

# Open *Doors*

MAGAZINE | Sept/Oct

**Put hope at  
the centre**

**Supporting persecuted  
Christians in the  
Middle East**





Join Open Doors live for our annual event as we gather online with our persecuted brothers and sisters. Hear their stories first-hand, be challenged to pray and moved to act.

Gather together with your church, friends and family to grow your vision of church and deepen your faith!

**SATURDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2021 | 8PM**

Book your place today at [opendoorsuk.org/standingstrong](https://opendoorsuk.org/standingstrong)



SEND A LETTER OF HOPE

You can let your persecuted family know that they are not forgotten by writing a letter of encouragement.

Our new letter-writing guide features Christians from all over the world – including the Middle East, Ethiopia and Malaysia – who would love to hear from you.

Order the guide at [opendoorsuk.org/write](https://opendoorsuk.org/write)

“Anytime I am sad, or my heart is heavy, I pick up the letters and start reading and feel comforted.” – MARTINA FROM NIGERIA



## Leave a legacy of hope

You can give your persecuted family hope of a brighter future by including a gift to Open Doors in your Will. Your gift will mean a lifetime of support for those who suffer for following Jesus.

If you have not yet made a Will, you can make a Will for FREE using our partner *Farewill*.

To find out more go to [opendoorsuk.org/legacy](https://opendoorsuk.org/legacy) or phone 01993 777338.



“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” MATTHEW 25:40

Open Doors is an international ministry serving persecuted Christians and churches worldwide.

Open Doors supplies Bibles, leadership training, literacy programmes, livelihood support and advocacy services. We also mobilise the church in the UK and Ireland to serve Christians living under religious persecution.

If you have any questions about the work of Open Doors, or would like to reprint any of the articles in this magazine, please do get in touch.

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### Open Doors UK & I

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**Cover image:** Joseph fled his home in Syria when so-called Islamic State invaded. Now, thanks to your support and a Centre of Hope, he is home and running a small business

## Letter from Henrietta

# Hope at the centre

“Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life” PROVERBS 13:12

As we came out of lockdown, I thought a lot about the importance of hope to pull us forward. Hope is such a powerful and beautiful gift from God. That’s exactly what Centres of Hope offer to Christian communities, and others, in the Middle East – they bring hope to people who are desperately in need.

So many Christians fled Syria and Iraq during the terrible conflict, and those who remain face the pandemic on top of extreme rejection, isolation and persecution. Miraculously, despite the dangers, the church in Syria and Iraq is seeing many new believers come to faith from a Muslim background. Praise God! Courageous men and women are learning the truth of Jesus and choosing to follow Him, even if it costs them dearly. And it so often does. It’s heartbreaking to read about the persecution these Christian converts encounter.

But the good news is that Christians are God’s family, and it’s a family that sticks together. On p9, you can read the extraordinary story of Anwar\*, a sheikh’s son in Syria. Anwar’s family rejected him when he became a Christian, but he found hope and a new family at a Centre of Hope. And now I’m delighted to say that he is helping others at the centre himself. Thanks to you, Open Doors partners are supporting more and more people through Centres of Hope. The centres not only provide basic supplies, they provide love, community and a future. They provide hope – both for believers and for others in desperate need.

We’re six years into Open Doors’ *Hope for the Middle East* campaign, and I know many of you have supported it every step of the way. Thank you and let’s keep going! We know that hope involves waiting (Romans 8:24-25). So let’s keep praying, supporting and encouraging the church in the Middle East to keep shining the light of God’s hope to their communities. That’s life in God’s kingdom!



Henrietta

Henrietta Blyth  
CEO, Open Doors UK&I

\*Name changed for security reasons

**NIGERIA**

## From 'Chibok girl' to university graduate

Seven years after being one of 276 girls kidnapped by Boko Haram from her school in Chibok state, Nigeria, Mary Katembi (BELOW) is celebrating. This summer, she graduated from American University in Yola, Adamawa State, with a degree in accounting.

"Once, I never thought I would see Mary again," says



Saratu, Mary's mother. "But the prayers of believers have brought her out of captivity and now she has graduated from university. *Yesu na gode* – thank you Jesus!"

Sadly, 112 of the girls kidnapped in April 2014 remain in captivity. Open Doors partners continue to stand alongside the Chibok community as they wait for the return of their daughters.

"Mary is a testimony," her father, Katembi, shares. "Please don't stop praying for the other girls and other children that are in the hands of the abductors, that God will bring them out and, one day, we will come and celebrate more graduations."



