

Open *Doors*

PRAYER DIARY | September/October 2023



**"Keep watch
and pray."**

MATTHEW 26:41

| China

Friday 1 September

Increasing surveillance and new restrictions on internet and social media are intensifying pressure on Christians, as the Communist Party tries to limit all threats to its power. Pray that, despite the growing pressure, Chinese believers will stay united and faithful in their pursuit of Jesus.

Saturday 2 September

The only Christian church sanctioned by the Chinese authorities is the Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM). CCTV cameras are routinely installed in church buildings, and ministers have to submit their sermons for approval and editing every week. Please pray that TSPM church leaders will have courage to preach the gospel, despite the government's strong control.

Sunday 3 September

Due to the increasing surveillance, many house churches have stopped meeting in large groups and split into smaller groups. Meeting online has also become more difficult as Chinese authorities pay closer attention to online activities. Pray for courage and resourcefulness as believers find ways to continue meeting together.

Monday 4 September

Buying a Bible online is illegal and, in some provinces of

China, it is difficult to get hold of a physical Bible. Pray for courage and protection for those distributing God's Word to believers in ethnic minority areas.

Tuesday 5 September

Ming* was arrested for smuggling Bibles (see magazine p6). Although he was released, he cannot attend church as the authorities still watch him and regularly search his house. Ming is receiving discipleship support through Brother Hao*, an Open Doors partner. Ask God to work through Hao to strengthen Ming's faith and rebuild his trust.

Wednesday 6 September

Ming's father-in-law has forbidden him from living with his wife and daughter because of his faith. Pray for comfort for Ming as he struggles with the loneliness of living without his family, and that Ming's father-in-law will have a change of heart.

Thursday 7 September

Ask God to send more workers to serve people from ethnic minorities, like Ming. There is a great demand for the gospel in these areas, but the workers are few. Pray that Open Doors partners can find creative ways to minister to believers in these most sensitive regions.

| Myanmar

Friday 8 September

Since the coup in February 2021, Christians have encountered greater violence and tighter restrictions. Even in relatively safe areas,

believers are required to ask permission to meet. Ask God to protect believers and surround them with songs of deliverance (Psalm 32:7).

Saturday 9 September

Many involved with the civil war see it as an instrument to eliminate Christianity in Myanmar. Pray against this effort and ask the Holy Spirit to empower believers through the knowledge that 'the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world' (1 John 4:4).

Sunday 10 September

"Christians in this situation are like candles that are burning but are on the verge of going out," says Daisy*, an Open Doors local partner. "They need help from another candle to be lit again with a full flame." Ask the Holy Spirit to fan into flame the faith of weary believers.

Monday 11 September

Following the coup, the authorities have greatly enhanced their digital surveillance capabilities (see Magazine p18). It's impacted our local partners, who must be very careful in their communications and financial transactions. Pray that their work will not be hindered, and ask God to provide more workers.

Tuesday 12 September

Believers risk monitoring, interrogation, arrest and even death to attend discipleship programmes run by Open Doors partners. Praise God for their courageous faith, and pray for the Lord's continued

protection over these sessions and all those involved in them.

Wednesday 13 September

"God answers our prayers though you!" That's often the first thing Open Doors partners hear when they deliver food packages to believers in need. Praise God for this impact, and pray that our partners will be equipped to reach more people.

Thursday 14 September

Many pastors are finding it very difficult to help those who come to them for pastoral care because of their own struggles. Some are also suffering from trauma that originates from when the military was previously in power. Ask the Lord to heal, nourish and restore these pastors.



Friday 15 September

"The presence of people praying for Myanmar and supporting them enables Christians to continue walking in their faith," says Daisy (ABOVE). "It brings comfort to those who are suffering. It's like having someone to fight their battles." Pray that the church in Myanmar will continue to grow in faith, witness and number.

