

Open *Doors*

PRAYER DIARY | March/April 2024



**“I have seen
the Lord!”**

JOHN 20:18

MARCH

Persecuted women

Friday 1 March

Millions of Christian women and girls around the world are persecuted for both their faith and their gender - but this often goes unnoticed by the world. Pray that Open Doors' *See. Change.* campaign will raise greater awareness of this issue and ensure that persecuted women are seen, valued and empowered to reach their God-given potential.

Saturday 2 March – Middle East

When a woman leaves Islam to follow Jesus, she is often rejected by her family and cut off from financial support. Pray for wisdom for Open Doors partners working through local churches and Centres of Hope to support our sisters who risk their lives to follow Jesus.

Sunday 3 March – Middle East

Pray for girls whose parents place them under house arrest because they've left the family's religion. Some parents even take away a girl's mobile phone to stop them contacting other Christians. Ask the Lord to guide them and pray that parents will accept their daughters' new faith.

Monday 4 March – Iraq

When Sara chose to follow Jesus, her father locked

her in her room and tried to force her to marry a Muslim. Miraculously, God rescued her and provided her with support through a local church (see Magazine p8). She asks: "Please pray that my father finds Christ, that he will be saved and that I will get to see him again."

Tuesday 5 March – Iraq

Sara now attends a Centre of Hope supported by Open Doors where she has been strengthened in her faith and calling to share God's Word with others. "My ministry is to taxi drivers," she says. "I talk with them about God and distribute Bibles to them. Pray that God gives me His strength and wisdom as I go and spread His Word."

Wednesday 6 March – Syria

Laila is a new believer from a Muslim background. At school, her children must participate in Islamic religion lessons. She is very scared of the consequences if their community discovers they have left Islam. Pray for their protection and that Laila's faith will grow despite the hostility she faces.

Thursday 7 March – Syria

Ruba (52) recently graduated from the first counselling school started by Open Doors partners in Syria. She is now offering counselling sessions. Pray for wisdom as she helps people heal from trauma after years of war, persecution and last year's earthquake.

Friday 8 March

To mark International Women's Day, Open Doors is

proposing to hold a debate in Parliament to discuss the persecution of Christian women. Pray that MPs will recognise the importance of Open Doors' research on this issue, engage in the debate and be moved to take action.

Saturday 9 March – Middle East

In churches made up of converts from Islam, the treatment of women is very influenced by the surrounding culture. Pray that, through Open Doors' discipleship programmes, both women and men in the church will see how Jesus treated women with dignity and compassion, and that this will bring positive change in their attitudes and actions towards women.

Sunday 10 March

– Mothering Sunday
In many parts of the Middle East, responsibility for how children are raised and schooled rests solely with their mothers. Ask God to help women raise their children to their fullest potential and disciple them to follow Jesus no matter the cost.

Ramadan

Monday 11 March

Ramadan started yesterday. As many Muslims spend more time in prayer and meditation, ask the Holy Spirit to be at work, bringing the understanding that Jesus is the only Way to an eternal life with God.

Tuesday 12 March

For new believers from Muslim backgrounds who

have been rejected by their families, Ramadan can bring heightened tension and isolation. Pray that they will know God's presence and remain firm in their faith.

Wednesday 13 March – Ethiopia

A new well was recently built by a church with support from Open Doors. During Ramadan, the church asks Christians to give Muslims priority when collecting water. This kindness has surprised Muslims and eased hostility between the two groups. Praise God for this newfound peace, and pray that relationships between Muslims and Christians will flourish.

Thursday 14 March – Southern Philippines

Pria* is a house church leader who's faced verbal and physical persecution. This moved Pria to consider ways of sharing God's love with her Muslim neighbours during Ramadan, so now she and other Christians prepare food for the breaking of the fast in the mosque, and share it with the whole community. Pray that Pria's ministry will spread, and that God's love will be revealed.

Friday 15 March

In some countries, believers from Muslim backgrounds can be met with suspicion by churches. Pray that church leaders will put their trust in Jesus and welcome these believers, particularly during Ramadan.

