"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

JOHN 8:12
Saturday 2 November - Syria
The elderly, the sick, the disabled and single mothers are still in great need. As they cannot work to earn a living, they depend on practical support they get from churches. Pray for Open Doors church partners continuing to provide thousands of vulnerable families with relief aid and spiritual care.

Friday 1 November - Syria
Eight years of civil war have killed over half a million people and displaced over 12 million, according to the UN. Keep praying that the Prince of Peace will restore peace and stability to this nation and work through His church to bring healing to its people.

Tuesday 5 November - Syria
Jina and her son Abraham (7) are receiving relief aid and spiritual care through a Centre of Hope run by Pastor Abdalla, an Open Doors partner in Aleppo. Pray that the Centre will be able to reach more vulnerable families with the support they need to survive.

Wednesday 6 November - Syria
Pray for the Centre of Hope in Latakia which runs a psychological/spiritual programme for teenagers called ‘My life has meaning’. Twenty Muslim teenagers are participating. Pray for wisdom for the teachers and open hearts for those who attend.

Thursday 7 November - Syria
Pray for weapons control inside Syria. There are no boundaries when it comes to having guns, which are easy to get hold of. They are being used recklessly: to celebrate winning a football game, for example. Last year a family lost their four-year-old daughter and two other people were injured this way.

Friday 8 November - Syria
Praise God that He continues to build His church in Syria. Pastor Rami, leader of a house church in Mashta al-Helou, says: “Thank God for working miracles in Mashta al-Helou, He is healing, liberating and speaking to people in dreams and visions. Many people are coming to Jesus.”

Saturday 9 November - Iraq
Since the Islamic State uprising in 2014, over 50 Christians have gone missing. Their fate is unknown. Pray with their families in hope that they will be reunited again.

Sunday 10 November - Iraq
Keep praying for Noeh (14) and his family, who returned to their home in Karamles last year after four years of displacement. Living costs are high and Noeh’s father is struggling to find work. Ask the Lord to provide for their needs and pray for Open Doors partners supporting Iraqi Christians with livelihood training and microloans.

Monday 11 November - Iraq
Pray for Milad (25), Steven (26) and Attir (26) who recently started a farm in Karamles, with help from Open Doors. The farm provides an income for four families. “If we hadn’t received the grant we would have to leave our village, our country maybe. We are very grateful to those who made this possible,” says Milad.

Tuesday 12 November - Iraq
Give thanks for the many Christian families who have returned to their villages to rebuild their churches, homes and schools. Pray that their faith will encourage other Christians to remain in their land so that the light of the church is not extinguished.

Wednesday 13 November - Lebanon
Pray for Christian radio and TV programmes that bring the Good News into the homes and hearts of thousands. Ask God to work through these programmes to bring the message of hope to many people across the Middle East.

Thursday 14 November - Iran
Christian parents often struggle to know how to teach their children about the Lord. With no Sunday schools operating, it is down to the parents to teach them, but resources are scarce. Pray that good quality, age-appropriate materials will reach the parents so they can help their children grow to know God’s love.

Friday 15 November - Palestinian Territories
Life in Gaza becomes harder every day due to the lack of basic necessities such as safe drinking water, healthy environment and food. Pray especially for children, the sick and elderly people, who suffer the most. Pray for a long-lasting solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.
In 2017, Magid was selling palm branches with his wife, Hannan, and son, Youssef, outside St Mark’s Church in Alexandria, Egypt, when a suicide bomber attacked. Hannan lost her life in the blast, leaving Magid to raise their two children on his own. Single-father families are rare in the Middle East, and it has not been easy for Magid to adjust to life without Hannan. But, thanks to your prayers, he and his family are flourishing.

Open Doors local partners visited Magid and his two children, Youssef (13) and Maryam (8), at their home. He has become much closer to his children over the last two years. “I try to be like a friend to my children and a mother and father in one,” he says. “I play with them and we pray together. I try to give them as much love as possible. They should always feel loved.”

Maryam says her father is doing a good job. “He works, but he is also around a lot for us. He is very kind, forgiving and peaceful. He has a lot of love inside, and he teaches me how to love others too. I want to be like him when I grow up.”