## Class homework heads to Africa

It's not often that homework travels across the world. For the Year 8 students of Ripley St Thomas Church of England Academy in Lancashire, their RE homework will be doing just that.

The class had been learning about the persecution of Christians and the department felt that the story of Hajaratu\* – a widow from Nigeria, who is receiving letters through an Open Doors letter-writing campaign – 'would motivate our wonderful students to send her posters, prayers and messages of encouragement'.

"The response from the students was fantastic and often deeply moving," said a spokesperson for the school.

One letter (ABOVE) was written by Jennifer in Hausa. It translates as: "To Hajaratu. Thank you so much for sharing your story with us. It has really blessed me. I pray for you."

Would you like to write to persecuted Christians? Order a copy of our new letter-writing guide at [opendoorsuk.org/write](http://opendoorsuk.org/write)



**DRC**

## Two women injured as militant groups continue to target Christians

Two Christian women were injured when a bomb exploded in a church in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The explosion happened in Beni, in north eastern DRC, on 27 June. The two women serve as deacons at Emmanuel Church and were preparing for a service when the bomb exploded. The suspected perpetrators are the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a group which claims to have links to so-called Islamic State.

The attack came amidst a

surge in violence by militant groups in the region. Whilst most groups are driven by ethnic and economic factors, the ADF is pursuing an Islamic expansionist agenda through violent attacks and ambushes, which includes targeting Christians.

Persecution of believers in the DRC is getting significantly worse – the country rose 17 places in the latest World Watch List to number 40. The violence they face is some of the most extreme in the world. Please pray for their protection.

**ERITREA**

## Two elderly pastors arrested and a third placed on house arrest

Two elderly pastors have been arrested in Eritrea, and a third placed on house arrest, as the government continues to detain Christians not from state-approved denominations.

Pastor Ghirmay (75) and Pastor Samuel (74) were taken from their homes during the night in July to an unknown location. Police also intended to arrest Pastor Georgio (72) – who has previously spent five years in prison for his faith – but when they found him sick in bed, they

told him he was under house arrest until he is well enough to be taken into custody. All three pastors are part of the Full Gospel Church in the capital, Asmara.

Last year, the government began releasing detained Christians. However, arrests continue to take place. Despite almost half of the country's population being Christian, those not from state-approved denominations face extreme persecution. The Ethiopian

Orthodox Church, Catholic church and Lutheran church are the only Christian denominations recognised by the government.

"We call on the international community to continue in fervent prayer for our brothers and sisters in Eritrea," says Jo Newhouse\*, spokesperson for Open Door's work in sub-Saharan Africa. "Pray for God's provision for the hundreds of Christians who continue to endure hardship in prison."

**INDONESIA**

## You're reaching thousands of Christians with Covid-19 aid



LEFT Warto Mukio and his wife are thankful for the timely help; (RIGHT) aid funded by you arrives for distribution

In the wake of a surge of Covid-19 cases in Indonesia – resulting in thousands of deaths, and restrictions that gravely impacted lives – your support ensured thousands of vulnerable believers were reached with vital relief aid.

**"I don't know if I can survive without this help."**

"Thank you, Open Doors, for this aid," Warto Mukio and his wife Yah share. "This is a great help

to us in this difficult time. We can't repay your kindness."

"I don't know if I can survive without this help," Yah says. "Life is very difficult these days. I feel very blessed."

"I was really happy when I heard you were distributing relief aid," says Tumiyem, who also received aid. "This is really a blessing to me and a great help to me and my family."

Indonesian society has taken on a more conservative

Islamic character in recent years, putting added pressure on Christians. The last year has also seen three terrorist attacks on churches. Praise God that Open Doors local partners can come alongside persecuted and vulnerable believers.

\*Names changed for security reasons

**For the latest news and stories of courageous faith, visit [opendoorsuk.org](http://opendoorsuk.org)**

## Emails, tweets and prayers – your crucial role in standing for truth in India

Thank you! Christians in India are caught between two crises: persecution and pandemic. They desperately need the global church to speak out for them – and you’ve done just that. As our Advocacy team continues to amplify their voice their voice, you still have a vital part to play.

### WE ASKED, YOU SPOKE

In June, 5,900 of you invited your MP to the Parliamentary briefing of *Destructive Lies*, a report commissioned by Open Doors and conducted by the London School of Economics that highlights the extreme persecution facing Christians and other religious minorities in India. A total of 38 MPs and representatives attended the briefing on 1 July.