*Name changed for security reasons

Forgetting sadness and learning forgiveness

With your prayers and support, Jashim is learning how to love those who attacked him

You might remember Jashim from Bangladesh. Many Open Doors supporters prayed for him in 2022 after he was severely beaten by his family for his faith. He's still recovering from the ordeal, but your prayers – together with support from Open Doors local partners – have transformed his response to the incident as well as his relationship with those who attacked him.

"I have the right to choose and practise my faith," Jashim told his family as they attacked him two years ago. "I will not forsake my faith in Jesus Christ." Infuriated by these words, the family gathered a mob of 50-60 people. Jashim and his family were thrown out of their home, and he was beaten so badly that he's still recovering today; he's on medication for traumatic head injuries and unable to work like he used to.

But spiritually and emotionally, Jashim is in a much better place after attending a Standing Strong Through the Storm programme, which provides contextualised Bible

teaching on how to respond to persecution. It's one of many initiatives provided by Open Doors partners for our persecuted family in Bangladesh, which rose four places to number 26 in the World Watch List 2024.

"When I was persecuted, I did not have this knowledge and I did not know how to react to the persecutors," says Jashim. "I thought I was right, and they were wrong. Now I understand that I was also wrong because I responded to them in an unbiblical way. At that time, I did not understand their feelings and their anger. Now I understand."

"THE GREATEST THINGS I HAVE LEARNT ARE FORGIVENESS AND LOVE, AND TO PRAY FOR THEM."

"However, the greatest things I have learnt are forgiveness and love, and to pray for them," he continues. "I have forgiven them. I tried to rebuild our broken relationship and it



Practical, emotional and spiritual support from Open Doors local partners is helping Jashim (ABOVE) and his wife, Aklima (LEFT), following persecution for their faith

worked. Now we are back home together. I know they plan to convince me to go back to their faith, but I am very aware of it and dealing with them wisely."

Jashim's wife, Aklima, also attended the training. "My wife has forgiven my family members," says Jashim. "She is working hard to make their relationship stronger. She doesn't want to make any mistakes again by fighting or arguing with Muslims. She is dealing with them wisely and showing the love of the Lord, forgetting all the sad experiences we had in the past."

Thank you for praying for Jashim and his family, and for your gifts that enable local partners to help believers like them in Bangladesh. "I am very happy to have received this training," says Jashim.

PRAY

- Give thanks for the healing journey Jashim and his family are on, and pray for it to continue
- That their relationships with the wider family will continue to grow
- That their wider family will come to know Jesus.

Believers from Muslim backgrounds

Saturday 16 March – Central Asia

Ahmad* was brutally beaten by his neighbours when he converted from Islam. Despite constant threats, he continues to share the gospel. Ahmad asks: “Pray that God would work through me to touch the hearts of my relatives, friends and neighbours.”

Sunday 17 March – Central Asia

When Tiliiana* converted to Christianity from Islam, her husband beat her and she fled. Praise God, with the help of Open Doors partners, she is now in a safe place receiving trauma care and being looked after by the local church. Pray for Tiliiana’s continued healing.

Monday 18 March – Kyrgyzstan

Mahri’s* abusive aunt wouldn’t let her attend church. Give thanks that she’s finally started college in another city. Mahri asks: “Pray that God will help me find Christian sisters and brothers. I’m longing for a new family.”

Tuesday 19 March – Iran

Esmaeli Narimanpour, a new convert, was arrested on Christmas Eve after a raid on his home. When his family members went to follow up on his case, they were themselves questioned and detained for several hours.

Pray for courage for Esmaeli, and for his swift release.

Wednesday 20 March – Iran
Nowruz, or Persian New Year, is celebrated today in Iran and its neighbouring countries.

As many look forward to a new start, and a season of growth and change, ask God to make Himself known to Muslims, that they will perceive the new things that God is doing (Isaiah 43:19).

Thursday 21 March – Maldives

The few Christian converts must keep their faith secret, and have little access to fellowship or Christian resources. Please pray that this would be the year that secret believers can access the Bible in their own language.

Friday 22 March – Morocco

Since Ikram* and Abbas* left Islam to follow Jesus, they have been attacked and pressured to return to their former faith, and they are struggling to obtain groceries and other essentials for their children. They recently found refuge in the church. Please pray that they can relocate to a safer area soon.

