

Monday 29th March

The people of Yemen

For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." Romans 14:11



Source: Wikimedia Commons

The country of Yemen has been inhabited for hundreds of years with beautifully unique people as distinct as the landscape and culture they enjoy. Myriad tribes are separated from each other by their geographic location, their sect of Islam, their language and dialect and their traditions and history.

Tribal living is the very essence of life in Yemen. People's lives, identity, religion, job, political views, future and the very core of an individual's identity are determined by people and circumstances that existed long before they were ever born. They are expected to behave, live and work in a way consistent with their inherited tribal values, which are shared by all their blood relatives living nearby (habl). Groups of these extended families all support the qarya (village) where they live together, and then the neighbouring villages group together to support one another in the uzla (territory) where they all live.

This larger grouping of multiple village groups can be made up of thousands of people all sharing the same cultural identity. This gives a strong sense of security and strength for individuals and families. This ever-expanding circle of mutual support provides comfort and stability,

especially in recent years as Yemen's war has devastated state institutions and infrastructure.

But as the economy is changing and people are moving from villages to cities, these traditional tribal social structures are weakening. This is particularly true in the south of Yemen where those living in the cities adapt to city life. Yet even there, families take pride in their cultural heritage. In the north of the country the tribal social structure is still strong. Families adhere to tribal laws and traditions and respect the authority of the village aqil (elder) and the shaykh (tribal leader). There is fierce tribal loyalty and brotherhood, rooted in centuries of tradition and pride.

On page 5 of the prayer guide produced for this week of prayer, there is a list of the main tribes in Yemen. You may want to follow the link and choose one of the tribes listed for focussed prayer today:

<https://www.pray-ap.info/downloads/Yemen2021A4.pdf>

- Pray for all the different tribes to have a witness of Jesus Christ, a witness who brings each tribe into His Kingdom.
- Pray that strong tribal identity would not stop Yemeni people from accepting Christ as Lord and Saviour and enjoying the freedom He brings.
- Pray for tribes to be at peace with each other during these very difficult times in Yemen.

Source: <https://www.pray-ap.info/downloads/Yemen2021A4.pdf>

Tuesday 30th March

Cholera, Covid-19 and a nation in despair

“But you, O Lord, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me.” Ps 22:19

Since September 2016, there has been an ongoing cholera epidemic in Yemen, considered to be one of the worst in recent history. According to the World Health Organisation, there have been more than 1 million reported cholera cases since 2018. Those most affected are children under five years of age. The Covid-19 pandemic has made efforts to control the cholera outbreak more difficult for an already war-torn country. It is likely that many cases of cholera are going undetected and untreated, because people are not going to hospitals for treatment for fear of catching Covid-19 there.

This situation is putting immense strain on a healthcare system that is already overwhelmed, particularly with the ongoing war destroying many healthcare facilities. Now, almost 20 million people lack access to adequate healthcare. Many healthcare professionals have not been paid in years, causing many to leave the system. Furthermore, the government’s ineffective response to the health crisis and misuse of funds have limited international aid, further compounding this desperate situation. Those who have stayed are now being asked to treat patients, including Covid-19 patients, without personal protective equipment.

Yemeni people desperately need an end to the war that has caused so much destruction and suffering.

- Let’s cry out to God to protect the Yemeni people and to be their comfort and help in the midst of such suffering and sickness.
- Pray that those who are sick will seek treatment in spite of their fears and for this to be effective.
- Pray for healthcare workers to continue to serve, to be paid and to be protected.

Source: <https://www.pray-ap.info/downloads/Yemen2021A4.pdf>

Wednesday 31st March

The war in Yemen

“He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.” Ps 46:9

Yemen was once called ‘fortunate Arabia,’ boasting beautiful landscapes and being renowned for its long history of trade in gold, frankincense and myrrh as well as premium coffee. After six years of war, it is now one of the poorest countries in the world.



Source: Flickr

Since the Arab Spring in 2011, Yemen has been in turmoil as a result of a devastating civil war. The violence and its consequences for the people have escalated since March 26, 2015, when Saudi Arabia entered into the war. Since then, the ongoing conflict has been between the Houthis, backed by Iran, and the Sunnis, backed by a coalition made up of Saudi Arabia, the US, the UK and France. Moreover, militants from al-Qaeda, local affiliates of the Islamic State, and other terrorist groups have taken advantage of the

chaos by seizing territory in the south and carrying out deadly attacks, further adding to the turmoil and violence plaguing Yemen.

It is estimated that 12,000 civilians have been killed in direct attacks and thousands more have died from preventable causes including malnutrition, disease and poor health. Among the 30 million Yemenis, 80% rely on humanitarian aid to survive each day, as millions face hunger. Almost 18 million people do not have enough clean water or access to adequate sanitation. Women and children have been especially affected by the war. Save the Children estimated that 85,000 children might have died from severe malnutrition between April 2015 and October 2018. Families have been torn apart. Women and children who lose their male head of household are singled out for oppression.

- Pray for other nations to stop supplying weapons to the warring factions and to promote a peaceful end to this ongoing war.
- Ask the Lord to send a spirit of forgiveness among the warring tribes to bring about true and lasting peace.
- Pray for women and children to be cared for in the midst of the violence and terrorism.

Source: <https://www.pray-ap.info/downloads/Yemen2021A4.pdf>

Thursday 1st April

Believers and the church in Yemen

“Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.” John 4:35

It is estimated that less than 0.0001% of the population may be followers of Christ. The persecution and oppression against the Yemeni church or any witness of Christ is extreme.