This was followed by further engagement from MPs. Sarah Owen, Feryal Clark, Andrew Rosindell, Imran Ahmad Khan and Janet Daby requested further information from Parliament about issues raised in the report. Brendan O’Hara submitted an Early Day Motion (formally calling for a debate on the topic), which now has 21 signatures.

Further momentum followed in July, with 547 of you tweeting Nigel Adams (Minister for

Asia) and Simon Manley (Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the UK to the World Trade Organisation and UN) sharing footage showing the persecution of Christians in India. A further 3,049 emailed the video.

And on 15 August – Indian Independence Day – you joined forces with Open Doors supporters globally for a social media campaign to raise awareness by sharing pictures of yourselves holding #StandForTruthIndia.



against religious minorities in India.

### PLEASE PRAY

- That human rights will be given greater consideration in trade talks with India
- That an international fact-finding commission will take place
- For more opportunities for the Advocacy team to be a voice to those in power.

This is a phenomenal response! Whether you tweeted, emailed, prayed or shared a photo – thank you!

### WHAT’S NEXT?

Our Advocacy team has been pushing for the implementation of two of the recommendations from the report.

In August, the team contributed to an open consultation with the government about which aspects of the UK’s existing trade arrangements with India could be considered for amendment. This provided a great opportunity to stress that human rights should be a significant factor in all trade negotiations with the country. Trade talks between the UK and India will begin in September.

The team are also seeking to organise meetings with UN officials to reinforce the need for an international fact-finding commission into violence and other human rights violations

### BE A LOCAL VOICE!

Our volunteer Advocacy Reps have been meeting with their MPs to discuss the report. It’s led to our Advocacy team following up with individual MPs who’ve shared that they’d like to work more closely with us on certain actions. **Being a local voice for the persecuted church makes a real difference. Find out how you can become an Advocacy Rep at [opendoorsuk.org/volunteer](https://opendoorsuk.org/volunteer)**

do —\*  
not be  
afraid



## RESOURCES FOR CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR FROM OPEN DOORS

“Do not be afraid”: the first words that the angels gave to the shepherds still resonate with all of us over 2,000 years later. So often the steps that bring us closest to God take some courage – this year, that perhaps even included returning to a church building for a service, after months of online gathering.

But whatever happens in the rest of 2021, we know that, as always, we will be celebrating the birth of Jesus this Christmas. Along with our persecuted family around the world. And you’ll be able to use new Open Doors resources this Christmas, to help you do just that.

The resources you can order take as their theme that message from the angels: “Do not be afraid.” They feature 11-year-old Rafif from Iraq (PICTURED), whose father sacrificed his life warning Christians of a bomb attack in Mosul. You’ll be introduced properly to Rafif’s inspiring story of love and courage in a future magazine.

As we emerge from lockdown, none of us knows exactly what is in store for us towards the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022. But Christmas is a reminder that God is with us.

And if God is with us, then we do not need to be afraid.

FIND OUT MORE AT [OPENDOORSUK.ORG/CHRISTMAS](https://opendoorsuk.org/christmas)

NEW CHURCH RESOURCE

### AMONG THIS YEAR’S OPEN DOORS CHRISTMAS RESOURCES:

- \* ‘Do Not Be Afraid’ carol sheet. Contains stories, prayers, Bible readings and, of course, well-loved carols. Use it in your services or take it out carol singing.
- \* ‘Do Not Be Afraid’ card. This giveaway card has seven Bible verses to bring comfort and encouragement to anyone feeling anxious or worried. Great to give out to visitors to your Christmas services and to family and friends between Christmas and New Year.
- \* There will also be a letter-writing campaign for persecuted Christian children around the world – like Rafif.
- \* Videos, notes and activities for speakers and church leaders to use in their services as they wish.

# IN SYRIA, HELP PUT HOPE AT THE CENTRE

A decade of war and persecution – followed by a pandemic – has left Christian communities in Syria and Iraq in a desperate situation. But with your support, Centres of Hope are keeping the church's hope alive, and helping Christians to share that hope with their communities - with those who are running out of hope.

Hope hasn't always been easy for Anwar\*. Growing up in Syria, he was immersed in the life of a strict and secretive Islamic sect where his father was a sheikh. "I was excluded and didn't have many friends," remembers Anwar. "But I was also very religious – I would pray with my dad and imitate him."

As a teenager, Anwar started to doubt the religion he'd been raised in – and particularly his hope of being loved. "I was very curious about who Allah really was – does he love me? What should I do to please him?" But Anwar's father wouldn't – or couldn't – answer his questions.