Saturday 23 March – Egypt

Mounir* decided to read the New Testament after his teacher mocked Christians during a lesson. He then became a Christian himself – but was beaten by his father and brother and ran away. Please pray that Mounir’s faith will grow as he starts a new job in another city.

*Names changed for security reasons

Sunday 24 March – Oman

Most Christians in Oman are migrant workers. Recently, non-Omani Christians encouraged Omani believers to meet and they formed a church, but the leader has since been forced to leave the country. Pray for these believers, that they don’t lose heart.

Monday 25 March – Oman

The non-Omani church leaders had been helping the church in Oman grow in different ways: hosting Bible studies, discipling new Christians and teaching about the importance of fellowship. Please pray that believers will find new ways to come together for worship, and that their faith will be strengthened.

Tuesday 26 March – Nigeria

Leaving Islam for Christianity can be incredibly dangerous, especially for young people. In some regions, local Open Doors partners send new believers who’ve been rejected by their families to live with caregivers who help to disciple them. Ask God to bless this ministry.

Wednesday 27 March – Nigeria

Abdul* (22) became a Christian after he dreamt about Jesus. When his family threatened his life, he was taken in by an Open Doors caregiver. “I want to evangelise to those who don’t know about Christ,” Abdul* says. Ask God to bless and strengthen him and give him opportunities to tell others about Jesus.

Easter

Thursday 28 March – Maundy Thursday

Around Easter, raids on secret house churches increase in countries like China and Iran. Pray for all those spying on Christian gatherings this year, that they will not report them to the authorities and instead will come to know Christ.

Friday 29 March – Good Friday

“Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing’” (Luke 23:34). Please pray for Christians who have suffered unjustly and cruelly and are struggling to forgive their persecutors, that they can leave their burdens at the foot of the cross and encounter Jesus’ peace.

Saturday 30 March – Nigeria

Over Christmas, Islamic militants killed more than 160 Christians in Plateau State in over 30 attacks. Magdalene’s young daughter was killed in one of the attacks – this will be the first Easter without her. Please pray that God will comfort Magdalene and her family and renew their hope in Jesus’ resurrection.

Sunday 31 March – Easter Sunday

Today, Christians around the world say with the disciples in John 20:25, “We have seen the Lord!” Pray for protection for persecuted Christians meeting to celebrate, and that their testimony will open the eyes of many to Jesus’ gift of new life.

YOU'RE HELPING HEAL BROKEN HEARTS IN EGYPT



Representative image

When Mariam's* husband Omar* was killed, her world fell apart. She felt far from God and struggled to care for her four children. But thanks to your prayers and support, local Open Doors partners are there for her and are giving her hope for her family's future.

Mariam married Omar when she was 17. They were

both Christians and had four daughters together. They lived in Cairo, but Omar worked in a region outside the city – which put him in danger. “In this area, Christians suffer a lot because of their faith, and they are discriminated against on a daily basis,” Mariam says. “However, my husband never felt afraid and used to help the Christians

there and donate to sick and needy people.”

MARIAM'S FAMILY FALLS APART

Because of his good deeds, local radical Muslims began to oppose him. It started with threats – which quickly and tragically spiralled. “They ambushed my husband and slaughtered him in his workplace. My heart was torn apart,” Mariam says. “Everything turned upside down. Nothing returned the same as before.”

Omar's murder impacted the whole family. They became afraid and felt unsafe. Mariam was filled with bitterness and resentment

towards God, and her daughters were traumatised and lost any confidence they had. As well as the emotional and spiritual turmoil, Mariam discovered she could no longer afford her children's school supplies.

YOU HELP BUILD THEM UP AGAIN

When Open Doors heard about Mariam's struggles,

they sent Carol*, a local partner, to visit her. Carol sat and listened as Mariam poured out her heart. “Why did God do this?” she cried. “Why has He left us in our fear? Why has He forsaken us?”

“WE STOPPED BLAMING GOD, AND WE WORSHIP HIM INSTEAD.”

Carol's visit to comfort Mariam was just the beginning. Local partners helped her to set up a small business to generate income and are providing ongoing counselling and pastoral visits for her and her daughters. Mariam has also joined a discipleship group.

