“If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it.”

MARK 8:35 (NLT)
**North Korea**

**Wednesday 1 January**
North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong-un, will celebrate the new year with an official visit to Kumsusan Palace of the Sun, the mausoleum for former leaders. Citizens of Pyongyang will gather at Kim Il Sung Square to ‘strongly boast the people’s revolutionary spirit of Juche ideology’. Pray that the idolisation of North Korea’s human leaders will come to an end and the glory of Jesus will be revealed.

**Thursday 2 January**
North Korea has been number one on the World Watch List since 2002, making it the most dangerous place in the world to be a Christian. Pray that 2020 will be a year of spiritual breakthrough and pray that God’s people may be free to worship Him without fear.

**Friday 3 January**
Open Doors estimates that there are between 50,000 and 70,000 Christians imprisoned in North Korea’s labour camps. Ask God to sustain and strengthen these believers, and pray that, despite the persecution they face, Jesus’ name will be lifted high in the prisons of North Korea.

**Saturday 4 January**
“My father prayed for more than five years before God gave him the opportunity to share the gospel with me,” says Kim Sang-Hwa*, who became a Christian aged 12 after discovering her parents’ secret Bible. Pray for wisdom for Christian parents who cannot tell their children about Jesus for fear that they will accidentally betray their faith to the authorities.

**Sunday 5 January**
Jinsoo* is a secret believer who was discovered during a house search. When the police found a Bible in his house, Jinsoo said quite boldly, “I want to freely worship Jesus.” Since this incident, nobody in the village has seen him. Ask the Lord to honour his courage, strengthen him in his faith and deliver him from every evil attack.

**Monday 6 January**
Chinese surveillance of North Korean refugees has become more and more strict. Ask the Lord to guide Open Doors field workers reaching out to refugees in China and pray for more opportunities to introduce them to the good news of Jesus Christ.

**Tuesday 7 January**
Ask God to protect the safe houses in China run with support from Open Doors, where refugees can read and study God’s Word. Pray that the training believers receive will equip them to build a strong church that can bring the gospel to North Korea.

**Wednesday 8 January**
Give thanks that Open Doors is able to keep 60,000 Christians alive inside North Korea with food and medicine, thanks to your gifts and prayers. Ask the Lord to protect the secret
networks delivering this support and pray that we can reach more believers in 2020.

**China**

**Thursday 9 January**
At this time of great uncertainty in China, pray that 2020 will be the beginning of a new cycle of revivals that sweep the nation, driven by the true hope and salvation found only in Jesus.

**Friday 10 January**
Pray for the release of ethnic minority groups still in prison camps, for persecuted brothers and sisters from Muslim and Buddhist backgrounds, and for China’s house churches which are increasingly forced to meet in secret. Pray for new wisdom, boldness and vision for China’s believers in 2020.

**Saturday 11 January**
Pray for guidance, energy and protection for Open Doors workers in China as they serve our persecuted family. Ask God to lead them to the believers who most need support and encouragement, and pray that the training and resources they provide will have a big impact.

**Sunday 12 January**
Brother Qin*, a believer from a Buddhist background, was arrested six years ago for preaching the gospel to his own people. At the time, his wife was pregnant with their first child. Open Doors workers who visit his wife to encourage her were told Qin won’t be released until 2020. Please pray that Qin will be released this year, so he can return to his wife and meet his son for the first time.

**Monday 13 January**
In September we asked you to pray for Dilnaz*, a sister from a Muslim background whose husband was abducted by police in 2017. Praise God that Dilnaz’s husband has been released and is back home with his family! Ask God to heal and restore him, and please keep praying for the family as they are still being monitored by the authorities.

**Tuesday 14 January**
In October we shared the good news of the release of Ammar*, a believer from a Muslim background who was imprisoned in a re-education camp in western China. Despite the serious consequences he will face if discovered, Ammar has begun to share the gospel again. “I must tell my Muslim brothers now because, in their pain, they are desperate to find the truth and to know God’s love,” he says. Pray for his protection.

