



*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."  
Luke 4:18-19*



# THE FATHER'S HEART

31 Days of Prayer for the Pashtuns

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**WELCOME!**



### ***“I never heard that Jesus died for me.”***

Meena speaks on behalf of her people—the rugged, poetic, passionate Pashtuns of Afghanistan and Pakistan. She represents 50 million precious souls who are still waiting to hear the powerful, life-saving gospel message. God’s heart yearns after the Pashtuns like the heart of a father longs for his lost children to come home. This prayer guide is an invitation to explore God’s heart for the Pashtuns. It was assembled by field workers, intercessors, and mission strategists with a deep love for Pashtuns—and with contributions from five Pashtun believers. Our desire is that in praying through this guide, your heart may gain a deep love for the Pashtuns as well. Welcome to your part in the wonderful work the Father is doing to reach unreached people with His offer of salvation!

Even after 200 years of gospel ministry, the Pashtuns have yet to see a strong, multiplying movement toward Christ. As devout

Muslim people, Pashtuns who convert risk life and honor. Persistent war, terrorism, poverty, instability, suspicion, language barriers, and spiritual and mental strongholds all hinder visible fruit. All of these factors are why we know the Pashtuns won’t be reached without prayer—a global movement of prayer—asking the Father to bring his kingdom to the Pashtuns as it is in heaven. You are now joining a global prayer movement on behalf of the Pashtun people! Invite your family and friends to join and enjoy learning and praying together.

A prayer guide entitled “Peace for Pashtuns” was published in 2006 with a second edition published in 2013. In the ensuing years, unprecedented global awareness and prayer has been seen, as well as a wave of new gospel laborers and a complete Bible in a main dialect of Pashto. Though it is impossible to know exactly how many, some Pashtuns continue to choose Christ and are living out their faith amid extreme persecution. Now, in this third edition of the guide, we again are seeking God for miraculous answers to prayer.

The topics were chosen based on what it seemed the Lord was putting on our hearts as needing strategic, focused prayer in this particular era of his work with the Pashtuns. A special focus in this guide is on Pashtun believers. Five entries are dedicated to some key challenges faced by these precious brothers and sisters. Another unique focus of this guide is on what we are calling “strongholds”—widespread spiritual and mental beliefs that persistently keep Pashtuns from accepting the gospel.

Imagine how the world would be different if the Pashtun people followed Christ! Some have said that when this occurs, the whole Muslim world will be shaken. May this prayer guide offer a piece of the heavenly Father’s heart for the Pashtuns and draw you close to Him as you read and pray for their redemption, transformation, healing, and joy.

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*\*Certain individual’s names in this guide have been changed for their protection.*



## WHO ARE THE PASHTUNS?

Also known as Pathans, Pashtuns, or Pakhtuns, Pashtuns are a people comprising nearly 42% of Afghanistan's population<sup>1</sup> and 15.4 % of Pakistan's population<sup>2</sup>. The Pashtuns primarily reside in Eastern and Southern Afghanistan and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Pashtuns are a tribal community with about 60 subtribes. They have a legendary reputation as a fierce, independent, bold, and fearless people. Pashtuns' Persian neighbors called them "Afghans," which means "unruliness" or "upheaval." But Pashtuns are also known for their love for children, tightly connected families, and their rich literary history of poetry and proverbs, which they weave skillfully into daily speech. Pashtuns are unmatched in lavish hospitality and generosity to guests, and they prefer brilliant, striking colors and patterns, which one will notice in their clothing, curtains, carpets,

1 [www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/pashtun\\_people](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/pashtun_people)

2 [www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/pk.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/pk.html)

and the upholstery in their homes. Pashtun culture is expressed in Pashtunwali, an unwritten, undefined code of ethics that lies at the heart of the Pashtun ethos. Islam came to the Pashtuns in the eighth century, and since then they have been 99% Muslim. Prior to Islam, Pashtuns were influenced by Buddhism, Hinduism, and Zoroastrianism. Estimates suggest that less than 1 tenth of 1% of Pashtuns are followers of Jesus Christ.

## PASHTUNWALI

**MELMASTIA:** hospitality

**GHAYRAT:** courage and honor

**BADAL:** revenge and repayment

**NANAWATE:** offering sanctuary to a fugitive

**TUREH:** bravery

**SABAT:** loyalty

**IMAANDAARI:** piety expressed through good deeds

**ISTEQAMAT:** steadfastness and persistence

**NAMUS:** The defense of one's women





## PRAYER AND WORSHIP

Our heavenly Father is seeking Pashtuns to worship him in spirit and truth. Jesus even prayed for Pashtuns who would come to believe (John 17:20). For many years, God's people have been praying for the Lord's harvest among Pashtuns. After hearing how Pashtuns form the world's largest unreached Muslim tribal society, I too joined in this faithful intercession for God's salvation among them. I remember the first time I had the privilege of gathering with some Pashtun believers to pray and worship. Now there are hundreds of Pashtuns who follow Isa-al-Masih (Jesus the Messiah). Let's continue to agree in prayer with our great High Priest and our Pashtun brothers and sisters for God's kingdom to advance, for thousands upon thousands of Pashtuns to become disciples and gather in their homes to worship the one true God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who passionately pursues them to be his sons and daughters. May Pashtuns come to sing a new song: You are worthy, Lamb of God, for you were slain and by your blood you have redeemed us to God from every tribe...*Ahmadzai, Barakzai, Bettani, Durrani, Gharghashti, Karlani, Sarbani, Yousafzai...*and all the rest!

Look up one of your favorite worship songs to listen to or sing, and let it lead you into intercession for the Pashtuns. One day may worship rise from redeemed Pashtun hearts all over the Pashtun lands!

### PRAY

- For God's Spirit to mobilize us to pray for greater access to God's Word, for more laborers, and miraculous breakthroughs among every Pashtun tribe.
- For God's Spirit to reveal Christ, for dreams and visions, for the gospel to spread and bring forth the Lord's harvest among millions of Pashtuns.
- For God's Spirit to draw whole families to faith, for thousands of homes to become "lighthouses" of prayer and worship for God's glory among Pashtuns.



MALACHI 1:11  
 "From where the sun rises to where it sets...in every place pure offering will be brought to Me, because My Name will be great among the nations, says the Lord."



## KARACHI

Karachi, Pakistan has the largest population of Pashtuns of any city in the world, with some estimates of up to 7 million. You can find them all over this fun, bustling multicultural city. They are working in tea shops, driving rickshaws, studying in the universities, or sitting with their families in the park. They are extremely thankful and friendly when someone says even a few words in Pashto to them.

There are also big challenges in this city. People deal with extreme heat, power outages, and all kinds of infrastructure problems. For the poor in the city, this can make life extremely difficult; but beyond all these challenges, you will find a massive sea of incredibly friendly and warm-hearted people. There are millions wanting to chat to anyone who will come learn their language and give them the time.

Many Pashtuns are weary from the heavy anxieties of life in this massive city. Their souls are parched, and their bodies and minds are exhausted. They have no one to set them free from the bondages of sin, shame, and despair. Many have hearts that are crying out day and night, longing to have an intimate relationship with God. Who will go and tell them that this is possible?

Let us have faith for what the Father can do in this place. He knows how many hairs are on the head of every Pashtun, and each one is precious in his sight. He is not overwhelmed by the number of them; instead, He longs to know them and pour out his love upon them. Let us ask him to make a way in the wilderness!

*On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink." John 7:37*



### PRAY

- That God would send more gospel laborers to this city and its millions of Pashtuns.
- That God would draw the Pashtuns in Karachi to himself, and for their hearts to be warm and receptive to his message.
- That God would raise up Pashtuns who would be willing to pour out their lives on the feet of Jesus like a sweet perfume, risking everything to take the good news to their people and others beyond!

ISAIAH 41:17  
 "The poor and needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. But I the Lord will answer them, I... will not forsake them."



## KABUL CITY

As we sit and talk over a cup of tea in the home, my local friend speaks rapidly in her mother tongue and shares her story with me: "My uncle often tells me to train as a midwife and come back to the place of my family origins. He says too many women are dying during childbirth, and there is no one there who can help them." She has lived all her life in Kabul City, the capital of Afghanistan, but her family is from a Pashtun dominant province to the south. She has grown up with a blend of both Southern Pashtun and urban culture. While she maintains strong connections with her family, she also enjoys the many opportunities and freedoms of living in Kabul.

This is the situation of many Pashtuns in Kabul. War, lack of security, and a search for jobs led them to uproot from their home provinces and start a new life here. If you ask a Pashtun about their home province, they will often share their story with an aching longing for their home and sadness about leaving.

With a population of five to eight million, Kabul has not been without struggles for Pashtuns. While it is true that some come from wealthy families who can obtain an education and become doctors or politicians, this is not the case for all. Many of them live in poverty, struggling to find work. Women must continue to adhere to the Pashtun cultural standard of staying hidden in their homes from non-relatives. Far from their families and home villages, these women experience extreme isolation

and loneliness.