“I have seen God's practical love through your love, care and presence,” Mariam says. “I believe that God is my Heavenly Father, and He has never forsaken me. I am blessed with the small business project, and it is now working very well. We stopped blaming God, and we worship Him instead.”

PLEASE PRAY MARIAM'S PRAYER WITH HER:

“God, thank You for showing me mercy. I believe You have the ability to change bad circumstances to better ones. Through every challenge I face, I ask that You free me from worry and fear and bring me Your peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.”

*Names changed for security reasons

APRIL

Persecuted women

Monday 1 April – Middle East

In some parts of the region, girls are often seen as inferior to boys. Because daughters typically live with their in-laws when they marry, some parents have the attitude they're raising their daughters 'for someone else's family', so girls grow up feeling devalued by disengaged parents who believe girls are not worth their investment. Pray that girls living in this environment will discover their identity in Christ.

Tuesday 2 April – Iran

Iran's dress code limits women's freedom of expression and subjects anyone who doesn't comply to social stigma, harassment and legal consequences. It also serves as a symbol of political and religious control by the government. Ask God to miraculously change the hearts and minds of those in positions of power, so that Iran's women have the freedom to flourish.

Wednesday 3 April – Iran

In some areas, a woman's access to higher education and career opportunities is highly restricted. A woman needs tremendous courage to share her faith in this environment. Give thanks that many Christian women converts, both teachers and students, are boldly sharing Christ, despite the risk of

being fired or prevented from continuing their studies.

Thursday 4 April – Iran

Mahnaz, an Iranian Christian woman, was fired from her job as a university professor when she shared her new belief in Christ. "I believe there are a lot of teachers and students who are afraid to share about their faith because they need to have education or work," she says. "Please pray for the safety of these women, and may God strengthen their faith."

Friday 5 April – Egypt

Pray for Open Doors partners serving Christian women and girls in Cairo and Upper Egypt. Raised in a culture that considers women inferior to men, many struggle with low self-image and feelings of worthlessness - a mindset that has even infiltrated the church. Ask God to work through our partners to bring change in the hearts and minds of these women, so they recognise their true value in God's sight.

Saturday 6 April – Egypt

Pray for a believer from a Muslim background who is trapped in a cycle of abuse, facing both violence and financial exploitation by her husband. Ask the Lord to protect our sister and give her peace, and pray that He will reveal Himself to her husband and lead him to repentance.

Sunday 7 April – North Africa

Nadia, a Christian, is married to Majed, a Muslim. At one time, Majed showed interest in his wife's faith, but after spending more

time with his mother, he has become violent with Nadia. Ask the Lord to fortify Nadia's faith, and to open the hearts of Majed and his mother to faith in Christ.

Africa

Monday 8 April – Sudan

In January, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Wad Madani was set ablaze. Pray that the local church leaders would know God's wisdom and provision as they seek a new place to gather.

Tuesday 9 April – Sudan

Ask God to protect Christians in Wad Madani. Pray that fear will not overcome them and that they will be 'like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes' (Jeremiah 17:8).

Wednesday 10 April – DRC

A year after CEPAC Church in Kasindi was bombed by ADF militants, killing 15, believers gathered for a week of evangelism – and baptised 15 new Christians! "The Lord has called many servants," says Pastor Kambale. "We have just consecrated pastors with several evangelists and deacons." Ask God to continue to rebuild this church.

Thursday 11 April – DRC

Open Doors partners have supported CEPAC Church with relief aid, trauma care and new Bibles – which was just what Joys, who lost her son Muyisa (11) in the attack, needed. "I see God's Word gradually comforts

her," shares Joys' husband. "Pray that God helps us understand His will."

Friday 12 April – DRC

Pastor Kambale's church now has 300 more members than it did a year ago! The church asks us to remember them in their prayers. "Pray that the faithful Christians of this church will fervently continue to build their faith on Jesus Christ alone, who is life and truth," asks Pastor Kambale.

Saturday 13 April – Nigeria

In January, clashes erupted between Christians and Muslims in Plateau State after a Christian man was killed by suspected Fulani militants. Isaiah 2:4 says, "He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples." Please pray that Christians in the region will choose the way of peace and put their trust in God.