**Wednesday 15 January – UK and Ireland**
The 2020 World Watch List is being launched in Parliament today. Pray that MPs new and old, from across the parties, will attend the event, engage with the issue of religious freedom, and be moved to use the influence God has given them to bring change for those who are persecuted for their faith.

*Name changed for security reasons
Thank you so much for your continued prayers for the children and families affected by the Samarinda church bombings in Indonesia in 2016. Alvaro, Trinity and Anita are continuing to heal from the awful burn injuries and trauma they suffered during the bomb attack on their church.

Trinity, now six years old, and her family are currently in China, where she is undergoing advanced treatment to fix her fingers, elbows and knees. Trinity’s mother sent a text expressing her gratitude for all of the encouragement they have received during this time: “Thank you Open Doors, may you always be a blessing for Christians and the world. Jesus bless you.”

Seven-year-old Alvaro is back at school! “He is very happy and excited to start school,” said his mother, Novita. “He had already prepared everything weeks before the school started, like his school uniform, and polishing his shoes.”

When asked if he is treated differently by schoolteachers or friends, Alvaro shared, “No, they are kind to me and don’t mock my appearance.”

Alvaro has to participate in the morning briefing before lessons start, outside the classroom and under the sun, just like other students. Pray for him – when the scars on
his head and face are exposed to sunlight, it creates a burning sensation and pain.

Alvaro will continue to need treatment in later years – for now, it’s been postponed, as doctors advised against giving him anaesthetic to prevent possible after-effects on his body in the future. School for Trinity is still a long way off – her treatment is taking priority.

Alvaro’s father recently sent Open Doors a video of Alvaro singing with him a song called ‘Kau terbaik bagiku’ which means ‘You are the best to me’. Here are the lyrics:

I have forgotten what’s behind me,
I give myself to you, oh Jesus,
And I ran to my purpose,
You give me a new day,
The old has passed.
Your plan, oh God,
Is beautiful to me beyond my understanding.
Your words are yes and amen,
You are the best for me.

> You can watch the video at www.opendoorsuk.org/indonesia

PRAY

- For joy, strength and patience for Alvaro, Trinity, Anita and their families as they continue on the long journey to healing

- For recovery, both physically and mentally, for the parents as well as the children – that even in their darkest hours, they will continue to hope in God’s promises

- For courage and protection for Indonesia’s Christians, as Islamic extremist groups become more influential in pushing for an Islamic nation.

ABOVE Your prayers and support have kept Alvaro (7) and his parents going
Afghanistan

Thursday 16 January
The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan does not allow conversion from Islam. It is seen as apostasy and brings shame on the family and community. Pray for change to take place within the country and for openness to religions outside of Islam.

Friday 17 January
The small number of Christian converts must remain in hiding. Increasing levels of violence have created a general sense of insecurity and there are no signs of improvement for the foreseeable future. Please pray for stability and peace in Afghanistan.

Saturday 18 January
Christian converts from Islam face strong pressure from their family, friends, and neighbours to recant their Christian faith. Depending on the family, they may even fear for their lives. Living openly as a Christian is not possible. Pray for courage and protection over Afghan believers.

Sunday 19 January
Christian parents often hide their faith from their children for fear of discovery. Pray that they will find safe ways to share the gospel with them.

Somalia

Monday 20 January
The Somali people are more than 99 per cent Muslim and society expects all Somalis to be Muslim. Imams in mosques and madrassas state publicly that there is no room for Christians or churches in Somalia. Pray that the Lord will continue to build His church here amid these hostilities.

Tuesday 21 January
The Christian community is small and under constant attack. Open Doors estimates the number of Christians in the country to be in the hundreds. Ask the Lord to send out more workers into the harvest field and pray that they will be wise in finding ministry opportunities that express God’s love.

Wednesday 22 January
The militant Islamic group al-Shabaab targets and kills any Somalis suspected of being Christian. Foreign jihadists are also present in the country and have control over most rural areas. Pray that their influence will be diminished.

Thursday 23 January
Pray that vibrant fellowships will be formed despite the dangers. Pray for mature and godly role-models among Somali believers and for growing unity among the different fellowships.

