

Walking Through Lent with the Persecuted Church



GLOBAL
CHRISTIAN
RELIEF



Where Lent Begins

The season of Lent begins with a sentence we don't often say out loud.

You are dust, and to dust you will return.

Those words make us uncomfortable. They challenge our sense of identity. They confront our ego and our desire for control.

But they are also deeply biblical.

Scripture tells us, *"As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust."* (Psalm 103:13-14)

Scripture does not teach this truth to shame us. Instead, God uses these words to remind us of our dependence on Him and of His care for us. To remember that we are dust does not diminish our worth. It tells the truth about our need.

And it is precisely there that God meets us with fatherly compassion.

That is where we begin our journey toward the cross – trusting the promised resurrection that lies just beyond it. We do not start with our own achievement or in our own strength, but with our dependence on God, our Heavenly Father.

But we are not alone on this journey.

We walk it with our family in Christ – one that stretches from your local church to every nation on earth. Across the globe, many of our brothers and sisters live close to this truth every day. Their faith is shaped by pressure,

uncertainty, and the cost of following Jesus, yet grounded in the same dependence on God's grace that Lent invites us to rediscover.

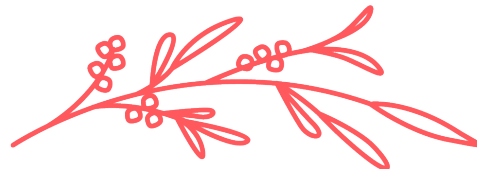
And this makes them ideal guides and mentors as we walk through this season together.

Over the next five weeks, we'll meet believers who:

- Pray when it would be easier to give up
- Choose Christ when it costs them more than they expected
- Remain faithful through suffering that continues
- Share what little they have with others
- Trust God's promises even as they wait

This guide is an invitation to walk with them – to pray, to listen, and to be formed together as one body in Christ during this season of Lent.

As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust."
(Psalm 103:13-14)



How to Use This Guide

This may be your first Lenten guide – or it may be your twentieth.

You likely come with expectations. About what Lent should feel like. About how much you should read or pray. About what you should take away from the next 40 days.

As we begin this journey together, we invite you to set those expectations down.

So you can take hold of something far more important.

This guide does not ask you to perform, keep pace, or get it “right.” It invites you to slow down, to pray honestly, and to listen attentively. To show up as you are – and to trust God to do the work He promises to do.

Our expectation is simple: **that God will meet us here.**

And we trust him to do just that.

What you’ll find in this guide isn’t intended to be prescriptive. If you skip a day or a week, if you read it out of order, or if you miss one component, God can – and will – show up.

Scripture promises us: *“The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.”* (Psalm 145:18)

With that in mind, don’t worry about how closely you adhere to any specific format. This guide was developed with the hope that each week you would enter prayer honestly, bringing your own life before God while holding our persecuted brothers and sisters before him as well.

Your routine may go something like this: Spend time each week with the featured Scripture, story, and prayer points.

Use the daily prompts to pray honestly – both for your own walk with God and for believers around the world.

Move at a pace that allows space for listening.

The season of Lent spans 40 days, traditionally not counting Sundays. This guide uses a five-week rhythm – each week with its own theme – to help you engage the heart of the season while leaving room for worship, rest, and reflection along the way. Many find that walking through Lent in this way prepares them to enter Holy Week with greater attentiveness.

We’re trusting God will do something incredible in your life and the Church as a whole during this season.

An Optional Lenten Practice

Historically, followers of Jesus have often adopted a simple practice during the 40 days of Lent – something that helps them pay closer attention to God in the weeks leading up to Good Friday and Easter. Some have fasted from one meal a day or set aside a particular kind of food, such as sweets, for the season.

You don’t need to do anything like this for God to bless your next five weeks. And there is no single practice that makes Lent “work.” Still, Christians throughout the centuries have found that small, intentional acts of restraint can create space – space to listen more carefully, to pray more honestly, and to remember their dependence on God.

If you choose to add a simple practice during Lent, consider one that helps you walk more closely with persecuted believers around the world. This might mean fasting from distraction for a set time each week and using that space to pray or returning regularly to a particular story from this guide and holding those believers before God. The goal is not to imitate their suffering, but to share in prayer, attention, and hope as members of one Body in Christ.



Week 1: Prayer

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.” (Colossians 4:2-3)

Paul begins not with instruction alone, but with invitation. He urges believers to remain devoted to prayer – and then he asks them to pray with him. To watch. To give thanks. To ask God to open doors, even while chains remain. It’s a reminder that prayer is not something we do at a distance from one another but something we share as one body.