*Names changed for security reasons

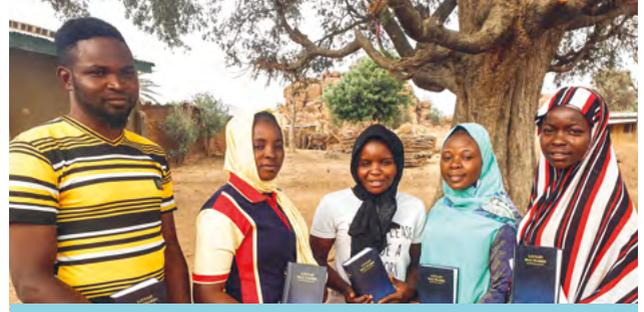
Give thanks for **ANSWERED PRAYER**



For the first time in her life, Dorcas from northern Nigeria has received her very own Bible – thanks to the prayers and gifts of Open Doors supporters like you.

“I am so happy to have a new Bible that I can call my own!” she says. “To me, this Bible is a weapon to overcome and win the battle in life. I believe the Bible will be of great impact in my spiritual journey because it is the foundation on which we should build our lives. Knowing God for yourself and being rooted in God’s Word will be the best way of living in this world.”

Dorcas is one of 130 young people in Nigeria to receive their own Bible to support and encourage them in their discipleship journey. This encouragement is vital as these young believers experience both discrimination and violence on a daily basis because of their faith in Jesus Christ. They are the minority in their communities, yet they continue to demonstrate resilience in the midst of



Dorcas is one of 130 young people in Nigeria to receive their own Bible, thanks to your prayers and support

increasing persecution. As a result, many around them have come to faith!

STRENGTHENING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CHRISTIANS

For Rashida, a young woman in her twenties, receiving this Bible is an answer to prayer. “Now I am filled with joy because I received the gift of the Bible. I believe it will enlighten me on so many things that I was doing in the past that are not God’s will. I have the Word now and I can read it for myself.”

Before receiving his own Bible, Matthew shared one with the rest of his family. But now he will be able to spend time in God’s Word whenever he likes. “To have my own Bible... I am so grateful to God,” he says. “I trust that reading the Bible and obeying the instruction of God will bring a lot of changes in my life because the Word of God is light.”

Now at number six on the World Watch List, believers in Nigeria are experiencing increasing levels of violence. More Christians are killed for their faith in Nigeria than in the rest of the world combined – 14 every day, on average.

These Bibles will help the next generation of Christians and church leaders to stand firm in their faith.

“To me, this Bible is a weapon to overcome and win the battle in life.”

“I pray for everyone that contributed in one way or the other for the Bible to reach me and other people in my community,” Dorcas says. “I will share it with people who don’t have a Bible and win souls for Christ so that the name of Jesus will be glorified.”

PLEASE PRAY

- Praise God for the gift of these Bibles – pray that they will be a source of encouragement to their owners
- That God will continue to fill these young Christians with joy and courage as they share their faith
- That Open Doors partners in Nigeria will be able to deliver more Bibles into the hands of believers.

| Middle East

Saturday 16 September – Iran

Today marks one year since the death of Mahsa Amini, who died whilst in custody for 'improper' wearing of the hijab. Her death sparked riots across the country calling for greater freedom for Iranian women. Please pray that Christian women facing persecution in Iran will be strengthened and encouraged in their faith and protected from harm.

Sunday 17 September – Iran

In July, more than 50 Christian converts were arrested in a wave of incidents across the country. The arrests coincided with the morality police being more visible and aggressive on the streets. Pray that these believers will be freed, and that the authorities' hearts towards Christians will soften.

Monday 18 September – Saudi Arabia

Digital resources being available on the internet and through social media is truly a blessing to the underground churches. However, new believers can find it difficult to discern which resources accurately reflect Christianity and which don't. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide these believers to find truth-filled resources that will help them grow closer to Jesus.

Tuesday 19 September – Lebanon

Earlier this year, 35 young people from 18 countries gathered at a youth2youth forum in Beirut to discuss the fears and challenges they face. The forum aimed to equip

them with advocacy tools to become beacons of hope. Pray that they will be strengthened to put into practice all they learned at the forum.

Wednesday 20 September – Syria

Thanks to training Merry received last year through Open Doors partners, she was able to help co-ordinate the relief effort following the February earthquakes. "My only desire is that God would declare Himself and be shown through us to the people, and let everyone in Aleppo and Syria know that Christ is love," she says. Please pray with her that this would become a reality.

