

Open*Doors*

PRAYER DIARY | January/February 2024



"I count everything
as loss because of
the surpassing worth
of knowing Christ
Jesus my Lord."

PHILIPPIANS 3:8 (ESV)

JANUARY

North Korea

Monday 1 January

North Korea is the most dangerous place in the world in which to follow Jesus. Give thanks that, despite the great cost, North Koreans are coming to know Christ! Pray that the gospel will continue to spread inside the country and that the underground church will find ways to meet with and disciple new believers.

Tuesday 2 January

“Our first prayer request is that we can help North Korean Christians physically survive,” says Brother Simon*, who works with Open Doors North Korea ministry. Pray that Christians will be reached with food, clothes and medicine through Open Doors networks, especially during the winter.

Wednesday 3 January

Open Doors operates a radio ministry outside North Korea that reaches thousands of secret believers in North Korea each day. North Korea only officially sells radios that are tuned to state frequencies. Pray that more Christians will get radios through our secret networks outside the country.

Thursday 4 January

Pray for Christians who secretly listen to these Christian radio broadcasts. The North Korean regime tries to block frequencies from outside the country. Ask

God to lead believers to the right frequencies and pray for protection as they listen at night – that they will be encouraged and grow in faith.

Friday 5 January

Christians inside North Korea have asked Open Doors to produce a radio programme about the persecuted church to help them pray for persecuted Christians around the world. Pray for the new, weekly programme developed to introduce North Korean Christians to Open Doors and share about helping persecuted churches worldwide. May God’s kingdom come as His people unite in prayer!

Saturday 6 January

Messages sent from North Korean believers show that their main concern is how to safely pass on their Christian faith to their children. Give thanks that God has opened channels for Open Doors to supply materials through networks outside the country. Pray that these resources will nourish and train children to stand firm in God’s Word.

Sunday 7 January

Remember the 50-70,000 Christians in North Korean prisons. They face starvation, torture and back-breaking labour in terrible conditions. Those in detention centres are often interrogated and beaten. Ask Jesus to stand beside them, give them strength and rescue them from every evil attack (2 Timothy 4:17).

Monday 8 January

Open Doors currently supports 100,000 North Korean Christians with vital physical and spiritual support through networks outside the country. Ask God to protect those risking their lives to provide relief aid, training and resources, to strengthen underground churches in their faith.

Yemen

Tuesday 9 January

Following Jesus in Yemen's strongly conservative Muslim society is extremely dangerous. The punishment for leaving Islam can be death or banishment. Pray for wisdom and protection for Yemeni Christians, and that, despite the dangers, God will continue to give them opportunities and courage to share the gospel.

Wednesday 10 January

Yemen's 10-year civil war has pushed the country into one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Let's cry out today on behalf of all Yemenis, that God in His mercy will bring an end to war and restore peace and stability to the country.

Thursday 11 January

The humanitarian crisis has also exacerbated the pressure on Christians. While some relief aid is available, this is mostly distributed through local Muslim groups and mosques, which are alleged to discriminate against anyone not considered a devout Muslim.

Ask God to provide His people with their daily needs.

Friday 12 January

Most Yemeni Christians come from Muslim backgrounds. As conversion from Islam is forbidden by Islamic and state law, Christians who share their faith risk severe repercussions from their families, the authorities and radical Islamic groups. Pray that believers will find ways to meet together to encourage one another in their faith.

Saturday 13 January

Despite threats, arrest and imprisonment, Saleh* and his brother run a secret church inside Yemen (see Magazine p.18). Meeting together and discipling new believers is extremely dangerous. Pray that they will be guided by the Holy Spirit to bravely share the message of salvation with those who are ready to hear.

Sunday 14 January

Saleh's vision is broader than his own church network. "I hope that soon there will be Christians in every corner of the country, that Christians in every village and city will go out to share the gospel," he says. "My dream goes further; I pray to see the church spread to parts of Africa and the rest of the Arabian Peninsula." Pray with him that God will bring his dream to fruition.

