

# Open *Doors*

PRAYER DIARY | March/April 2022

A close-up, low-angle portrait of a woman with dark skin, looking slightly to the right. She is wearing a light blue headband with yellow and black circular patterns. The background is a solid purple color.

**"You are the God  
who sees me"**

GENESIS 16:13

# MARCH

## Persecuted Women

### Tuesday 1 March

Millions of Christian women around the world suffer persecution that is hidden, violent and complex. Open Doors' vision is that every woman who is persecuted for her faith and gender is seen, valued and empowered to reach her God-given potential. Today, please pray that this vision will become a reality for our persecuted sisters.

### Wednesday 2 March – North Africa

Sarah\* from North Africa was rejected by her family and then her husband after she became a Christian (see Magazine p8). Thanks to your prayers and support, Sarah now has a job and is involved in discipleship training. But the doors of her family's home remain closed to her. Pray that Sarah will remain strong in her faith and that her family will come to know Christ.

### Thursday 3 March – North Africa

In North Africa, women who convert to Christianity from Islam often face expulsion from their homes, as leaving Islam brings shame to the family. Unmarried women are not expected to live away from the family home and lack support. Ask the Lord to provide for their practical needs and be their support.

### Friday 4 March – North Africa

"There are cases where [Christian] women are imprisoned in their houses," says Pastor Salah. "Contact with people outside is forbidden and often their cell phone is taken from them." Pray that God will comfort and encourage these women, and that their captors will come to know the Lord Jesus.

### Saturday 5 March – North Africa

Nelya\* works with persecuted women in North Africa: "I am in contact with two young women who are following Jesus. At home they can't speak about their faith, so we meet in secret online or on the phone. These women are not allowed to come to church or meet with other believers." Pray for wisdom for Nelya as she supports these two women.

### Sunday 6 March – Kyrgyzstan

Kabia\*, an elderly woman, was expelled from home for her faith by her daughter-in-law who is a devout Muslim. A woman from her church has taken Kabia into her house, and fellow church members are now providing for her needs. Pray for God's comfort for Kabia and that she will stand strong in her faith.

### Monday 7 March – DRC

Sisters Alma (21) and Benedicte (22) became Christians at secondary school. When their father found out, he cut their funding for university. Open Doors was able to help them with registration and exam fees to enable them to continue their first year. Pray that God will

bless them in their studies and that they will remain firm in their faith.

### Tuesday 8 March - International Women's Day

On International Women's Day, Open Doors is joining with Aid to the Church in Need to host a panel on the persecution of Christian women that will be streamed live online. Please pray that MPs will attend the panel, engage with the issues raised and take action to ensure that the government recognises that faith makes women more vulnerable to gender-based violence.

## | North Africa

### Wednesday 9 March – Sudan

The ongoing political crisis has led to rising inflation and poverty. This is gravely affecting Christians who are amongst the poorest in Sudan. Churches are also unable to gather and church incomes are dwindling. Pray for political stability and provision for those in need.

### Thursday 10 March – Algeria

The pressure of being a Christian is taking its toll on many believers, who often face hostility from the authorities as well as from their family and local community. Ask the Holy Spirit to help these brothers and sisters and keep their 'lamp burning' (Psalm 18:28).

### Friday 11 March – Libya

All Christians in Libya, whether Libyans or foreigners, face rejection by society and exposure to

violence, so most are very afraid to meet. Ask God to provide new ways for believers to gather and pray that faith will root deeply in those new to Christianity.

### Saturday 12 March – Egypt

Girls and young women living in slum areas in Cairo and Upper Egypt are at risk of grooming and exploitation. They live in fear every day. Pray for their protection, for God's peace to guard their hearts, and for justice for those who have been wronged.

### Sunday 13 March – Tunisia

Belhsen\* moved across Tunisia to share the gospel. But he faced severe persecution and had to leave. He feels very discouraged. Ask God to work through this experience for Belhsen's good and pray that he will know that nothing can separate him from Christ's love.

### Monday 14 March – Morocco

Mohsen\* recently lost his job for following Jesus. Ahmad\*, another believer, needs to leave his home city because of hostility to his faith. Ask the Lord to meet the practical needs of these two brothers.