## ANWAR MET A CHRISTIAN

There was one thing that Anwar did feel certain about: that he shouldn't be friends with Christians. "I was sure that Christianity is a lie – to us, Christians were deluded; they worship a human not a God, they are infidels. I wasn't supposed to let any Christian enter my life." But when Anwar went to college, he met a Christian girl who shared her faith in Jesus with

him. He responded by mocking her. "I didn't believe a word she said, especially when she told me that He is alive now and I can speak to Him myself."

## DEEP DEPRESSION

Life got really hard for Anwar, and he stopped seeing the possibility of hope. His mental and physical health were very bad, he lived alone in his family's second home and felt very isolated, and war was making Syria an extremely difficult place to live.

**"I fell in love with Jesus – He is my best friend"**

"I went through deep depression. At that point, I believed that Allah hated me, and I hated him for allowing all this to happen to me. I wanted to end my life."

Despite being mocked, the Christian girl kept telling Anwar the gospel, and encouraged him to try talking to Jesus.

"I thought to myself – why not

try this?" The girl explained to Anwar how to pray to Jesus, and he went to his room and tried. "At first, nothing changed – but after a while, I became addicted to knowing Jesus. One day I was talking to Him, and I remember I started crying. I poured my heart out to Him, and suddenly I wasn't alone anymore."

## "JESUS IS MY BEST FRIEND"

That was the turning point for Anwar's life. The moment that hopelessness turned into hope. "I fell in love with Jesus – He is my best friend," says Anwar.

Amazingly, many Muslims are having the same encounter with Jesus in the Middle East – thanks largely to the courageous witness of the church, like Anwar's friend. That's despite a decade of war and persecution significantly depleting the number of believers in the Middle East. More than half of Syria's Christian population have fled during the civil war, and an even higher percentage have left Iraq – but the remaining believers, and those who are



IMAGE Anwar in Syria was thrown out of his home when he converted to Christianity



Thanks to you, Open Doors partners could support Anwar when he needed help most

returning to rebuild their lives, are spreading the good news of Jesus with extraordinary courage.

But believers from a Muslim background, like Anwar, are the most vulnerable to persecution. They face rejection, violence and social isolation. Some lose their inheritance and property. When difficult periods come, like the pandemic, these believers do not have any support from their families and the communities they grew up in.

#### REJECTED BY HIS FAMILY

At first, Anwar hid his faith, knowing the danger that would come if his family found out – he'd grown up hearing about people who converted and then were imprisoned, attacked or even murdered. If it's considered disgraceful for a Muslim to convert to Christianity, it's considered even worse for a sheikh's son to do so.

"I remember when my friend took me to the church for the first time in the city, I didn't hear the sermon or the songs," says Anwar. "I was preoccupied by the fear of someone recognising me and telling my family."

But Anwar was well-known in his community, and it wasn't long before news did indeed get back to his family. They stopped answering his phone calls. The only time he managed to get through to one of his sisters, she told him, "Don't ever come back here. You are no longer my brother. Wasn't your Muslim faith enough for you? Have you no honour?"

#### SUPPORTED BY A CENTRE OF HOPE

Anwar's family threw him out. A new relationship with Jesus had restored his sense of hope – but he had lost his relationship with his parents and siblings. Courageously, he stood firm in his new faith.

**"You can reach everyone through the church. We give them hope."**

Thankfully, a friend put him in touch with Open Doors partners who run a Centre of Hope near him. This church supports believers from a Muslim background who've been rejected by their families or lost their livelihoods, and was able to provide Anwar with fellowship and money for rent. It's one of 40 designated Centres of Hope in

Syria, with dozens more in Iraq, which provide emergency aid and trauma care, as well as income-generating projects to help people rebuild their lives for the long-term. Open Doors partners also work with 90 other churches in Syria and, with your help, this number is increasing – the aim to start working with 12 new churches a year.

"We work with churches because churches are the most sustainable institution in history," says Mourad\*, a local partner who coordinates Open Doors work in Syria. "Governments come and go, organisations come and go, but the churches stay."

"They are the best partners for serving society and achieving sustainable impact. You can reach everyone through the church. We give them hope."