Sunday 14 April – Nigeria

Today marks 10 years since 276 girls were kidnapped from their school in Chibok. While many have since been released or escaped, 112 girls are still unaccounted for. Pray that God will comfort their grieving families – and that the remaining girls will be released.

Monday 15 April – Uganda

As violence against Christians in Uganda increases, Open Doors partners are stepping up their support. Pray for wisdom and compassion as they visit believers and assess their needs.

*Name changed for security reasons

A CHURCH ALWAYS ON THE RUN

Viviana's church in the mountains of Colombia is invisible – but God is present and at work

A typical service in Viviana's* church doesn't look anything like a church service – it looks like a backpack-weaving class. But that's exactly why it works. "We are an invisible church here," she says. "We don't have a temple or the freedom to meet, so we gather in hidden places."

Viviana's faith in Jesus is a complete secret to the rest of her community in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, an isolated mountain range in northern Colombia. Her father is one of the leaders of the indigenous Arhuaco people, who believe in and worship Mother Nature. It's a community where the gospel is completely forbidden.

Being a Christian is seen as having a disease, Viviana explains; a kind of madness that must be cured by the spiritual leaders. "They perform rites to purify you," she says. As well as purification rites, a Christian might face physical

punishment, imprisonment or expulsion from the community if they are discovered.

Viviana has extra reason to be cautious – if her faith is found out, she could have her 13-year-old daughter taken away from her. Thankfully, her daughter is currently safe in the Open Doors Children's Centre.

MEETING AT THE ESCAPE

To meet with other Christians, Viviana must leave her village – sometimes for days on end. This is becoming harder to do without arousing suspicion. For several years, she and other Christians from the indigenous reserve have been meeting in La Huida, or 'The Escape'. "The name originated when a brother from Peru came to visit us," says Josué*, who leads the meetings. "He called it that because, as Christians, we are always on the run."

In La Huida, Christians are preparing themselves to take the gospel to other communities, to preach in

secret, and to strengthen believers who live in remote places and cannot go to La Huida often.

DISGUIISING THE CHURCH IN PLAIN SIGHT

In recent years, meeting has become even more difficult after some young people were arrested and forced to confess when they were caught going down to La Huida without good reason. As a result, Josué and others worked together with Open Doors partners to create a project to give Christians an excuse to meet together.

"IF WE DO NOT GO, OTHER BELIEVERS WILL NOT EITHER, AND THAT IS WHAT MOTIVATES US."

The women have created their own strategy for meeting and sharing the gospel: a backpack-weaving project, where they not only meet with other women to talk about the gospel, but also generate income to

support the church's missionary activities. Weaving backpacks is one of the most traditional customs of the Arhuaco women, so the class has attracted non-Christians too, who can hear about Jesus.

"God sends us out as His sheep amid wolves," says Josué, referring to Matthew 10:16. "We must be wise and go because, if we do not go, other believers will not either, and that is what motivates us."

PRAY

- That Viviana will be able to keep meeting with other Christians
- That God will equip Viviana, Josué and all His people as He sends them out
- That these secret church projects will introduce more people to the good news of the gospel.

*Name changed for security reasons



Watch a video of Viviana's amazing story at opendoorsuk.org

Asia

Tuesday 16 April – Myanmar

Seventeen people, including eleven believers, were killed when a church was bombed by the military in January. “Among the dead were some parents who left their children behind,” says a local partner. Pray for our partners as they seek to help those affected by this tragedy.

Wednesday 17 April – Vietnam

Tho*, a doctor, has been told to renounce his new faith or risk losing his job. Family and neighbours are also pressurising him. “His local church has been praying with him and encouraging his family to stay strong in the Lord,” says a partner. “And he needs your prayers, too.”

Thursday 18 April – Indonesia

“I feel very understood, because our experiences are similar and we’re strengthened by each testimony,” said Mira*, after attending a retreat hosted by local partners for believers from Muslim backgrounds. Pray that the friendships formed and lessons learned will have a lasting impact on those present.

Friday 19 April – China

A partner was running training for some 90 church leaders when the authorities arrived on the premises. “In soft murmur, we prayed,” says the partner. “The atmosphere was filled with peace and love.” Praise God that the authorities left without entering the room where

the training was happening. Pray that the experience will encourage those present.

