

# *Devotional*

## PRAYER FOR THE PERSECUTED

7 SESSIONS

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# *Session 1*

## JESUS CHRIST: GOD'S IMAGE

### **Scripture:**

Colossians 1:15-20

### **Verse Highlight:**

Colossians 1:18 — And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent.



### **DEVOTIONAL:**

Jesus is the image of the invisible God. Jesus, who is God, helps us see what the Father is like and what He cares about. As we look forward to the next six sessions, praying for the persecuted church, let us always remember that we operate out of our love for Jesus and our submission to Him. As Christians, we are united through the blood of His cross, as the body, with Jesus as our head. In every aspect of our lives, we must first acknowledge that Jesus is who it's all for. Let us worship and glorify Him in everything!

### **PRAYER:**

Father, thank You for giving us Your son Jesus to save us. I pray that everything I do would bring glory to Your Name. Help me to have a heart like Yours, that cares for and advocates for Your children. I pray that you would strengthen and encourage the body of believers around the world. Bring them justice, peace, and perseverance in the face of trials.

### **CLIENT STORIES:**

Over the next six sessions, you'll get a glimpse into the lives of some ADF International clients who are being persecuted for their faith in Jesus. They come from different countries and continents, and face different threats, but they all trust in Jesus for hope and deliverance. Please pray for them and others like them going through trials for the sake of Christ.

## *Session 2*

### HUMANS: MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

**Scripture:**

Genesis 1:26-31

**Verse Highlight:**

Genesis 1:27 — So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

**DEVOTIONAL:**

Part of God's perfect design for the world involves humans, a special creation, made in His image, filling the earth and subduing it. This image of God allows us to share in some of His attributes and participate in His redemptive plan for creation. Bearing God's image gives humans inherent worth and dignity. Sadly, there are many who do not respect life, but rather seek to abuse, persecute, and even kill the most vulnerable among us. This is why we fight for the value of human life to be recognized.

**PRAYER:**

God, thank You for giving me value and purpose. I pray that You would help me to recognize this value in every other person, and to fight for the rights of others, especially those who do not have a voice. I pray for cultures and governments around the world to affirm the dignity of human life, and not to disregard those who society has deemed unworthy. Please protect life and bring Your people justice, peace, and perseverance in the face of trials.

**CLIENT HIGHLIGHT:**

Pavica Vojnović leads a "40 Days for Life" group in Pforzheim, Germany. For 40 days, twice a year, Pavica and 20 others would gather to peacefully pray outside of an abortion advisory center, for women and their unborn children. But although Pavica's group did not break any laws, the abortion advisory center complained, and the city has banned them from gathering and praying near the center. ADF International is fighting for Pavica's rights to freedom of religion, assembly, and speech. Please pray for Pavica and other Christians advocating for life.