### Tuesday 15 March – Morocco

Pray for Mouha\*, who was beaten up by his friends after they found a Bible in his pocket. Pray for spiritual and emotional healing, and for courage to keep reading God's Word.

\*Name changed for security reasons

# Give thanks for ANSWERED PRAYER



## You prayed when Praba could not

### A GRIEVING MOTHER FROM SRI LANKA IS FINDING HAPPINESS AMONGST HER TEARS

**It was the day after she buried her eight-year-old son. Praba, full of questions and unimaginable grief, was crying out to God when she received a vision. "Jesus was holding Peter in his hands," she remembers. "That is where Peter is, and that is where I will go someday."**

It's three years since suicide bombers attacked multiple sites across Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday. Three churches were among

those targeted on 21 April 2019, including Zion Church in Batticaloa where 31 believers, including Peter, lost their lives.

Praba's vision gives her tremendous hope. It's what's helped keep her going the past three years – that and your prayers.

"After we lost Peter, for about six months I could not pray," Praba shares. "Whenever I sat down to pray, 'Jesus' was

all I could manage to say. I could only cry." For the first two years, Praba, her husband and their 15-year-old daughter, Anne, couldn't pray together.

It's here you stepped in. "People who had never even seen us were praying for us when we could not. It is because of their prayers that we have been able to stay strong in our faith. Thank you for upholding our family in prayer during this time."

### "Thank you for upholding our family in prayer"

Last year, on Peter's birthday, the family took a brave step forward. "We prayed together that morning," Praba shares. "He is not with us anymore, but we cannot forget the gift Jesus gave us."

The focus on Jesus reflects a shift that has taken place in Praba's life. "It was only after Peter died that I fully committed my life to Jesus. I used to go to church only on Sundays and spent most of my time caring for my family.

"Now everything else comes second. I am putting God first



ABOVE The family will never forget Peter

now. That is what we are called to do. I have started my ministry again and am teaching Sunday school. My relationship with Jesus has grown deeper.

"We are okay now," adds Praba, who loves interior design and is using her skills to bless others. "We are happy and we laugh, but we will never forget Peter. We remember him every day and we cry every day. But crying has become a part of our lives now."

### PRAY

- That Praba will flourish in her Sunday School and interior design roles
- For the provision of close friends for Anne, who often feels lonely without Peter
- Ask God to provide a sustainable income for the family.

LEFT Open Doors partners pray with Praba: "When the incident happened, you were among the people who spent a lot of time with us," she says



## | West Africa

### **Wednesday 16 March**

Thousands of Christians in countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger have been displaced from their homes by extremist violence. Ask the Lord to protect and guide our brothers and sisters, and pray for Open Doors partners providing for their needs.

### **Thursday 17 March**

Islamic extremism often stems from the breakdown of democracy. Ask God to raise up leaders in the region who are truly invested in democracy and passionate about the welfare of those they lead.

### **Friday 18 March**

Countries with limited resources due to political, social and climate instability are fertile ground for Islamic extremists to spread their expansionist agendas through violence. Pray that governments and international partners will be given wisdom, unity and success as they seek effective ways to address these issues.

### **Saturday 19 March**

Across the region, careers in areas such as journalism, politics and law have traditionally been regarded by many as unsuitable for Christians to pursue. However, believers are needed in these fields to be salt and light. Ask the Lord to raise up individuals for these important ministries.

### **Sunday 20 March**

The church in sub-Saharan Africa has an invaluable role

to play in promoting unity and addressing societal needs. Pray that governments will create space for churches and Christians to thrive in these roles, and ask God to embolden His people when the opportunities emerge.

### **Monday 21 March**

Pastors in the region face a huge task in equipping congregations to grow and stand firm in their faith. Many are also needed to care for those traumatised by persecution, and their roles can make them a target for violence. Ask the Lord to protect church leaders and pray that training programmes run by Open Doors partners will nourish their souls.

### **Tuesday 22 March - Nigeria**

A trauma centre in Nigeria run by Open Doors partners is being extended to increase intake from 720 a year to 2,880. This includes widows, rape victims and orphans. Praise God for this development, and pray that all those who visit will find lasting hope, peace and healing.