But the Lord’s harvest in Yemen is coming after years of faithful witnessing by both Yemeni believers and their international partners, some of whom paid with their lives for sharing Christ in this country.

You might like to listen to the testimony of one Yemeni believer:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3i4QT39TfKU&feature=emb_logo

Another Yemeni believer shared the following: “After centuries in which there were few if any Yemeni believers, God’s Church in Yemen is growing! By God’s grace hundreds of Yemenis from a Muslim background are coming to faith in Christ each year. They are coming by the Holy Spirit calling them through television, radio and the internet. They are coming as the Lord leads them to encounter Himself through His Word. They are coming as field workers proclaim the Word of God. They are coming through the testimonies of their believing relatives and neighbours. They are coming as the Lord gives individuals dreams and visions that lead to faith in Jesus. While many individual Yemeni believers are coming to faith, we are seeing entire families and extended families coming to faith as well.”

But believers are struggling to survive. Any international aid is often distributed through Islamic relief agencies who discriminate against those who are not seen as devout Muslims. Evangelism is illegal in Yemen and rejecting Islam is a crime. As in many other Muslim countries, leaving Islam to follow Christ often results in believers being rejected by their families and communities and even in death. In spite of these dangers and challenges, local churches of Yemeni believers are forming and growing. Yemeni believers work in their communities to witness to “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” 2 Cor 4:6

God is being glorified through the sacrifices that His people have endured in Yemen and which continue today.

- Let's praise and thank God for the growth of the church in Yemen and for the immense sacrifice of believers who shine as lights in their communities.
- Pray for isolated new believers to be able to connect with other believers.
- Pray for the Yemeni church to walk worthy of the calling it has received and for the Lord to add to their numbers each day those who are being saved.
- Let's thank God for workers who have gone to this country. So many more are needed. Pray for more people to go Yemen with the good news of Easter.

Source: <https://www.pray-ap.info/downloads/Yemen2021A4.pdf>

Friday 2nd April

Uyghurs in China

As many as 15 million Uyghurs live in China in the far western region of Xinjiang. Chinese authorities believe that the Uyghurs want an independent state, following Islamist insurgents who carried out extremist attacks. In an attempt to curb such activities, the authorities, who see the Uyghurs as terrorists, have curtailed their freedoms and taken their rights away. They have set up camps where it is reported up to 2 million Uyghurs have been forcibly sent to be re-educated and to eliminate any threat to China's territory.

There are recent reports in the international press of Uyghurs being used as forced labour to pick cotton.



Source: Flickr

Xinjiang is mostly a desert region, producing about a fifth of the world's cotton supply. There is evidence new factories have been built within the grounds of the re-education camps. People who have managed to escape from the camps have reported physical, mental and sexual torture and women have spoken of mass rape and sexual abuse.

Reports also suggest that women are being forcibly sterilised to suppress the population and forced to marry Chinese men against their will. Uyghur children are being separated from their families. Orphans are given new identities.

Mosques and mosque schools have been shut down in an effort to stifle radicalism, terrorism and Islam-inspired insurgencies. There are widespread arbitrary arrests and invasive surveillance.

Today, Uyghurs in Xinjiang struggle for the survival of their culture and religion.

- Cry out to God to intervene, to save them and bring hope.
- Pray for open doors for Christ followers to gain access to this region and these precious people.

- Pray for Uyghurs being detained and persecuted, that they will meet Jesus in their isolation and suffering.
- Pray for a complete change of heart in the Chinese authorities towards the Uyghur people, bringing forgiveness and reconciliation.

Sources: <https://www.prayercast.com/uyghur.html> and <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-22278037>

Saturday 3rd April

Praying for places of unrest

“And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.” Rev 5:9

Regardless of where we live, Christ’s peace can overcome every trouble and turmoil. For all who call on Christ as Saviour, He gives peace for eternity. Let’s pray that Muslim families surrounded by unrest will discover peace in Christ this Easter and embrace Him as the Saviour who has overcome the world by His death and resurrection.

Gaza Strip

Since 2001, the military measures brought to the West Bank and Gaza Strip have intensified financial instability. In Gaza alone, 70% of people live in poverty and 80% are dependent on external aid. Pray for continued aid to pour into the Gaza Strip. Pray for peace between Israelis and Palestinians in this contested strip of land. Pray for Muslims there to know the care and love the Father has for them.

Iran

Ask God for the lifting of tensions between Iran, its neighbours and global powers. Pray that the growing Iranian house church movement will multiply, with new believers added every day. Pray for Jesus to be worshipped throughout this vast land.

Syria

Syria’s conflict passed the 10-year mark in March with no end in sight. More than 465,000 have been killed, over a million injured, over 5.6 million refugees have fled Syria, and another 6.6 million have sought safety elsewhere in the country. Pray for an end to fighting and for God’s peace to cover each man, woman and child traumatised by war. Pray for Syrians to hear the gospel and turn to Christ.

Afghanistan

Since the 1979 Soviet occupation, there have been years of fighting, killing and bombing in Afghanistan. The ongoing war is costing the lives of hundreds of people every week. In February last year, a peace deal was agreed between the US and the Taliban including the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan, a Taliban pledge to prevent al-Qaeda from operating in areas under Taliban control, and for talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government. Pray for all involved in the peace process to honour their commitment and bring an end to this war and suffering.

You may want to spend a few moments praying for other areas of ongoing conflict or suffering in the Muslim world; including the conflict in the Tigray region in Northern Ethiopia and the protests in Myanmar at the military takeover, which has left Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh with even less hope of returning home.

Source of some content: <https://frontiersusa.org/blog/praying-for-places-of-unrest/>