

Monday 3rd August

The Arabian Peninsula

The Arabian Peninsula, the largest peninsula in the world, is a vast plateau with huge deserts, bordered by rugged mountains in the west and south. For hundreds of years, towers have lined the coastlines keeping watch over local fishing villages and warning them of invaders coming by ship. Many of these ancient towers still stand as monuments to the local culture and religion. But the

coronavirus, an invisible new enemy invaded quietly. No watchtower could have detected it. And in a remarkably short amount of time, it has forced huge changes upon communities there.



Before the discovery of oil in the 1930s, the Arab Peninsula was largely empty, inhabited mostly by tent-dwelling Bedouins. Since then, with the exception of Yemen which has no natural oil and gas, all of the countries have become very wealthy. With a population of over 86 million, the region is full of modern, growing cities with skyscrapers, major roads, heavy traffic and growing air pollution. Now they have

suffered from the effects of the pandemic and falling oil prices.

With the Arabian Peninsula being the birthplace of Islam, it is the major religion practised there. The dominant form of Islam is the extremely conservative Wahhabi sect. There is virtually no freedom of religion and becoming a follower of Jesus is dangerous. Local women are restricted and controlled by men. Few have freedom of thought or religion. The average mother has five to seven children, and men often have more than one wife.

Nannies and maids do most of the nurturing in the early years. Though many children and young people enjoy a financially luxurious life, they rarely enjoy a close family relationship. Many of the children and youth have been exposed to other cultures and faiths through travel, television, films and the internet. Yet they are raised to stand boldly against any belief except Islam, even though most of them are not religious.

Now the coronavirus is chipping away at their sacred practices. It's challenging their ways of life and culture. To learn more about this region and pray for all Muslims living there, watch this Prayercast video: <https://prayercast.com/arabian-peninsula.html>

- Pray for greater religious freedom across this region, for hearts to be softened, humbled and prepared to receive Jesus.
- Pray for children and young people who do not have a good relationship with their earthly fathers to know God as their good father who loves them unconditionally.
- This region is enduring a time of great crisis. Pray for more workers for the harvest across this region. Pray for creative ways for workers to get visas and ask God to raise up teachers, engineers, business people, fitness teachers, medical professionals and others ready to come and bring the gospel message. Pray for those waiting to come but who have been prevented by the coronavirus crisis, that God will lead them to keep investing their lives for this region.

Source of some material: <https://prayercast.com/arabian-peninsula.html>

Tuesday 4th August

Pray for foreign workers in the region

“Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” Col 3: 22 - 24

Some of the nannies and maids we read about yesterday are from the millions of foreign residents (expatriates) mostly from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt and the Philippines, who have moved to the Arabian Peninsula to work in the expanding economies of these countries. Expats outnumber the locals by four to one in Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, often living in very bad conditions and quite separately from locals. In contrast to the local population, many of these workers are very poor and sometimes exploited. Some are not paid their wages and are forced to work outside in 45 degree temperatures. There are millions of Filipino and other Asian maids who work in the households of local Arab families. Sometimes they are mistreated and sexually assaulted.

Many low-wage migrant workers have been very badly affected by the coronavirus pandemic which hit this region earlier than in Europe or America. They have suddenly been left without a job and with no other way to earn a living. They are desperate, but unable to return home. Some have been forced to plead for food from their employers or charities. One worker received a message from a Muslim friend telling him; “I’m scared of the coronavirus and there’s almost no work.” In Qatar, a government directive in mid-April allowed companies that have stopped operating due to coronavirus restrictions to put workers on unpaid leave or terminate their contracts. The government said food and accommodation, which is usually arranged by employers, must continue to be provided, but workers’ testimonies suggest in some cases this is not happening. You can read the full article [here](#). The situation for low-paid workers in Qatar is repeated across this region.

Employment laws have changed for the better in some countries such as Oman, in response to the current economic turmoil, but more needs to be done.

- Pray for mercy for these millions of migrant workers who sacrifice so much by coming to the Gulf to work and are now affected by the economic turmoil caused by Covid-19. Pray they will be treated well by their Arab employers.
- Pray for strength for believers among these workers, that they would be strong witnesses for God, working as for the Lord and shining as bright witnesses to local families.
- Pray for changes in employment laws that will not leave foreign workers trapped and without any form of income.