## | Hope for the Middle East

### **Wednesday 23 March – Syria**

Keep praying for Anwar\*, the son of a Sheikh, who was rejected by his family when he chose to follow Jesus. Recently he has been battling with depression. Although he found help at a Centre of Hope, he no longer sees a future for himself in Syria and has left the country. Ask God to restore his health and give him peace.

### **Thursday 24 March – Syria**

So-called Islamic State (IS) sleeper cells are threatening Christians in Qamishli under the motto 'Christians will vanish'. They post threats on social media about an upcoming era when Christians will be forced to leave or convert to Islam. Pray for Christians in north-east Syria to be protected and stand strong in the face of these threats.

### **Friday 25 March – Syria**

In recent months our local partners have been more closely monitored by Syrian security officials. Pray for protection over the projects they run and wisdom in handling questions about the funding and purpose of these projects. Pray for God's favour so that they can continue to serve Him in peace.

### **Saturday 26 March – Syria**

Thank God for the successful launch of a new Facebook group for teenagers which aims to create a secure environment for young people to spend time together, ask questions and express their feelings. In one week, the promo reached over 10,000 people, had over 6,000 complete views, and had 270 participants! Pray that this project will change many young people's lives.

### **Sunday 27 March – Mother's Day**

Keep praying for Jina, whose husband Rober was kidnapped eight years ago, leaving her to bring up her son Apo (9) alone. Pray that God's love will sustain Jina as she raises Apo

to follow Jesus, and pray with her that Rober will be restored to her.

### **Monday 28 March – Iraq**

Pray for Open Doors partners travelling to different areas of Iraq to provide training for future church leaders. Pray for safe travel, for protection over the venues and that God will work through the training to strengthen His people to build His kingdom in Iraq.

### **Tuesday 29 March – Iraq**

Islamic State (IS) sleeper cells continue to carry out regular attacks against villages in the border areas of Kirkuk, Nineveh and Erbil. Pray for the protection of civilians living in these conflict areas and pray that IS will not regain control of the region.

### **Wednesday 30 March – Iraq**

Keep praying for Christians in the Nineveh plain who have returned to rebuild their destroyed villages. The unstable security situation in the area, coupled with unemployment and difficult living conditions, is creating fear and uncertainty. Ask God to give wisdom to local church leaders to know how to encourage their people and renew their faith in God.

### **Thursday 31 March – Iraq**

Open Doors partners have started a counselling school to train individuals and groups to provide pastoral support, trauma care, and marriage and family counselling to those in need. Pray that the school and those who work there will bring hope and healing to all who attend.

# “You thought of me without knowing me in person”

YOU'RE HELPING LATIFA AS SHE FACES REJECTION, SHAME AND ABUSE – NOW YOU CAN WRITE TO HER



**When Latifa\* from North Africa became friends with a Christian man and his mother, she tried to convince them to become Muslims. But over the course of six months something was stirring in Latifa, until one Easter she made a decision that surprised herself – and infuriated her family.**

“I used to go home and read my Bible, then call the mother even in the middle of the night and talk about it,” Latifa recalls of the months before she became a Christian. “I couldn’t stay away from my Bible. It was breathing life into my soul.”

After giving her life to Jesus at an Easter service, aged 26, Latifa was rejected by those meant to protect her: her family. Her brother threatened her with death and followed her to church to disrupt services. She was put under house arrest for two weeks before being thrown out. “My father

used to love me unimaginably,” Latifa says. “When he asked me to leave, it was like the end of the world to me.”

Latifa not only faced rejection and homelessness, but also shame. In North African culture, a woman only leaves home when she marries. Thankfully, she found shelter with a Christian woman. It was a month before she found work but she still couldn’t attend church. She was told that her ‘family was determined to hurt me’.

The family eventually reached Latifa, by which time attitudes had softened. Amazingly, relationships were restored and they accepted Latifa’s marriage to the man who first introduced her to Jesus.

However, the persecution resumed when the couple sought to live in the area where her mother grew up. Wider family issued death threats and got the couple

twice evicted from their home. They also got Latifa’s husband fired from his job and had him beaten up, made threats about their daughter, and put pressure on Latifa’s mother. “My mother asked me to never visit her again.”