Kashif, a believer in Pakistan, knows this kind of prayer well. Since choosing to follow Jesus, he has lost his family’s support, his financial security, and the freedom to live openly. He moves often and stays hidden. And so prayer is not something he fits into his life; it is what holds his life together. Like Paul, he prays while living with real constraints, trusting God to open doors he cannot open himself.

This week, we don’t pray *for* Kashif as observers. Instead, we pray *with* him. We bring our own fears, hopes, and unanswered questions before God, even as we hold Kashif and other secret believers in prayer. As we turn our eyes toward the cross, we learn to devote ourselves to prayer together – watchful for God’s work, thankful for His presence, and trusting Him to move in ways we cannot yet see.

Kashif echoes Paul’s prayer when he asks God to open a door for the Gospel in the community where he grew up. *“The people of my village are dying without knowing Him or even hearing His name,”* he says. This week, let’s join him in that prayer.

Praying as You Begin the Week

Devote yourself to prayer this week. Ask God to shape your attention and trust, especially when words feel hard to find.

Pray with Kashif and other secret believers who depend on prayer daily, asking God to be near to them under pressure.

Hold before God any fears, uncertainties, or unanswered questions you are carrying as you begin this Lenten journey.

Ask God to open doors for the Gospel, even when circumstances feel constraining or unclear.

Praying Through the Week

DAY 1: PRAYER OF TRUST

Lord, You care for every detail of our lives. Help us trust You today – both for ourselves and for believers like Kashif around the world – as we depend on You for all we need.

DAY 2: PRAYER OF NEARNESS

We’re grateful, Heavenly Father, that You walk with us even in the most difficult times of our lives. Your nearness is the greatest gift You give us as Jesus-followers. May secret believers like Kashif recognize that presence today no matter what trouble they’re facing.

DAY 3: PRAYER OF WATCHFULNESS

Keep our eyes open today to where You’re moving around us. Help us not to just look but to see, not to just hear but to listen.

DAY 4: PRAYER OF SURRENDER

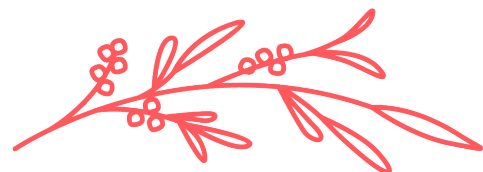
We surrender today to You – all of its possibilities and problems. Help Your children – whether we worship in freedom or in secret – to trust the outcomes of our lives to You, our loving Heavenly Father.


DAY 5: PRAYER FOR OPEN DOORS

Father, open doors for us to share the Good News about who You are to people around us who don’t know You. Open doors with our neighbors and with Kashif’s, as we seek to be faithful to Your call on our lives.

DAY 6: PRAYER AS LIFELINE

Jesus, help us to continually make prayer an indispensable part of our walk with You. Open our hearts and minds every day to the needs of our brothers and sisters around the world and your unfailing presence with us.





*We surrender today
to You – all of its
possibilities and
problems.*

Week 2: Repentance

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23)

Jesus’ call to take up our cross and follow Him isn’t just a one-time invitation when we become Christians but a daily call to choose Him again and again, over everything else in this life. That daily turning is at the heart of repentance.

Repentance means to change our direction. It is the decision to turn from the life we were living toward the life God is calling us to live. We don’t repent to dwell on past sin or failure. We repent so our lives can be reoriented toward God’s purposes and shaped more fully by His grace.

Ahmed, a husband and father in Egypt, experienced that turning in a moment he never expected. Raised to be hostile toward Christians, he openly despised Jesus and his followers. When his daughter became gravely ill, Ahmed resisted stepping into a church. But after she was healed through prayer, Ahmed found himself face-to-face with Jesus – not in judgment, but in mercy. In that moment, he grieved the hatred he had carried and chose to turn toward Christ, surrendering the life he thought he understood for one that would now be lived in secret.

That decision reshaped everything. Ahmed and his family chose to follow Jesus quietly, knowing the cost could be severe. As we pray with Ahmed and other believers this week, we remember that repentance is not reserved for dramatic moments alone. God continues to invite each of us to turn toward Him, releasing attitudes, assumptions, and patterns that pull us away from His ways. As we walk through Lent, we ask for the grace to follow Jesus again today.