*Name changed for security reasons

Baher from Egypt is seeing huge transformation in his life, thanks to your prayers

Thank you so much for your continued prayers for Baher* from Egypt. He featured in our July 2023 magazine – and he's seen real transformation in his life since then, thanks to your support.

Baher attends church regularly and is now part of a discipleship group that meets to study the Bible. He also has his audio Bible, which has helped him to remain in God's Word outside of church. Through this worship and fellowship, his understanding of God's love and grace has grown much stronger.

Reflecting on his past struggles – Baher used to work in a dangerous quarry, where he lost his brother and his arm in separate incidents – he has come to understand that his hardships were not punishments from God. He has seen the Lord bring good out of those tragic

situations, learning to trust in His plan, knowing that God's faithfulness prevails.

Baher has also been hugely encouraged by his local church family, who are walking with him and supporting him in his faith as it grows.

BAHER'S BUSINESS HELPS FULFIL A DREAM

Thanks to your gifts, Baher received a microloan from local Open Doors partners, and he set up a sheep-farming business. With the guidance and encouragement from the microloan ministry leaders, Baher's project has flourished! Profits have steadily increased, allowing him to sustain his project and support his family. Additionally, he's been able to purchase a small house, which has been a dream of his for a long time.



ABOVE Baher's sheep-farming business - and faith - are flourishing, thanks to you; BELOW Baher has found a loving church community

His personal life has had ups and downs. Baher was engaged but, unfortunately, his engagement ended, resulting in a painful breakup that left him deeply depressed. Baher requests prayers for healing and strength, and that God will lead him to the right partner in the future.

Although there are still difficult days, Baher remains steadfast in his faith,



deepening in his love for God with each passing day and approaching each new chapter with unwavering faith and gratitude. Thank you for standing alongside him in prayer.

PRAY

- That Baher will continue to grow closer to Jesus and know he is loved
- That God will establish Baher in his own home and give him a family
- For local Open Doors partners in Egypt as they continue to walk with Baher and other believers like him.

*Name changed for security reasons

Monday 15 January

With the help of Open Doors partners, Saleh provides meeting spaces, medical help and food for Yemeni Christians. Pray that this ministry will flourish and continue to strengthen the Yemeni church.

Tuesday 16 January

“Your prayers are important and uplifting to us, giving us strength and encouragement to keep going,” says Saleh. Pray that, as his story is shared with Christians around the world, many will be inspired by his example and challenged to support their persecuted family in Yemen and other countries where the cost of following Jesus is highest.

World Watch List

Wednesday 17 January

As the World Watch List 2024 is launched in parliament today, ask the Holy Spirit to draw many MPs and parliamentarians to the event and open their eyes to the persecution Christians face around the world. Pray that many will respond to God’s invitation to ‘speak up and judge fairly, and defend the rights of the poor and needy’ (Proverbs 31:9).

Thursday 18 January – North Korea

The Kim family has ruled over North Korea for more than 70 years. In that time, they have overseen the most brutal treatment of Christians in the world. Ask God to change the hearts

of Kim Jong-Un and his regime so God’s people can be free to worship Him.

Friday 19 January – Somalia

The militant group al-Shabaab has repeatedly expressed its desire to eradicate Christians from the country. Pray for protection for Christians who are at risk from Islamic militants, and ask God to give them wisdom and courage to live out their faith despite the dangers.

Saturday 20 January – Libya

Libya remains deeply unstable, increasing the danger for God’s people. Violence against Christians has risen in the last year. Pray that stability and order will come to Libya so that God’s people can follow Him without fear.

Sunday 21 January – Eritrea

Imprisoned Christians in Eritrea’s extensive prison network are often tortured and medical treatment is withheld when they are sick. Ask God’s Spirit to be their comfort, companion and healer in prison.

Monday 22 January – Yemen

Although following Jesus in Yemen continues to be extremely dangerous, brave Yemeni believers are sharing their faith and people are coming to know Christ. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead believers to those who are genuinely searching for truth.

Tuesday 23 January – Nigeria

Nigeria is the most violent place in the world to live as

a Christian. Pray for Open Doors trauma workers serving survivors of violence and their families. Pray that, through their ministry, many would find healing and hope.