Latifa (now 42) has been abandoned by her family, but not by you. “You made sure that I was visited by women because I couldn’t go to church,” she shares. “You helped me pay my rent. If we didn’t move from there, only God knows what could have happened.” Open Doors partners also gave financial support whilst Latifa received cancer treatment.

“Thank you for your support. You thought of me without knowing me in person. We’ve never met, but we’re brothers and sisters and belong to the same body. Knowing that believers around the world are praying for us makes us proud.”

## PRAY

- For protection over the family and provision of stable work for Latifa’s husband
- That Latifa will fully recover from cancer
- For restoration of all family relationships.

### > WRITE

Latifa says, “My family and I need your spiritual support.” You can help provide this by writing to her. Find out how at [opendoorsuk.org/write](https://opendoorsuk.org/write)

### > WATCH

You can watch Latifa share her story at [opendoorsuk.org](https://opendoorsuk.org)

\*Name changed for security reasons

## | Ramadan

### Friday 1 April

As millions of Muslims around the world prepare to observe Ramadan, ask the Lord to reveal Himself to those who are searching for God. Pray that they will be drawn to Christian websites, TV or radio programmes, or courageous believers who can share the love of Christ with them.

### Saturday 2 April - Brunei

The first day of Ramadan is a public holiday in Brunei. It is considered a holy day as Muslims believe the first verses of the Quran were revealed to Muhammad during this time. Pray that as the people of Brunei earnestly seek God today, they will come to know the love of Jesus.

### Sunday 3 April - Arabians Peninsula

Ramadan emphasises Muslim brotherhood and community. Pray for isolated believers from Muslim backgrounds (BMBs) who can feel particularly lonely at this time. Pray for the comfort and presence of the Holy Spirit, and for strength not to give in to the pressure to return to Islam.

### Monday 4 April - Sub-Saharan Africa

Ramadan can be a particularly challenging time for new believers. "When I'm on the streets with my friends and they go for prayer, I have to go to the mosque and pray with them," shares one brother. "I

feel guilty about this and feel that I don't belong there. But if I don't go, that's the end of my life." Pray for protection and for God's wisdom to know how to live out their faith.

### Tuesday 5 April - Sub-Saharan Africa

There is an urgent need for Christians who can stand by BMBs, to disciple them and model life in Christ to them. Open Doors partners provide training to church leaders in caring for these believers. Pray that the training will bear fruit and that new believers will be welcomed and lovingly cared for during Ramadan.

### Wednesday 6 April - Indonesia

"The local Muslims would come to my house and force us to fast and pray, since we don't show up at the mosque anymore," says Samir\*. "It gets worse during Ramadan." Pray for strength for BMBs who are holding fast to Christ despite opposition. Pray that their courage will draw others to Jesus.

### Thursday 7 April

Many believers from Muslim backgrounds say that it is the love of Christ that drew them to Christianity. Ask the Lord to increase in His church a genuine love for the Muslim community, and pray that Muslims will be drawn to Jesus as Christians emulate Christ's love for them in their daily lives.

> Pray for Muslims around the world this Ramadan with *30 Days of Prayer for the Muslim World*. To download a copy go to [opendoorsuk.org](http://opendoorsuk.org)

## | Persecuted Women

### Friday 8 April - Sri Lanka

Sharifa (21) had been secretly attending church - but when her family discovered it, they threw her out, saying: "You will be welcomed back at this house when you are ready to convert to Islam." Sharifa now lives with a relative and Open Doors partners are helping pay her class fees. Pray that she will stand strong in her faith.

### Saturday 9 April - Mozambique

Lorena's\* husband was killed when insurgents raided their village. She fled her home, but her faith in God remains: "In no one else I trust, only in God and Jesus Christ. Because He did not leave me." Lorena (SEE COVER) and her family have received relief aid through Open Doors partners. Ask God to heal and restore Lorena and provide for her needs.

### Sunday 10 April - India

Sharda\* works with impoverished women and children in her community. Life became extremely difficult when her son was shot by Hindu extremists. Fortunately, he survived and now lives in another town. Open Doors partners helped Sharda set up a tailoring business to support her - but she still faces opposition. Pray that God will protect Sharda and her family as she continues to serve Him.