Thursday 21 September – Iraq

Good news! The harvest this year is better than the one before. In southern Iraq, farmers are enjoying a good harvest of wheat and barley, and the expected wheat production is around 3.5 million tonnes. Praise the Lord for this great harvest, and pray that every community in Iraq will benefit from this blessing.

| Asia

Friday 22 September – Nepal

Shanti* faced violent persecution from her husband for her faith. Local Open Doors partners met with Shanti and prayed with her. "God has changed [my husband] a lot," she says. "I still hope and have faith in God that He will surely change him fully." Please pray with Shanti for her husband and children to accept Christ.

*Names changed for security reasons

Saturday 23 September – Nepal

Shanti also received support to start a small shop, and attended persecution survival training. With the money she earns, she can now pay her household expenses. Pray for wisdom for Open Doors partners helping persecuted believers through training and practical aid programmes like these.

Sunday 24 September – North Korea

Since the pandemic, a secret route used by Open Doors fieldworkers to distribute materials such as media devices and practical supplies to North Korean believers has become limited. Pray for wisdom to find a new way to get these supplies to the believers.

Monday 25 September – North Korea

Pray for secret Christians in the army. Conscripts have to serve up to ten years. Pray for courage and wisdom to be salt and light in their environment. Pray that North Korea will cease to celebrate violence and war, and be changed into a country where people can freely talk, travel and worship God.

Tuesday 26 September – Vietnam

"Thirty years ago, I started an underground Bible school," says Pastor Barnabas*. "I was beaten, jailed, forced to run away from local authorities in the forest. Throughout my journey, God was always there for me. God made miracles happen. He protected me, comforted me." Praise God that today there are thousands of disciples across the country

who graduated from Barnabas' underground school!

Wednesday 27 September – Vietnam

Kieu* and her three grandchildren are being pressured by villagers to give up their new faith. Their livestock shelter has been destroyed and their crops damaged. But Kieu is standing firm in her faith. Ask God to provide all their needs, and pray that 'the joy of the Lord [will be their] strength' (Nehemiah 8:10).

Thursday 28 September – Laos

Peto* is a rural evangelist who's being supported through Open Doors' training. "I ask you to pray for land where we can build a church for worship," he says. "Please pray also that our brothers and sisters in faith will be bold and courageous in proclaiming the gospel despite the risks involved."

Friday 29 September – Laos

When Pastor Vee* began to share the gospel in his village, the community turned against him. "I was cast out from my own tribe," he says. But he never gave up and now there are 90 Christians from different tribes who worship together in his community! Ask God to bless Vee and his children.

Saturday 30 September – UK

The first of our four autumn Standing Strong supporter events takes place today. Elijah Ali* from Iraq will share his story tonight in Cambridge, and next week in Northern Ireland. Pray for high attendance and that people at both events will be moved to stand with their persecuted church family.

TEACHING TO REACH THE LOST

Not even surveillance will stop Philemon evangelising in Vietnam



Philemon* from Vietnam had hit rock bottom. Despite being revered as a powerful shaman in his village, he was deeply in debt, addicted to alcohol – and he and his family were facing eviction.

Unable to see a way out of his problems, he bought poison with the intention of killing himself, along with his wife and two children. But the day before he planned to go through with it, he visited his sister to say goodbye – and she shared the gospel with him.

That night, Philemon threw the poison away. A journey of transformation had begun that saw Philemon and his wife encounter Jesus and choose to follow Him.

MONITORING AND INTERROGATION

Philemon immediately began evangelising, risking

hostile encounters with local authorities when he travelled to remote villages. In some cases, he was warned to leave the area within 24 hours. Sometimes he was forced to leave and banned from going back.

Serving as a local missionary, Philemon became more and more aware of a problem that needed to be addressed: illiteracy. With support from local Open Doors partners, he trained to become a teacher. “When the participants learn how to read and write, their values and worth improve,” he says.

“The classes became a place for non-believers to know Jesus.”

