

Do Your Prayers Really Matter? For Persecuted Christians, That's an Emphatic 'Yes'

Read Time: 2 Minutes 54 Seconds

This Sunday, the first Sunday in November, is the International Day of Prayer for Persecuted Christians. The day has been commemorated since 1996, and each year Christians and churches around the world spend time lifting up Christians oppressed, arrested, beaten and even killed simply because they wear the name of Christ.

But why do we pray, and do our prayers really matter?

The first reason for Christians to pray for our brothers and sisters who are persecuted is because Scripture calls us to do so. The writer of Hebrews 13:3 instructs us to "Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body." Paul tells the Corinthian church that, "If one member suffers, all suffer together," (1 Cor. 12:26). We pray for persecuted Christians—on IDOP Sunday and, hopefully, throughout the year—because Scripture tells us to.

The second reason to pray is because persecuted Christians ask us to. In fact, it's their first request to us as fellow members of the body of Christ. When fellow VOM workers and I travel into hostile and restricted nations, we ask Christians how we and other members of the Body of Christ can help them. Their first response, every time, is, "Pray for us!" They don't ask us to pray their suffering and persecution will end. Instead, they ask us to pray that they will be faithful to Christ in spite of their persecution.

Does it matter? Does the prayer of a church in Pasadena make a difference for a Christian in Pakistan? Does a praying family in Chicago affect God's people in China? Yes! It's impossible to overestimate the value of our prayers to our family members facing persecution.

Gracia Burnham, former missionary in the Philippines, was kidnapped and held hostage with her husband, Martin, for more than a year by a radical Islamist group. Gracia told me how God used the prayers of people around the world during the Burnham's months in captivity, enduring relentless firefights between their captors and the Filipino military trying to rescue the hostages.

"There would be days when, all of a sudden, I knew people were praying," Gracia said on VOM Radio. "One day we were walking through a waist-high swamp. We had just been in a gun battle. There were wounded, they were dragging them through the swamps. We were exhausted. And I remember thinking, all of a sudden, people are praying for us right now."

Somehow, miraculously, the Holy Spirit allowed Martin and Gracia to feel—in real time—the prayers of God's people on the opposite side of the globe.

It's been more than 20 years since Martin was killed and Gracia was rescued. Yet every time Gracia speaks to American Christians, she thanks those that prayed for her and Martin in the jungle.

"Every time you prayed for us, we needed it!" she told an audience recently.

In more than 70 nations around the world, there are Christians who need our prayers right now. That's why I hope you, your family, your church—and every church—will join in prayer this Sunday, on the International Day of Prayer for Persecuted Christians.

Todd Nettleton is host of *The Voice of the Martyrs Radio*, heard on 1,100+ radio stations and by thousands of podcast listeners each week, and the author of "When Faith is Forbidden: 40 Days on the Frontlines with Persecuted Christians," from Moody Publishers, which was named the 2022 Christian Book Award winner for Biography and Memoir. In 24 years serving with *The Voice of the Martyrs*, Todd has conducted face-to-face interviews with hundreds of Christians who have endured persecution for their faith.

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