However, Pashtuns in Kabul have greater access to the Good Book and Christians than those living in the tight-knit tribal regions. Some women, such as this local friend, enjoy more educational opportunities and freedoms. There is more openness to new ideas and friendships with outsiders than in the Pashtun dominant provinces.

We have hope because the hand of God is at work, weaving together a beautiful redemption story amid deep suffering and brokenness. Perhaps urban Pashtuns in Kabul will hear the good news, believe, and be stirred to one day bring it back to their place of origin, reaching people in places that are near-impossible for outsiders to go.

*The Lord will hold you in his hand for all to see – a splendid crown in the hand of God. Isaiah 62:3*



## PRAY

- For Pashtuns in Kabul to hear the good news and fall in love with the one who made them and loves them.
- For the few Pashtun believers, who are so precious in the Father's sight but face hardship and persecution.
- For Kabul to become a gateway to the hearts of Pashtuns in other provinces and villages.

ISAIAH 62:12  
 "They will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the Lord; and you will be called Sought After, the City No Longer Deserted."



## PESHAWAR

The city of Peshawar lies in the heart of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly North West Frontier) province. With a population of over 2.2 million, it serves as the provincial capital. Situated near the Khyber Pass on the Afghan border, Peshawar has for millennia been a gateway to Central Asia and to the subcontinent. People from distant lands and tribal territories adjacent to the Peshawar valley have been drawn to this vibrant political, economic, cultural, and educational center. The dizzying mixture of sights, smells, and sounds of one of the world's most picturesque bazaars reflects both Peshawar's ancient past and its modernizing aspirations. Surrounded by green agricultural land on the edges of an ever-turbulent frontier, Peshawar is set apart from major Pakistani cities by the presence, language, and cultural distinctives of the Pashtuns.

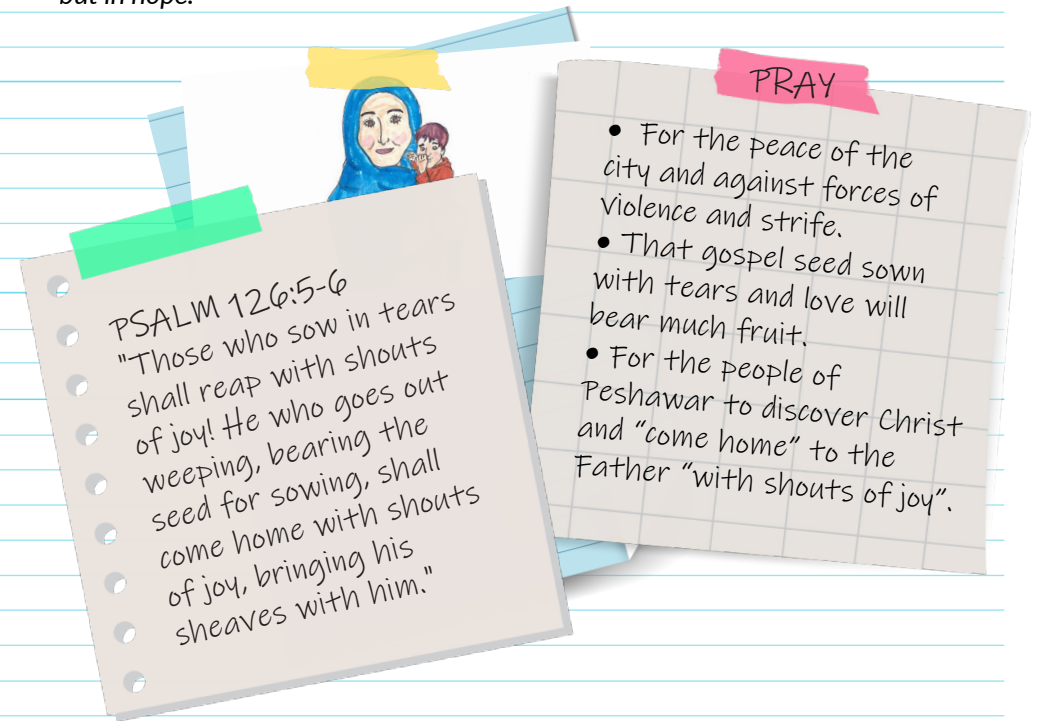
During and after the Soviet-Afghan war (1979 to 1989), Peshawar and the Province were host to 3.5 million Afghan refugees living in hundreds of tent villages. This transformed the city, since it served as the base of operations for UN relief, international NGOs, the Afghan mujahideen (freedom fighters), as well as a center for weapons and foreign fighters. Adding to the intrigue were myriads of journalists, government officials, scholars, spies, and adventurers.

The city continues to function as a transit point for people, ideas, and commerce - including the smuggling of goods into landlocked Afghanistan. On a trip to the Khyber Pass, a visitor asked a local leader, "What is the Pashto word for 'smuggling?'" He answered with typical Pashtun wit, "We just call it 'business!'"

Political instability in Afghanistan, Taliban-related violence along the Pak-Afg border, and insecurities in Pakistan, continue to impact Peshawar. Sporadic suicide bombings have traumatized the city and its citizenry.

Peshawar embodies the ongoing tensions between continuity and reform. Amidst clashing values and an insecure future, the gospel offers hope for the city - hope for a transformation that begins in the human heart, by the power of God. Many 19th-20th century missionaries made this strategic city their home. Some are buried in the city's Christian cemetery (Gora Qabristan). An 1876 report from Christian workers in Peshawar could have been written today:

*"In taking a retrospect of the past year, we have no cause for discouragement, although the actual [believers] have been but few. On the contrary... we see the quiet under-current which is manifesting itself... Oftentimes, men who first hear the gospel at Peshawar make an open profession [of faith, later, elsewhere.]" "The work is the Lord's. In obedience to his command, and in dependence on his Spirit, the seed must be sown patiently, but in hope."<sup>3</sup>*



<sup>3</sup> Church Missionary Intelligencer, North India—Peshawar, August, 1876, p. 483. Accessed July 6, 2020.





## JALALABAD

A beautiful road winds from Kabul to the city of Jalalabad, the capital of Afghanistan's eastern Nangarhar province. In the Pashto language, Jalalabad means "Land of Glory". Although only about one hundred miles separate the two cities, the trip can take anywhere from three to six hours because of the switchbacks in the mountain roads, accidents, and traffic jams.

A few years ago, the population of Jalalabad was estimated at around 300,000, but recently this number has dramatically increased due to many Afghan refugees returning home from Pakistan. Though many families in and around Jalalabad value education and desire a good life, they simultaneously face pressure from the conservative culture and strong religious elements. Most families have been touched by violence from the conflict that surrounds them and the brokenness of their own societies.

Shegoofa, who lived in a village just outside of Jalalabad, chose a bride for her son. She was thrilled to find a beautiful, light-skinned teenager named Atifa who was educated up to the fourth grade. She was the daughter of a distant relative and therefore was from good stock and did not demand an exorbitant dowry. As soon as the wedding celebrations were over, it was time for Atifa to earn her keep. She started cooking, cleaning, and doing some mending for her husband's parents, three brothers, and two sisters. When Atifa became pregnant,

trouble in the household began. She became so sick that she was not able to fulfill the usual daughter-in-law duties, which made her mother-in-law terribly angry. One day, Shegoofa became so enraged that she attacked Atifa with a knife, resulting in the deaths of Atifa and her unborn son. Shegoofa was sent to prison, and her son turned to drugs to escape the grief and pain of losing his mother, wife, and son in one day.

There is much sadness and tragedy in Pashtun homes in Jalalabad. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ can break through the darkness and bring hope and joy to these beautiful people whom God loves.

*For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Habakkuk 2:14*

### PRAY

- For teams to settle into Jalalabad and have many open doors to share the good news and encourage the local believers.
- For the families who often live between hope for a modern future and the reality of the desperate situation in their region. Pray that the hopeless and searching would discover peace and joy in Jesus.
- For the presence of the Lord to enter the regional men and women's prison in this city where an outreach project has started!

JOHN 8:12  
Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life."



## KANDAHAR

In many ways, Kandahar is the spiritual, cultural, and strategic heart of Afghanistan and the Pashtun. Archeologists have determined that Kandahar is one of the oldest cities in the entire world with ancient ruins dating back 5-7,000 years. When the Afghan empire stretched from Iran to India under the great Pashtun king and father of Afghanistan, Ahmad Shah Durrani, Kandahar was the capital city. Today, Ahmad's mausoleum is the most important shrine in the city and is also the centerpiece of the largest bill in Afghan currency.

Southern Afghanistan is composed of multiple provinces that are collectively referred to as Loya Kandahar or "Big Kandahar." The locals refer to the distinct and softer version of the Pashto language spoken in this region as "Kandahari Pashto." Kandahari people have a distinctive, colorful way of dress and manner. Men wear bright turbans and cloaks, and ladies clad in blue, green, and purple burqas float through the city. The extremes of Pashtun culture, from hospitality to brutality, are on full display in this fertile, harsh, and starkly beautiful land. Though an ancient place, it is plagued by modern politics and violence. Kandahar and its surrounding areas remain the most violent part of the country and the most neglected by foreign development efforts. Separated from outside influence, Kandahari Pashtuns suffer in ignorance, many dying of diseases already eradicated in the rest of the world.