“*It would be an honour to die for Jesus*”

Magid shares some of the struggles he faces as a single parent. “It’s not easy to take care of two children on my own, but God gives me peace,” he says. “I struggle most when I see how much the children miss their mother, miss her tenderness. Then it helps to visit the monastery where she is buried. We go there twice a month. Being there helps us to feel peaceful, close to God.”

Maryam nods. “I miss my mother a lot,” she says, “but I know she is with Jesus. My love for God is so big, bigger than the whole world.” When she grows up, she wants to be a nun: “Then I can always be close to God and pray all day long.” This is what she prays for her family: “Our Father, I praise You because You are close to us and keep us alive. I thank You for giving us life and comforting us about the death of my mother.”

Magid’s faith in God keeps the fear away. “Even if a terrorist targets the church again,” he says, “it would be an honour to die for Jesus.”

**PRAY**

- For Magid and his children, that God will continue to heal them and fill them with His Spirit
- That all the families affected by the 2017 Palm Sunday bombing will know God’s love and presence close to them
- That Christians in Egypt will continue to proclaim the gospel without fear, confident in the Lord Jesus and His love.
India

Monday 25 November
Thank God for everyone who has spoken up for their persecuted sisters by signing the handmade petition. Ask God to open up more opportunities for Open Doors to use the petition to raise further prayer, support and awareness for our sisters who continue to need our support.

Saturday 23 November
Pray for everyone who has visited the petition display in Westminster Abbey this week. Pray that they will be deeply impacted by what they’ve seen and will share this with others so that more prayer and support will be galvanised.

Wednesday 27 November
Indian Christians from rural areas are often poor and face discrimination because of their faith, particularly in finding jobs. Pray for Open Doors partners providing livelihood training to enable our brothers and sisters to support their families.

Yemen

Thursday 28 November
Pray for an end to the ‘forgotten war’ raging in this country. Pray that the blockade on food, water and medicines will be lifted so that supplies can get through to the thousands of families on the brink of starvation.

Friday 29 November
The ongoing war puts our brothers and sisters under continuing restrictions. Groups of people who meet together but aren’t relatives are suspicious in the eyes of the authorities. Pray that Christians will find ways to meet to encourage one another to keep trusting in God.

Saturday 30 November
Pray for those who have committed their lives to serving the Yemeni Christian community. Ask the Lord to open up ways for them to meet and disciple a new generation of leaders who can grow the church in Yemen.

Monday 18 November
Today is the start of the PSVI conference. Pray that the presentation of the petition will help governments to recognise that sexual violence in conflict is inextricably linked with faith-based persecution, and that this will be recognised at the conference.

Tuesday 19 November
Tirham*, an Open Doors partner and trauma care worker from Nigeria, is in the UK this week to speak to parliamentarians and media about the violent persecution Christian women experience. Pray for wisdom and courage as she speaks and pray that the PSVI conference will agree on how to support women like Tirham who do such important work, often in very isolated and difficult contexts.

Wednesday 20 November
Thank God that He sees every woman persecuted for her faith and gender. Pray for those who are hidden - those who have been abducted or held under house arrest. Pray that they will know the God who sees them, and pray that their communities will not shame them, but love them.

Thursday 21 November
Persecution of Christian women is complex because it exploits all the vulnerabilities specific to women. Ask God to resource Open Doors partners around the world supporting vulnerable women with relief aid, livelihood training and discipleship programmes, so that they can fulfil their God-given potential.

Friday 22 November
Persecution of Christian women is often violent. Pray for Open Doors workers providing trauma care programmes for women who have experienced sexual violence. Pray that these programmes will restore hope and dignity to many women.

Friday 26 November
Bhima* was socially boycotted by his community because of his faith in Jesus. Open Doors partners helped him to open a grocery shop so he could support himself, but when his persecutors saw this, they sent people on a motorbike to run him over, breaking his leg. He is now undergoing treatment. Pray for a speedy recovery.