Libya

Friday 24 January
An armed conflict which began in April 2019 over control of the capital Tripoli has killed several civilians and caused tens of thousands of Libyans to flee their homes. Pray that the violence in the
country will not descend into out-and-out civil war.

Saturday 25 January
With the country in a state of anarchy, militant Islamist groups are able to attack Christians with impunity. Ask God to change the hearts of the militants and to protect and encourage Christians in Libya.

Sunday 26 January
Open Doors estimates that there are only around 150 Libyan Christians. In this strict Islamic country, conversion from Islam to Christianity is not accepted, so converts from Islam are usually secret believers. Pray that these believers will find ways to meet together so they can grow in their faith.

Monday 27 January
Give thanks that the number of Libyan believers from Muslim backgrounds is slowly growing. Pray that Christian TV programmes and websites will help to disciple isolated believers, and reach more Libyans with the truth of the gospel.

Wednesday 29 January
Pray for converts from Muslim backgrounds who suffer the brunt of persecution in Pakistan. Radical Islamist groups see them as apostates, and their family, friends and neighbours see their conversion as shaming the community.

Thursday 30 January
An estimated 700 girls and women are abducted each year. They are often raped and forcibly married to Muslim men in the community. This usually results in forced conversions. Please pray for protection for Christian women and girls in Pakistan.

Friday 31 January
Pray for Open Doors local church partners strengthening Christians with biblical training, literacy and livelihood projects, trauma therapy and emergency aid. Pray for protection for those travelling to rural areas to reach isolated Christian communities with practical support and the hope of the gospel.

Pakistan

Tuesday 28 January
Pakistan is an Islamic Republic and the more recent process of Islamisation goes back as far as the 1980s. The country suffers from a plethora of radical Islamic groups. Please pray for the new Pakistani government to pass laws that will protect the Christians in the country.
Your prayers and gifts are a lifeline to believers living in the most dangerous countries in which to be a Christian. For Somali believer and single mum Momina*, they provided vital support when she and her children were cut off from her family for choosing to follow Jesus.

Until Momina met Jesus, she never had inner peace. As a mother to six children, her life was busy, but comfortable. She is one of many Somali people living in another country in the Horn of Africa, and, as jobs are scarce in those countries, her husband worked abroad, sending her the money she needed to take care of the family.

But she found it stressful to raise the children and worried constantly about them. “I read the Quran daily and prayed regularly, like any good Muslim. I asked Allah to take care of the children, and even told him, ‘You are responsible for my children.’”

However, peace kept eluding her – eventually, she stopped praying altogether. “I stopped praying for three days,” she says. “Then I had a beautiful dream. I saw a very bright shining light and heard the words, ‘You are my daughter.’ I asked, ‘Who are you?’ and the voice answered, ‘I am your Father, the Saviour of the world.’”

Momina decided to seek out others who might tell her the meaning of her dream. “I went to a Christian man I knew. I asked him to give me a Bible. I started reading about Jesus, and then went to church.”

Open Doors partners are supporting Momina’s children with schooling

“Thank you for feeding my family”
Her family soon found out she had become a Christian, and the consequences were disastrous. Her extended family insulted and threatened her, and her husband informed all their relatives that Momina had changed her religion and, as a result, she and the children were dead to him. He instructed everyone to stop sending money to her. Momina had no one to turn to.

But the Lord did not leave her. He led her to a church which partners with Open Doors, where she and her children received support for both their physical and spiritual needs.

“As the Bible says, whoever feeds the hungry is blessed. Thank you for feeding my family. God bless those who feel for us, those who have received Jesus before us and now stand by our side to help us; thank you for those who feel as we feel and who care for us.

“Your support reached me when I was almost gone, almost broken, and when I felt I had no one... I am pleased that I surrendered my life into [God’s] hands. My happiness before and after being in Christ is completely different. My soul has found rest. May God bless those who pray for people like me.”