The Kherqa Sharif is a shrine in Kandahar containing a sacred

cloak thought to have belonged to the prophet of Islam, Muhammad. When the Taliban rose to power, their leader, Mullah Omar, lifted this cloak as a symbol of his spiritual leadership. Recently, the current president opened the box of the cloak to offer prayers for peace for this troubled nation. It seems everyone from every position recognizes that Kandahar acts as the spiritual epicenter of Afghanistan and the Pashtun.

Access to this region around Kandahar for even the boldest Christian workers has been difficult and at times, deadly. However, the seeds planted by those who sowed during slightly better times continue to bear some fruit. Creative means, such as radio and social media, are being used to reach the 9 million Southern Pashtuns of Afghanistan and Pakistan. These seeds are also beginning to bear fruit. In this dry, rugged land, many are waiting to hear the gospel, but the message must come in a way they can receive and understand.

### PRAY

- That the spiritually thirsty will receive the living water of the gospel that is being sprinkled on this arid land. Pray that new creative strategies will rain down the message of the saving gospel on the whole region.
- For the few "secret" believers to share their faith carefully and courageously throughout "Big Kandahar."
- That Kandahar will once again open to Christian workers who might help bring physical and spiritual healing to this land.

ISAIAH 45:22  
 "Turn to me and  
 be saved, all  
 you ends of the  
 earth; for I am  
 God, and there is  
 no other."



## QUETTA

The city of Quetta, Pakistan, is situated in a sunny mile-high valley surrounded by four towering mountains. Before the devastating earthquake of 1935, its British-built infrastructure earned it the title “Little London.” Re-built over the years, it now has a population of over a million, with Pashtuns - speaking the Southern dialect of Pashto - representing over half the city.

Near the porous Afghan border, Quetta is home to many Taliban and a stronghold of turmoil and strife. The Baloch Liberation Army, an internationally recognized terrorist organization, is also established in Quetta. “Now we have had salt in your home”, stated our bearded, husky guest, as he got up from our carpeted floor after being served green tea. “You won’t be harmed.”

While it is not currently recommended that foreign harvest workers travel to Quetta, we thank God that Pashtuns are able to hear the good news through radio and internet. R, a courageous fighter in his late teens, had recently returned to Quetta from Afghanistan where he supported a military faction. It was my second meeting with him in a local restaurant and I tried to mask my surprise when he asked me if I listen to Christian radio programs in Pashto.

During the first year that R met with me to help me learn Southern Pashto, we read the New Testament together in the neighboring Yousafzai dialect, as it was not available in R’s dialect. Today we are

still praying for the Bible to be completed in Southern Pashto, so that all Southern Pashtuns may easily understand it.

Under a tough exterior that matches their rugged environment, people long for freedom from violence and oppression. “Sometimes my family members and I experience demonic attacks at night. It’s as if a mountain is crushing my chest and I feel like I’m getting choked. Every home in our area has such experiences”, R confided in me, as we walked through a busy, exhaust-filled market area.

But God is at work! Q, a new believer, would spend a couple of hours with me on Fridays to read the Bible together. One morning as we read the story of Jacob blessing his grandsons, he abruptly stopped reading. Is he struggling with some grammatical construction? I thought. When I finally glanced at him, tears were running down his leathery cheeks. This Bible story impacted this Pashtun grandfather more deeply than I could have imagined.

GR, a white-turbaned friend whose name means “Slave of the Prophet” reached over for another biscuit to dip into his green tea as we sat on our guest room floor. After a silence he spoke deliberately, “I want to change my name. I want to change it to ‘Slave of Isa’ [Jesus].”

**ISAIAH 57:18-19**

- "I have seen their ways, but I will heal them; I will guide them and restore comfort to Israel's mourners, creating praise on their lips. Peace, peace, to those far and near," says the Lord. "And I will heal them."

**PRAY**

- That many Pashtuns in Quetta would experience transformation as they come to understand Christ's redeeming sacrifice! May spiritual strongholds be broken by the good news.
- That believers from the Punjabi community would reach out boldly with the good news to their Pashtun neighbors despite the risk.
- For God's love to displace the pervasive violence and for peace to return to Quetta.



## PASHTUN VILLAGES

Every Pashtun is connected to a village in the ruggedly beautiful frontiers of Pakistan or Afghanistan. Hidden in the lush Swat Valley or perched on blossoming mountainsides in Kunar province, Pashtun villages can be hard to access and harsh on anyone who chooses to follow Christ. Despite this, the gospel is reaching some in the remotest corners of Pashtun lands.

### My Friend

"I waited for three days hoping that someone would give my son a Christian burial. No one came... Finally, I buried him myself." When I read this, I knew I had to meet the man whose letter I held in my hands. In his previous letters, he had sent me his picture and the name of his village.

His delight in meeting me was somewhat muted. He had just completed rebuilding his hujra (a special room used for guests). It had been burned down because he would meet with fellow villagers there and show them the truth of the gospel. What was unpalatable for the villagers was that until just a short while ago, he had been their leader at the village mosque. Not only that, he was the sixth generation in the line of religious leaders in that village. His wife was the daughter of a religious leader from a neighboring village.

Since that first time I visited him, the villagers had kidnapped his two younger sons. The Lord showed him in a dream where they had been taken, and he went there and retrieved them. Next, they cut off his

access to the village well. They even forbade the local shop from selling bread to his family.

It was at this point that he fled his ancestral village and became a part of my family in the city. I will never forget the privilege of worshiping together with him, his wife, and children in their home. He led his family beautifully in the ways of the Lord. In the short, few years I was with him, he led many others to Christ. In the process, he was beaten, robbed, and often mistreated by angry, zealous men.

He was just an hour away from home when he was martyred...

*Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. 2 Timothy 4:8*



Take a moment to reflect. Are you willing to "take up your cross" and risk losing everything for the sake of following Jesus and sharing him with others?

### PRAY

- That Pashtun believers who are isolated in remote areas would be found faithful, just as he is faithful.
- That the fragrance of Jesus would fill every corner of the Pashtun lands, from major cities to remote mountain villages.
- That doors would open to more gospel proclamation in the rural Pashtun villages and that rural Pashtuns would find the peace they are longing for in Jesus



## GOVERNMENT LEADERS

*Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority... 1 Timothy 2:1-2*

Governing Afghanistan and Pakistan is a master class in honor politics. Leaders in honor-shame cultures are widely expected to boost their own socio-linguistic community's economy and political power, often at the expense of rival ethnic groups. At its best, this environment produces dedicated representatives who advocate for their constituents. At its worst, honor politics become a stagnant swamp of cronyism, sectarianism, racism, and graft.

Afghanistan's Pashtun majority has held power for decades under the current democratically elected government, the Taliban, and previous administrations. However, in neighboring Pakistan, the Pashtun only comprise 15% of the population. Pashtuns there have struggled to elect leaders who promote their interests, which has hindered social mobility. However, there have been hints of change since Oxford-educated cricketer Imran Khan, a Pashtun, was elected prime minister on an anti-corruption platform in 2018. His narrative resonated with Pakistanis even outside the Pashtun community, and his actions while in office seem to have sifted out entrenched corruption in all branches of government.

