

# Secret Believers Prayer Focus



## Part 3



Behind Closed Doors, In the Shoes of a Believer, Uzbekistan, Somalia, Bible Study

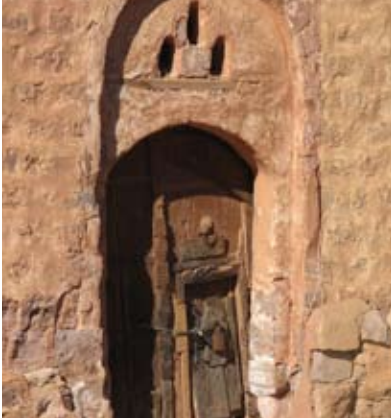
**Betrayed!**

**Isolated from culture!**

**In need of perseverance!**

**Comforted by your prayers!**

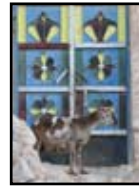
***YOUR PRAYERS make a difference in the lives of secret believers.***



Secret Believers  
Prayer Focus



# July



## Please Pray

- Pray for those who are forced to remain secretive about their faith just to stay alive.
- Pray that these believers will be aware of Jesus presence with them and not be lonely.
- Pray that they will discover other believers and that they will find ways of encouraging each other.
- Pray for those who are struggling to maintain their faith in their homelands - that they will be strengthened to remain.

## Behind Closed Doors

In Muslim dominated areas these believers are facing increased suffering each day.

- I am invisible. I am forced to live in the shadows but shadows of a world that will not accept me
- I walk among these people, my own people of my own blood, but I cannot let them see the true me
- I pray beside them, but they must not hear me for my prayers are different to theirs
- There are many like me, but even I cannot see them
- I live in fear; I am forbidden; I am an outcast; I am called an Infidel – I am a Secret Believer

Throughout the Muslim world, brothers and sisters who once followed Islam, but who now follow Jesus, are paying the highest price for their beliefs. They are called infidels . . . They are kidnapped, beaten, imprisoned, and even killed. In their homelands, secret believers are struggling for their faith . . . and their lives.

In everyday life Secret Believers operate as a part of the Islamic society they grow up in, but now they also have a real desire in their hearts to follow Jesus and they do everything possible to please Jesus through their lives and their conduct.



## Key Facts:

I live in fear...  
I am invisible...  
I walk among them...  
I pray beside them...  
I am a Secret Believer!

## In the Shoes of a Secret Believer

The message of Jihad - defending Islam - is instilled in Muslims from childhood. Eternal punishment is promised to all who do not follow this and every pillar of Islam. Radical extremists instill this message of terror in the Muslim community. Their objective is clear... to take Islam to all the earth.

**But even in the face of this, many Muslims are eager to learn more about Jesus,**

Muslim Background Believers seek community with other Christians, but where will they go? They want to learn more about Jesus, but who will teach them? The challenges facing secret believers are many, but the greatest danger all too often comes from within their own families.

“Muslims who become followers of Christ face a number of challenges, sometimes just staying alive. Often their families are the biggest threat to their lives, they will persecute them and beat them severely, urging them to come back to Islam and saying if you wont... come back to Islam, we’re going to kill you,” says Al Jensen from OD.

**In spite of the enormous risk, many secret believers are ready to openly proclaim their faith.** They are eager to share the good news of Jesus, but they often lack Christian resources and education. In many Muslim countries there are no seminaries to study their new found faith and Pastors are in desperate need of training.

## Please Pray

- Pray for those whose own families are hostile to their Christian faith and who are mistreated and beaten within their families.
- Pray they will stand strong. Pray that Secret Believers will so shine the light of Jesus that members of their families and friends will come to faith too.
- Pray for resources and training to be available to these believers and for opportunities for them to study and have training.
- Pray for those who pastor Secret Believers that they too will receive the training they need.

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# August



## Please Pray

- Pray that one day the Church in Uzbekistan will be recognised by the government.
- Pray for these leaders that they may stand strong in their faith throughout their persecution.
- Pray the Lord provides ways in which this literature can safely reach those who desire to know more
- Pray for Secret Believers that they may stand strong against these pressures, and in turn may be able to share Christ with their family members.
- Pray that despite their persecution, these believers' physical needs will be met.

## Uzbekistan

### Sources of Oppression and Persecution

- Government control of the Uzbek Church through the former KGB is very strong. All religious communities have to be registered, but for the Protestant Church to obtain registration is a long, tiresome and almost impossible process. Often registration is refused or after it has been granted it is withdrawn again. There is no Uzbek indigenous Church with registration.
- Indigenous church leaders and those who are active in outreach to the Uzbek population are regularly "invited" to the police station for questioning; believers are intimidated, threatened, fined, expelled from their place of work and/or residence and frequently imprisoned for several days, a few weeks or several years.
- Literature import and in country printing is strictly monitored and censored. National and local authorities regularly confiscate Christian literature in the Uzbek language and other indigenous languages. Serious fines are handed out to those who are involved in the distribution of Christian literature. .
- Pressure from the Muslim family members can be very strong on new believers. Local community leaders put pressure on Christians by cutting off water supplies and/or electricity, etc. to force them out of the village or to make them renounce Christianity.



## Key Facts

WWL Ranking: 10

Leader: President Islam Karimov

Population: 27.4 million (1% Christian)

Majority Religion: Islam

Type of Government: Authoritarian

# People

## The Church in Uzbekistan

Before 1991 there was only a small and stagnant church. However, in the early 90s Uzbek people started to come to the Lord. Gradually an indigenous Uzbek Church began to form, using indigenous Uzbek ways to worship and to share the Gospel. Music, poetry recital, story telling and other expressions of Uzbek culture are used in outreach.