This week, the handmade petition will be presented to the UK government during the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) conference. Please join us in praying that the petition will bring change for our persecuted sisters.

Sunday 17 November
As Christians worldwide mark the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, remember the many women who are persecuted for both their faith and gender. Pray for the display of the handmade petition in Westminster Abbey this week. Pray that many eyes will be opened and many hearts touched by the double vulnerability of persecuted Christian women.

Monday 24 November
Thank God for everyone who was threatened for converting members of their community to Christianity. They were told to pay hundreds of thousands of rupees or be expelled from the village. Pray for courage and protection.

Sunday 24 November
Thank God for everyone who has spoken up for their persecuted sisters by signing the handmade petition. Ask God to open up more opportunities for Open Doors to use the petition to raise further prayer, support and awareness for our sisters who continue to need our support.

Sunday 23 November
Thank God for everyone who has visited the petition display in Westminster Abbey this week. Pray that they will be deeply impacted by what they’ve seen and will share this with others so that more prayer and support will be galvanised.

Women from Bangladesh display their handmade petitions

India

Monday 25 November
Pray for 20 believers threatened for converting members of their community to Christianity. They were told to pay hundreds of thousands of rupees or be expelled from the village. Pray for courage and protection.

Tuesday 26 November
Bhima* was socially boycotted by his community because of his faith in Jesus. Open Doors partners helped him to open a grocery shop so he could support himself, but when his persecutors saw this, they sent people on a motorbike to run him over, breaking his leg. He is now undergoing treatment. Pray for a speedy recovery.

Wednesday 27 November
Indian Christians from rural areas are often poor and face discrimination because of their faith, particularly in finding jobs. Pray for Open Doors partners providing livelihood training to enable our brothers and sisters to support their families.

Thursday 28 November
Pray for an end to the ‘forgotten war’ raging in this country. Pray that the blockade on food, water and medicines will be lifted so that supplies can get through to the thousands of families on the brink of starvation.

Friday 29 November
The ongoing war puts our brothers and sisters under continuing restrictions. Groups of people who meet together but aren’t relatives are suspicious in the eyes of the authorities. Pray that Christians will find ways to meet to encourage one another to keep trusting in God.

Saturday 30 November
Pray for those who have committed their lives to serving the Yemeni Christian community. Ask the Lord to open up ways for them to meet and disciple a new generation of leaders who can grow the church in Yemen.

*name changed for security reasons
Christians in northern Iraq have new hope for a more peaceful future, thanks to your support for the Hope for the Middle East campaign.

With your help, Open Doors partners have now restored over 1,270 houses in the Christian villages of the Nineveh Plain. Louy (42), a father, teacher and follower of Christ, is one of many Christians who have returned to their village determined to restore peace in their communities.

In 2014, Louy and his family had to flee their home in Bartella when so-called Islamic State (IS) invaded the region. After several years away, the family returned, repairing their home with help from Open Doors’ local partners. Louy is so grateful to everyone who has supported them.

Perhaps you can remember a stressful time when you moved to a new place. Now imagine having to flee from IS, leaving people, places and possessions you know and love.

Louy describes how his 12-year-old son Sharbel ‘felt cut off from his friends, his school, his street and home.’ Now that they are back, Sharbel says: “It’s much better now: my friends are here; the church is nearby.”

Despite all that Louy and his family have endured, they continue to trust God. Louy says: “Even during our displacement, we said that it may be God’s plan for us as Christians. This is our life – we’ve built it on this basis and we thank God in very situation.”

Now, as a teacher at a school with many Muslim students, Louy teaches peace in his classroom. He says, “When I teach these children, the most important thing for me to teach them is about peace. When there is no peace, you could study to become a doctor or other good job, but you won’t really benefit from having such a good job because peace is much more important. We, as Christians, are considered ‘sons of peace’.”

Iraq is a Muslim-majority country but Louy really wants to pass on his Christian faith to his son, despite huge challenges. “Church comes first in our lives and that’s how we raise our child. […] In his school lessons, he is receiving a Christian education and through the advice he gets from me, from his mother, his grandmother and grandfather. We build his life on this foundation.”