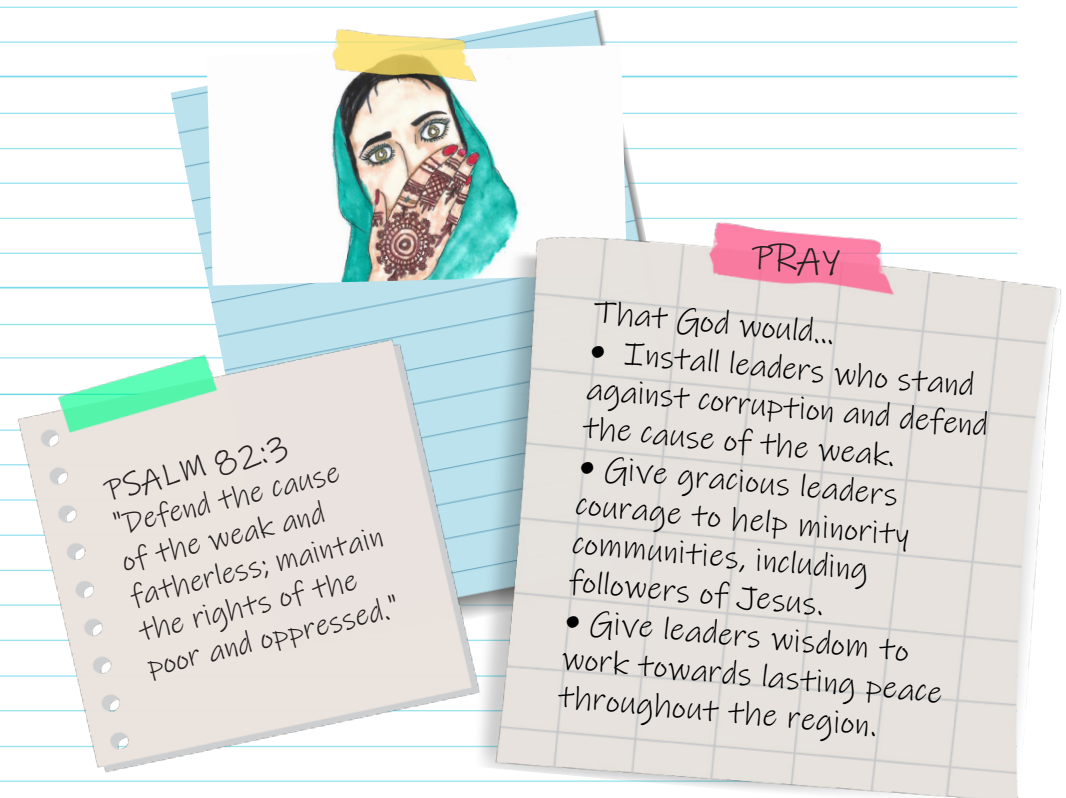
Recent elections to Afghanistan's highest office have been more complicated. Pashtun candidates Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah

both claimed victory in the last two elections. In the constitutional crises that followed, the leaders struck power sharing deals that, while largely peaceful, still continue to complicate peace talks with Taliban leadership. For its part, the Taliban wants to establish an Islamic government in Afghanistan, one that accepts freed Taliban prisoners into public service.

To many Pashtun villagers, however, the seats of power in far-off Kabul and Islamabad are irrelevant abstractions compared to tangible, local hardships. There, family patriarchs, mullahs [Muslim religious leaders], jirga councils [Pashtun tribal decision-making assembly], and warlords from the Taliban or Islamic State wield more influence than federally appointed governors.

The King of Kings knows the political players. He provides for those in need, fights for justice, judges the corrupt, and protects the innocent from violence.

*The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will. Proverbs 21:1*





## PASHTUNS FAR FROM HOME

Dawood stood in line at the airport in Kabul. Already hundreds of miles away from home, he felt like a stranger in the big city. As the line moved, he nudged his flour sack filled with nuts and dried fruit along in front of him. He was filled with grief at being separated for the first time ever from his parents, five brothers, and three sisters who shared a home in a remote village. At the same time, he swelled with pride at the thought of being able to work to send much-needed money back home and then return in a few years with gifts of watches and smartphones.

When Dawood arrived in the Arab Gulf, a man from his village met him with bad news. The job Dawood had been promised did not exist anymore, and he would have to find his own work. After a drive through the desert, they arrived at a row of tire shops with small rooms on top, each holding eight other Pashtun men. Dawood spent the night in a bunk so small he could not sit up and went out to look for work the next morning. He had more education than most, but since he did not speak the local language, he was only qualified to do construction work or physical labor.

As the hot days went by and no one hired him, Dawood started to lose hope of paying his own room and board, much less sending money home. His father called to check on him, but he couldn't bear the shame of telling him his troubles. Frustrated and alone, Dawood walked by a building like some he had seen in films. He thought it was called a church. He heard

singing and lingered outside, wishing someone would give him a reason to sing.

You can find Pashtun immigrants and refugees all over the world: the Arab Gulf, India, United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Turkey, Australia, Canada, and elsewhere. Outside their familiar culture and family, many are in a unique position to hear and consider the gospel. Some believers are befriending these Pashtuns and sharing with them, seeking to make the most of this special opportunity, but more prayer and laborers are desperately needed for the Pashtun diaspora.

*And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us. Acts 17:26-27*



PRAY

- That Christians will befriend and share the gospel with Dawood and close to one million others who leave to find work in the Arab Gulf.
- That Pashtuns who leave their country, only to have their hopes dashed, would turn from earthly things and find hope in Jesus.
- That God would build a Pashtun Church in each country where they are scattered.

JEREMIAH 29:11  
 "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."



## PASHTUN WOMEN

In the twenty-first century, Pashtun culture is changing. Globalization, urbanization, displacement, and economic pressures have brought new ideas and practices into Pashtun homes, for women as well as men. These changes have affected women's lives to a lesser degree in Afghanistan and in rural areas, but in the cities and especially in Pakistan the impact is seen. Each Pashtun woman's life is uniquely shaped by her place of birth, her family's social status, her opportunities for education and employment, and the freedoms given to her to engage with the world outside her home.

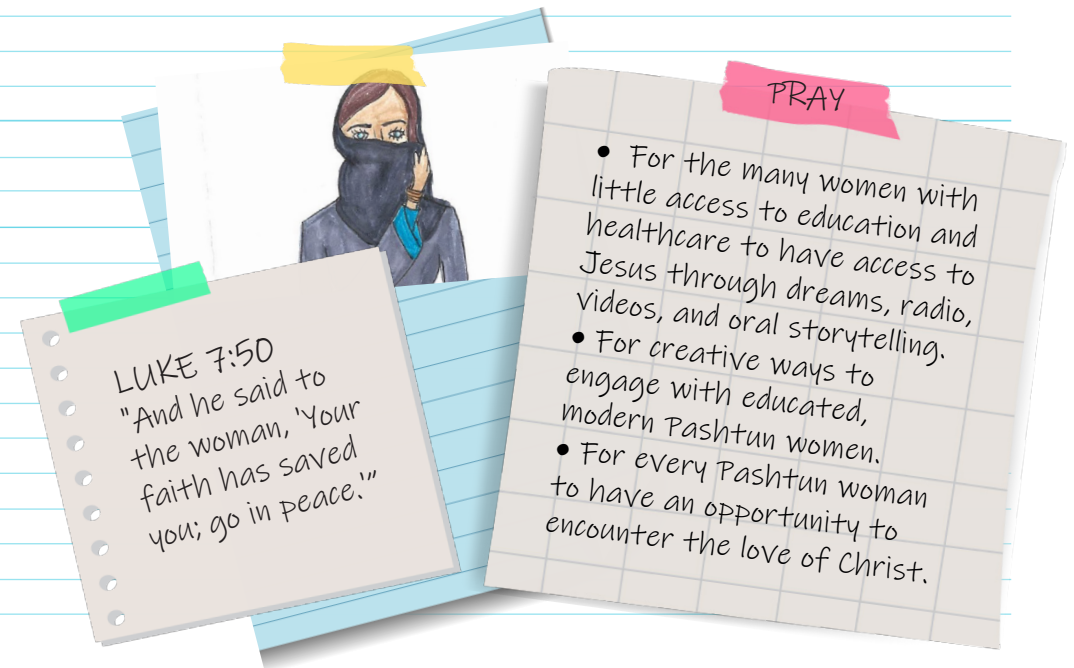
In Afghanistan and rural Pakistan, an increasing number of Pashtun girls are enjoying an education until the 12th grade. However, by then they may already be engaged, and the new in-laws are pressuring for a wedding date. Thankfully, many fathers allow them to graduate from 12th grade before their wedding. Education is being valued more and more, but many men's perspective remains that women don't need to read and write to cook delicious Kabuli Palaw and Mantu [traditional Pashtun dishes]. Because of the ongoing war in Afghanistan, the male population has decreased, and parents are concerned their daughters will not find a good match before they become too old. Girls who reject proposals while they are 15 or 16 have to consider marrying a widower or becoming a second wife in their late '20s.

Some Pashtun girls can attend university. But for strict families who

apply Purdah (separation of men and women), only private universities are considered appropriate and they are too expensive. If a young unmarried woman with university education does have the opportunity to work for a few years, once she marries her life usually shifts to the home. She will serve her mother-in-law, bear children, and be in the background. She will rarely leave the compound because she will cook for the guests, nurse, and care for her children. Women in the villages have the additional tasks of gathering firewood, collecting water, tending animals, and helping in the fields. These women are considered among the most unreached subset of the Pashtuns, as they are sequestered in their homes, with limited access to information from the outside world. How will these women hear that God sees them and loves them?

Today a growing number of passionate and determined Pashtun women have entered the workforce as entrepreneurs, teachers, bankers, doctors, engineers, journalists, community leaders, politicians and much more. Together with their families they are reshaping the codes of Pashto to fit modern life.

All Pashtun women have an immense influence on their families as daughters, sisters, wives, mothers, aunts, and grandmothers. May Pashtun women come to know their identity in Christ and use their influence to spread his kingdom of peace to the generations to come.





## PASHTUN MEN

### Protecting the Family Name

Abdul grew up in a small Pashtun village skirting a large city in Afghanistan. He was curious, loved learning, and enjoyed exploring new ideas and concepts. He knew from experience to keep his curiosity a secret, especially from his brothers. They valued their religious and Pashtun traditions much more than exploring new ways of understanding life and God. They often warned Abdul that it was a sin to question traditional Islamic teaching.