> You can watch Momina tell her story at www.opendoorsuk.org/prayernews

PRAY

- Thank God for his provision for Momina. Pray that she will find a way to earn a stable income
- For wisdom as she raises her children and pray that they will come to know Jesus
- For Open Doors’ secret networks providing vital support for isolated and vulnerable believers in the Horn of Africa.

*Name changed for security reasons
North Korea

Saturday 1 February
North Korean winters are particularly harsh, with average temperatures well below minus ten degrees Celsius. The food situation this year is also more severe than ever as harvests have been poor. Pray for North Korean believers to survive the harsh winter and ask the Lord to protect Open Doors secret workers smuggling food and medicine into the country.

Sunday 2 February
Deep in China’s forests, Open Doors holds secret women’s Bible study groups for North Korean refugees. The groups meet occasionally to study and memorise the Bible together. Pray that these believers can meet in safety and learn from God’s Word so they can become mature disciples of Jesus.

Monday 3 February
Pray for Sister Yu-mi*, a member of one of these groups who was recently baptised. According to her leader, she had waited for the baptism for months and studied all the materials with passion, and on the day of her baptism, she cried throughout the event. Pray that she will grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus.

Tuesday 4 February
Pray for wisdom and protection for the leaders of the women’s Bible study groups. Ask the Lord to bring more new members to the meetings, and pray that the wounds of their hearts will be healed through the loving fellowship they receive.

Wednesday 5 February
Pray for a believer named Joo-hee* who was caught and detained by the Chinese government. Please pray that she will be released safely, and that she will know God’s protection and providence through this incident.

Thursday 6 February
Pray for Open Doors’ secret workers, who take enormous risks to serve the church in North Korea. Pray for their physical and spiritual health, for safety as they travel long distances, that they would not be subjected to serious ID checks, and that they would know the presence of Jesus strengthening and refreshing them every day.

Friday 7 February
Open Doors supports the broadcasting of Christian radio programmes into North Korea to help believers to learn from the Bible and become true disciples of Jesus. Pray that those who listen to the programmes will be protected as they listen so they can share what they learn with other Christians in their secret meetings.

Saturday 8 February
Underground church leaders have a vision to see a strong, Spirit-inspired, missional church in North Korea. One day they want to unite with
their brothers and sisters in South Korea and China to bring the gospel to the darkest places in Asia. Pray with them that the Lord will make this vision a reality.

**Persecuted Children**

**Sunday 9 February – Syria**
Christian children in smaller towns are often one of the few Christians in their schools. Normally religious classes should be for Muslims as well as Christians but, without Christian teachers, only Islam and Islamic culture is taught. Pray for Lian (8) who is forced to attend Islamic class. Pray that this situation will change for him and other Christians.

**Monday 10 February – Myanmar**
Pray for children’s camps being organised in many places to share the gospel with children and help them grow to know God’s Word. Ask God to bless these camps and work through them to reach many with His love.

**Tuesday 11 February – Myanmar**
Praise God that 1,000 children’s Bibles have been distributed nationwide. Pray for children like Amelia* (8), who was very grateful to receive one of the Bibles and now reads it every day when she comes home from school with her friend Mimi*. Pray that these Bibles will help more children like Amelia and Mimi to learn stories from the Bible and grow in faith.

**Wednesday 12 February – Brunei**
Youth are the future leaders of the country and the government is focused on youth development in the coming year. Pray for the church to see how important it is to disciple and mentor young believers, so that they will be God’s channel of blessing for the nation.

**Thursday 13 February – East Africa**
Winnie* (12) has to dress like a Muslim because it is dangerous to be a Christian in the area where her family live. It makes her feel bad. Pray for the Lord’s comfort and protection, and pray that church leaders will have wisdom to know how to help Winnie and others like her who are confronted by the danger of targeted attacks.

**Friday 14 February – East Africa**
Kelly* (14) feels immense pressure to become a Muslim. She doesn’t have the inner-strength to tell her friends she can’t go with them to the mosque and fears that, if they found out about her faith, they may attack her. She attends church and Sunday school. Ask the Lord to give Christians in her church the wisdom to help Kelly navigate these difficulties.

