

Give thanks for Answered prayer

A widow who faced persecution from her family and her community after her son died is following Jesus with more determination than ever, thanks to the prayers and gifts of Open Doors supporters.

Kusum (27) lost her five-year-old son two years ago due to an illness. Because of her faith in Jesus, her village wouldn't allow her to bury her son, and her father-in-law used to come to her house with an axe and threaten to cut her into pieces, blaming her faith for the death of his son and grandson.

Her story was featured as part of our 2016 India appeal. With your help, our local church partners reached out to Kusum with livelihood support, enabling her to survive, provide for her remaining 11-year-old son, and continue to follow Jesus.

After the death of her younger son, Kusum was traumatised. But when Open Doors contacts visited her recently, she seemed totally transformed.

"I'm so happy to see you again," she said. "The past two years were very good. I still face opposition from my in-laws. But I'm not sad or depressed. Whenever they persecute, I pray. Prayer makes me strong and I know others pray for me too."

Life continues to be hard for Kusum. "All my in-laws verbally abuse me. And other villagers don't want to give me jobs. I'm not allowed to work in the fields. They treat me like I'm really lower caste. I found a job as a cook at a school, but Hindu families complained and I was ordered to leave. Now I have found a different job cleaning in a school. But already people are complaining and have told me to leave. Fortunately, my mother's family is different. They support me financially when I really need it. It's one of the many ways God has provided for me."



Kusum and her son were ostracised by their village



Despite many challenges, Kusum's son is growing in his faith

Through these challenges, Kusum has discovered the power of prayer to keep faith alive. "I became very independent because of prayer. I continually pray and always sing songs while working. When my five-year-old son was about to die, he told me: 'Don't stop praying. Don't stop going to prayer meetings.' That really encouraged me and has kept my faith alive."

"You were there when I was in need"

Kusum's 11-year-old son now lives and studies at a Christian boarding school in another village. "There's still so much abuse going on in my village," she says. "I don't want him to listen to all that. Besides, now he gets a good education. He stays with me during holidays and I always warn him not to hang with certain bad kids in the village. But he replies, 'No, mama, I will go to everyone. Everybody needs to be my friend so I can tell all of them about Jesus.'"

Your prayers and support have also been a huge source of encouragement to Kusum. "Whenever I was in great need, God provided through your supporters. He sent an Open Doors partner who came with groceries when I had nothing to eat. I'm so thankful to all of you. You were there when I was in need. I want to give thanks to you. Lots of thanks. I am so thankful."

PRAY

- Thank God for Kusum's courage and perseverance; pray that she will shine as a witness for Christ
- Ask God to soften the hearts of her community and in-laws towards her and her son
- For Open Doors local church partners providing spiritual and practical support to believers who face rejection from their families and communities.

You can watch more of Kusum's story by going to www.opendoorsuk.org/india, or by ordering edition 269 of the Prayer News DVD. Phone 01993 460015.

WORLD WATCH LIST

11 INDIA

Despite being the world's largest democracy, with a constitution that guarantees freedom of religion, India has risen rapidly up the Open Doors World Watch List from number 28 in 2014, to number 11 in 2018 – its highest ever position.

Hindu extremism continues to thrive. The Indian government, led by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), believes that being a Hindu is part of Indian identity, and frequently turns a blind eye to attacks on those of other faiths. The militant Hindu nationalist group Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which is linked with the BJP, has stated on national media that they will make India free of Christians and Muslims by 31 December 2021.

Violence against Christians is also increasing. At least eight Christians were killed last year, almost 600 detained and nearly 24,000 physically assaulted. As a result, the level of fear and uncertainty among the majority of Christians is growing.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, have mercy on our brothers and sisters in India. May they know You as their Rock, their Protector and their Defender. Provide for those believers who have been cut off from their friends and family for Your sake, and turn the hearts of Hindu extremists, that they would be overwhelmed and transformed by Your love.

THANK YOU FOR PRAYING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY IN INDIA. PLEASE DON'T STOP NOW!

With your help, our local church partners can reach Christians in every corner of India with practical, legal and spiritual support. To help you pray regularly, the prayer diary will include prayer requests from India each month. For more ways to support Christians in India go to www.opendoorsuk.org/india

You can order more copies of this edition of the prayer diary to share with your church or small group by calling 01993 460015.



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Open Doors

prayer diary
60 years of serving persecuted Christians

A month of prayer for India

"I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH, AND THE GATES OF HELL WILL NOT OVERCOME IT."

Matthew 16:18



PRAY

The Nation

Day 1

It's been over four years since the Hindu nationalist BJP party came to power. In that time anti-minority violence has increased and India has risen from number 28 to number 11 on the Open Doors World Watch List. Ask God to change the hearts of India's leaders to stand up for and protect the rights of Christians and other minorities.

Day 2

Pray for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government. Pray that they will come to a knowledge of the truth about Jesus, our Saviour, so that God's people in India may be free to live peaceful and quiet lives that honour Him (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

Day 3

The BJP is intensifying its activities in northeast India. In some districts the public presentation of the gospel is restricted, and Christians are openly criticised on social media. Pray for wisdom and boldness for Christians here as they share their faith and pray that the gospel will spread.

Day 4

Eight states in India now have anti-conversion laws, which are often misused to harass and even imprison Christians. Pray for perseverance and protection for Hindu-background believers, who come under intense pressure to return to Hinduism.

Day 5

Nearly 80 per cent of Christians in India come from a Dalit and tribal background and are already oppressed for being lower caste. Being a Christian makes them doubly vulnerable. Pray that they will find strength and hope in Jesus' example of faith in the face of unjust suffering (1 Peter 2:19-21).