Abdul got the opportunity to attend university in the city. He was excited about the chance to broaden his knowledge of the world. He quickly made friends with a Christian foreigner working on campus who gave him room to ask questions. Like many Pashtun men, he felt freedom to talk with this "outsider" in ways that he could never dream of talking with his family. As the conversations turned toward God, he was struck by the fact that the Christian seemed to know God personally, as opposed to knowing merely facts about God. He wanted to know God that way, too.

After some time, Abdul was given a New Testament. Abdul was overcome with joy and excitement at the gift and quickly began reading. However, after a couple of weeks, he thought about his family and how he

was taught to protect their honor at all cost. He decided to talk with his village Imam (religious teacher) about some of his questions to see if he knew God in the same way as the Christian. After revealing to the Imam that he had received a New Testament, the Imam spat and told Abdul that it was a sin to read anything but the Qur'an and to question his beliefs.

Fear and shame overcame Abdul. Pressure from his family eventually forced him to return the New Testament to his Christian friend. Abdul decided to bury his curiosity to protect his family's name and honor.

Pashtun men carry the responsibility for upholding their family honor, reputation, and pride. They also bear the burden of providing for the family, many even forgoing education to find work at home or abroad. They need trustworthy friends who will listen well and point them to Jesus, the one who bears their burdens and gives true rest.



PRAY

- That Pashtun men would be befriended by Christians who would provide a safe place for them to ask questions and share their hearts.
- That the Holy Spirit would enable Pashtun men to understand the honor of adoption into God's family and kingdom, valuing that above the honor of men.
- That Pashtun men will surrender their burdens to the Lord Jesus.

MATTHEW 11:28-30  
 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."





## THE NEXT GENERATION

Many young Pashtuns dream of a bright future despite the unique challenges they face. They are growing up between the tension of traditional, conservative Islamic ways and encroaching Western values. For Pashtun girls, life's opportunities are determined by the values of the family they come from. Boys and men have more freedom, but they frequently endure unemployment, endless temptations, and limited education.

Some students place their hope in education. But getting to attend school is not always guaranteed, especially for girls and those in rural areas. Many Pashtun children are sent to Qur'anic schools where they are trained to be good Muslims and memorize the Qur'an in Arabic. Bright young Pashtun men pursue university education if their families can afford it. And even though tradition dictates that women should marry young and bear children, increasing numbers of young Pashtun women are allowed to attend university. Many of these youths are bursting with creativity, innovation, and talent, full of potential to contribute their skills to society.

For the last several years, finding employment has been difficult. Thousands of young Pashtun men travel treacherous miles and sneak across borders in hopes of a better life. Lack of employment opportunities creates the temptation to join extremist groups like the Taliban or the Islamic State, who actively recruit youth—even on college campuses—with the promise of a stable income. Many Pashtun youths also find themselves

caught in addictions when they turn to gaming, pornography, or drugs to find relief from their fears or boredom.

The challenges faced by young Pashtuns are many, but Christ offers hope and purpose! One previously rebellious teenager, whose father was a drug addict, gave his life to Christ after he saw his father become a believer and be freed from his addiction.

Another young Afghan believer shares his story: "I was eight when my family fled from Afghanistan to India because the Taliban were plotting to kill us because of my dad's faith. Growing up in India, I had a hard time understanding God's plan as to why he brought us out of Afghanistan. This question was a huge wall between my spiritual growth and me for many years. I was 17 or 18 years old when I finally understood the wonderful plan that God had for my family and me. He wanted to save us and use us for his glory among the Afghan refugees here in New Delhi. I have heard thousands of testimonies of salvation from other Afghan youths who fled their country looking for jobs. My prayer is that they would experience God's love in a deeper sense and their faith may not be only for the worldly benefits."

Christ offers the hope and life that these young Pashtuns—the future of their people—long for.

PRAY

- For Pashtun children and youth who believe in Christ to grow a deep, mature, personal relationship with him.
- For Pashtun children and youth to hear the gospel and find their purpose, hope, and joy in Jesus.
- For Pashtun children and youth to be protected from evil influences and instead influence their country for good.

LUKE 18:16  
 "But Jesus called the children to him and said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.'"



## WELCOMING PASHTUNS

Gretchen had all the names of the new Pashtun family pulled up on her phone. All the way to their house her mind and heart debated with themselves:

“What if they don’t open the door? Everyone in the apartment complex will be watching me through the windows. What if my words or dress – even glances – are culturally offensive? Will their teacups be clean? I’ll leave my purse in the car, so I won’t take home roaches. What if no one speaks a word of English? I’ll get Joan in Chicago on speaker phone. She knows the Pashtun language. She’s warm. I can count on her voice to reassure them...”

Gretchen turned her doubts into prayers: “Spirit of Jesus, you are in me! When I walk in, you walk in! Perhaps they will feel your peace. Help me relax and feel your peace.” She rehearsed Jesus’ words in her mind: I will never leave you or forsake you. How will they hear unless someone is sent? My sheep hear my voice. You are the light of the world. “What do I have to lose?” she thought, and breathed one more prayer, “May the TV not be blaring, so I could show a clip from Magdalena [a version of the Jesus Film] on my phone.” Gretchen was at the new immigrant family’s

door by now, and she could hear kids giggling and someone scurrying.

Knock, knock . . .

Two hours later:

“Kate, you have a minute? I just met the sweetest family – six kids! They just arrived this week from Afghanistan. The father was able to translate for the wife and me to chat. I think our team can help them get settled. I got to tell the family our church has been praying for Afghanistan for 15 years, and we love immigrants! They need furniture, help getting set up with Social Services, and someone to take them to see the kids’ new schools.”

Wherever Pashtuns travel to seek jobs and safety, may they be welcomed by Christians!

*By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. John 13:35*

Are there Pashtuns in your city? Is anyone reaching out to them with the love of Christ?



### PRAY

ROMANS 10:14  
 “But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?”

- For teams of Christians to surround each Pashtun immigrant – putting God’s love on display.
- For host country believers to become adept at sharing the vast Pashtun resources available, from Bibles to films to videos.
- For culturally near-neighbor believers from Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, and India to speak boldly of Jesus to Pashtun immigrants.



## LABORERS AND THE CHURCH

*Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." Matthew 9:37-38*

Hello, I'm Ruth. I was 17 when 9/11 happened and it changed my life forever. In the aftermath, my home church began a prayer group for the country of Afghanistan and for the Pashtun people.

It was at Bible school that God confirmed my calling to reach the unreached Pashtuns with the love of Jesus. My home church had eventually adopted the Pashtuns as 'their' unreached people group and were excited to help prepare and send me. I felt like an extension of the church. We were in this together.

I have been on the field for 12 years now as an English teacher. Pashtuns are so hospitable. I have no problems meeting and getting to know them. But sharing with them why I am a "Jesus follower" can be a challenge. Sometimes it can seem impossible. But the regular emails, messages, and video calls from my church at home remind me of the truth and encourage me. Some from my church even visited me, demonstrating their commitment to the Pashtuns. It is not about me, but about the church together reaching Pashtuns with the love of Jesus.

*"...On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious*

*favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many." 2 Corinthians 1:10-11*

Among the 50 million Pashtuns there are so few believers that the chances that a Pashtun would meet one in his lifetime is miniscule. The massive cities full of millions of Pashtuns at best have a few handfuls of gospel workers, while some have zero. The need is vast! We are thankful God has been raising up laborers from all over the world, and churches worldwide are becoming more aware of the unreached Pashtun.

Harvest laborers are an extension of the local church, and together they share the calling. When a church understands and joins the vision of reaching an unreached people group like the Pashtun, the impact is massive. Field workers are encouraged to continue ministry in a hard place and spiritual breakthroughs occur because of the church's prayers. The spiritual health of the church grows as its members develop a missional worldview and lifestyle, desiring Jesus to be known and worshiped by all, whether in foreign fields and or in their backyards.



PRAY

- That many more gospel laborers will be called, equipped, and sent to the Pashtun harvest.
- That more churches will actively engage in reaching Pashtuns through sending, partnering, praying, and connecting with diaspora Pashtuns in their communities.
- That gospel laborers and churches will partner together well in the shared calling to reach the unreached with the gospel.

To learn more about People Group adoption and how your church can be involved in reaching Pashtuns, contact PAN/RAP (See back page).



## DREAMS AND VISIONS

### Written by a gospel worker from South America

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"

"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." Luke 19:39-40

Many people here in Afghanistan encounter Jesus in dreams and visions. We gospel workers, like midwives assisting with a birth, get the joy of helping guide these people into new life in Christ after their hearts have already been prepared. It is such an honor and privilege to serve Jesus in this nation. I get to listen to people share their dreams and visions of Jesus, and I hold their hands and walk with them as they learn more about "the man in white" from their dreams, who died for their sins.