Anwar certainly received that hope: "They helped me in my hardest conditions. This was a new hope for me, a new start," he says. In Anwar's most desperate moment, the Centre of Hope was there for him – and now he has been equipped to give back. He teaches English to children aged 11-14 at the Centre of Hope; his favourite



## WHAT IS A CENTRE OF HOPE?

At a Centre of Hope, local Open Doors partners can reach their communities with hope and help. Some are hosted in church buildings, some are in low-cost, newly constructed sites and others are in repurposed buildings.

Through Centres of Hope, Open Doors partners can provide vital food and other relief aid, medical care, trauma care, children's classes, Bible training, business microloans and more.

There are 40 designated Centres of Hope in Syria, and dozens more in Iraq. Open Doors partners also work with 90 other churches in Syria – with the aim of working with another 12 new churches every year.

"Christians in Syria love their country," says Mourad\*, a local Open Doors partner who coordinates work in Syria. "They don't want to leave if the minimum of their needs is met. When they have food, security and can meet in a church, they will remain. That is why we need to continue to stand with them, to give them hope."



Anwar now inspires the next generation, teaching children at the Centre of Hope

## KEEPING HOPE ALIVE DURING COVID

### CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE

Covid-19 has particularly affected vulnerable believers in Syria and Iraq. But your response to Open Doors' Covid-19 appeal for Syria is making an enormous difference. The church has been able to step in where officials couldn't, or wouldn't.

"The church provided me with oxygen bottles," says Nancy from Latakia, Syria. Her father died from Covid, and she was hospitalised. "I had to be on oxygen for five days. I would have died without. They [Open Doors partners] prayed for me and paid my medical bills."

Antoinette, from Qamishli, was ill for over six weeks:

"I had faith in Jesus and relied on Him. The church supported us with their prayers and encouragement. They helped financially."

These are just a couple of the many Christians affected by Covid – even those who stayed healthy suffered in other ways. Poverty, isolation and discrimination mean that the impact of the pandemic hits Christians disproportionately. Your support and prayers mean that thousands of believers have received emergency relief, financial help and crucial hope for the future.

Read the full article at [opendoorsuk.org](https://opendoorsuk.org)

part is talking to children about Jesus. "Children don't just need a teacher; they need someone who has a relationship with God and can influence them positively," he says.

### A NEW FAMILY

"The Centre of Hope gave me a new beginning in my life, after my old family became like strangers. I was alone. Now I've met a new family in the church, and I belong to this family. If it weren't for the Centre of Hope, I don't know what I would have done. I would be homeless, hungry and alone."

And, of course, it was the encounter with Jesus that really changed Anwar's life: "Jesus is everything to me. When I had no one, He was with me. He's my brother, my companion, my best friend. I talk to Him all the time. I don't talk to my family, I just talk to Him about everything. Jesus truly saved my life.

"I say to all the people going through the same circumstances I did: 'Have courage and trust the Lord because it's worth it, it's really worth everything.'"

**"If it weren't for the Centre of Hope, I don't know what I would have done. I would be homeless, hungry and alone."**

Sadly, there are many believers who are experiencing the same rejection and persecution that Anwar faced. Open Doors is in the sixth year of the seven-year *Hope for the Middle East* campaign, which supports and strengthens the church in Syria and Iraq to offer hope to displaced and persecuted believers and to the wider community. Open Doors partners have been in the region for many years, and are uniquely well-placed to stand alongside the persecuted church in times of crisis and for the long-term.

### KEEP SPREADING HOPE

Mourad sees the impact that support has, giving hope in emergencies and over generations: "When a hungry person gets a food package with love and respect, it gives him hope. When someone can start a small business, that gives hope. When a believer from a Muslim background is offered training, it gives hope. And giving hope is contagious. Someone who has hope, spreads hope."

Christians in the Middle East desperately need hope – facing the continuing impact of Covid-19, on top of the legacy of lengthy conflict and ongoing persecution. Hope is the most powerful force – and you can keep hope alive in an environment where it could so easily die.

With your support and prayers today, that contagious hope can keep spreading.

### PLEASE PRAY

- Join Anwar in praying that his family come to know Christ, and that he can restore his intimacy with them
- For God to bless the work of Open Doors partners and the Centres of Hope, to truly offer hope to their communities
- For protection from persecution, especially for believers from a Muslim background.

### PLEASE GIVE

You can make a gift at [opendoorsuk.org](https://opendoorsuk.org)

**Every £24** could give Bibles to two children to help them grow in faith.

**Every £47** could provide food and medical support to a believer affected by Covid-19.

**Every £56** could pay two weeks' rent for a persecuted Christian, giving them somewhere safe to live.

### PLEASE ENCOURAGE

You can send a digital message of encouragement to believers in the Middle East, to help keep hope alive. They'd love to hear from you! Write a short message – up to 500 characters, or 100 characters with a picture – and email it to [inspire@opendoorsuk.org](mailto:inspire@opendoorsuk.org) with the subject line 'Hope for the Middle East'.