Source of some material: <https://www.prayercast.com/downloads/AP%20Ramadan%202019%20Prayer%20Guide.pdf> and <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/may/07/qatars-migrant-workers-beg-for-food-as-covid-19-infections-rise>

Wednesday 5th August

Believers in this region

Amongst the millions of foreign nationals working in this region, God has placed many Christian believers. A growing number of Arab believers from outside the Arabian Peninsula have been moving into the region to work in various professions. Their witness for Christ is growing bolder, and through their Arab culture and language, they are able to answer the difficult questions on faith for spiritual seekers. Our prayers for these modern day apostles will help them as they partner with other expatriate believers to establish the church among local Arabs. In each country the church is non-existent or very small and underground. However, God is working in the lives of the local Muslim people. Those that become followers of Christ must keep their faith a secret to remain within their family and Muslim community. Those who are able to stay within these communities hold the greatest potential for establishing indigenous churches. These families and individuals need our prayers as they experience challenges in standing firm in their faith and as they seek ways to be a witness for Christ to their families, friends and co-workers.

Many churches have started in the last decade to accommodate expatriate believers as the local governments, officially or unofficially, allow these churches to meet, although still small in number. Never before have so many Christians lived alongside the local Arab peoples. Public witness about Jesus is still illegal, but private opportunities to share one's faith are available through work or neighbourhood relationships.

- Let's take time to thank God for the expat churches in major cities across this region. Pray for the church to continue to grow during this season of lockdown and uncertainty.
- Pray for fellowships to be strengthened in the face of social distancing and for worship to continue online.
- Covid-19 has led to the unblocking of video calling across the region. Let's thank God for this opportunity and pray it will be used to connect local people to God.
- Ask God to bless and encourage all believers in this region and for them to shine as beacons of hope in these difficult times.
- Pray for the few language schools to have favour with the governments, so that foreign workers can have a place to learn Gulf dialect Arabic. Let's thank God for the handful of Arabic teachers and language nurturers who are able to be employed in them.

Source of most material: <https://www.pray-ap.info/downloads/1englishcountry.pdf>

Thursday 6th August

Testimonies from the region

Ali is a Muslim from the Arab Peninsula region. Watch a short 3-minute clip to hear his testimony of how a local believer introduced him to Christ: <https://prayercast.com/ali-ap.html>.

Ali and his friend met to talk, Ali's intention being to convert this man back to Islam. As they chatted, they began to talk about the Bible and Ali said it was corrupted. His friend asked if he had read it and gave him three copies, challenging him to read one and show him where the corruption was. Ali began to read Genesis and came upon the story of Pharaoh's dream about the healthy and sick cows. Ali told his friend that the Bible had copied this story from the Quran. His friend explained this was impossible as the Bible had been written hundreds of years earlier than the Quran.

Ali spent time searching the Bible and the Quran and began learning about the character of Jesus. He made a decision to accept Him as Lord and was baptised. His hope is that all Muslims will read the Bible, as the Quran says they should, and that they too will know this peace and salvation.

This testimony is from a worker in Oman:

"I was with a local Omani friend in a coffee shop and we talked for three hours about spiritual matters. We didn't even get out of our chairs during that time! I was sharing the gospel and showing him Arabic scriptures on my phone. He objected to everything I was saying. We were getting nowhere. So in the end, I asked him, 'Can I pray for you?' He answered, 'yes, please pray for me.' So I put my hand on his shoulder and prayed in Arabic and English for his personal needs. He then started to tremble violently. This scared me! But what I couldn't get across through arguments, I was able to get across through my love and care for him, expressed through prayer."

- Let's take a moment to thank God for the workers and local believers in this region who courageously share their faith with local Muslims.
- Let's pray for millions of Muslims to read the Bible and discover the character of Christ and His love for them, just as Ali did.
- Pray more field workers will be able to come to this region, in spite of the current challenges and difficulties, bringing the love and care of Jesus to the local Muslim population.

Friday 7th August

Oman **Pop: Approximately 5 million**

"Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known."
Jeremiah 33:3

Oman, officially the Sultanate of Oman, is the most eastern Arab nation. It sits on the southeastern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, bordering the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Omanis have historically made their living as fishermen, traders, date farmers, and traditional Bedouin nomad camel herders. In ancient times there was a flourishing trade in frankincense from trees which grow in the south.