Sakina was a young lady oppressed by evil spirits. Her family was concerned she had mental problems. One day she had a dream of a man in white who came into her room, took her heart from her chest, and breathed on it. As soon as the man's breath reached her heart, it became pure white. He then put it back inside of her, and she felt peace fill her soul. Not long after having this dream, Sakina met a believer who was able to explain her dream to her and tell her about "the man in white who is able to clean hearts."

God himself is the one touching hearts and revealing himself here—many times through dreams and visions. The Pashtuns are known for being a group of people hard to reach with the gospel, and few people are willing to dedicate their lives to bringing Christ to them. In a world where many churches are packed with people, we need more Christians out in the field, dedicating their lives to sharing Christ with the lost. Many people are dying without having heard the name of Jesus. But God is causing the "stones to cry out" in people's dreams, awakening their hearts to a longed-for, yet unknown Savior, making them hungry to know more.

Jesus said the harvest is great, but the laborers are few (Luke 10:2). He is pursuing the lost and preparing them to receive the gospel, often through dreams or visions. Who will be there to explain their dream to them when they have questions?

*Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. Psalm 2:8*



PRAY

- For more gospel laborers who are willing to dedicate their lives to Christ's name among the unreached Pashtuns.
- For more Pashtuns to have dreams and visions that will open their hearts to Christ.
- For boldness for believers, both foreigners and locals, to reach Pashtun people.

ACTS 2:17  
 "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams."



## HOSPITALITY AND GENEROSITY

“Look, Mommy! Halima gave me this pretty necklace!”

My three-year-old daughter’s eyes were alight with joy. We had just visited our new neighbor’s house in Kabul, Afghanistan, and one of their girls had gifted Lexi a beaded necklace. The family was not particularly well-off, but the simple act of sending a guest home with a gift is second nature to Pashtuns. A few days later, Halima and her mother came over to our house for a visit. While I chatted with Halima’s mother over tea, Lexi came tiptoeing into the room and climbed on my lap.

“Can I give Halima one of my dollies?” Lexi whispered in my ear.

Having been shown such a kind gesture from Halima, my daughter was learning the way of generosity from Pashtuns. She gladly gave away one of her prized My Little Pony toys that day.

Pashtuns are taught from a young age that generosity is not simply a virtue, it is who they are. When guests come into the home, regardless of how the host feels toward them, they will be given food to eat, tea to drink, and a bed on which to sleep if they wish to stay the night. Even when a guest drops in unannounced (which is the norm), the household will work together to prepare tea for them immediately. When a family has a joyous life event such as the birth of a child or the purchase of a home, they themselves will have a celebration for everyone else to come and share in their joy rather than having a baby shower or house-warming party.

As Christians, we can learn a lot from Pashtuns about what it means to excel in the habit of hospitality. Scripture tells us not to neglect showing hospitality to strangers. Jesus told us to love our enemies. There is simply no getting around the scriptural command to love extravagantly just as we have been loved by God. In God’s infinite foreknowledge, he chose to reflect a small facet of his generosity in Pashtun culture.



### PRAY

- That Pashtun's hearts and eyes would be opened to see the most generous gift that has ever been given: Jesus' life as the sacrifice for the sin of all mankind.
- That Christian Pashtuns would excel in hospitality for the sake of the gospel, and not just for the sake of being a good Pashtun.
- That we believers who live among Pashtuns would learn to love our neighbors as ourselves and grow in this practice of hospitality as we work to reach Pashtuns with the good news.

LUKE 6: 27-28  
 “But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you.”



## SCRIPTURE TRANSLATION

Nooria is a baptized Pashtun believer in Jesus who is newly married to a Muslim man. Her family insisted they follow through on a traditional arranged marriage to her cousin. Nooria is bright, literate, and curious. Her spouse is open-minded enough to let her maintain her “odd” new faith in Jesus. Nooria is checking and proofreading portions of Scripture being translated into her Afghan Pashto dialect as well as some stories for Christian radio programs. But now she had to stop because of objections from her new husband’s family with whom she lives.

Considered an educated Pashtun woman because she graduated from high school, Nooria has been able to help the Bible translation project by giving feedback from a woman’s perspective. She knows how women will interpret it. She knows that most women will need to hear it read aloud to them rather than read it for themselves, as only a small percentage of Pashtun women in Afghanistan are literate. Nooria can identify words that are too formal, or words that seem foreign to their dialect of Pashto. The translation project aims to be readable for those with only a sixth-to eighth-grade reading level, and there are plans to make audio recordings as soon as books are completed.

The team is hoping Nooria will be able to resume checking translation soon, and that other women can come alongside the mother-tongue translators to help with review, proofreading, and recording.

While there have been various parts of scripture translated into the main Pashto dialects, there has not been a complete Bible (Old and New Testaments) available in any dialect of Pashto since the 1890 version, which went out of print long ago. Many believe that this famine of the Word is a key reason why Pashtuns have only believed in small numbers.

The famine is about to end. The Bible has just been released in the main Pakistani dialect, in printed form and as an app. At the same time, several efforts are taking place to translate the Bible into the main Pashto dialects of Afghanistan. By 2025, we can expect a flood of Pashto scriptures. With the full text of the Bible available in the main dialects, a whole raft of great resources can now be generated, including the Jesus film, radio, and TV programs, and, in time, discipleship materials.

There is still more to be done. Pashto has more than a dozen other key dialects that need Bible translation. Pray for the Lord to equip a new wave of translators to finish the task.



### PRAY

- For the ongoing Bible translation efforts in the various dialects of Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- For unity in vision and purpose for the translation teams.
- For God to raise up teams of translators, exegetical checkers, consultants, and linguists to get the Bible into all the dialects and to adapt existing translations into oral scripture.
- For wider distribution of the scriptures as they become available.

ISAIAH 55:11  
 "So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."



## OPEN HEARTS AND OPEN DOORS

Gulalai ran to me as I entered the studio. After exchanging greetings, I noticed her tears. She is my most confident, skilled, and compassionate employee. Our clients love her! But here she was—her joy and confidence shattered as she grieved over the most recent explosion. “Things aren’t good here. We aren’t living right. People are dying in explosions; husbands are beating their wives and children; families are starving. This can’t be the way! Is there a right path for us? Or is this how it will always be?”

Like many Pashtuns in the homelands [Afghanistan and Pakistan], Gulalai has been crying out for change. Though no one may see or hear her cry, our Father keeps track of her sorrows. And while hopelessness and helplessness seem to pervade the land, God is opening doors for Pashtuns to hear the good news! It is not just our neighbors who open their doors to us gospel workers. They’re the people we buy our vegetables from, or the students in our class. They’re our patients, coworkers, taxi drivers, and their families.

### Open Hearts

Satan comes to steal, kill, and destroy. He is stealing sight by blinding Pashtun eyes to truth; killing hope by pouring out despair through war, poverty, and revenge; and destroying opportunities for Pashtuns to encounter followers of Christ. Without an opportunity to explore the truth in scripture, Pashtuns young and old are conditioned to believe it is corrupted and are taught to defend Islam. Jesus came so that we may have life—abundant life! God is opening Pashtun hearts to hear the word and

receive it like the fourth soil we read about in Matthew 13. Prayer is needed for Christians to meet and share with open-hearted Pashtuns. *As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying. Acts 16:14*

### Open Doors

Before we encounter open hearts, we must walk through open doors to bring the gospel to the Pashtuns. While many countries with unreached and unengaged peoples may allow cross-cultural workers to stay on a tourist or missionary visa, work in the Pashtun homelands requires creative access. God has opened doors in areas such as business, engineering, development, healthcare, education, and linguistics. These professions can be a redemptive pathway into homes and hearts as Christians honor God in their work.

Ultimately, the Holy Spirit is the only one who can open the Pashtun homelands for gospel workers to share Christ, whether they are foreign or local. We look to him to open doors and hearts! *When I came to the city of Troas to preach the Good News of Christ, the Lord opened a door of opportunity for me. 2 Corinthians 2:12*



### PRAY

- Consider these verses as you pray for open hearts and doors:
- PSALM 24:7
- 1 CORINTHIANS 16:9
- REVELATION 3:20

- That believers around the world would be willing to use their skills among the Pashtuns and leave behind comfort, wealth, and safety for the sake of God’s glory.
- That strongholds like fear, oppression, pride, and despair would be broken in Jesus’ name so that Pashtuns would have open hearts to hear the gospel and believe.
- That God would draw whole families to himself, so they can encourage each other and worship together.



## MEDIA

“It is amazing! We are hearing from Pashtuns from the ‘ends of the earth’—remote villages and mountainsides in Pakistan and Afghanistan, wherever they can access radio or internet,” a gospel worker using media outreach exclaims with joy.

Reaching Pashtuns with media is putting smiles on gospel workers’ faces as they connect with more Pashtuns in heart-warming ways through Facebook and calls from radio broadcasts.

