

Monday 10th January

Let's start the week watching this PrayerCast video on Afghanistan and praying along:

<https://www.prayercast.com/afghanistan.html>

Afghanistan has been ranked 2nd this year by Open Doors on its list of the world's most difficult countries to live as a Christian (see here: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2021/january/christian-persecution-2021-countries-open-doors-watch-list.html>). There, any belief contrary to Islam is illegal. Converting from Islam to Christianity can result in death. If a family member is known to have converted, their own family could kill them, have them arrested and put into prison or a mental hospital. Believers have to gather and worship in secret.

Along with spiritual poverty, Afghanistan also suffers from huge humanitarian poverty. The situation in Afghanistan could become the world's worst humanitarian crisis, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) says. As many as 23 million people, most of the country's population, are facing acute food shortages over the winter months.

Peace may seem like a distant hope for Afghanistan, but God is moving. Frontiers workers in nearby countries report that Afghan refugees are more open to the gospel than ever before. Dozens of Muslim-background Afghans have become followers of Jesus Christ, and their numbers are multiplying. In Afghanistan there are no church buildings, but God has built His church there through the workers who have come over the years and sowed seeds and shared bible studies with many Afghans. We know this work was not in vain and that God never forgets a prayer we have prayed.

- Pray that God uses this instability to soften people's hearts, to draw towards Him those who are already seeking.
- Pray that it removes a false sense of hope and salvation through money or democracy.
- Pray that those who have fled would find followers of Jesus in their countries of refuge who show them the love of our Heavenly Father.

Tuesday 11th January

"I first learned to use the imprecatory psalms [psalms which ask for God's judgement on evil] under the first reign of the Taliban. They didn't seem to apply to my life before that--under the Taliban, they came alive. In those days, we prayed daily for the redemption of the Taliban--and we also prayed that if they would not repent, they would be quickly removed from power. We prayed both of these things wholeheartedly. I hope that believers will pray this way for the Taliban--quick redemption or quick removal."

Today we are going to focus our prayers for Afghanistan on the requests made by a Frontiers worker:

Pray for wise and loving leadership to be raised up for the nation. There have been a few leaders in the last twenty years, but most Afghan leaders only work to increase their own piece of the pie, and so the nation continued to decay and fragment over the last 20 years. Pray for leadership that opens the nation to the gospel, inspires people to love their nation instead of leave it, and opens people's hearts to Jesus.

A desire for holiness and purity is often a motivation for the Taliban. **Pray that those who long for purity and holiness will be led to Jesus** by their desire.

For local believers: Local believers already faced much hardship and persecution. With the Taliban in power, the immediate danger for believers increases significantly. People fear being killed simply because they worked with foreigners, let alone those who were disciplined by them. I hear that many believers are trying to erase all traces of "salty" materials in their homes. Pray that they will find ways to hide their Bibles instead of destroying them. Pray that in the days to come, they will encourage one another to obey God's word. Pray that they will discern the leadership of the Holy Spirit in the difficult times ahead--and that they will be found FAITHFUL. "On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell will NOT prevail against it." Pray for the Church to be built even now.

Wednesday 12th January
Women in Afghanistan

Jesus cared so much for women who were marginalised, even when it put a risk to his own reputation. He showed love and mercy in unbelievable amounts. Let's start with reading the story of the woman at the well:

"When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

(John 4:7-14)



Women, especially those who do not have the protection of men, are liable to abuse, not just by the Taliban, but because of reduced freedom, family abuse will be unseen and even hidden. Those without families may not have jobs to sustain them. The women believers are even more vulnerable as their faith alone makes them a huge target.

Widows are in a particularly vulnerable position with no men to provide for them financially. They are unlikely to be allowed to work or study under a Taliban government. Many families depended on the contributions of working women and will suffer hardship. More bad marriages are made in this climate, with physical and emotional abuse skyrocketing. Girls are given in marriage even younger because of the financial pressures.