A trauma care worker gives support in Nigeria

Wednesday 24 January – Pakistan

Christian women and girls are at high risk of abduction, forced marriage and sexual abuse. Pray for the protection and welfare of our sisters, and for the release of all those taken from their families.

Thursday 25 January – Sudan

Christians in Sudan are especially vulnerable during times of conflict. Ask God to restore peace to Sudan, and pray for strength and courage for those risking much to serve those displaced by the war.

Friday 26 January – Iran

Praise God that the church in Iran is growing! Ask God to continue to pour out His Spirit on Iranian believers, and pray that new believers will find fellowship.

Saturday 27 January – Afghanistan

Many Afghan Christians who fled from Taliban rule are

now refugees in countries where it's still difficult to follow Jesus - and difficult to make ends meet. Ask God to help them find relief, and pray that surrounding countries will be open to letting refugees work, attend school and worship freely.

Sunday 28 January – India

Christians who convert from Hinduism are the most vulnerable to persecution across India. Pray for the comfort and courage of the Holy Spirit for those under pressure from their family or community to deny Christ.

Monday 29 January – Syria

As the northwestern part of Syria continues to recover from the 2023 earthquake, ask God to help His people to be salt and light, showing His love to every community.

Tuesday 30 January – Saudi Arabia

Pray for secret Christians living and following Jesus in Saudi Arabia. Ask God to help them find other Christians - and for Christian communities to have the courage to trust new believers.

Wednesday 31 January

The 13 countries listed above are all categorised on the World Watch List as countries where persecution is 'extreme'. Pray for believers risking everything to follow Jesus in these places, that God's love and Christ's perseverance will strengthen them to live for Him no matter the cost (2 Thessalonians 3:5).

“GOD FIGHTS FOR ME”: NEEMA’S DETERMINED FAITH IN THE FACE OF TRAGEDY

YOUR PRAYERS AND GIFTS ARE SUSTAINING
NEEMA AND HER CHURCH IN DRC



Neema* was in church with her two sons, Danny* (8) and David* (4) when a loud noise made them sit up. They initially thought a speaker had fallen from the wall – but it wasn’t a speaker. “It was the bomb that had been placed to trap and kill people at the church,” Neema says.

The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a prominent Islamic extremist group in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), had planned their attack on

Neema’s church for a service celebrating 62 baptisms earlier in the week.

The improvised explosive device detonated, killing 17 people – including David.

But no one told her the news until she was out of hospital three weeks later. Neema was severely wounded, with injuries all over her legs and body. Danny, her other son, lost an eye in the attack. Neema’s mother-in-law, who still followed

the local religion, blamed Neema for taking the boys to church, and even threatened to kill her.

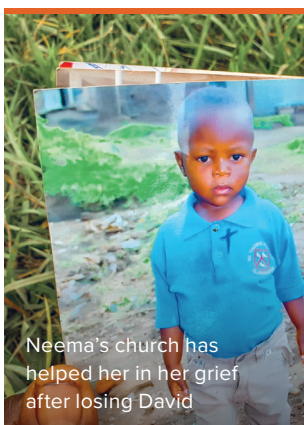
At her lowest moments, Neema blamed herself too: “I say to myself, ‘God, if I had left them at home and gone off alone, maybe I could have been hurt alone.’” But despite the pain, she continues to fix her eyes on Jesus. “We didn’t leave God. Of course, we were hurt, but we are moving on. God sees everything we are carrying. He sees it in front of His cross.”

TRAUMA CARE HELPS CHURCH REGAIN STRENGTH

The Sunday following the attack, local Open Doors partners visited the church to pray with and encourage them. They also visited those who’d been injured in hospital and provided the families – including Neema’s – with food aid, thanks to your support.

“THEY CAME TO EXTERMINATE US, BUT OUR FAITH CAN’T BE PUT OUT.”

The team also ran trauma-healing sessions for the survivors. Rev. Kambale, leader of Neema’s church, says, “The Christians were tired, but thanks to the support of our brothers and sisters, we have regained our strength.”