Louy is so grateful to all who have supported him and his family. “We always say that, without support from the church and organisations, we would not have been able to return,” he says. “We wouldn’t have managed without your help.”

PRAY

• Give thanks for Louy’s firm faith in God and his desire to pass it on to Sharbel

• Thank God that, as a teacher, Louy is also able to teach the children of Bartella the importance of love and peace

• Pray that Iraqi Christians would be encouraged, protected and enabled to share the gospel, despite the enormous challenges of living in a Muslim majority country.

> Watch Louy tell his story on our Prayer News page: www.opendoorsuk.org/prayernews
Hope for the Middle East

Sunday 1 December – Syria
Pray for the Good Shepherd project run by Pastor Abdalla’s church in Aleppo, which provides vital food, fuel and spiritual care to families with no other means of support. Ask God to work through the project to keep hope alive for the most needy families, especially as winter approaches.

Monday 2 December – Syria
Abraham’s father was kidnapped when Abraham was just a baby and is still missing (see Magazine p8). Abraham (7) wasn’t able to speak for three years after his father disappeared and remains very anxious. Ask the Lord to comfort him, and pray for wisdom for Open Doors partners supporting him and his mother Jina through the Good Shepherd project.

Tuesday 3 December – Syria
Give thanks for the 16 Centres of Hope that are providing practical and spiritual help to those affected by war and persecution. Open Doors partners have a vision to open another 20 Centres of Hope across Syria. Ask God to make this vision a reality in 2020.

Wednesday 4 December – Syria
Pray for a team of volunteers running Sunday school activities in Latakia. They’re planning to visit a Muslim village to perform dances set to Christian songs as a way of telling the children about Jesus. Pray for wisdom, and that the word of God will spread across the village.

Thursday 5 December – Iraq
Many Iraqi Christian families who fled to neighbouring countries in 2014 are still waiting for asylum. They often face discrimination for their faith and are not allowed to work or attend school. Ask God to give these families hope and a future.

Friday 6 December – Iraq
Give thanks for the success of several youth gatherings in Bartella, Karamles and Ankawa, which were attended by thousands of young people. Ask the Lord to give young Iraqi Christians the courage and faith to stay in Iraq and make a difference in their communities.

Saturday 7 December – Iraq
Thousands of Yazidis are still unable to return to their homes in Sinjar from where IS ousted them in 2014. Many live in tents in desperate conditions. Ask the Lord to provide a way for them to go home, and pray that many will find a lasting home in Him.

Children

Sunday 8 December – Syria
Pray for children’s activities being run in Centres of Hope in Syria. “New ways of thinking about love are being planted in children’s hearts and minds, the opposite to what they were used to,” says one teacher. “We pray for a generation of love instead of hatred and violence, a generation that will seek the God of love despite everything they learned before.”

Monday 9 December – India
New bridge schools are being established here to give Christian children extra support in their education. They often face discrimination in school because of their family’s faith. Pray that these schools will help children to learn and grow in confidence.

Tuesday 10 December – Vietnam
Phouc* (6) was attacked by villagers angry that her parents had turned from ancestor worship to follow Christ. After a month in a coma, she regained consciousness but could not remember anything - even her parents. Pray for the medical staff caring for Phouc and pray for her complete recovery.

Wednesday 11 December – Malaysia
Pray for a new discipleship programme that uses the Bible to train young people. Pray that the training will teach young people how to live wisely for Jesus.

Thursday 12 December – Indonesia
Give thanks that Alvaro (7), who was badly burned in a church bombing in 2016, has recently started school. “He is very happy and excited,” says his mother, Novita. “He had already prepared everything weeks before the school started, like his school uniform, and polishing his shoes.” Pray for continued strength and healing for Alvaro and his parents.

Friday 13 December – East Africa
Sella* (12) is one of only a few Christians in her school. She is constantly mocked for her faith and told that her prayers don’t reach Heaven, but gets no protection from teaching staff. Pray for Open Doors workers working to reassure her of the Lord’s presence with her and pray that she will know that God hears and answers her prayers.

