledge and freedom – and 20 years of access is a lot.

“Twenty years of access means more generations have been impacted. Two of them have been impacted directly, and one generation, not yet born, is yet to be impacted by the gifts of freedom. The exercise of freedom, and the fight, the battle, the war, it is going on at this moment in the hearts of the most resilient communities in the face of the earth.”

“When you pray, you meet us in the room of God's throne,” says secret believer Fatimah*. “You

meet us there and we can have communion there.”

“It will not be easy, but we do this because we believe Jesus is there and is alive,” shares her husband Saad*. “We are all reading and meditating on John 17, especially trying to understand the measure of love. If you love us, pray for us. This is where we are together: at the foot of the cross, where the full measure of love is known. If you love me – if you love Jesus – pray for us.”

God of angel armies, we pray that Your banner of love will be over our church family in Afghanistan. Sustain and uphold them through these trials and challenges, and secure in them Your hope of victory. Amen.

Jehovah Jireh

GOD OUR PROVIDER

“And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus” PHILIPPIANS 4:19

Day 15

Many aid organisations and governing bodies have cut their support in Afghanistan in an attempt to snub the Taliban leadership. But without foreign aid it's the locals who suffer the most. Pray for God's wisdom for global policy and decision makers – ask the Lord to show them how to reach those in need with basic necessities as they also uphold justice, righteousness and truth.

Day 16

It's a challenge to transport goods, to go through checkpoints and to have access to the believers in refugee camps to give them the support they need most. Transporting help and working on the frontlines are fraught with challenges, but praise God that He continues to open doors for His work to prosper. Today, pray that God will continue to open doors for our partners to build connections on the ground.

Day 17

Aysha is an Open Doors partner ministering to Afghan refugees: “Refugees – especially women – are emotionally broken, very stressed and often crying as they have lost their homes, and because of the situation in their country. We need

prayers for wisdom, strength and new opportunities to serve the women, such as trauma counselling. Pray that we can share the gospel with them and bring them to local churches.”



ABOVE Secret believers in neighbouring countries pray for Afghan refugees

Day 18

Refugees are controlled by the army of the country they're entering. They are given temporary shelter in transit camps, then have to go through a registration process. Only then are they allowed to be part of the camps. “The displaced have nowhere to go and are going back and forth, being passed around by border control. So many have no idea what waits for them on the other side of the border,” says a local partner. Ask God to give refugees safe passage and pray that they will find shelter.

Day 19

Sharinah and her child have become asylum seekers in a

neighbouring country after escaping Afghanistan. Her child had pneumonia and she had no money. By God's providence, Sharinah ran into an Open Doors partner, Ali, while he was arranging food deliveries. Ali was led by God's Spirit to help Sharinah's child get proper healthcare right then and there. Sharinah is a Muslim, but she is now in regular contact with Ali for encouragement. Continue to pray for healing for Sharinah's child – and pray that Jesus will show Himself to Sharinah.

Day 20

The raging Covid pandemic has not spared Afghanistan, and child malnutrition and measles outbreaks are also affecting the country. A doctor told the media, “Basic medical equipment and facilities are

lacking in the city hospital – what could the state of health look like in the areas that are further away?” Today, ask the Lord to revitalise the Afghan hospitals. Ask Him to heal the sick and restore their health.

Day 21

God continues to be faithful in reaching needy Afghan believers. Nazim, one of our frontline partners, shares: “We have supported other families in this area, Christian and non-Christian, with some food packs and clean water as there has been almost no clean water there for around three years.” Today, give thanks to God for how He reaches out and strengthens Afghan believers physically and spiritually. Indeed, He is Jehovah Jireh, our God who provides!

BELOW Refugees need prayers for wisdom, strength and new opportunities SOURCE: ALAMY



Jehovah Nissi

THE LORD IS OUR BANNER

“The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.” EXODUS 14:14

Day 22

Despite their circumstances, secret believers in Afghanistan are still trusting in the sovereignty of God. Even with the loss of his livelihood, Sharifullah says, “We will never let hope be silenced... We will make sure the world hears the gospel through every breath we take. And we know you will help us by living the gospel, using your freedom and sharing Jesus with those who have come to your neighbourhoods. Please continue to stand with us.” Praise God for the faith of believers in Afghanistan!

Day 23

Secret believers in hiding are desperately seeking a safe community where they can live out their faith and be fed spiritually. Ask God to keep the faith of Afghan believers alive through His Word. Pray that He will lead them to churches and communities of faith where they can grow in

Jesus. Pray that the promises of God will take root in their hearts and bear fruit, and pray that He will provide pastors, ministers and Bible teachers to encourage them.

Day 24

A local source says: “In the Asian context, family ties are very close knit. Many believers who leave the country have left with their close families who don’t know Jesus yet. Pray that they would have the courage to share the truth of Christ within their families. However, when they do so, they must be prepared for the consequences. There is no guarantee as to how their loved ones would respond.” Today, pray for the secret believers to have courage to be a witness for Christ despite the high risks.

Day 25

Open Doors partners have already been able to help many refugee families with the basics that they need to survive. For the future, our partners are already looking for ways to help refugee families for the long-term – possibly with small scale businesses like variety shops, or with tuk-tuks or

local taxis. Praise God for the overwhelming support and generosity of the global church towards Afghanistan, and for the kingdom work He is doing in their midst!

Day 26

Even against the backdrop of violence, a health crisis, and shortages of every kind, secret believers in Afghanistan remain confident in Jesus. For Saad and his wife Fatimah, the birth of their daughter is a sign of hope: “The birth of our baby girl is a sign that God has not given up on our country.” Praise God for the hope He gives Afghan believers to persevere. Pray that, despite their situation, secret believers and Afghan refugees would stand strong in their suffering. May they put their hope and trust in our God who provides victory.

Day 27

As Afghanistan fades out of the headlines, it could be easy for us in the global church to forget about the suffering of our brothers and sisters in this country. Or it could also be the opposite – as news of terrorist attacks in the Gulf constantly bombard us, our hearts could grow weary and overwhelmed. As we approach the end of our month of prayer, ask the Lord to renew the

hearts of His people here in the UK and Ireland with compassion for their brothers and sisters in Afghanistan and around the world who suffer for following Jesus.

Day 28

Thank you for joining in prayer with our Afghan brothers and sisters this month. Knowing that you remember them means so much to our brothers and sisters in Afghanistan. As one believer shares, “Knowing I am God’s beloved reminds me that no matter what someone does to me, the church will not forget me because Jesus will not forget me.”

Please keep holding Afghan believers before God in your prayers – we will continue to provide the latest prayer information to help you do this throughout the year. And you can find the latest stories and prayer updates on our website: go to opendoorsuk.org



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