# Session 3

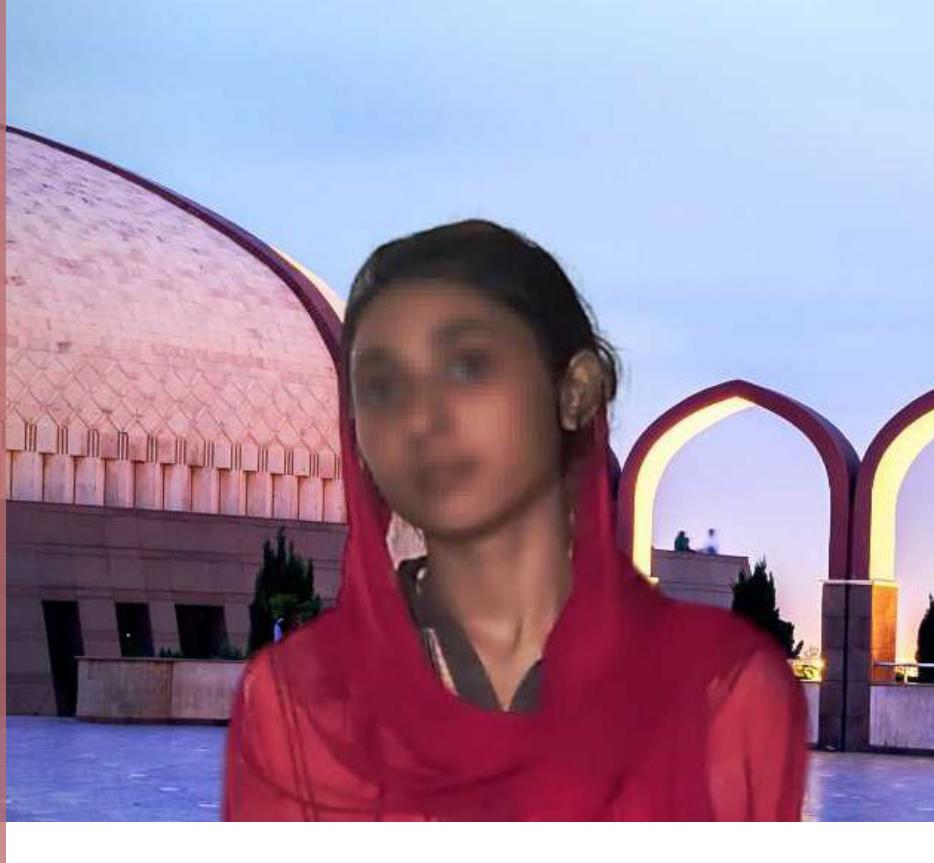
## RESCUED FROM SLAVERY

### Scripture:

Romans 6:5-11

### Verse Highlight:

Romans 6:6 – We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.



### DEVOTIONAL:

Humans are created in God's image, but because of our sin, we've been cut off from God and enslaved to sin. But that's not the end of the story! Through Jesus's death and resurrection, we have been reconciled to God and, in Christ, made free from sin. Jesus died so that we can be free from the bondage of sin. This reality is what we desire for every person to experience. There is freedom and new life in Jesus by the power of His resurrection. As recipients of this spiritual freedom, we also desire that our brothers and sisters in Christ have the physical freedom to live out their faith without being oppressed or enslaved.

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You for the freedom from sin that you have given me. I pray for my brothers and sisters in Christ who are not physically free but are persecuted and oppressed for their faith. I pray that You would protect their lives and deliver them into freedom. I pray that you would confuse the plans of their oppressors, convict them of this grave sin, and bring them to repentance before your mighty Name. Please bring justice, peace, and perseverance to Your people in the face of trials and violent persecution.

### CLIENT HIGHLIGHT:

Maira, a Pakistani Christian girl, was only 14 when kidnapped, sexually abused, and forced to marry a much older man. She was told she has to turn away from the Christian faith. Every year in Pakistan, an estimated 1,000 girls from religious minorities are kidnapped and made to "convert" through forced marriage. Maira was able to escape and together with her lawyer Sumera Shafiq, ADF International was able to get her and her family into hiding while fighting against the government and her abusers to have the marriage annulled. Please pray for protection for Maira and for other Christians who are kidnapped and abused every day.

# *Session 4*

## FACING TRIALS

### Scripture:

1 Peter 4:12-19

### Verse Highlight:

1 Peter 4:13 — But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed.



*Photo credit: Morningstar News*

### DEVOTIONAL:

When Christ's body, the church, suffers for their faith, they share in the suffering that Jesus experienced. This should be a comfort to us all, knowing that Jesus was glorified after He suffered, and that God will always be just to deliver His children. We rely on the peace and joy that only God can give us when we suffer. But we recognize that in the United States, we do not have to suffer the way many Christians around the world are made to suffer. As members of one body with them, we should be quick to lift our fellow believers up in prayer regularly.

### PRAYER:

Lord, thank You for the suffering that Jesus went through to save me from my sin and restore me to You. I pray that You would embolden me to stand up for Your truth in the face of persecution. And I pray for members of the church around the world who face violence and even death because of their faith. Please protect them and fill them with Your Spirit, that they might persevere and be a witness for You, even to those who are persecuting them. Please bring them justice and peace as they face these trials.

### CLIENT HIGHLIGHT:

In Nepal, Pastor Keshab, 32, was sentenced to two years in prison for praying with fellow citizens and sharing gospel tracts. Nepal's constitution guarantees religious freedom, but the justice system does not reflect that fact. That is why ADF International, along with local allies, is fighting to clear Pastor Keshab's name. Thankfully, he was released on bail while his appeal is pending, so he is able to be with his wife and children for now. Please pray for Pastor Keshab and other Christians who have faced trials and persecution for practicing their faith and spreading God's Word.

# *Session 5*

## **BEARING EACH OTHER'S BURDENS**

### **Scripture:**

Philippians 2:1-18

### **Verse Highlight:**

Philippians 2:3-4 — Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.



