

Pastor Lawan Andimi Is Dead—Pray for God's Intervention

Pastor Lawan Andimi was a peace-loving man. He was affiliated with the Church of the Brethren in northern Nigeria, and he served as chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria in his local district in Adamawa State. But a few weeks ago the soft-spoken church leader was abducted by Islamic militants affiliated with the ruthless Boko Haram terrorist group.

A few days later Andimi appeared in a video that was widely distributed inside and outside Nigeria. In his message he asked church and government leaders to negotiate his release. But he also said that he was prepared to die if necessary.

On Jan. 20 he was beheaded by his captors. Sources said Andimi refused to renounce his faith in Jesus.

He paid the ultimate price.

Nigeria's president, Muhammadu Buhari, denounced the murder as "cruel, inhuman and deliberately provocative," according to *The New York Times*. But press releases will not stop the killings. Just days after Andimi's death, another Islamic terrorist group in a different region of northern Nigeria killed nine Christians and two other captives. The group released a video showing a hooded child, probably 9 years old, executing a Christian man with a pistol.

What can we do about this senseless violence? It seems so far removed from our isolated world. Most Americans are too preoccupied with the Super Bowl or the Oscars to care about religious violence on the other side of the world. But those of us who follow Christ cannot remain passive when our brothers and sisters are suffering.

On the political side, we can demand action. Write your senators and representatives in Washington and ask them to pressure Nigeria to end Boko Haram's reign of terror. Islamic militants are already spreading their influence beyond Nigeria into neighboring countries, and America must stand for religious freedom and demand that Mr. Buhari's government take military action against the terrorist groups.

You can also pray during this time of emergency. The Christian Association of Nigeria has called for three days of prayer and fasting beginning this Friday, Jan. 31 to Feb. 2. Never underestimate the power of united prayer. Gather your church together to pray for all believers living in nations where Christians are persecuted.

Here are six biblical ways you can pray:

1. **Pray for a bold witness of the gospel in the midst of persecution.** Persecution was a reality in the New Testament church, but it did not stop the early disciples from spreading the gospel. After Peter and John were arrested and told to stop preaching, they announced: "We cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). Pray that all persecuted Christians will not be intimidated or silenced by acts of terror.
2. **Pray for supernatural miracles to confirm the gospel.** When the early church faced opposition, they prayed not only for boldness, but also for a display of God's power. They prayed in unity in Acts 4:29-30: "Now, Lord, look on their threats and grant that Your servants may speak Your word with great boldness, by stretching out Your hand to heal and that signs and wonders may be performed in the name of Your holy Son Jesus." Pray that God will bare His arm and show the world that He is real, especially to militant Muslims who don't know the Savior.

3. **Pray that the seed of the martyrs will produce a harvest of converts.** When an angry crowd stoned Stephen, the first martyr of the early church, he cried out on his knees: "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" (Acts 7:60). His death was tragic, but it was not in vain. A great outpouring of the Holy Spirit followed his martyrdom. When a born-again Christian gives his or her life for Jesus, God takes note and responds. This could be the greatest hour of spiritual awakening in Africa, the Middle East and other regions where believers are in danger.
4. **Pray for heavy conviction to fall on those who persecute the church.** Saul was bent on arresting and killing the early disciples, and he watched as Stephen was martyred. Yet shortly after Saul launched his terror campaign, he fell on his face on the Damascus road and was dramatically converted (see Acts 9:3-4). This same miracle can happen today to leaders of ISIS. Don't limit God's power—and don't pray vindictive prayers of judgment on these people. Pray that the most militant persecutors of the church will have a head-on collision with the Son of God.
5. **Pray for angelic protection and intervention.** During one wave of persecution against the New Testament church, an angel appeared in Peter's prison cell, woke him up and caused his chains to fall off (see Acts 12:7). Later, after King Herod refused to stop his rule of terror, an angel struck him dead (see 12:23). The Bible does not say the church prayed for Herod's death; we should never pray with a vengeful spirit, but we should leave room for the wrath of God when mercy runs out.
6. **Pray that the global Christian community will work for peace.** We cannot just sit back and watch our brothers and sisters being beheaded for their faith while we enjoy our First World comforts. We must be in solidarity

with them, not only in prayer but also in action. We should actively support government and church leaders who are working behind the scenes for reconciliation, humanitarian aid and protection for the victims of injustice.

Our response to this wave of terror cannot be fear—or hatred. Don't just curse the darkness. Be proactive by praying fervently. Ask God to unleash a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit that will not only bring peace-loving Muslims to Christ, but also bloodthirsty militants who are sharpening their knives for the next attack.

You can watch Pastor Andimi's last recorded words here in this video, which was released by Boko Haram on Jan. 2, 2020, in their effort to demand a ransom for his life. Please pray for his wife and family who continue to grieve this tragic loss.
{eoa}