Every year, Philemon reaches around 1,500 people through his teaching. Hundreds of

participants are now running this teaching in their own communities!

But even now, his work is not easy. “I travel south, to the central and to the northern-most part of Vietnam. Monitoring and interrogation from authorities are always there, especially since I am not from those areas.”

YOUR PRAYER IS VITAL

Despite the risks, Philemon continues to serve others. His heart for evangelism is evident in his ministry. “The literacy project is also attended by non-believers and the classes became a place for them to know Jesus,” he says. “This project is for the community, not only for the church.”

Philemon is grateful for your part in helping the church in Vietnam and asks for continued prayer which is so essential to his work: “I see that God is

helping this project become successful. I give thanks for your support. We cannot do anything by ourselves. Prayer is like breathing, we need it moment by moment. It is also vital when we are faced with persecution. During those times, we could feel the spiritual power that protects us and gives peace to us. We are encouraged in tough situations.”

PLEASE PRAY

- Give thanks for Philemon's ministry and for the difference it's making to so many people
- That God will protect Philemon and his family
- For Open Doors partners in Vietnam as they continue to serve believers.

*Name changed for security reasons



LEFT Through Philemon's literacy courses, more and more people are coming to know Jesus



| China

Sunday 1 October

In China, the state is threatened by anything that could rock the 'stability' of the country. For the government, this means conformity to political thought and cultural identity. Ask the Holy Spirit to change the hearts of those in government to see Christians as a positive influence in the country, not disrupters.

Monday 2 October

Under new measures introduced in 2022, churches that want to share sermons or Bible studies online require a permit – but this is only available to state-approved religious institutions, such as the Three Self Patriotic Movement. Pray that house churches will find ways to continue sharing and growing in their knowledge of God's Word.

Tuesday 3 October

In what is believed to be a 'test case', churches in Zhejiang Province have been ordered to display new signs by their entrances saying, "Love the Communist party, love the country and love the religion." Pray that local churches will remain faithful to Christ and not be intimidated by this order, and pray that it will not be rolled out in other provinces.

Wednesday 4 October

Muslim-majority areas of China are among the most restricted in the country. Monitoring and control by the authorities have

tightened further in recent months. Ask God's Spirit to bring freedom and hope to these areas, and pray that the small number of Christians will remain steadfast in their faith and deeply connected to Jesus.

Thursday 5 October

Give thanks that several Christian pastors and church workers were released from prison this year. They are still being closely monitored by the authorities. Ask for God's protection as they adjust to life outside prison, and pray that their relationships with loved ones will be restored.

Friday 6 October

Regulations on religion introduced in 2018 include a ban on under-18s attending church. Ask the Holy Spirit to inspire and guide pastors into ways to connect with and disciple children and young people.



ABOVE An undercover youth prayer meeting in China, earlier this year

Saturday 7 October

Thank God for the growth of the church in China, despite the efforts of the authorities. Pray for the hearts of Chinese people to be receptive to the

gospel and pray that many more will come to Christ.

| Asia

Sunday 8 October – Pakistan

A general election is anticipated to take place by 7 November. Pray for a free, fair and peaceful election process, and that God will raise up leaders who will govern with equity and justice for all Pakistanis, regardless of religion or ethnicity.

Monday 9 October – Bangladesh

Pray for students receiving advanced adult literacy training. At this level, students are able to attend Scripture-reading classes where they can explore the Bible more deeply. Pray that they will be blessed by what they learn and grow spiritually as well as in their literacy skills.

Tuesday 10 October – Central Asia

Thousands of Afghan refugees are in limbo in Central Asia, without enough money to move on, and without their legal papers because of the haste in which they left Afghanistan. Pray for wisdom and protection for Open Doors partners reaching out to both Christian and Muslim refugees with practical aid and spiritual support.

Wednesday 11 October – Central Asia

Give thanks that Muslim Afghan refugees are now able to hear the gospel. Many have given their lives to Jesus and want to be baptised! Pray that the hearts of many more

Muslims, especially those who have been radicalised, will be opened to the gospel and touched by the love of Jesus.