Saturday 14 December – Nigeria
Pray for the Chibok girls, Leah Sharibu and many other girls abducted by Boko Haram. This will be another Christmas spent away from their loved ones in terrible circumstances. Ask the Holy Spirit to renew their faith and pray for their release.

Sunday 15 December – Bangladesh
Pray for children attending a Christmas celebration for believers from Muslim backgrounds. Around 100 families will attend, and for many this will be the first time they celebrate Christmas. Pray that God’s peace and favour will rest on them.

*name changed for security reasons
Secret Christmas

At Christmas, we see Bethlehem – a small, then-backwater town in the Middle East – take centre stage for one of the most significant events in the Christian calendar. We sing carols about it, set up Nativity scenes, and reflect on it as a place of great peace and blessing.

But what is Christmas like for believers in the Middle East 2,000 years after the birth of Jesus? Nadia* lives in Israel, not far from Bethlehem itself. “Christmas is a very confrontational time for me,” she says – and for good reason. Coming from a Muslim background, her community expelled her when they found out she had chosen to follow Jesus.

As the only believer in her family, Christmas can be a really lonely time for her. And yet every year, in a beautiful act of hospitality, she opens up her house for secret believers nearby to celebrate Christmas in safety. “Last year, there were 14 people in my apartment celebrating Christmas and they stayed overnight. They brought their own decorations, and even a tree, and they brought all the food they liked. We had a great time together! They really had the feeling that this was their house as well.”

Things are different in Libya, however. “Christmas is not a special day in Libya,” says Charley*, an Open Doors fieldworker who is in regular contact with isolated believers there. “You won’t see any Christmas trees there; life just continues as usual. In day-to-day life, believers are already very alone with few Christian connections. At Christmas, this is even more apparent. Individual believers here don’t even dare to dream about celebrating Christmas.”

For Christians in Libya who do have connections with other believers – for example, other family members – then discreet Christmas celebrations might occur. “Don’t expect Christmas trees, angels and fake snow,” Charley says, “but secret believers do have a nice meal on Christmas Day, just as you would with a birthday.”

Christmas celebrations may be more low-key in the Middle East than here in the UK and Ireland, but the faith of believers there is not diminished because of it. If anything, their desire to see others around them come to know Jesus as Lord increases. “I have a vision that, before I die, I will witness at least one million Palestinian Muslims coming to the Lord,” says Nadia. “I do believe in that and I wish to see it soon.”

PRAY:

• For Nadia as she opens her home to believers this Christmas, and for isolated believers in Libya, that they would know Jesus present in their midst

• For God’s protection and wisdom for secret believers who choose to celebrate Christmas this year

• That all Christians who are persecuted for their faith would experience the peace and joy of the Christ child.

*name changed for security reasons

Christians celebrate Christmas secretly in the Middle East
Monday 16 December
- Arabian Peninsula
Please pray for Christians in prison here. It is not possible to share details about individuals, but pray especially for those who have to endure lashes or beatings. Pray that their faith in Jesus Christ will remain steadfast and that the joy of the Lord will be their strength.

Tuesday 17 December - India
Pray for Pastor Raman* who has been falsely charged with rape and imprisoned. Pray for bail to be granted and that his name will be cleared.

Wednesday 18 December - China
Remember Joyce, a believer from a Muslim background who was recently released after being held in a remote facility for many months. She was not allowed to return home but was sent back to the village where she was born where she has no family or friends. She needs to find work to provide for herself and her son, but finding a job is difficult. “Please pray for me,” she says.

Thursday 19 December - Eritrea
A series of mass arrests earlier this year left over 200 Christians in prison, including over 100 women. Prisoners here are kept in horrific conditions and forced to do long hours of manual labour. Ask God to strengthen them with all power so that they may have great endurance and patience (Colossians 1:11).

Friday 20 December - Tajikistan
Remember Pastor Bahrom, imprisoned for three years in 2017 on charges of ‘religious extremism’. He is not allowed any visitors except his wife, Gulnora. Pray for an opportunity for her to visit him over the Christmas period.

