



ST. PETER'S LENTEN PROJECT.

No.1: PRAYING FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

'OPENDOORS' is an international ministry serving persecuted Christians and churches worldwide. The World Watch list is an annual ranking compiled by 'OPENDOORS' researchers based on detailed information from Open Door workers and key church leaders in over 60 countries. The 2019 list notes that there are 54 countries in which Christians are systematically persecuted for their faith. (See list on OpenDoors website)

In today's world these are the places where you can be arrested for possessing a Bible; where you may go to your local church one day to find that it's been closed by the government; places where you will be denied a job, or your children be denied education, because you have a 'Christian' name; places where you find yourself in prison because you talked to someone about Jesus; where you are forced out of your home because of your faith. These are the places where faith in Jesus costs the most. This is the reality of life for many Christians in many countries around the world. For Christians these are place of darkness and danger. But they are also places of amazing courage and hope.

These are also the places where our brothers and sisters are showing incredible courage. Despite the risks, they are still choosing to follow Jesus, because they know that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. These are the places where Bibles are hidden as precious treasures. Where Christians meet in secret. Where prayers are barely whispered – but cannot be stopped.

We can't escape or ignore the stories of believers being persecuted for their faith around the world, and neither should we.

But in some cases, the extent to which our brothers and sisters in Christ suffer because of their refusal to abandon their faith and submit to the demands of those who attack them seems so great that we lose confidence in our ability to support them.

Despite the intimidating scale of the horrors faced by these believers, we can still do many things to stand up for those who don't live with the same religious freedom that we have. Campaigning for governments to pursue justice for the victims; standing up for those who are persecuted in our presence and praying for the protection of those whose faith freedoms are severely limited or non-existent are just three of the ways that we can demonstrate our solidarity with them.

Christians who work to keep their faith strong at times when they're faced with violence or even death are an inspiration to us all. If they can wholly trust in the Lord during such testing times, we can join with them and pray for them to continue to know God's peace and experience His protection.

We should never think of prayer as being the least we can do. Prayer is powerful, necessary and regularly requested by the very victims we want to help. While we may never have the chance to *meet* our persecuted Christian brothers and sisters, we do have the opportunity to *pray* for them.

Please join with St. Peter's community in praying for persecuted Christians and all peoples whose lives are blighted by poverty, hunger, oppression and prejudice. Let us make this be part of our Lenten journey and preparation for Easter.

Let us remember this day all people who are:

subjected to oppression,
driven from their homes,
unlawfully imprisoned,
denied religious liberty,
excluded from economic opportunity,
targeted by racial and cultural prejudices,
silenced by violence and injustice
killed in wars (we will not forget)
tortured in jails,
disappeared in the night.

To hear that you are praying is so good. We need your prayer, care and presence: to know that we are not alone, that we are in the body together and have hope for the future.

Iranian Pastor

PRAYER Loving Lord – Be with all that are suffering persecution at the hands of so many that would destroy the truth of Your Word.

Help every man and woman, boy and girl going through some form of persecution today – may You guard and guide and encourage each one, no matter where they are...

Give them the strength to remain firm in their faith, despite any physical, emotion or psychological pain they may have to endure for the sake of Jesus Christ. Protect and keep each one from harm and danger that stalks their path – hide them under the shadow of Your wing and support and strengthen them in the ordeals that they will be subjected to.

Let Your peace and joy and love reign in their hearts and help them to walk humbly before You – as they identify with the sufferings that the Lord Jesus endured for them. May the seed of Your love be planted in the hearts of their persecutors - so that their life may produce much fruit, in Jesus name we pray,

AMEN