Day 6

June's flash floods in Kerala state left over 400 people dead and 1 million displaced, including many Christians. Pray for those supporting people who have lost homes and businesses with emergency relief and shelter.

The Church

Day 7

Churches have been vandalised, bombed and set on fire, and church leaders beaten and threatened, to pressurise Christians to renounce their faith. Pray that church leaders will have courage and perseverance to lead their members not to give up meeting together despite persecution.

Day 8

Pastor Sujit* has been attacked by Hindu extremists and his church demolished three times. Yet he still meets with his congregation in secret and hopes one day to rebuild the church. "Please pray," he says. "I believe God will certainly open the way to resume the construction work."

Day 9

Pray for a pastor in northern India who has been charged

with coerced conversion. After a few days in prison he was released on bail but remains under strict police surveillance. Pray for his family's protection as he still gets threats from a Hindu extremist group.

Day 10

Pray for Pastor Gyran*. Recently, 200 Hindu extremists came to his house and forced him to revert to Hinduism. Ask the Lord in His mercy to restore Pastor Gyran's faith and pray for his physical and spiritual protection.

Day 11

Many Christians in India live in poverty and can't afford to buy their own Bible. Pray for protection for those distributing God's Word to those with little or no access to it.

Day 12

Praise God that, despite trials and persecution, the church in India is growing! Give thanks for those who risk their safety, their freedom and even their lives to share their faith in their communities, and ask the Holy Spirit to keep adding to their number.

Hindu-background believers

Day 13

In recent years, Hindu extremists have become more aggressive, claiming that India belongs to Hinduism. Pray for tenacious

faith for Hindu-background believers (HBBs) who face constant pressure to return to Hindu beliefs.

Day 14

Hindu-background believers are often targeted by 'ghar-wapsi' or 'homecoming' campaigns designed to reconvert people to Hinduism. Ask God to provide discipleship opportunities for young believers so they can resist the temptation to recant their faith in Jesus.

Day 15

Karan is the only Christian in his family. His father is the village chief, and in his village, it's a disgrace that the chief's son is not a Hindu. Pray that Karan will be strengthened by God's Word through Bible training, and pray that his family will come to know Jesus.

Day 16

Gallu* was abducted, beaten and tortured by local villagers to try to force him to renounce his faith. His house was also burnt down. Thankfully he escaped from his abductors. Pray for physical and emotional healing for Gallu, and for protection for local believers who are extremely fearful.

Day 17

When Mamta* decided to follow Jesus, Hindu extremists placed her name on a list and presented it to a senior government official, accusing her of converting other Hindus to Christianity. Pray for protection for Mamta and her children and

ask the Lord to bring her wider family to know Him.

Day 18

Manku* and his family came to Christ after his wife was healed. When local villagers found out, they beat him, ostracised the family and denied Manku any work in the village. Ask the Lord to strengthen Manku's faith and provide a way for him to earn a living.

Day 19

Pray for Hindu extremist groups who oppose the growth of the church. Ask God to soften their hearts to the gospel and pray that many will find salvation in Jesus through the witness of His people.

Women and girls

Day 20

Pray for Christian girls who are put under house arrest by their families because of their faith. Ask God to sustain and protect them and pray that their families would come to know Him.

Day 21

Ashani (19) was raped and killed by her Hindu fiancé after her parents told him he

must respect her Christian faith. Ask the Lord to comfort the family and pray for wisdom for those supporting them with legal advice.

Day 22

Pray for courage for a sister who was beaten up by a group of young men from her village and warned that she would be killed if she didn't give up her Christian faith. Ask the Lord to be her shield and defender.

Day 23

Shanti trusted Jesus after He healed her from a mental health issue. Her family threw her out and her village has threatened to expel her unless she denies Jesus. She prays: "Lord, thank You for revealing Your salvation to me. I pray that You would save my daughter and son-in-law. I pray that You would provide a good place to live for me. I am struggling to find a home, but I trust You. Please help me stand strong in You." Please pray with her.

Day 24

Mother-of-four, Jaanvi* (38), has been ostracised for following Jesus, yet longs to see her village come to know Him. "I see the Hindus around us suffering from illnesses and lack of peace,

just like my family once suffered. I pray that they will come to prayer meetings and receive the healing and forgiving power of Jesus, so that they come to know Jesus Christ." Join with her in prayer.

Day 25

Open Doors trains local churches to run persecution survival seminars for women affected by persecution. Pray that these seminars will give many women the strength and encouragement they need to stand firm in their faith.

Transforming lives

Day 26

Open Doors works through local church partners to support Christians in India with Bibles, training, livelihood and advocacy support, and relief aid. Pray for wisdom and resilience and that their work would strengthen the church.

Day 27

Give thanks for persecution survival training run by Open Doors' local church partners to help Christians respond biblically to persecution. An attendee says, "We now know how to live and act as responsible Christians. Whatever you do to support us, it's very inspiring to me. I will continue my ministry with even more zeal."

Day 28

Give thanks that Reena*, who was abducted and

abused by Hindu extremists, has recovered thanks to the prayers and gifts of Open Doors supporters. "She now works at a school and teaches the children Christian values," says a contact. "It's amazing to see how God continues to work in and through her."

Day 29

Rajan was given livelihood support through a worm composting project run by Open Doors church partners. He has since included more people in the project and started a cell group. Give thanks that 12 persecuted families are now earning additional income through this project!

Day 30

Over 24,000 Christians were attacked for their faith last year. Pray for courage and protection for local Rapid Response teams taking great risks to support victims of violence with emergency food and medical care.

Day 31

As persecution becomes more extreme, Open Doors plans to double its support for Christians in India through local church partners. Pray for discernment for those working to strengthen the church for the long-term task of building God's kingdom in India.

**Name changed for security reasons*