*name changed for security reasons
The gospel cannot be chained

Ruth and Musse, whose story was first told in Prayer News 265 Feb/March 2018

“\textit{This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God’s word is not chained. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.}”

\textit{2 TIMOTHY 2:8-10}

In Eritrea, the government views Christians as agents of the West and will arrest, harass and kill them with impunity. Musse*, the pastor of an unregistered church, can testify to this.

All in all, he spent six years in prison. But the government had been keeping him under increasing surveillance for over 13 years, keeping him in a constant state of vigilance – never able to stay too long in one location.

When friends and relatives suggested that he should leave his beloved Eritrea, he refused. “We know we have a mission and we must live for that mission,” he said, out of pastoral concern for his flock. But it came at a

“We know we have a mission and we must live for that mission”
cost, especially to his wife Ruth* and their family, being separated from him, as well as being constantly watched.

Incredibly, although conditions were harsh in prison, Musse says that it brought a new stability to his faith. “Until you adapt to life in prison, you face some ‘difficulties,’” he says. “But, once I had adapted, I had consistent prayer and Bible reading.

“In prison, one of my main purposes as a Christian was to evangelise. You continue teaching. Of course, it is forbidden to do it openly, but we did it at night-time when everybody was asleep. We even had Bible portions we could study in secret.

“We saw many conversions”

“Sometimes there were very problematic people who used to inform on us. They would tell the guards, ‘Mussie is preaching, teaching and doing other Christian things.’ There were people like that, yes. But many are passing through different frustrations and depression. Those people loved what we taught and shared. Some of them even tried to cover for us. We saw many conversions. The gospel can’t be chained.”

Musse’s eventual release came about because of his failing health. Nevertheless, it was a massive answer to prayer for the entire family. Musse now remains under close and constant surveillance, forced to report to his local police station regularly to show that he has not fled the country. Every time he goes there, he risks re-arrest.

“Please continue praying for us,” Ruth says. “Pray that we will keep calm; we need prayers so that we live without worry and keep calm.”

Musse adds: “I would like to thank all of you very much. While I was in trouble and faced challenges, you, as my brothers and sisters, set aside your own things and prayed for me. I thank you very much. Most of all, I would like to praise and thank the Lord for inspiring you to pray for me. He is the one that kept us in your hearts of prayer. May the Lord bless all of you who prayed for me while I was in chains.”

**PRAY**

- Give thanks that God’s Word is not chained! Pray that the gospel will continue to spread inside Eritrea’s prisons
- For complete physical and spiritual restoration for Musse, Ruth and their family
- For the Lord’s strength to persevere for Christians still held in Eritrea’s prisons.

*names changed for security reasons
Persecuted Women

Saturday 15 February – Tunisia
Pray for a young widow with three small children. Her late husband’s family are threatening to take her children away after three young people in the family converted to Christianity. Pray for protection over this young family and pray that these threats will not take their toll, as she has an important role in the church.

Sunday 16 February – Nepal
Monika* is being persecuted by her husband and his family. Her husband has threatened to divorce her if she doesn’t renounce her faith. Ask God to change her husband’s heart, and pray for comfort and strength for Monika and for her son, whose mental health has been badly affected.

Monday 17 February – India
Sushila* has suffered mental abuse and has been severely beaten up for her faith in Jesus. She has had to quit her theological studies because of strong opposition from people in her village. Pray for her healing and restoration.

Tuesday 18 February – Bhutan
Pray for women’s empowerment training programmes taking place early this year. Pray for safety for those attending the training and pray that they will use what they learn to be a blessing to their families, churches and communities.

Wednesday 19 February – East Africa
Pray for Esther, whose husband, family and community all rejected her when she left Islam to follow Jesus. Open Doors has built her a house and is providing her with spiritual care. “Thank you for coming to my rescue,” she says. “Knowing that there are people who love me and are concerned about me is very humbling.”