Thursday 12 October – Central Asia

Ask God to open doors for Afghan refugees to earn an income so they can support their families and not become dependent on relief aid. Pray that youth and children will have opportunities to continue their education and build a more hopeful future for themselves.

Friday 13 October – Indonesia

In Indonesia, a church needs 90 members before it is granted a building permit. This is a challenging figure in a majority-Muslim country. Ask the Lord to add to the number of those who are being saved, so that more believers can come together to form congregations.

Saturday 14 October – Indonesia

Additionally, the church needs the approval of the village chief and 60 signatures from locals. This has proven to be almost impossible. Pray for a softening of the hearts of these villagers to allow Muslims and Christians to live together in harmony, and to worship freely.

Sunday 15 October – Brunei

There is a growing desire among Christian youth in Brunei to have a deeper relationship with the Lord. Many long for guidance and leadership. Ask God to raise up mentors and leaders who can nurture this generation.



“My biggest persecutor was my greatest miracle”

Persecution was unrelenting, but Sang from Vietnam persevered – and it led to a wonderful answer to prayer

When Sang* gave his life to Jesus in 2011, it ushered in a decade of persecution – not only for him, but for his mother who wasn't even a Christian.

Sang was aged 14 when he made the decision that infuriated his father, who saw it as a betrayal of the family's animist background. But Sang was resolute, forcing his father to keep changing tack to get him to change his mind.

One attempt involved getting Sang to attend military school. “I told him that I will follow his will to enter that school,

but I will not give up my faith,” recalls Sang. To his father's dismay, Sang was not admitted – because he's a Christian.

“When I wouldn't back down, my dad persecuted my mother instead,” he continues. She was beaten and verbally abused. “Little did my father know that she supported my faith and wanted to convert but was afraid of him.”

Sang left home to become a pharmacist, but by the time he had graduated he'd realised that his passion was church work. He wanted to go to a

Bible school run by Open Doors local partners, but his father was livid, threatening to kill him, his mother or himself if he went.

Sang courageously went and, although his dad didn't follow through on his threats, the hostility remained. “Sometimes I wondered, ‘Why not just obey my dad to have an easier life?’ There were times I thought of giving up, but it would occur to me that if I die, I will be full of despair and without hope. So, I get up and continue to follow Christ – if I die, I want to die in and for Christ.”

His perseverance led to an amazing answer to prayer. “My father was my biggest persecutor, but he was also my biggest miracle,” he says. “In 2021, he and my mother became Christians. My father said he saw a huge transformation in me since I returned from Bible school.”

Today, Sang travels to remote regions to disciple new believers and evangelise. Key to his ministry is prayer – both his and yours.

“Prayer makes me become more faithful in the Lord and deepens my relationship with

“When someone prays for me, they're like my partners in this job; I am not alone.”

Him. It makes me strong, especially in tough situations,” he says. “Other people praying for me is important, too. When someone prays for me, they're like my partners in this job; I am not alone. I believe that the one who prays for me has the same vision as me.”

PLEASE PRAY

- For protection, strength and wisdom as Sang travels
- That his ministry will bear increasing fruit
- That Sang will soon be able to build a church for local tribal people.

*Name changed for security reasons



| West Africa

Monday 16 October – Nigeria

"The attacks happen almost every day in different communities around the local government area," said a local partner following a spate of attacks on Christians in Plateau State by militant Fulani herdsmen over the summer. "Please pray that God will provide and protect us," says a believer.

Tuesday 17 October – Burkina Faso

At least two Christians were among seven people killed in an attack on a village by Islamic militants. This includes Pastor Jonas Yaro, who was shot dead in front of his wife; they have three children. Ask God to comfort them and give them hope in place of despair.

Wednesday 18 October – Mali

In June, Malians approved a draft constitution that included the country remaining a secular state. Prominent Muslim leaders had called for a 'multiconfessional state', raising concerns among Christians over what this could mean for them as a minority religion. Praise God for this good news!

Thursday 19 October – Niger

The military seized power in July and, at the time of writing, it's unclear what this might mean for Christians. However, there are concerns about the influence of Islamic extremists in the army. "If they're among this new junta, then persecution may well be on the rise," says a local partner. Pray for the protection of the Nigerian church.