### **DEVOTIONAL:**

Because of Jesus's sacrificial love for us, we are called to be a people set apart, noteworthy for the way we love one another. This is one of the best ways to show the people around us that God has changed our lives. As we seek to live according to God's commands, we should serve the people closest to us. But we can also look for ways to help people in need, even if they live on the other side of the globe. How can you serve Christians around the world who need help?

### **PRAYER:**

Lord, thank You for showing me how to be humble and instructing me in how to serve like You did. I pray that You would bring to mind ways that I can better be serving the people in my life. Constantly remind me of my calling to love others in every way I can. Please encourage me to pray for Your people around the world and to find ways to help whenever I can. I pray for success for those who are fighting to protect the persecuted Christians around the globe.

### **CLIENT HIGHLIGHT:**

Shafqat and Shagufta, a Christian couple from Pakistan, got some amazing news in June 2021! They had spent the previous seven years on death row, unjustly charged with blasphemy. After years of waiting to be killed for something they didn't do, they were acquitted, thanks to God's provision and help from ADF International and other allies. Despite being acquitted, Shafqat and Shagufta have had to flee the country because of extremists in Pakistan who have threatened their lives. Please pray for their continued protection, and for ADF International and our allies as we fight to bring justice and peace to Christians facing persecution.

# *Session 6*

## UNITED IN CHRIST

### **Scripture:**

Romans 12:4-18

### **Verse Highlight:**

Romans 12:4-5 — For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.



### **DEVOTIONAL:**

Even greater than the bond someone might have with a family member or best friend, is the bond between brothers and sisters in Christ. We are members of one another, working together as one body, the body of Jesus Christ. This binds us together with Christians in different cities, countries, and even continents. What a blessing it is to be operating together with a unified purpose! We each have unique gifts to offer the body, so let's use those gifts to serve one another, give generously, and lift each other up.

### **PRAYER:**

Father, thank You for the unity I have with every other person who is in You. Thank You for binding Your people together in love. Help me to view other Christians through this lens and never cause division in Your church. Please strengthen Your body as we seek to use our gifts to serve others. Please be with the church around the world, enabling them to gather together to worship You. And please bring justice and peace to those people who are seeking to worship You.

### **CLIENT HIGHLIGHT:**

People of faith in Uganda celebrated in September of 2021 as the nation-wide ban on public worship was lifted after 96 days. Uganda's COVID-19 restrictions were unfairly applied, forcing places of worship to shut their doors while non-religious businesses were allowed to operate. In recent history, unfair restrictions like this have prevented the body of Christ from being able to meet in many countries around the world. Just like in Uganda, ADF International is working in countries around the globe to protect the rights of God's people to worship together. Please pray that Christians will never again be unjustly prevented from uniting with one another and gathering in worship.

# *Session 7*

## A WITNESS TO THE NATIONS

### **Scripture:**

Romans 10:9-15

### **Verse Highlight:**

Romans 10:14-15 — How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”



### **DEVOTIONAL:**

The Gospel is beautifully simple – all who believe that Jesus is Lord will be saved. This is such great news, and it is accessible to everyone. But it's important for those who know Jesus to spread the Gospel of His grace to people around them. This is an honorable calling that not many respond to. Consider the people who you know or come in contact with who do not know Jesus, perhaps only because no one has told them about Him. Who can you tell about Jesus? Who can you invite into the family of God?

### **PRAYER:**

God, thank You for bringing the good news of Jesus to me so that I was able to know You and be restored to You. I pray that the people around me who do not know You would come to a saving faith in You. Help me to be an ambassador for You and give me boldness to proclaim the name of Jesus to people in my life. Please give protection and favor to the missionaries and evangelists You have sent into the world who spread the Gospel every day. Keep the doors open for the good news to be spread and for many more to come to know You. I pray for the people who will sacrifice their comfort, their families, and maybe even their lives in order to follow You. I ask that You bless them with justice and peace and keep them safe.

### **CLIENT HIGHLIGHT:**

David Byle and his family called Turkey home for 19 years, until the government forced him to leave. David is an evangelist, called to spread the Gospel in Turkey, but after years of doing so he was arrested, unjustly forced to leave, and banned from returning to the country. Authorities alleged David was a threat to public order and security despite him successfully challenging previous charges brought against him. He is doing the courageous work of giving people hope in Jesus, and he's being persecuted for it. Please pray for justice in David's case and protection for other Christians around the world who are spreading the good news of Jesus.