Thursday 20 February – Ethiopia
Hellen’s* husband abandoned her when she chose to follow Jesus, leaving her to bring up three children alone. With your support, Open Doors has paid for the children’s schooling and helped Hellen set up a tearoom. Ask God to bless Hellen’s business and pray that her children will grow to follow Jesus.

Hope for the Middle East

Friday 21 February – Iraq
Weeks of unrest at the end of 2019 left hundreds of protestors dead and led to the resignation of Prime Minister Mahdi. Pray for a return to peace and political stability, and ask God to raise up wise and righteous leaders to govern the Iraqi people.

*names changed for security reasons
Saturday 22 February – Iraq
Pray for discipleship training run by Open Doors partners for new believers in Iraq. Most practise their Christian faith secretly, for fear of being killed. Ask God to give them the courage and wisdom to share their faith with others.

Sunday 23 February – Syria
Pray for the family of two priests, Hovsep Petoyan and his father Abraham, who were shot dead by Islamic State in Qamishli in November. Ask God to comfort Hovsep’s wife, Caron, and her three children, Hovig, Anna and Cayana. Pray that the Christians in Qamishli will not give in to fear.

Monday 24 February – Syria
Pray for Christians from the village of Tal Abyad who were driven away from their homes by October’s attacks in northern Syria. After they fled, some houses were robbed and destroyed so they can’t go back now. One displaced family said: “We are Armenians and they’ve always aimed to empty the village of Christians.” Pray for justice for Christians in that area so they can return to their homes and live in dignity and freedom.

Tuesday 25 February – Lebanon
Lebanon has been a refuge for the poorest and most devastated refugees from neighbouring countries like Syria and Iraq over the years. But it is now going through its own times of turmoil and trouble. Ask the Lord to restore political stability to Lebanon and to preserve the relative religious freedom that exists there so that the church can continue to be a refuge for those who love Jesus.

India

Wednesday 26 February
Pray for the government of India and its leadership, as they plan to make amendments in Indian laws which will make professing and practising the Christian faith difficult. Pray that such laws will not be allowed to pass, and that the leaders of India will seek freedom and justice for all.

Thursday 27 February
Pray for those who attack and persecute the body of Christ across India. Please pray that they would come to the saving knowledge of Jesus; that they would know the truth and the truth would set them free.

Friday 28 February
Manav* and his brother were badly beaten by extremists because of their faith in Christ. Manav is in hospital and his treatment is ongoing. Pray for their continued healing and comfort, and ask God to change the hearts of their attackers so that they turn to follow Jesus.

Saturday 29 February
Please pray for Ranu*, a widow, and her children, who are being socially boycotted by their community because they follow Jesus. Ask the Lord to comfort them and provide for their needs, and pray that their community will come to faith in Christ through their witness.
The power of Amen!

“For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ. And so through him the ‘Amen’ is spoken by us to the glory of God.”

2 CORINTHIANS 1:20

What do you imagine is happening when you pray?

North Korean Christian, Timothy*, has firm views.

“Each time a Christian in our world says ‘Amen’, I think that has authority. When we say ‘Amen’, there is a certain, invisible, spiritual power in there – that makes a huge change.”

Coming from North Korea, Timothy has first-hand experience of persecution – and prayer. “This country is not happy with Christians, not happy with the cross.”

Most North Koreans are also extremely poor. “People constantly fight for survival. When Open Doors is in contact with them and provides physical support, it’s like receiving help from an angel. When you’re in difficult circumstances and someone comes to give you warm bread – you feel like you’ve met someone from heaven.”

The risks facing such workers necessitate prayer. “Our prayers give them the visions and wisdom to see how they can avoid that risk.

“Each time you say ‘Amen’, that authorises spiritual power, making step-by-step progress. And there has been change happening in North Korea – it’s just that we don’t see the physical event yet. But change will happen. The darkness always tries to cover us, but the final victory is always in the hands of God.”

Our Father in heaven, Your kingdom come in North Korea. Your will be done. Give your children their daily bread and deliver them from evil, for Your glory. Amen!

> You can hear Timothy talking about North Korea at www.opendoorsuk.org/prayernews

*name changed for security reasons