Saturday 20 April – Philippines

Praise God for a gathering of 1,000 believers from different tribal Muslim backgrounds, which included 40 baptisms! “Seeing my childhood friends, once Muslims and now worshipping Jesus together, reinforces my belief in the love of God and the truth of His promises,” says a participant.

Sunday 21 April – Turkmenistan

Many Christians, including those from registered churches, must gather secretly. Whilst the online sphere provides some opportunity for discipleship and fellowship, internet connectivity is not always stable or safe. Pray for this to improve.

Monday 22 April – Laos

Two believers’ homes were destroyed as Christians in Laos face rising persecution. Nan* was left on the roadside in scorching heat when his home was demolished, whilst the Chan* family were forced from their village after their home was torn down. Ask the Lord to comfort, encourage and provide for these believers.

Youth

Tuesday 23 April

This year, Open Doors Youth are looking to reach 20,000 young people through festivals, youth group

sessions and other initiatives. Ask the Holy Spirit to anoint the team in their work, and pray that their ministry will have a transformative impact on young people’s relationship with God and their persecuted family.

COUNTING THE COST

Wednesday 24 April – DRC

Neema’s* son was among 15 believers killed when Islamic militants bombed their church. “They came to exterminate us, but our faith cannot diminish,” she says. “We cannot leave His Word because of wounds.” Pray that the church will continue to heal and grow.

Thursday 25 April – Vietnam

“Even if you kill me today, I will remain strong and will keep my faith in the Lord.” That’s what Gia Han* said to her brother and villagers before they beat her and her children. Their farm was also taken from them. Pray for provision and healing.

Friday 26 April – Comoros

Because of her faith, Nura* has lost work, been evicted and divorced her husband after he became abusive. “I’ve never allowed anything to take me away from Jesus, no matter the challenges,” she says. “I am asking you to pray for me, so that I remain in the glory of God.”

Saturday 27 April – Colombia

Pastor Daniel’s* church is the only one in his region for people from indigenous

backgrounds. It has about 60 members. “Some walk six hours every month or every other month to go to church,” he says. “They want to come here to be strengthened.” Pray for their protection.

Sunday 28 April – Nepal

“I am ready to forsake everything but not Jesus,” Nabina* told her family after she became a Christian, and her grandmother told her, “You are dead to us.” She asks, “Pray for my parents and relatives to open their hearts and accept Christ. Pray that I can grow in my faith.”

Monday 29 April – Bangladesh

“This is my last and final decision – for the rest of my life I will follow Jesus,” Rahman*, a former imam, told village elders. He’s lost friends and been abandoned by his father, and he’s struggling to provide for his wife and children. Pray for provision of their physical, spiritual and emotional needs.

Tuesday 30 April – South East Asia

Esther* and her family live in Europe, having escaped persecution in their Muslim-majority country. Esther has an online ministry reaching people in the region. Recently, she shared the gospel with a family from her home country, who travelled to Europe to get baptised by Esther! Pray for more people to discover Jesus.

*Names changed for security reasons



TWO OPPORTUNITIES TO PRAY FOR YOUR PERSECUTED SISTERS

Sadly, millions of Christian women and girls face persecution for both their faith and their gender, yet their suffering often goes unseen. Will you join us in praying for them?

SEE. CHANGE. PRAYER BREAKFAST

Saturday 13 April
Open Doors, Witney

We warmly invite you to our offices for a prayer breakfast where we'll be hearing from Khalda, a believer from a Muslim background. Khalda has faced intense opposition for her faith, including death threats to save her family's 'honour', and speaks about the challenges facing persecuted women. With plenty of creative opportunities to pray, this is an event not to miss!

SEE. CHANGE. PRAYER WEBINAR

Thursday 7 March,
7.30, online

If you can't make it to Witney, why not join our online prayer webinar where we will be praying for our persecuted sisters ahead of International Women's Day?

Find out more and book your place at opendoorsuk.org/seechange

ABOVE Susanna Koh will be at the prayer webinar to share updates about the trial on her husband's abduction in Malaysia



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