- We pray that women who may see themselves as damaged would receive living water from Jesus.
- Pray that women who gained some small sense of value over the last 20 years with a less religiously involved government will find out how God values them.
- We pray for Afghan women to find believers to build community with safely.

Thursday 13th January

Today we are going to hear a first-hand account of how the Holy Spirit is moving in Afghanistan:



“The cousin of a believer had been tending his allotment for him because he had moved to a city because of Taliban threats. The believer felt God wanted him to return to check on the garden despite the danger. He returned with his sons and the Taliban did not attack him whilst he tended the garden. His cousin, who is not a believer, was questioned by the Taliban in the mosque – they asked why there was so many

men in white with the believer and his sons when he was in the garden. The cousin reported this to the believer, who testified that it was only him and his sons in the garden – it must have been angels!”

- We praise God for this powerful story which show His Spirit moving in Afghanistan and pray for many more Afghans to experience this.
- We pray for an increase in dreams and visions to Afghan people revealing the truth of who Jesus is.
- We pray for more Afghan Muslims to form strong relationships with believers in Christ who show them love.

Friday 14th January

Kabul

Kabul is the capital of Afghanistan. Over 3500 years old, Kabul has long played a central role in the region. The country was first invaded by Arab armies within 10 years (642) of the death of Muhammad, but they were turned back. Islam would only take root in the region centuries later when Sufi traders began to arrive around 1200.



Kabul is an important city in the ongoing battle against Islamist militants.

The city suffered under various regimes between 1973 and 2001, and the population plummeted. Much of the city was destroyed during the Afghan civil war (1992-1996), and it was virtually a ghost town under the previous Taliban rule (1996-2001).

Since the Taliban were removed from power in 2001, the city has been expanding rapidly. The population more than doubled between 2001 and 2014, making Kabul one of the fastest-growing cities in the world. A massive new modern housing development, New Kabul City, was begun on the north side in 2015. This is now under threat with the new Taliban regime being increasingly hostile to foreign newcomers and business which can be seen to be encouraging western lifestyles.

God is moving in Kabul in small ways. In one particularly downtrodden minority group, perhaps a few hundred have responded to the gospel. Among other ethnic groups in the city, there is a tiny trickle of response. Over the past decade media outreach has multiplied in the major languages. This gives unprecedented access to the Scriptures in a variety of local languages on mobile devices.

Today most of the NGOs have left Kabul. There has been a steady decline in Christian witness in the capital. The security situation has deteriorated so much that few Westerners dare live in the city.

You may want to watch this prayer video from Prayer cast, from which much of the information for today's prayers were taken: <https://www.prayercast.com/kabul.html>

- Pray for this strategic city, that there would peace and security here, and that Christian witness would increase here.
- Pray for the love of Jesus to replace despair with hope.
- Pray for massive advancement of the gospel through dreams, visions, and courageous proclamation.

Saturday 15th January

As we think of a nation that has been caught up in the pain of war for so long, it is easy to lose hope. Let us listen to “God I look to you” and declare that our God is sovereign over the spiritual battle which rages on in Afghanistan:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KP1QKueGK-o&ab_channel=BethelMusic



Let's finish this week of praying for Afghanistan by declaring scripture over this nation:

*“Afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted,
I will rebuild you with stones of turquoise,
your foundations with lapis lazuli.*

*12 I will make your battlements of rubies,
your gates of sparkling jewels,
and all your walls of precious stones.*

*13 All your children will be taught by the LORD,
and great will be their peace.*

*14 In righteousness you will be established:
Tyranny will be far from you;
you will have nothing to fear.*

*Terror will be far removed;
it will not come near you.*

*15 If anyone does attack you, it will not be my doing;
whoever attacks you will surrender to you.*

(Isaiah 54: 11-15)

- Father God, we thank you that you hold the nation of Afghanistan in your mighty hands. We entrust the Taliban, the Afghan people, and the future of the country to you.
- We pray that Afghan believers would know no fear in the power of your love.
- We pray that peace would reign over this country in Jesus' name.