We are so grateful for God’s hand providing fresh, relevant translations of scripture, Jesus film project resources, and other excellent materials that can be shared through media through posts or videos. Radio, television, and social media, like Facebook and YouTube, are being used for outreach. Social media can reach millions. Content can be automated through chatbots that walk seekers through introductory scripture teaching on the gospel. Pashtuns in rural villages can read about Christ through these chatbots, and when ready, be connected with a live person who can share more deeply with them. Radio programs reach even where social media cannot, carrying truth on the radio waves into hidden valleys in rural Pashtun areas where internet access isn’t possible. Technology has helped us make live contact with Pashtuns. “I named my son after you!” said one new father to a follow-up worker whose wife was prayed for to safely deliver a baby boy.

We gospel workers feel like we are climbing big mountains of potential

with media and its use for the building of God’s kingdom. We can see faraway possibilities. But we also see huge gaps. Many Pashtun women don’t have the same freedoms that men have to seek new information, making them harder to reach even with media outreach. We need strategies to reach Pashtun women.

We also need more follow-up capacity, that is, Pashto speakers who are mature in Christ and can disciple others virtually. And we need courageous Pashto speakers “on the ground” who are willing to make the tough decisions about whether to take the risk to meet new, promising contacts. And as technology advances, we need knowledge and skill to use tools like artificial intelligence and machine-learning that could significantly increase our ability to respond to inquiries.

Social media respondents are saying things like, “I love your messages.” In response, we pray, “Lord, help us to be relevant and available to all Pashtuns who want to follow Jesus.”



### PRAY

- That Pashtun women would get the outreach and follow-up that they so desperately need.
- That follow-up capacity would significantly increase for teams working with media outreach.
- That technology would be properly leveraged for the proclamation of the gospel, with accompanying live follow-up.

COLOSSIANS 1:28  
 “He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.”





## SON OF GOD

In Pashtun society, family is extremely important. Akmal, a firstborn son, understands that his position requires that he uphold his family's beliefs, reputation, and honor. For the sake of this honor, he is not open to the idea of Isa Masih (Jesus) being called God's son because he knows that if he believes this, he will bring shame on his whole family.

While sitting next to his friend on brightly patterned floor cushions, Akmal declares, "I will not hear that God has a son! God is not a man like us!" His friend tops off Akmal's teacup before answering. "I can agree with you that God is a spirit. He does not marry or have children like us. Jesus is not God's son in a physical sense but in a spiritual one. Jesus has a special relationship with God as the one who represents him on earth."

"I still don't understand. Then why do Christians call him God's son?"

"Jesus has a lot of names that show his unique relationship with God. He is the Word of God, Image of God, and Son of God. All of these names show us that it is through Jesus that we can really know the unseen God. Just think, Akmal! God loved us so much that he sent us not only a prophet but a perfect, exact representation of himself in Jesus Christ."

Misinterpretation of Scripture's teaching about the meaning of the term Son of God during the founding of Islam has led generations of Muslims to outrightly reject this important title of Jesus. And yet, it is by coming to know Jesus as Son—the precious one sent from God's side—that they can truly know God as Father.

There is an unmet longing in every Pashtun heart to belong to God's heavenly family—to know him not only as Creator and Sovereign but also as a Father who gave them the right to be called his sons and daughters through faith in his Son, Jesus Christ.



PRAY

- That Pashtuns will come to enjoy membership in the family of God through his Son, Jesus Christ.
- That translators, foreign workers, and local Pashtun believers will find winsome and creative ways to clearly explain all that Scripture says about who Jesus is, including that he is the Son of God.
- For boldness among Pashtuns to question long-held understandings and the curiosity to seek after truth.

I JOHN 4:14-15  
 "And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God."



## CONFUSING WESTERN CULTURE FOR CHRISTIANITY

For many Pashtuns, the only representation of the West is international media, Western movies and television, and the all-invasive internet and social media. A picture of Western values and culture are naturally drawn from these sources.

What is this picture? It is one that clashes strongly with their own values. Governments are power hungry, forming policies that are immoral and domineering. Societies are based on immoral values, and the result is divorce, promiscuity, and destruction of relationships. It is not surprising that these concepts are transferred to Pashtuns' views of Christianity.

What is Christianity to a Pashtun? Every Westerner must be a Christian because they certainly are not Muslim. The Christian is rich and powerful but is also dissolute and unmindful of God. This view forms the Pashtuns' creed of the Christian: "I was told that his book and faith are abrogated, a thing of the past. It must be so because I see him drinking, carousing, and living aimlessly. His family and life are in shambles, racked with drugs and alcohol. He is isolated, godless, and devoid of honor."

This is quite different from the Pashtun's world, where religion, culture, and code are pervasive and inform his every thought, action, and word.

He strives to be a good Muslim and uphold his honor. His wife and family follow the Qur'an, obey the mullahs, and do everything to maintain family honor. His tribe is the foundation of his identity. Each member is duty-bound to help him, especially the powerful. This duty extends to other Pashtuns; indeed, to all Muslims. His society is deeply relational and interconnected, which provides him with security.

It is a small wonder, then, when the Pashtun somehow sees and hears the message of life or encounters a real Christian, that he is confused and questioning: "This is totally different from all that I know and think. How can it be true? What about my creed, my book, and my identity? Why is my Christian friend so different? And why do I feel such peace when I hear about this Jesus?"

*You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed...And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word... you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God... 1 Thessalonians 2:10-13*



1 THESSALONIANS 1:4-5  
 "... our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake."

PRAY

- For Pashtuns to seek, value, and love truth above all else.
- For the Lord to move through words, healings, and supernatural confirmations of his love.
- That those presenting the gospel, by face or by Facebook, will do so clearly and that their lives will reflect the love of Christ.



## READING THE INJEEL

*"Seekers will be finders" - Afghan proverb*

Ahmed is a Pashtun in a rural area who found a Pashto New Testament through the internet on his phone. As he reads what is known to Muslims as the Injeel, he is intrigued that this holy book is in his own language. However, Ahmed is wary as he reads the Injeel, knowing what his Islamic teacher taught— that it was changed by men and should not be trusted. Ahmed knows that the Qur'an is considered the final word given by Allah.

As he reads, Ahmed finds a pattern in Matthew's genealogies that is familiar to him: individuals being identified within the larger tribe to which they belong. Then he reads a familiar story of an arranged marriage between Mary and Joseph. It does not trouble Ahmed when he reads that Mary became pregnant by a miracle from God. He already knows the story about the birth of Jesus from his own religious tradition, and he expects miracles in a holy book.

However, Ahmed is surprised that a holy man, a prophet, would honor people who are not worthy of honor. Jesus treats the poor kindly, and he forgives a woman who committed adultery. He is also intrigued by Jesus' teaching about forgiving enemies and not taking revenge. How can a real man not take revenge? Finally, he is intrigued that the disciples worship Jesus as God. This makes him curious because he has been taught that Jesus

was no more than a prophet. Yet, there it is—written in the Holy Injeel.

However, out of everything he's read, there is one teaching that has impacted him the most: Jesus' teaching that a man who looks at a woman with lust is guilty of adultery! He knows he is guilty. Though he reads God's Word on his phone, he also uses it to view pornography.

He quits both for a couple of days before resuming the New Testament. He is intrigued, challenged, and amazed all at the same time. He has questions and wonders who can answer them. Has the Injeel been changed? How can he know this is true? Can God forgive him of his sin of lust?

**Declare this promise over Pashtuns like Ahmed:**

So Jesus said... "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:31-32



PRAY

- For Pashtuns to read or hear Scripture, and for God to confirm the truth of his word through dreams, visions, facts, and believers who can come alongside to teach.
- For the Holy Spirit to move Pashtuns to seek him and direct them to read the Scripture.
- For Pashtuns to grasp, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the things which challenge their worldview, such as the truthfulness of the Bible.

JEREMIAH 29:13  
"You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart."



## FEAR, SHAME, DISTRUST

"Thank you for giving me this loan, but please don't tell my brother about it. He will be angry and jealous."

"Don't tell my mother-in-law how much salary I'm earning. I don't trust her."

"Don't tell my mother that you know my aunt. They do not get along. She will be jealous and ask too many questions."

"I can't face my father with this poor grade on my exam. Please can you change it for me?"

"She's a worthless daughter-in-law. All she brings into the family are girls, no boys. What good is that?"

"The thing I fear the most is my husband."

Pashtuns live in a world overshadowed by mistrust, fear, and shame. It is a complicated paradox. On one hand, they are generous with their hospitality, share with others, and seem to live well with extended family. On the other hand, they are fearful of the family members that they live with and of other relatives and neighbors. The fear is that someone may know something about them that could bring dishonor, shame, or a bad name.

It is such a burden to be living under this tension — cautiously interacting with those who could potentially provide safety, security, and intimacy but, in reality, are a threat to their peace of heart. Jesus' promise of "life in its fullness" is available to them — to break this bondage and set them free; however, they live as captives to the strongholds of the Enemy.