### Monday 11 April - Syria

Around 85 per cent of Syrian women aged 30-40 are unmarried - largely because

so many men have fled the country because of war and persecution. In Eastern culture, a woman is considered a liability to her parents if she reaches a certain age and is still living with them. Ask God to provide for these women and dissolve the cultural stigma around being single.

### Tuesday 12 April - China

Julia\* is a Buddhist-background believer. Her community frequently cuts off her water and electricity because of her faith. Their hostility also makes it hard for other believers to visit her. But she hasn't given up: "Nothing could stop me from worshipping God. Jesus Christ is enough for me!" Pray that Julia will remain steadfast in her faith.

### Wednesday 13 April - Nigeria

In January, around 20 girls were taken by Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) in raids around Chibok in north-east Nigeria. Professor Babagana Zulum, Borno State Governor, says, "The ISWAP fighters are more sophisticated, educated, armed and brutal than the Boko Haram terrorists." Pray for the safe and imminent release of all held captive.

### Thursday 14 April - Nigeria

It's been eight years since Boko Haram abducted over 270 schoolgirls from Chibok - more than 100 remain in captivity. Keep praying for the safe return of the girls who are still being held, and that God's presence will be with them and their families.

\*Names changed for security reasons

# Knowing their worth



## GHADA SEES CHANGE IN THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

**Proverbs 31:26** says, “She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.”

This could be said of Ghada Shomali, a teacher at a girls’ school in Beit Sahur, just outside Bethlehem. From a young age, she wanted to inspire and support the next generation of women in their faith, just as she was encouraged in hers. “What inspired me to become a Christian religion teacher was the priest, who always encouraged us to study Christianity more deeply so that we could have generations who have more knowledge of Christianity,” Ghada says.

She covers a wide range of topics in her teaching,

like the responsibilities of Christian citizens, friendship and family, and tries to connect them with the daily life of her students. They also study the Bible in every

**“They have to know their value as Christian women so they can share their faith”**

lesson, talking about the life of Jesus and His teachings, as well as looking at the Old and New Testament. “Since I’m a teacher at a girls’ school, I get asked a lot about women’s issues, how Christianity did justice to women and gave women their dignity. I always explain it through the way Jesus dealt with women.”

Through her ministry, Ghada has seen God at work in the lives of her students. “Some who didn’t used to go to church, started to go. Some didn’t do any charity works but now they are motivated to do them. I see them solve their problems based on the Bible’s values. I’ll be happy to see that the solution came from them. We are working on bringing girls and parents closer.”

work with the elderly and disabled.

Above all, Ghada is passionate about seeing the gospel transform the lives of her students, so they in turn can share the good news of Jesus with others. “[These girls] have to know their value as Christian women, so they can share their faith with the next generation,” she says.

### PRAY

- That Ghada’s students will know God’s infinite and transforming love for them
- For God’s continued blessing and anointing on Ghada and her ministry
- That more and more women in the Palestinian Territories will know their God-given worth.

Alongside her teaching job, she also volunteers with the youth in her church. They go out and serve their community in practical ways, like visiting the sick, or helping other organisations that

RIGHT Ghada is raising her daughters to know God’s love; BELOW Ghada is empowering the next generation of women



## | Easter

### Friday 15 April – Good Friday

As we remember the sufferings of Christ today, pray for Christians for whom meeting to worship Jesus is a risk. Ask God to protect Easter celebrations this weekend, and pray that Jesus' name will be glorified through His people's courageous witness.

### Saturday 16 April

"When the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'" (John 20:19). Remember secret believers who must keep their faith hidden for fear of persecution. Pray that Jesus' presence will bring them peace today.

### Sunday 17 April – Easter Sunday

"Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever!" (Rev 1:17-18). He is risen! Pray that the joy of Jesus' victory over death will banish all fear from the hearts of His suffering people around the world today.

### Monday 18 April – Easter Monday

Open Doors is partnering with Spring Harvest to help connect Christians in the UK with the church in the Middle East. Pray that, as Spring Harvest delegates hear about the courageous faith of persecuted Christians, they will be encouraged in their faith and moved to support their persecuted family.