A Prayer to Begin the Week

Ask God to show you where He is inviting you to turn toward him again – especially in places where your habits, assumptions, or priorities have drifted.

Pray with Ahmed and other secret believers who have chosen to follow Jesus at great cost, asking God to strengthen them as they continue to take up their crosses daily.

Bring before God anything you are holding tightly – fear, control, comfort, or certainty – and ask for grace to release what keeps you from following Christ more freely.

Ask God to reorient your life toward his purposes, trusting that repentance is met not with judgment, but with mercy.

Praying Through the Week

DAY 1: REPENTANCE AS HONEST CONFESSION

Look at our hearts, Lord, and show us anything that comes between us and You. Give us the courage, like Ahmed and believers who have turned toward You at great cost, to turn from our brokenness and toward the life You are calling us to live.

DAY 2: REPENTANCE AS TRANSFORMING LOYALTIES

Father, we confess that our loyalties are sometimes divided. Even as we follow You, we can place activities, ideas, dreams, or approval ahead of You. Forgive us, and help us, along with believers who choose You under pressure, to live for You alone today.

DAY 3: REPENTANCE AS GIVING UP CONTROL

Jesus, there are many parts of our lives we try to manage on our own. Give us the grace to trust You fully with all parts of our lives.

DAY 4: REPENTANCE AS OBEDIENCE

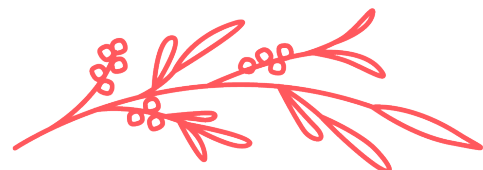
Lord, sometimes obeying You is hard. Strengthen us – and our brothers and sisters all around the world – as we seek to obey You when Your call is inconvenient and difficult.

DAY 5: REPENTANCE THAT RECEIVES MERCY

Heavenly Father, thank you for the wide-open arms You have toward us when we repent. Whether we’ve harbored hatred and contempt or allowed small compromises to reshape our lives, You meet us with mercy when we don’t deserve it.

DAY 6: REPENTANCE THAT TRUSTS WHAT COMES NEXT TO GOD

God, we place what comes next in Your hands. For believers whose obedience has led them into uncertainty, and for us as we follow You step by step, give patience, courage, and hope to trust You beyond today.



*God, we place
what comes next
in Your hands.*



Week 3: Endurance

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23)

It's often around the third week of Lent that we begin to feel weary. Especially if we've chosen to give something up – whether a meal, a habit, or a comfort we enjoy. This is usually the point when resolve starts to thin and giving up feels tempting.

That's why Paul's words to the Galatians matter so much: *“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”*

Following Jesus is not always a short journey. Sometimes it is marked by waiting, repetition, and the quiet decision to remain faithful when circumstances don't change. Endurance is not dramatic. It is the grace to keep going when obedience feels costly and hope feels delayed.

Shanu, a believer in India, knows this kind of endurance well. After he and his family chose to follow Jesus, pressure from their village leaders quickly followed. They were warned, threatened, and eventually beaten for hours when they refused to renounce their faith. The family was expelled from their village and forced to leave everything behind. Months later, when they were allowed to return, they found their home ransacked and their livestock stolen. The hostility did not disappear. The hardship did not resolve. Yet Shanu and his family remained.

This week, we pray with Shanu and believers like him who continue to follow Jesus amid ongoing hardship. And we bring our own weariness before God as well, asking for the grace to keep going, to not give up, and to trust that the harvest Paul describes is held securely in God's hands.

A Prayer to Begin the Week

Bring before God any weariness you are carrying – physical, emotional, or spiritual – and ask for the grace to keep going when faithfulness feels hard.

Pray with believers like Shanu who remain faithful amid ongoing hardship, asking God to strengthen them when circumstances do not change. Ask God for patience and trust as you wait for the harvest He promises, even when the fruit of obedience is not immediately visible.

Hold before God the quiet, unseen acts of faith-

fulness happening around the world, trusting that none of them are wasted in his care.

Praying Through the Week

DAY 1: ENDURANCE THAT RELEASES CONTROL

Father, help us acknowledge the parts of our lives where we're ready to give up on what You want to do. Give us the confidence to do this without shame but as an act of trust in Your loving ways.

DAY 2: ENDURANCE THAT OBEYS WITHOUT IMMEDIATE RESULTS

Jesus, when we read stories like that of Shanu, our hearts hurt to see all he has had to endure as he obeys You. Help all of us – including believers in hard places like Shanu – to patiently obey even when it's tough and we see no visible fruit for our faithfulness.