Neema’s church has helped her in her grief after losing David

Neema adds her own thanks: “I thank Him for all the support from brothers and sisters... may the name of God be glorified.”

Thanks to your prayers, Neema’s faith is not diminished. “They came to exterminate us, but our faith can’t be put out,” she testifies. “They thought we would stop going to church. No, God fights for me. My God is going to keep me, and I can’t leave my God! I say: May the name of God be glorified.”

PRAY

- For Neema, her husband and her son Danny, that God will continue to comfort and heal them
- That Neema will remain strong in her faith and be a bold witness in her community
- For local Open Doors partners as they continue to minister to traumatised believers in DRC.

*Name changed for security reasons

FEBRUARY

Africa Cup of Nations

Thursday 1 February – Algeria

The African Cup of Nations is underway in the Ivory Coast. The football tournament features 11 countries on the World Watch List, including Algeria. Since the new government came to power in 2017, more than 40 churches have been closed. A handful remain open. Pray that believers will find ways to gather.

Friday 2 February – Burkina Faso

Ongoing political instability and the rising influence of Islamic militancy have contributed to Burkina Faso facing one of the world's severest displacement crises, with many Christians affected. Pray for peace and stability, and that people will be able to return to the places they once called home.

Saturday 3 February – Cameroon

"Boko Haram took my happiness away when they burnt my Bible," said Rukayyatu* following an attack. But thanks to supporters like you, she has a new Bible! "The past year without a Bible has been empty. Now I am filled." Praise God for Rukayyatu's infectious passion for His Word.

Sunday 4 February – DRC

At least 35 people were killed when suspected ADF militants attacked a Christian neighbourhood in Oicha, North Kivu province, in October. It was the latest attack on believers in the area, leaving them in despair and disillusionment. Pray that they will be assured God is near in this time of doubt and grief.

Monday 5 February – Egypt

Open Doors local partners are involved in church planting initiatives, with current efforts focused on Upper Egypt, Middle Egypt and cities along the Suez Canal. Ask the Holy Spirit to give specific words of encouragement and guidance to those involved in these projects.

Tuesday 6 February – Mali

Following the coup in 2020, insecurity has escalated: last year saw around 1,000 violent attacks involving jihadist groups. "The whole country is threatened by the insurgent Islamists," shares a contact. "May God intervene and destroy their agenda." Ask God to answer this prayer.

Wednesday 7 February – Mauritania

Although the growth of the internet and social media helps converts to connect with other Christians, this is still fraught with difficulty due to slow technological development in many regions and lack of privacy within families. Pray that this year will bring breakthroughs in this area.

Thursday 8 February

– Morocco

The earthquake that hit in September destroyed Mazem's* home and livelihood. He and his family of eight now live in a tent. He also struggles with his eyesight. But his faith is strong and he is not without hope in God. Pray for the provision of work, a new home and all other essentials, and ask God to restore Mazem's sight.

Friday 9 February

– Mozambique

Twelve Christians were killed in September when so-called Islamic State attacked the village of Naquitenge. It reflects the growing influence of militants in the north, which the government is struggling to address. Pray for stronger security that deters militants and gives locals peace.

Saturday 10 February

– Nigeria

Some 20,000 Christians live in displacement camps in Benue State that are surrounded by Fulani militants. Those who leave the camp for food and resources risk attack. In October, 11 women were raped when they went to fetch firewood. Pray for their healing, and for protection over those in these camps.

Sunday 11 February – Tunisia

President Kais Saied's grip on power is inviting growing discontent from the public – and drawing people to Jesus. "I rejoice as more hardship makes young people come

to Him," says Aizah*. "This week, I connected with four new seekers under 19 years old." Ask the Holy Spirit to stir more hearts towards Jesus.

Sudan

Monday 12 February

It's almost a year since conflict broke out between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). More than 9,000 people have been killed, with some six million displaced. At the time of writing, peace talks are ongoing. Pray for a decisive and lasting breakthrough.