## | Afghanistan

### Tuesday 19 April

Many Afghans have never heard the message of salvation in Jesus. They believe that, to get to heaven, they must obey every law of Islam – and even then, there is no guarantee of a place in heaven. Pray that they will discover that Jesus Christ is the way to God.

### Wednesday 20 April

Many families have fled the country to escape the Taliban's extreme brand of Islam. But as refugees, they now face more hardship – lack of food, water, medicine and shelter. Ask God to move the hearts of governments and NGOs to respond with mercy and wisdom to this new humanitarian crisis.

### Thursday 21 April

Pray for those living in fear of Taliban rule – women, secret Christians, those who worked for the former US-backed government. Pray for their protection, and ask God to miraculously turn their fear into boldness, so they may be salt and light in their country.

### Friday 22 April

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:44-45). Ask God to show mercy to the Taliban and turn their hearts from cruelty and violence to love.

## | Asia

### Saturday 23 April – China

In March, new religious laws came into force that

formally outlaw posting any religious content on any online platform – with the exception of registered religious entities that have been granted 'special' permission. This will greatly restrict believers' access to online spiritual resources. Pray that Christians will find other ways to deepen their relationship with Jesus.

### Sunday 24 April – China

The demand for marriage and family counselling is soaring. Pray for Yusuf\*, who provides counselling to Muslims in his region. Ask God to use Yusuf's unique ministry to advance His kingdom and bring many Muslim families to know God's love and forgiveness.

### Monday 25 April – Bangladesh

Pray for adult literacy and women's discipleship classes taking place this spring. Pray for wisdom and energy for the trainers; for teachable, humble hearts for the students; and for health and safety for all who attend.

### Tuesday 26 April – Myanmar

More than 25 Christians were killed by military forces in Myanmar last year, and thousands were displaced. "The believers are traumatised by what has been happening," says a local partner. "They are struggling hard for their survival." Ask God to restore peace to the country and pray for healing and provision for those who have lost homes or loved ones.

### Wednesday 27 April – Southern Philippines

Timothy's Crib is a safe haven for children who have

been abused or neglected by their families – like Muks\*, who comes from a Muslim background. "There have been a lot of trials and challenges," says Muks, "but my family in the crib has encouraged me to remain strong." Pray for wisdom and protection for the pastor and his family who run Timothy's Crib, as they lead these young people to the Lord.

### Thursday 28 April – Central Asia

Ahok\* and Guina\* are awaiting trial after they shared the gospel with two young people. The teenagers accepted Jesus, but their parents were outraged and are taking Ahok and Guina to court. Pray for justice for Ahok and Guina, for faith for the teenagers, and that Jesus will reveal Himself to their parents too.

### Friday 29 April – Uzbekistan

Recently, police officers broke into the house of a pastor and searched his house for religious materials. They also went into schools and took phones from students to check them for religious content. Pray for courage for these believers, and that the raids will not have negative consequences for the church.

### Saturday 30 April – Kazakhstan

Pray for a couple whose plans to build a church on land they bought in their village have been prohibited after local Muslim leaders appealed to the police. Pray for wisdom for the couple and ask God to make a way for them to meet with other believers.

\*Name changed for security reasons



## TRAVEL THE WORLD WITH A PRAYER PASSPORT AND MAP!

**Introduce the children in your life to the persecuted church with our Prayer Passport and map – a free, year-long resource to help families pray for their Christian family around the world.**

Each week use the full-colour wall map to find a prayer for each country. There's also a flag to colour in and an activity to help you connect with your persecuted church family.

You'll find lots of stories and links to extras on our website scattered throughout the passport to help children really engage with young, persecuted believers.

The Prayer Passport comes with a Top 50 map, a super-secret cipher codebreaker, and stickers to stamp your passport with to show where you've been!

Order your free children's Prayer Passport and map at **[opendoorsuk.org/resources](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/resources)** or call our Inspire Team: **01993 460015**.



Open Doors, PO Box 6, Witney,  
OX29 6WG  
T 01993 460015  
E [inspire@opendoorsuk.org](mailto:inspire@opendoorsuk.org)

**FIND US ON:**

**[opendoorsuk.org](https://www.opendoorsuk.org)**



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