DAY 3: ENDURANCE THAT REMAINS FAITHFUL WHEN UNSEEN

Help us to be faithful even when no one sees it. We stand with Christians across the street and around the world who are faithfully loving You and their neighbor when no one is looking. Let us live for Your applause and Your applause alone.

DAY 4: ENDURANCE THAT TRUSTS GOD'S TIMING

Lord, we know that our ways are not Your ways. We trust that even as we wait for You to act, we can lean on Your promises, just as Jesus-followers around the world do as troubles come.

DAY 5: ENDURANCE THAT PRESSES ON TOWARDS EASTER HOPE

As we prepare our hearts for Easter, we acknowledge that our walk with You can get difficult. Give all of us, whether we live comfortably in freedom or under extreme pressure for our faith, the strength to continue following You faithfully.

DAY 6: ENDURANCE ANCHORED IN GOD'S PROMISE TO MAKE ALL THINGS NEW

God, we know our endurance today rests not in what we see, but in Your promise to make all things new (Revelation 21:4-5). Strengthen believers like Shanu who follow You under pressure, and teach us to hope with them for the day when suffering no longer has the final word.

*Help us to be
faithful even when
no one sees it.*



Week 4: Generosity

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” (2 Corinthians 9:6-8)

God never intended prayer, repentance, and endurance to be ends in themselves. God works in our lives so His grace might overflow – reaching beyond us to bless others. When God meets us with mercy and sustains us through hardship, generosity becomes a natural response.

Jesus once drew attention to a widow who placed two small coins into the temple treasury. Others gave larger amounts, but Jesus noticed her – not because of what she gave, but because of the trust with which she gave it. Her generosity was quiet, unseen, and costly, yet Jesus called it abundant.

We still see that kind of generosity today. Solomon, a young Christian leader in Nigeria, works with displaced youth who have lost homes, security, and opportunity because of violence. With very little to spare, some of these young believers began pooling their small stipends to buy food – quietly sharing it with families around them. Their generosity was not abundant because their resources were great but because their trust in God was.

This week, we pray with believers like Solomon and the young Christians he serves. As we continue our Lenten journey, we ask God to shape our hearts so that what He has given us, whether much or little, might become a source of blessing to others. Generosity, like faithfulness, grows where trust takes root.

A Prayer to Begin the Week

Thank God for the ways His grace has met you and sustained you, and ask that what you have received might overflow to bless others.

Pray with believers like Solomon and the young Christians he serves, asking God to continue providing for them and to strengthen their trust as they share what little they have.

Ask God to shape your heart toward generosity, not driven by pressure or comparison, but by gratitude and freedom.

Praying Through the Week

DAY 1: GENEROSITY SHAPED BY GRATITUDE

Thank you, Lord, for all You have given us. Whether we have much or little, we trust that You care for us as a loving Father. As You have shaped generosity through gratitude in Solomon and those who serve alongside him, shape that same posture in us and through us.

DAY 2: GENEROSITY AFTER CONTENTMENT

Father, help us to be content with what You have given us. Quiet the hunger in our hearts for more, and teach us to hold what we have with open hands – ready for You to use as You see fit.

DAY 3: GENEROSITY DONE IN SECRET

Help us to be satisfied to know that You see our generosity, even if no one else does. Let our generosity to others be motivated only by a desire to be faithful to Your Spirit's leading.

DAY 4: GENEROSITY BEYOND MONEY

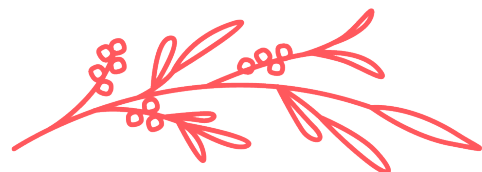
Lord, we know that money is not the only limited resource You have entrusted to us. Teach us to be generous with our time and our prayers, especially as we lift up suffering brothers and sisters in Christ.

DAY 5: GENEROSITY FREE FROM COMPARISON

Heavenly Father, free us from comparison – where we measure our generosity against others. Teach us to trust that You see faithfulness, not capacity, and to rest in Your pleasure rather than our performance.

DAY 6: GENEROSITY THAT IS GLOBALLY MINDED

Lord Jesus, awaken Your Church to the needs of our global family. Shape our hearts with Your compassion, and lead your people to respond with generous love.