Tuesday 13 February

In November, at least six children were killed when the largest church in Omdurman, which includes an orphanage, was bombed. A day earlier, a bomb fell on a mission house in Khartoum where nuns had been caring for people, injuring 23 people. Lift up in prayer all those affected by these awful incidents.

Wednesday 14 February

Many Christians from Muslim backgrounds also face dangers far closer to home. Some even refrain from telling their children about Jesus, for fear they may inadvertently disclose their parents' faith to the local community. Ask the Lord to encourage believers who are struggling to know how to express their faith safely.

*Name changed for security reasons

"I TRIED TO LEAVE JESUS – BUT I COULDN'T"

Somali believer Ayesha* has suffered many times for her faith – but won't turn her back on Jesus

Ayesha* is a single mum with three boys, living in the Horn of Africa. Originally from Somalia, she became a Christian 20 years ago, and it has cost her everything. But she won't leave Jesus, and she wants to encourage other believers going through difficult situations to hold on to their faith.

"When I received Jesus, I received many problems," Ayesha remembers. "My family attempted to take my children from me forcefully; my husband left me and the children because of my faith. After my husband's death, I raised the children alone."

One Sunday, Ayesha came home and was stabbed in the back by three women. Ayesha was rushed to hospital and had several operations to repair the damage. The women were all arrested, but Ayesha's own family came to their


defence. "My uncle went to the authorities and told them, 'We are thankful to those women who tried to kill her because she became our enemy. You have to release the women who stabbed her.'"

**"JESUS SHOWED
ME THE LIGHT,
AND I THANK HIM."**

Sadly, the women were released. The attack on her life made Ayesha question her decision to follow Christ, and she slid into depression. And yet she couldn't walk away from Jesus: "I decided 100 times to leave Jesus – but I couldn't do it."

ENCOURAGED TO ENDURE

Thanks to you, Ayesha has not been alone in her struggles. Your prayers and support have enabled local Open Doors partners in the Horn of Africa to support



Even after Ayesha was attacked, she remained faithful to Jesus

Ayesha with money for medical bills and starting a small business, and trauma care. “I want to give thanks to Jesus,” she says. “He showed me the light, and I thank Him – and I thank you all.”

Ayesha has paid a high cost for holding on to Jesus, but she knows that price is worth it. “Jesus told us the truth: If you want to follow Him, take up your cross, so that is the decision you make the day you choose Christ.

“To the person who receives eternal life, I want to tell you to endure. Do not be afraid;

you are stronger than any situation. You are a child of God. We are saved.”

PRAY

- That Ayesha and her children will be strengthened in their faith
- For Ayesha’s family, that they will come to know the joy of choosing Jesus
- That God will strengthen and provide for Open Doors partners in the Horn of Africa serving persecuted believers.

*Name changed for security reasons

Pray for the persecutors

Thursday 15 February

– Sri Lanka

Shani* and Sasha* became Christians, along with their mother, in 2019. But their father was furious, beating them and forcing them to worship Hindu gods. The three of them now attend church secretly. “I love Jesus,” says Shani. “But I want my dad, too.” Pray for his salvation.

Friday 16 February – Nepal

Anita* gave her life to Jesus when her daughter was healed after being prayed for at church. Her husband also became a Christian, before later renouncing his faith. “Persecution is coming from my husband and his family,” she says. “Nevertheless, God is with me.” Pray that Anita’s husband will return to Jesus.

Saturday 17 February

– Central Asia

A policeman arrived at an underground pastor’s home to arrest him, but he wasn’t in. His 10-year-old daughter invited him to wait. She made him dinner and, saying grace, thanked God for the food and this ‘good man’. Overwhelmed by her love, he became a Christian and is now helping protect the church. Praise God for this extraordinary testimony!

Sunday 18 February – Egypt

Last year, Fadi was killed by a colleague called Mohammed, who told police, “I hate Christians; I killed him because he is Christian.” Despite their

anguish, and justice being far from certain, Fadi’s family have decided to forgive Mohammed. Pray that this will impact Mohammed powerfully and lead him to Jesus.