Saturday 21 December - Kazakhstan
Pastor Maximov and his wife Larissa have been convicted of ‘praying by the laying on of hands, and the practice of prayer in other languages’ after being falsely accused by members of their congregation of causing ‘serious harm to health’. They have been sentenced to five and four years in prison respectively. Pray for the charges to be dropped and for comfort for the couple’s children.

Sunday 22 December - China
Keep praying for Uyghur pastor Alimjan Yimit, imprisoned for 15 years in 2008. Ask the Lord to comfort Alimjan, his wife Gulnur and their two sons as they spend an eleventh Christmas apart.

Monday 23 December - Pakistan
Pray for Asia Bibi and her family as they spend Christmas in freedom for the first time since her release from prison a year ago. Pray for healing and restoration for them as a family.

*name changed for security reasons

Christmas

Tuesday 24 December - Christmas Eve
In North Korea on Christmas Eve, people celebrate the birthday of the late Kim Jung-Suk – grandmother of leader Kim Jong-Un. Although Christmas is not a national holiday, it’s a tradition for underground believers to gather together and celebrate the day on their own. Open Doors is aiding these believers with Bibles and Christian literature. Pray that they will have a joyful Christmas and will experience God’s answers to their prayers.

Wednesday 25 December - Christmas Day
Praise God for the freedom we have to celebrate the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, today! Ask God to protect Christmas celebrations taking place in countries where meeting publicly to worship Jesus can make you a target.

Thursday 26 December - India
As attacks on Christians and churches have become more common, many are considering cancelling Christmas celebrations or pushing them underground. Ask God to protect those celebrating Christmas this year, whether in secret or in the open, and pray that the joy of the Lord will fill their hearts.

Friday 27 December - Nepal
Pray for Christians sharing the message of Christmas in schools and churches in their communities through carol singing, dramas and sharing the Word of God. Pray for protection against extremist attacks, and that the message of Christmas will reach the hearts of many Nepalese.

Saturday 28 December - China
Increasing government control means that Christians in house churches will celebrate Christmas this year in small home groups instead of larger meetings. Pray that the growing restrictions they face will fade in comparison to the joy of celebrating the birth of King Jesus.

Sunday 29 December - Laos
Pray for Christians planning Christmas outreach events to victims of August’s floods, which left thousands homeless. Many Lao people do not celebrate Christmas. Pray that these activities will share the light of Christ with them.

Monday 30 December - Central Asia
The church in Central Asia gives out a lot of Christmas gifts, especially for children, the elderly and people with disabilities. Pray that these gifts will show God’s love to these people.

Tuesday 31 December - New Year’s Eve
As we enter a new year, the challenges facing persecuted Christians have never been greater. Pray for wisdom for Open Doors workers and partners as they strengthen the persecuted church worldwide. Pray that more Christians across the UK and Ireland will be moved to pray for, support and speak out for their persecuted family.
A solid foundation

“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.”
– Psalm 119:105

Do you remember the first time you fell in love with God’s Word? Or maybe you’re not quite there yet... The Bible can be difficult to get into!

John* is a teenager from Vietnam – thanks to a Bible distribution project supported by Open Doors, he received a colourful children’s Bible that he couldn’t put down.

He says, “Every morning, I woke up and read the Bible. It gave me a knowledge of the Word. It led me to learn how I can pray, how I can talk to my friends about God... I’m so thankful my dad brought it to my home. I read it, and it gave me a foundation to understand the Lord.”

Nathaniel, who coordinates the Bible distribution project, says, “My prayer request is that there would be more Bibles printed and distributed. When children receive the Bible and the gospel has been sewn in their hearts, they will be the future men and women of God.”

Hebrews 4:12 tells us that ‘the Word of God is alive and active’. So when we meditate on God’s Word every day, when we prayerfully allow it to fill our hearts and minds, our relationship with God is transformed – and we are equipped to be Jesus’ ambassadors among our friends, family and communities.

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word, and thank You that it is so freely accessible to us. May Your Spirit bring the Bible to life so that it brings me into a deeper relationship with You.

You can watch John talk about his Bible at www.opendoorsuk.org/prayernews

*name changed for security reasons