Friday 20 October – Togo

After becoming a Christian, Apevia was forced from home with her children by her husband. Open Doors partners provided them with food, rent, education and livelihood support. "Pray that my loved ones will be converted and that my eldest son will find work," asks Apevia. "Pray that I will be strengthened in Christ."

Saturday 21 October – Ivory Coast

There is fear that the influence of militant Islamic groups in sub-Saharan Africa will bring further instability to the Ivory Coast (which currently falls outside the World Watch List top 50), with Christians targeted as they are elsewhere. Pray that the country will be guarded from this threat.

Sunday 22 October – Mauritania

Mauritania is number 20 on the World Watch List. Last year, some believers were detained, whilst others had to flee the country. Severe pressure comes from family, the community and the authorities (apostasy and evangelism are illegal). Pray that the transformation of believers' lives will lead to conversations about Jesus.

| Sudan

Monday 23 October

The conflict that broke out in April continues to deteriorate. At the time of writing, at least 3,000 people have been killed and more than three million displaced. Pray that the warring parties – the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the

paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) – will seek a swift and peaceful resolution.

Tuesday 24 October

Since fighting began, more than 165 churches have closed and at least 15 have been destroyed. Churches are also reporting incidents of rape, kidnap and looting. Pray for the protection, healing and release of believers, and the restoration of churches.

Wednesday 25 October

There are reports that Muslim fundamentalists are joining the fight, putting Christians further at risk. This adds to concern that the conflict could give Islamists a renewed foothold in the country. Pray that the country's positive steps towards religious freedom in recent years will not be undone.

| East Africa

Thursday 26 October – Uganda

A man gave his life to Jesus at the funeral of Amina, one of 37 students killed in an attack on a predominantly Christian school by Islamic extremists. But he's facing threats from his family. "I fear as a human, but I'm trusting Jesus to guide me," he says. "Even if they kill me, I'll be in heaven with Amina." Pray for his protection.

Friday 27 October – Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Since January, one million people have fled their homes in eastern DRC because of rising violence by groups including the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Christian communities are bearing the brunt of this onslaught. Pray for greater

security to combat this threat, and the provision of all humanitarian needs.

Saturday 28 October – Eritrea

Pastor Tesfay Yihdego (58) recently died after ten years in prison for his faith. According to a local partner, many church leaders contract fatal illnesses after long periods of detention in awful conditions. Pray that his family will be comforted in their grief, and pray for the health and wellbeing of all Christian prisoners.

Sunday 29 October – Ethiopia

Praise God for the incredible impact of a water well provided by Open Doors partners to support persecuted Christians. "If these people we despised, hated and cast out could give us this free clean water, this is an example to us," say local Muslims, who are among 1,000 households now using it.

Monday 30 October – Comoros

Comoros re-entered the World Watch List top 50 this year (at 42) due to greater pressure on Christians by locals and the authorities, and a rise in violence. The government has said publicly that there's only religious freedom for expatriates, not Comorians. Ask God to strengthen and encourage believers amidst hostility.

Tuesday 31 October – Somalia

Islamic militants have intensified their hunt for Christians – of whom there are believed to be only a few hundred. Their stated goal is to rid Somalia of any Christians. Pray for the safety of believers and that their number will grow.



IDOP ONLINE 2023

UNITING IN PRAYER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Will you join us?

SUNDAY 5 NOVEMBER | 7.30-8.30PM

We're excited to be joining once again with our friends at the Evangelical Alliance, CSW and Release International to pray for our persecuted family on the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church.

This year, Open Doors will be sharing stories from Nigeria, where last year more Christians were killed for their faith than everywhere else in the world combined.

You will also discover why Nicaragua has entered the World Watch List for the first

time, and hear from believers who have been imprisoned for their faith.

“How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!”

Psalm 133:1

We would love for you to join us as we seek to unite in prayer to make a difference to the lives of millions of Christians who courageously risk everything to follow Jesus.

Register your free place at opendoorsuk.org/idop



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