Monday 19 February

– Bangladesh

You might remember Jashim, who was beaten by his family in 2022. He’s still recovering, but training by Open Doors local partners is helping him and his wife process what happened. “I have forgiven them,” he says. “I tried to rebuild our broken relationship and it worked.” Pray that this restored relationship will grow stronger.

Tuesday 20 February

– Philippines

When Benita fell gravely ill, she sought prayer at the house church she had previously persecuted. “I never thought I’d say this, but Jesus healed me, and He saved us all,” says Benita. Give thanks for her new faith and pray that it will deepen.

Wednesday 21 February

– Colombia

John* was once in an armed group and he hated Christians. He gave his life to Jesus in prison. “For me, Jesus Christ is everything, He is more than life,” says John. “There are no words to describe the greatness of Jesus.” Pray that more gang members in Colombia will encounter Jesus.

Thursday 22 February

– Nicaragua

Pastor Wilbur* was leading a service being monitored

by two police officers. Afterwards, one of them accepted the pastor's offer for prayer. He became a Christian, and is now seeking to lead his colleagues to faith. Pray for courage and opportunities as he does this.

Counting the cost

Friday 23 February – Iran

After encountering Jesus in a dream, Sanaz* became a Christian. Today, she serves the homeless, the elderly and women addicted to drugs. But it's costly, and she sometimes receives beatings. "It's not easy, but it's worth it," says Sanaz. Praise God for her testimony and witness.

Saturday 24 February – Sudan

"Despite all these challenges, I'll stick to my faith and continue to love and serve Jesus," said a convert after being excommunicated by her family. Pray that she will know that 'the Spirit of glory and of God rests on' her (1 Peter 4:14), and ask the Holy Spirit to draw her family to Jesus.

Sunday 25 February – Sri Lanka

Despite rejection from his daughter and local villagers, 80-year-old Brother Piyasena is undeterred in his faith. He once took a paralysed man to church, where he was healed and the whole family became Christians. "God is enough for me," says Piyasena. "Pray that when I die, I die for the Lord."

Monday 26 February

– North Korea

"Living or dying, I'm devoted to the evangelisation of North Korea," writes a sister, who's spent time in a safehouse in China run by Open Doors fieldworkers. "If I have to be a martyr to save them, I will be one." Pray that the brave faith of secret believers will lead many people to Jesus in North Korea.

Tuesday 27 February – Laos

When Souvath* and his family became Christians, the authorities withdrew government support. "I'm going to continue to walk God's path, whatever circumstances my family will face," said Souvath, who has sadly since died from illness. Pray that his faith will have a lasting legacy.

Wednesday 28 February – Vietnam

Despite persecution, Xuan* has chosen to remain in her village and evangelise. "Even if they kill me, I know I am going to die for the Lord," says Xuan. Pray that Xuan's courageous faith will impact many people.

Thursday 29 February – Cuba

"After 40 years in ministry, I've learned we must face life's trials with courage and trust in God," says Pastor Angel, who's faced fines, imprisonment and beatings for his faith. Pray that church leaders in Cuba will continue to speak God's Word 'with great boldness' (Acts 4:29).

*Name changed for security reasons

AMONG THE ASHES

LEARN LAMENT WITH THE
PERSECUTED CHURCH

What do we do when everything falls apart? How do we pray when God seems distant or even absent? How do we learn to wait with patience and hope? Where can we turn when we find ourselves standing among the ashes?

Among the Ashes is a new resource for small groups and churches focusing on lament. Based around five inspirational films set in a variety of evocative locations around the UK, it combines biblical reflection with stories from the persecuted church to explore how the biblical principle of lament can bring us hope and comfort, even in the darkest situations.

This powerful resource comes with a discussion guide, which provides session plans to accompany each video, as well as background material, Bible readings and prayer points. It's ideal for Lent groups, small groups, prayer evenings or even church services.

Watch the films and order your discussion guides at
opendoorsuk.org/ashes



Open Doors, PO Box 6, Witney,
OX29 6WG

T 01993 460015

E contact@opendoorsuk.org

FIND US ON:

opendoorsuk.org



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