Send a message today at [opendoorsuk.org/write](https://opendoorsuk.org/write)

\*Name changed for security reasons

## HOPE FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

In Syria, over the first five years of Open Doors' *Hope for the Middle East* campaign, you've...

Given 1 million food parcels to vulnerable families

Provided 75,000 hygiene kits a year

Built more than 500 houses so families can rebuild their lives

Ensured 15,000 families can survive difficult winters each year

Created 1,734 income-generating projects including shops, restaurants, small businesses

Trained 12,000 believers each year

Helped Open Doors to partner with 130 churches in Syria to provide spiritual and practical help to their communities

And much more – let's keep going!

# “Food of the soul”

After the trauma of war, Iraqi Christians are receiving precious Bibles and rebuilding communities, thanks to you



ABOVE Jalila, Bashar and

Sedar (L-R) passionately love God’s Word - and you are helping them share the Bible with others

If you only had a few moments to leave your home, knowing that you might never return, what would you take with you? Jalila (75) from Iraq took her Bible. During her long displacement away from home, she was sustained by God’s Word – and now, thanks to your prayers and support, more Iraqi believers are receiving their own Bibles.

knowing if I would ever return. I took my Bible with me and asked the Lord to protect the rest of my home as we left.”

Jalila ended up in a refugee camp – a church hall shared with other families. Although her circumstances were



more Bibles for those in her study group!

Jalila has since returned home, after her town was liberated from the Islamic State extremists. She still has her original Bible. And, while her eyesight isn’t what it used to be (she uses a magnifying glass to read the small text), she is still sharing God’s Word – now with her grandchildren (LEFT). Thanks to you, they have all received their own Bibles, along with other books to help them understand their faith. Her grandson, Aram, says, “I share the stories I read with my friends in school.”

## STIRRING UP LOVE IN THE FACE OF HATRED

Jalila is one of many believers who drew extraordinary comfort from her Bible when persecution arrived. School teacher Bashar (35) began to read the Bible when he was threatened by Islamic

extremists. “We were the only Christian family in our neighbourhood in the city,” he says. “Extremists told us they were going to ‘clear the ground’ of Christians. They hated us. It made me depressed and scared. I thought I was useless.

“But one day I had a vision from the Lord; I saw Jesus being baptised in the Jordan, and I saw myself next to Him. A dove landed on my shoulder and said, ‘Stay strong, I will never leave you.’”

As Bashar started reading the Bible, God changed his life: “I started to love myself and the people around me. I am here to testify to what Jesus has done in my life.”

## ‘THE MOST IMPORTANT BOOK IN THE WORLD’

It’s so easy for us to pick up a Bible in a shop, or online, or even on our phones. But in Iraq, it’s far more difficult to obtain a copy of God’s Word. Through your gifts and prayers, Bibles are being distributed by Open Doors

local partners like Ramy\*. Every morning, he loads up his van with Bibles and other Christian literature and sets off around the country (BELOW). His work has become more difficult due to the pandemic: the borders between different regions are closed and special permissions are needed to pass. But God is faithful, and the Bibles get to where they need to go.

**“We need to rebuild our lives with a strong base. The Bible is such a base.”**

Ramy’s delivery route often includes churches. Sedar is 21; she is passionate about her church and the Bible: “I would like to tell people to come to Jesus with all their difficulties and struggles. It’s good to pray together when we feel weak. And we shouldn’t forget about our Bible: reading the Bible gives inner peace.”

Thanks to you, these precious books are encouraging our

sisters and brothers in Iraq who are rebuilding their communities after the invasion of IS. “The Bible is the most important book in the world, it is the book that teaches us most,” she says. “We need to rebuild our lives with a strong base. The Bible is such a base.”

