

# PRAY WITH THE CHURCH IN SRI LANKA



St. Sebastian's Church in Negombo, Sri Lanka, was one of the churches targeted by suicide bombers on Easter Sunday 2019

## Thank you for praying with the church in Sri Lanka

**On Easter Sunday, Sri Lanka was hit by some of the deadliest Easter attacks on Christian targets in history.** Three churches and three hotels were bombed by suicide bombers. Over 250 people were killed and at least 500 people wounded. This simple guide gives a pattern of prayer for Christians in Sri Lanka.

**“Please pray for all the people who were affected by this. Many are injured or grieving the loss of loved ones. Pray for strength and comfort and for His healing hand upon them.”**

SUNIL\*, OPEN DOORS CO-WORKER IN SRI LANKA

### 1. Pray for those who mourn

In many African cultures people will visit those who mourn and simply sit with them in silence. They do not offer any solutions. They do not try to fix what cannot be fixed. They just sit. And they say to their grieving friends and family, “I see you.”

We can do the same for Sri Lankan Christians. We cannot physically be with them. But we can feel a little of their pain. We can sit with them. We can say to them “I see you.”

### PRAY

- Close your eyes. Imagine that a Sri Lankan Christian is sitting next to you. Perhaps it is a mother who has lost her child, a husband who has lost his wife, a child who has lost parents
- In your imagination, reach out and take their hand. Just rest in silence together
- To end your prayer say, “I have seen you.”

## 2. Pray for those who persecute you

Liyoni,\* another Open Doors co-worker, went to the Zion Church in Batticaloa, where one of the attacks took place. She heard from eyewitness reports about the bomber.

"He acted as though he was waiting for someone," said Liyoni. "He stated that he was waiting for his sick mother and had inquired what time the healing service would start."

He was sweating profusely. Several people spoke to him. Some even urged him to go inside the church and take a seat and to take his backpack off.

"The man was reluctant to go inside and had said he needs to make a phone call first," said Liyoni.

He made a call on his phone. And that was the moment the bomb went off.

Jesus commands us to pray for those who persecute. We need to remember that the men and women who carry out these deeds are not monsters. They are made in the image of God. But they have been lied to. They have been promised paradise if they kill Christians. They, too, are victims.

### PRAY

- Close your eyes. Imagine there is a young man in the room with you. He has a backpack on. He is sweating, anxious
- He stands for all those who have committed these acts and all those who, even now, are considering doing the same
- Pray that they will hear God's voice and change their mind
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help Christians forgive their attackers.

## 3. Pray for those who bring comfort and hope

Open Doors co-workers have visited the victims of these attacks to listen to them, pray with them, and learn what their immediate needs are.

"I'm going there to meet with pastors and pray with them," says Sunil\*. He and Liyoni also attended the funeral of a Sunday School teacher and her 13-year-old nephew.

"The boy's parents were both present but the teacher's husband is still at the hospital recovering from his injuries. Many people were rushing from one funeral to the next."

There are wounds which never heal. But there are wounds which can be transformed. This bombing took place on Easter Day and one of the most important facts about Jesus' resurrection is that His resurrected body still bore the wounds of His crucifixion. Jesus' resurrection does not airbrush his death out of history. Instead, it shows that, through the power of God, our suffering, our wounds, can be transformed.



*Open Doors workers visited the families and attended the funerals of some of the bombing victims*

### PRAY

- For the victims and their families. Pray for healing for those who were injured and comfort for the families experiencing heartbreakin loss
- For the church in Sri Lanka to be a source of light and comfort to those who are hurting, especially as they are hurting themselves
- For the Sri Lankan government investigations, that justice will prevail
- For Open Doors co-workers and partners in Sri Lanka – people like Sunil and Liyoni - that the Lord would give them wisdom over how best to help and support the victims.

## **4. Pray for those who speak out**

On Sunday morning, the world woke up to the terrible news from Sri Lanka. The news of this terrorist attack filled the front pages of the newspapers and websites.

But people also woke up to the truth – the plain, brutal, undeniable fact that these people were attacked for one reason and one reason alone: they were Christians.

Every single day, human beings are killed, beaten, insulted and abused just because they are followers of Jesus. As their brothers and sisters in Christ, it is our duty to speak up on their behalf, to remind the world that this is happening and to do all we can to defend those who are persecuted because of their faith.

### **PRAY**

- For the witness of Open Doors as it brings the issue of Christian persecution to the attention of the world. Pray that we will speak with integrity, honesty and power
- That the media will report what is happening, and use its power to speak up for the right to worship freely
- For governments of the world, that they will place freedom of belief at the heart of their policy, and that they would use all means to speak up for those who are persecuted
- That we will use our freedom and our voices to focus attention on what is happening to Christians around the world.

## **5. Pray for those who are anxious**

The churches in Sri Lanka were not expecting this kind of attack. But in other places they are, sadly, more attuned to the possibility. At Easter 2017 in Egypt, 45 people were killed in bomb attacks on churches in Tanta and Alexandria. A year earlier in Pakistan, 75 people were killed when extremists exploded a bomb near a park in Lahore where Christians were celebrating Easter. Please pray for all those Christians who meet in situations of risk.

### **PRAY**

- When you next travel to church, or as you sit there, remember all those who attend church against the background hum of fear – who live with the possibility of attack
- Imagine as you enter the building that there are security forces on guard outside. In places like Egypt and Pakistan such forces are often on duty - pray that they may act with foresight and wisdom to keep people safe
- Pray for those who even now are planning evil against the family of Christ – that their plans may be thwarted and they may see the error of their ways.

## **More resources**

If you would like to continue praying with the persecuted church, there are a range of prayer resources on the Open Doors website, including our free bi-monthly Prayer News DVD and daily Prayer Diary.

If you would like to help Christians in Sri Lanka and elsewhere, please visit the Open Doors website – [www.opendoorsuk.org](http://www.opendoorsuk.org) – where you can give to support our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ.

\*Names changed for security purposes