*Thank you, Lord,
for all You have
given us.*

Week 5: Hope

“Let us hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, since he who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:23-25)

When many of us think about Lent, our minds often go first to fasting, prayer, and self-examination. We think of the cross – and rightly so – remembering all Jesus has done for us by surrendering His life for the sake of a lost world.

But Lent is not meant to end at the cross. It is a season shaped by hope. As we pray, repent, endure, and give, we learn to hold on – to trust the faithfulness of God even when the road is hard and the outcome is not yet visible. The cross stands at the center of this journey, but it does not have the final word. Resurrection does.

That future-facing hope is what steadies believers who follow Jesus under pressure. It is the hope that gathers scattered churches, sustains faith in hidden places, and keeps God’s people encouraging one another as they wait for what has been promised.

That kind of hope is not theoretical. We see it lived out in believers like Moussa, a father in rural Chad who has followed Jesus amid poverty, isolation, and ongoing pressure. For more than 11 years, Moussa has endured hardship without knowing when – or if – his circumstances will change. Yet he continues to gather his family, to listen to God’s Word, and to trust the faithfulness of God. *“The Word of God says when you persevere through persecution, God will be with you and He will fight for you,”* Moussa states.

His hope is not built on relief from suffering but on steady confidence that God is present, strengthening his faith and sustaining his family day by day.

A Prayer to Begin the Week

Thank God for the hope He has given us, a hope rooted not in circumstances, but in His faithfulness to what He has promised.

Pray with believers like Moussa who continue to follow Jesus under pressure, asking God to strengthen their trust as they wait without knowing what lies ahead.

Ask God to help you hold on unswervingly to hope when faith feels fragile or the future feels uncertain.

Pray for the Church around the world to encourage one another – to remain together, connected, and faithful as the Day nears when God fulfills all He has promised.

Praying Through the Week

DAY 1: HOPE CENTERED ON GOD’S PROMISES

Help us to hold on to Your faithfulness even when our circumstances seem overwhelming. Whether we live in relative freedom or in a country where our faith is regularly persecuted, we stand on Your promise to one day make all things new.

DAY 2: HOPE BASED ON GOD’S PAST FAITHFULNESS

Father, You have been infinitely faithful in our past. You’ve always kept Your promises, so we trust You’ll keep them today and tomorrow. Help us to surrender our fears to the One who stared death in the face and rolled away the stone.

DAY 3: HOPE SHARED IN COMMUNITY

Lord Jesus, You know how much we need one another. Help us encourage believers nearby and around the world as we hold on to hope together. Make us attentive to where others need strength today.

DAY 4: HOPE SUSTAINED BY THE CHURCH

Thank You for your Church, the gathering of Your people that helps us hold on tightly to Your promises when life gets hard. Help us to remember today and every day that many in our global family worship under pressure all the time.

DAY 5: HOPE THAT ENDURES SUFFERING

Help us to trust in Your promises when the pain becomes unbearable. Renew us daily in the hope that one day You will make all things new.

DAY 6: HOPE SHAPED BY RESURRECTION

As we approach Easter, God, help us be a resurrection-people, living in the rock-solid truth that pain and death don’t have the final word. Infuse us with Your hope so we can carry it to a world that needs to hear about You.

*Father, You have been
infinitely faithful in
our past.*



A Next Step: Walking with the Persecuted Church

Throughout this guide, you've prayed with believers who follow Jesus under pressure. These stories are not distant or theoretical. They are the lived faith of brothers and sisters who belong to the same Body of Christ.

As Lent draws to a close, the Church turns its attention toward Holy Week – the final days of Jesus' earthly ministry, His suffering, His death, and the hope secured through His resurrection. For many believers around the world, this story is not only remembered once a year. It is lived daily, at great cost, in faithfulness to Christ.

We enter Holy Week reminded that the way of the cross has always been a shared road. The same Jesus who suffered, died, and rose again walks with His people still – strengthening those who endure, sustaining those who hope, and holding fast to all

who trust Him.

Global Christian Relief exists to help the Church walk faithfully with persecuted believers around the world – through prayer, advocacy, and practical support. This work is not about rescue alone, but about presence: standing with those who endure, giving where love is needed, and together holding fast to hope.

If this Lenten journey has shaped your prayers, we invite you to continue walking with the persecuted church through Global Christian Relief – learning, praying, and standing with our global Christian family beyond this season.

Learn more about how you can stand with persecuted believers at gcrelief.org.