Often church growth takes place through families. Relatives see the impact of the Gospel on a family member and come to faith as well. Even though open proselytising is forbidden in the country, the number of Christians has increased rapidly over the last years.

Because it is almost impossible to get official registration with the government, most of the protestant groups have to work unofficially. They face fines, threats, beatings, prison, loss of jobs and confiscation of literature as many local authorities are very much against the presence of a Christian Uzbek Church. The pressure is particularly heavy in the Karakalpakstan region of NW Uzbekistan, but has spread over the country over the past year. People have become more cautious in asking about Christianity for fear of negative consequences from authorities.

In May 2008 Uzbek State television repeatedly broadcast an hour long program about Protestant churches. "In the Claws of Ignorance" encouraged hatred and intolerance of religious minorities. Christian cell group leaders in Karakalpakstan have been on the target list of security services for a long time. Some of the leaders have left the country, others face trials, have to pay enormous fines, or spend time in prison.

## Please Pray

- Pray for continued growth of the church in Uzbekistan.
- Pray for believers who face hardship, that they will be strengthened.
- Pray that people will see the state television programme as propaganda and not take it seriously.
- Pray for those in prison for their faith.
- Pray that people will have a hunger to know more about Christianity as they see it lived out by believers in Jesus.

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# September



## Please Pray Somalia

Please join us in praying for the tremendous needs of Somalia. This country needs both physical and spiritual nourishment.

- Pray for the few brave believers inside the country.
- Pray for a government concerned for the welfare of the people and for basic human rights, including freedom of religion.
- Pray for the Lord to again open doors for missionaries.
- Pray for Muslim Background Believers to stand strong in their faith when they see such hardships around them.
- Ask God to open new ways to reach Somalis with His Word. Pray that believers will receive the training they need to grow as disciples.

*Somalia desperately needs our prayers as conditions deteriorate.*

### Sources of Oppression and Persecution

The world's attention is being grasped by continual pirate activity upon passing ships, in waters surrounding Somalia. Yet there is still much unreported destructive activity affecting the people within this country.

Years of fighting have taken their toll on the nation leaving many people displaced. There are 1 million Internally Displaced Persons and 1.4 million in need of food.

There has not been an effective government controlling the country since 1991. In the absence of a national judicial system, local Shari'a courts enforce the law. There is social pressure to respect Islamic tradition, especially in rural areas.

Evangelism is prohibited. Only a handful of Somalis are Christians, practicing their faith in secret.

### The Church In Somalia

Missionaries won a few hundred people to Christ between 1898 and 1935, and between 1953 and 1974. Since then the church has been forced underground.

A number of believers have been martyred; others have been publicly named as targets for execution. Some have since fled the anarchy taking refuge in Kenya, Ethiopia, Yemen and elsewhere. Globally there may now be 2,000 Solamli Christians.



## Key Facts:

WWL Persecution Ranking: 5

Leader: Sharif Ahmed (President)

Population: 9.6 Million - few Christians

Majority Religion: Islam

Type of Gov't: Coalition - Transitional

Continued fighting between Somali Islamic militias and Ethiopian forces reportedly led to an increase in hostility towards Christians in several parts of the country. Four Christian teachers, two of them converts from Islam, were murdered by Islamic militants in south-central Somalia.

Even though the country was covered by a year long prayer campaign, Open Doors still received reports of at least 10 Christians being killed for their faith in 2008 In Somalia and several others kidnapped and raped.

**The minority of ethnic Somali Christians practice their faith in secret and live under extremely dangerous conditions.**

Somalia is ranked No. 5 in this year's Open Doors World Watch List which ranks the top persecutors of Christians. Conditions are worsening. The previous year Somalia was ranked No. 12.

**"The gospel has made extremely slow inroads into this dark country. Those who come to Christ do so at a huge risk. Most of them are Muslim Background Believers who face unbelievable pressure and persecution," says Open Doors USA President/CEO Carl Moeller.**

## Please Pray

- Please pray that they will have courage to continue and will be able to meet together to encourage one another.
- Pray that believers will have access to the Scriptures.
- Pray for an end to the conflict and for the international community to be able to bring relief from the famine which has gripped the country.
- Pray that the Somali people will cry out to the Lord as a result of the distress in their lives.
- Pray for Christian groups doing development and relief work in such a dangerous environment.



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# Secret Believers Prayer Focus



## Secret Believers Bible Study

**Definition of Secret:** "...designed or working to escape notice, knowledge, or observation".  
Some synonyms are: clandestine, hidden, concealed, covert.

The first believers to be described in the Bible as coming to Jesus in secret were Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. Both were men of influence who kept their faith in Jesus quiet and came by night or in secret so the Jewish leaders wouldn't know.

### **John 3:1-21 Nicodemus came to Jesus by night**

What was Nicodemus position?

What might have prevented him from coming in the day time?

### **John 19:38-42 Joseph of Arimathea - kept the burial of Jesus secret from the Jews**

### **Mark 15:43**

What do these Scriptures tell us about Joseph?

What made it important for Joseph to act in secret?

Who was with him?

Both of these influential men felt it was wiser to keep their faith hidden.

Many believers from Muslim backgrounds today also have to keep their faith a secret and struggle to find other believers with whom to meet - or even opportunities to meet secretly. Often their lives are at risk if they are known to be believers in Jesus. Life is usually very difficult for them.



*Throughout this brochure, names of believers have been changed to protect their identities.*



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