## PRAY

- Praise God that He is transforming lives and communities through the delivery of Bibles
- That more Iraqi Christians who hunger for God’s Word would receive their own copy
- For God’s protection and wisdom for Open Doors local partners who are distributing Bibles

## GIVE

Every £24 could give Bibles to two children to help them grow in their faith

Go to [opendoorsuk.org](https://www.opendoorsuk.org)

In 2014, so-called Islamic State (IS) extremists swept through Iraq, forcing Christians from their houses and burning down homes, villages and towns. Jalila’s town in the Nineveh Plain was on their target list, and so, as the extremists approached, Jalila found herself with not much time – and a difficult decision on her hands. But she knew the one thing she had to take with her. “The Bible is the food of the soul,” she says. “It is the most important thing in my life. I stood in front of the bookshelf, not

challenging and her future uncertain, her Bible sustained her. “Through the Bible, I listen to His voice. I know the hand of my Saviour is with me,” she says. Each day, Jalila would gather others in the hall to study a Bible verse together. Thanks to you, Open Doors local partners were able to supply





Open Doors  
**STANDING STRONG LIVE**  
*Together*  
**UNITE, PRAY AND GROW WITH YOUR PERSECUTED CHURCH FAMILY**

You are invited to meet your persecuted church family from India and the Middle East this September at Open Doors' free annual event online, **Standing Strong Live!** Hear directly from **Pastor Samuel\***, **Father Araam** and **Taher\*** and his family as they share how **God is at work in the midst of difficult and dangerous circumstances – and how your prayers and support are keeping the church alive.**

At Standing Strong Live 2021 our theme is 'together', and while we won't be gathering in person as one body, we can still come together to watch, pray and worship as family, friends and churches. This is a freedom that millions of our persecuted family do not have, and so we will stand with them in solidarity, that 'we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith' (Romans 1:12).

**MEET THE SPEAKERS**

**Pastor Samuel** is an Open Doors partner in India. He has been on the frontline, serving the persecuted church there throughout the pandemic – and has seen first-hand how your prayers and support



have blessed our brothers and sisters who have been suffering both from the impact of the pandemic, and from increasingly violent persecution.

**Father Araam** is a church leader in Iraq who runs two Centres of Hope: churches that are serving the poorest and most vulnerable in their communities. He has experienced the destruction and devastation caused by so-called

Islamic State but has remained standing with his church and his community throughout. Now, he is helping to rebuild and restore, thanks to your prayers and support.

You may remember **Taher's** story from your May magazine – arrested, imprisoned and tortured for being a church leader in the Middle East, Taher felt Jesus with him through it all. He was eventually released and went back to sharing the



gospel with others, but sadly had to flee his country with his family when the secret service would not stop harassing him. "The time that I had with Jesus in prison was the real freedom for me," he says. Hear more of his extraordinary story as he shares at Standing Strong Live this September.



**BRAVE FAITH – ONLINE YOUTH GATHERING**

Are you looking for fresh ways

to inspire the youth in your church? This year, Open Doors Youth are hosting Standing Strong for young people and youth groups, bringing the passion and brave faith of the persecuted church straight to their screens.

**"God has done such great things in our lives that I still believe He is worth following."**

FARAH

Hear from Farah\*, Taher's daughter, as she shares her experience of persecution after her dad was arrested, and Soy\* from Laos, who was imprisoned at just 14 years old for her faith.

Young people will find out what it looks like to live out brave faith from other young people across the UK and Ireland, and be inspired to live courageously for Jesus in their schools, homes and communities. Why not get your youth group together and make an evening of it?

**"This will be a fantastic opportunity to introduce the persecuted church to your youth group. It's a chance for them to connect, hear stories and learn that their prayers and actions can make a real difference in building God's kingdom around the world."**

NAOMI ALLEN  
 OPEN DOORS YOUTH

We will also be launching a brand-new, free discipleship

resource: *Brave Faith*. You don't want to miss it!

**Standing Strong Live**

Saturday 25 September, 8pm

**Standing Strong Live Youth event**

Friday 24 September, 7.15pm

REGISTER TODAY FOR STANDING STRONG LIVE AT [OPENDOORSUK.ORG/STANDINGSTRONG](https://opendoorsuk.org/standingstrong)

\*Name changed for security reasons

Open Doors  
YOUTH

## CHOOSE TO LOSE CHALLENGE

Could you choose to lose something you love to raise money and prayer for Christians who have lost everything because of their faith in Jesus?

Over the summer, at the Euros, the Olympics, Wimbledon and other sporting events, we've seen the glory that comes with winning – and, if you're an England fan, the pain that comes with losing. So, why choose to lose?

The simple fact is that courageous people around the world are choosing to follow Jesus, knowing that in doing so, they will lose. Their choice might mean loss of family, friends, home, income and security. And for some there's a greater cost - the loss of freedom, or even their life.