Oman embraced Islam in the eighth century. Today it is a majority-Muslim country of around 5 million people. Islam is practised by all Omanis, who represent 60% of the population. Most Omanis follow the Ibadi branch of Islam, which predates the Sunni and Shia branches. It's a devout form of Islam and a large part of the Omani identity. It has been growing in strength over the last 30 years. Folk Islam and occult activities are commonly practised. Over many years, traditional folk beliefs and Islam have become combined. Many locals have deep fears of evil spirits, jinn, the evil eye, and

believe in the power of witchcraft. The city of Bahla in Oman is the centre of black magic in Oman and arguably for the entire region. Religious education is compulsory in Oman and students are systematically indoctrinated against Christianity. Foreign Christians and Hindus are allowed freedom of worship, but conversion of Muslims, especially nationals, is strictly prohibited.

Sayyid Qaboos bin Said, who ruled for 50 years until his death earlier this year, was credited with modernising the country. The standard of living improved dramatically, as did the expectations and aspirations of the people. However, the oil and gas reserves which are expected to run out in the next few decades, have led to disillusionment and frustration which is directed at the government and fuels the growth of fundamentalist Islam. The new sultan of Oman, Qaboos' cousin, Haitham bin Tariq al-Said, is a member of the al-Said royal family and a graduate of Oxford University. He has pledged to continue his predecessor's policies for promoting peace with neighbouring countries and is expected to bring reforms.

For more information to pray for this nation, watch a Prayercast video:

<https://prayercast.com/oman.html>

- Important decisions are made in families, clans and tribes. Pray that whole families would believe the gospel.
- Pray that God would release Omanis from the fear of evil spirits and reveal Himself to them in dreams or visions. Pray for the light of the gospel to dispel all fear of darkness, especially in the city of Bahla. Let's ask for the Holy Spirit to reign there.
- Many areas of Oman are almost completely untouched with the gospel message. The good news is that some areas are slowly being populated with believers, but many more are needed. Pray that God would call believers to these unreached areas.
- Pray for the new leader, Haitham bin Tariq al-Said, to rule with tolerance and fairness. Let's pray that God-fearing believers just like Daniel will have an influence on Haitham leading to his salvation.

Sources: <https://www.arabworldmedia.org/prayer-guides/breakthrough-february-2018/> and <https://www.pray-ap.info/downloads/1englishcountry.pdf>

Saturday 8th August

Challenges and opportunities in Oman

We read earlier in this week how foreign workers can suffer when they come to this region. In Oman an employment law has recently been passed by the Sultanate to try and help foreign workers in response to the current economic turmoil, especially as about 40% of the population there is made up of foreign nationals. Foreign workers will be able to move more easily from one company to another, making Oman a more attractive destination for foreign workers. You can read the full article [here](#).

Challenges still exist. The coronavirus pandemic coincides with the nation's announcement during the 2019-2020 academic year that it would not renew visas for expat teachers for the coming school year. Hundreds, maybe thousands of teachers from other Arab countries work there, and it's

doubtful that the nation would be able to mobilise enough local teachers to fill the positions that become vacant.

At the present time it is thought that teaching for the next academic year will be online. A field worker who teaches in a local school reported that parents are concerned that the internet won't be good enough for study and that their children won't focus during online lessons. There is a mentality that 'online won't work.' Some communities do not have any access to the internet. Most public school children were at home without any set work from mid-March until the end of the school year in May. As a teacher of English she and her colleagues have 28 students registered for their summer school, compared to the usual 200-250 students.

The healthcare system is currently under strain through the coronavirus pandemic. It was hoped that the numbers of people affected would peak in March or April, but at the time of writing, the numbers are rising and Oman may now have the highest number of cases per capita globally and within the Arabian Peninsula. A new lockdown came into effect on the 25th July, lasting for 2 weeks until today.

- Cry out to God for an end to the coronavirus pandemic in Oman that in His grace and mercy He will bring healing to this land and its people.
- Pray for all children, youth and young people whose lives have been affected by the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic. May they know that God has a plan and purpose for their lives.
- Let's thank God for the positive change to the current employment law. Pray this will open doors for greater foreign investment and business opportunities for believers that bless the local population. Let's also pray for those teachers and field workers who have been adversely affected by government decisions.
- Let's ask for favour, blessing and protection upon all field workers, that they will be able to keep in touch with their local communities and finds ways to bless and encourage people through these turbulent times. Help them to rejoice always, just as Paul did in prison and by their example lead others to Christ.

Sources: <https://alkhaleejtoday.co/international/5002888/Oman-lifts-two-year-labour-ban-on-foreign-workers.html> and <https://www.pray-ap.info/downloads/1englishcountry.pdf>