Pradip\*, a Hindu teenager from Nepal, mocked his sister for becoming a Christian. But then he visited a church with a friend, and that same night he saw a flash of intense light in his room. Confused, he started looking for answers, which he eventually found in Jesus.

For Pradip, it was a winning choice, even though it meant being disowned by his parents and forced to leave his village. Pradip, like many others, knows that choosing Jesus means losing much. But he knows it also means gaining a future with Jesus, something so precious, it's more than worth the cost.

Whatever you love - coffee, chocolate, TV, Netflix, Spotify, gaming, sugar, social media – whatever it is, could you give it up for a short time? Choose what to give up and for how long, set a fundraising target, then sign up at [opendoorsyouth.org/choosetolose](https://opendoorsyouth.org/choosetolose) and we'll send you a helpful fundraising pack, links to set up sponsorship pages and a series of stories to help you remember why you're choosing to lose.

But that's not all. The *Choose to Lose Challenge* isn't just

a simple fundraiser. It's been designed to help you understand and connect with the reality facing our church family around the world.

**“Our youth group... were given an insight into how it feels to be denied something... they were really challenged by the stories of people who have given up everything for Jesus. They were left grateful, humbled and motivated to pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ facing persecution around the world.”**

LAURA, LEADER AT METTLE YOUTH GROUP, LISBURN CATHEDRAL

Sign up now at [opendoorsyouth.org/choosetolose](https://opendoorsyouth.org/choosetolose)

\*Name changed for security reasons

## ON YOUR MARKS GET SET...

Have you ever thought about using one of your hobbies to help your persecuted family? We're constantly hearing stories of supporters doing just that...

### GO!



ALDO FROM  
OXFORDSHIRE

**Challenge:** 'Three Bridge Challenge', which involved running 21 miles on a route featuring three bridges: Goring and Streatley, Whitchurch and Caversham.

**Total raised:** £1,881

**“In the final 20 minutes, whilst struggling uphill, I started thinking about the hardship faced by the persecuted church. Their hardship is so much worse than what I was feeling. It really helped focus my mind and gave me encouragement to finish the run.”**

### BAKE!



LORNA FROM ESSEX

**Challenge:** Hosted online cake auction for friends where she shared about the persecuted church and invited bids on eight cakes she and others had baked. Lorna was

raising money for Open Doors' *See. Change.* campaign which supports persecuted Christian women. **Total raised:** £867

**“I felt connected to my wider church family as we were doing something that would help make a difference for them.”**

### MULTIPLY!



REBECCA FROM  
WILTSHIRE

**Challenge:** 'Mathsathon'. Nine-year-old Rebecca spent six hours tackling Year 4 Maths

exercises in half-hour sessions over evenings and a weekend. **Total raised:** £210

**“Rebecca heard about Open Doors through church and is using the Prayer Passport with the World Watch List map.” - PROUD GRANDMA**

### SKETCH (AND WALK)!



AMAECHI FROM  
LONDON

**Challenge:** 'Four Cathedrals Challenge'. Amaechi walked to four cathedrals – Westminster, St George's, Southwark and St Paul's – stopping at each

to sketch them. It took over nine hours to complete. Amaechi plans to sell his artwork, with all proceeds going to Open Doors.

**Total raised:** £80 (so far)

**“It was motivating to know that, through my effort, someone somewhere is going to benefit.”**

### WHATEVER YOU LOVE DOING, YOU CAN

### DO IT TO FUNDRAISE FOR YOUR FAMILY.

If you especially enjoy baking, running or walking, we have activities just for you – but if it's something different, you can craft your own event or activity. Find out more at [opendoorsuk.org/fundraise](https://opendoorsuk.org/fundraise)

# A NEW HOPE AND A NEW FUTURE STARTS HERE

Anwar\* is the son of a sheikh in Syria. When he became a Christian, he was thrown out of home. Your gifts and prayers meant a Centre of Hope run by Open Doors partners could provide essential practical and spiritual support.

**“If it weren’t for the Centre of Hope, I would be homeless, hungry and alone,”** says Anwar.

Many other persecuted believers also need the hope that your support can bring. Will you give a new start today to persecuted Christians in the Middle East?

**Every £24** could give Bibles to two children to help them grow in faith.

**Every £56** could pay two weeks’ rent for a persecuted Christian, giving them somewhere safe to live.

To make your gift, return the enclosed envelope, phone 01993 460015 or visit [opendoorsuk.org](http://opendoorsuk.org). Thank you.

\*Name changed for security reasons



HOPE FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

 **OpenDoors**