*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. John 10:10*

*Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. Psalm 34:5*



## PRAY

- That many will be set free from the bondage of shame. May women especially be free from the weight of shame that they carry with them day after day. May they see that they are image bearers of God and honored in his sight. May they come to know that they can be adopted into his kingdom of life and freedom.
- That many will be set free from the bondage of fear. May wives not fear their husbands, children not fear their fathers, brothers not fear brothers. May the Prince of Peace free them from all earthly fears and bring them to a reverent fear of the Lord.
- That many will be set free from the bondage of distrust. May husbands and wives grow in trust for one another. May daughters-in-law trust mothers-in-law. May fathers trust sons and daughters. May they ultimately step out in faith to trust the only one who can bring them fullness of life.

GALATIANS 5:1  
 "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."



## THE CROSS

I could not believe my eyes. From across the long room, a tall man with a mile-wide smile called out, "Can you get me Bible correspondence courses so I may share them with Muslims here?" I knew this man had great faith. Zia was a Pashtun from Afghanistan who was physically blind, but he had spiritual eyes that were keen to the truth of the gospel. Years later, he lost his life because of his choice to set his eyes on Christ and to boldly share him with others.

Zia knew that salvation is by grace through faith in the atoning death of Christ on the cross. However, the cross of Christ is a monumental stumbling block for Pashtuns. A Pashtun might explain, "If our good deeds outweigh our bad, we will go to heaven. If not, we will serve time in the fires of hell, and in the end, we will go to heaven on the plea of Mohammad." The endless Islamic teaching of 'do good to earn heaven' starkly contradicts the teaching of 'Christ crucified for our sins.' The Cross is incompatible with the Pashtuns' reasons to fast, pray, and perform animal sacrifice, which are done to earn merit with God and increase their chances of entering Paradise. Stumbling over the cross, a Pashtun is likely to think, "It is impossible that anyone else besides me could bear the punishment for my sin!"

Like brother Zia, Pashtun believers suffer deeply for believing and sharing the message of the Cross. Christ himself suffered incalculable pain, and they share with him in his sufferings. Every follower of Christ is called to take the 'way of the cross' and be ready to suffer like their Savior.

I love to share the story of Christ laying down his life for us—or as Pashtuns say, being "martyred" for us. The truth of the cross is critical for Pashtuns to hear, even though it is often met by resistance. On this hard-to-believe cross, Jesus paid for the sin of every Pashtun who will receive him.



## PRAY

- Pashtuns are taught that Jesus was never actually crucified. Pray for truth to break down this stronghold and for Christ's death and resurrection to be accepted.
- Persecution is the cross. Pashtun believers are called to bear for placing their faith in Christ and for sharing the gospel. Pray that the cross of Christ will be a source of comfort and courage for them.
- Jesus is a Savior who had compassion on the crowds "because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." (Mt 9:36). The cross spells "compassion." Pray believers would be filled with compassion for lost Pashtuns.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:23-24  
 "But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

Read Zia's story here: <https://www.answering-islam.org/Testimonies/zia.html>



## THE MADRASSAS

Salman Khan is both relieved and anxious. Today is his graduation day from the madrasa (religious seminary)—the cramped white boarding school that has been his home for ten years.

He is relieved to have passed the rigorous years of memorizing, the strict discipline of prayer and more prayer, the boredom, and the fear. While his brothers and sisters have relaxed and played, Salman has been cooped up in strict isolation. He has lived in fear of his teachers who have brutally punished him for the slightest mispronunciation of Arabic, the tiniest errors in doctrine, and carelessness of dress. Today he will be done with all the years of mistreatment.

Salman is also anxious. Although he is about to be crowned with the turban of honor in his graduation ceremony, he is secretly harboring the doubt that he can ever be good enough to be sure of his salvation. He also doubts that his teacher's relentless attacks on other religious beliefs are well-founded. He is weary of the steady diet of suspicion, hatred, and violence that his learning has fueled.

Though Salman has read about Jesus in the Qur'an and has heard stories of God's love, he's never met a Christian or read the Bible. He wishes that he could; however, he is worried that his family will find out about his doubts and his longing for freedom and truth.



## PRAY

- For thousands of madrasa students like Salman in Pakistan and Afghanistan to hear the gospel.
- For boldness for madrasa students who have come to faith; for their courage and wisdom in sharing with their classmates, teachers, and family.
- For "Pauls,"—respected men of faith from the madrasa background—who can develop material—such as books, audio, and video—that will portray the Word in ways that will resonate with their community.

MATTHEW 11:28-30  
 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."



## UNITY AND COMMUNITY

I am Fatimah. As a Pashtun, I have never thought about myself as an individual. My identity, my belongings, every decision, every action, has always been shared. But when I heard about Jesus and came to know that he is the Savior of the world, I wanted to believe. But what would my family think? How can I make such a big decision on my own? Am I betraying my family? Will I be able to continue living under the same roof, eating from the same plate as my mother and father? What about my aunt who named me? Or my ten siblings? As a Pashtun, I had always felt so confident and strong, knowing that there is strength in numbers. One Pashto proverb says, "It is easy to break a single stick, but three together are not easily broken." And yet, there is another proverb which states that one drop of poison can cause an entire water supply to become undrinkable. My one act-leaving Islam for Jesus- could dishonor my whole family and unravel our reputation that has been built over generations.

*And what if the other believers do not accept me? What if someone asks me if my faith is sincere? What if they do not believe me? I could be losing everything by following Jesus. Will I really be received into the body of Christ? -*

### A Pashtun Sister in Christ

Many Pashtun believers are shunned or even disowned by their family and friends. Finding a new family in the body of Christ with whom they can have community and fellowship is vital. However, fear, lack of trust, ethnic tension, cultural differences, and other factors are used by the enemy to threaten the unity and community of Pashtun believers.



### PRAY

- That both Pashtun and non-Pashtun believers will be united under the headship of Christ, sharing life, prayer, and resources. Like Ananias with Paul, may they be willing to obey the Lord and fully accept those who have been called by him, without suspicion or fear.
- That Pashtun believers would be strengthened, encouraged, welcomed, and radically loved by the local body of Christ. May they not see themselves as failures because of betraying their family to follow Christ but be confident in him.
- That unity in the Afghan and Pakistani church across ethnic differences would be a testimony to the rest of the world of the power of the gospel.

### ACTS 2:44-47

"All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."



## PERSECUTION

### By a Pashtun Brother

"According to Islamic law the punishment for those who leave Islam is death. So, in a country like Afghanistan, to become a Christian is equivalent to death. This reminds me of what Jesus said to his disciples: "...Take up your cross and follow me...". By myself, I cannot imagine living among Muslims after having abandoned Islam. But I am. Why?

Because I have my living God who is always with me and protecting me. My family knows about my faith. My brothers refused to speak with me after they found out that I became a Christian. My relatives are not as friendly as they were before, and most of them hate me for my faith in Christ. I feel so lonely and isolated even among my very own people. Everyone who knows me, when they see me, they say, "He is a 'Kafir' (infidel)" or, "He is an apostate". My family disinherited me so that I will not receive any of the family inheritance. They have inflicted so much pressure on me, thinking they will make me leave Christ.

But Christ saved me, and he is protecting me. Every day, I carry my cross. I'm living in a very hard situation, facing persecution from every side. These are only a few examples of the many persecutions that believers in Christ here experience. Enemies try to put pressure on us, and we face every kind of persecution. I have even been threatened with death. But I love Jesus, the true Savior. The King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is with me."

According to Open Doors' 2020 ranking of the countries with the highest levels of persecution against Christians, Afghanistan ranked in second place, and Pakistan ranked fifth. Imprisonment, torture, and death are all likely risks in these countries for those who leave Islam to follow Jesus.



### PRAY

- For courage and protection for these believers who face immense pressure from loved ones to recant their faith.
- For an openness to religions outside of Islam so that Pashtuns may freely choose Christ.
- That Pashtun believers would develop life-long disciplines of seeking the Lord's presence daily and memorizing and applying the word, so they will have the strength to persevere under persecution.

MATTHEW 16:24-25  
 "Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."





## FELLOWSHIP

### By a Pashtun Brother

“We are very thankful to God that now our Pashtun brothers and sisters can listen to or read God’s Word in their own language and find salvation through Jesus. Even though we know that this is a difficult place to expose our faith to other people, there are still many who believe in Jesus. Pray that these believers will experience the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. We need to pray that the Holy Spirit will guide them and teach them how to grow in their faith. Fellowship is an important source of growing in faith, but many are afraid, lacking the trust to meet other Pashtun believers. We do not see many Pashtun believers openly gathering for prayer and worship. If someone discovers their faith, it will be difficult for them to stay in their country. Still, people are thirsty for God’s Word, and some believers meet in homes once or twice a week for prayer. There are small house churches, and we need to pray for the protection of these believers and their families. Pray that they will encourage and help one another to abide in Christ and bear fruit. Pray for the leaders to raise up other good leaders for the Pashtun church, so they in turn can disciple others.”

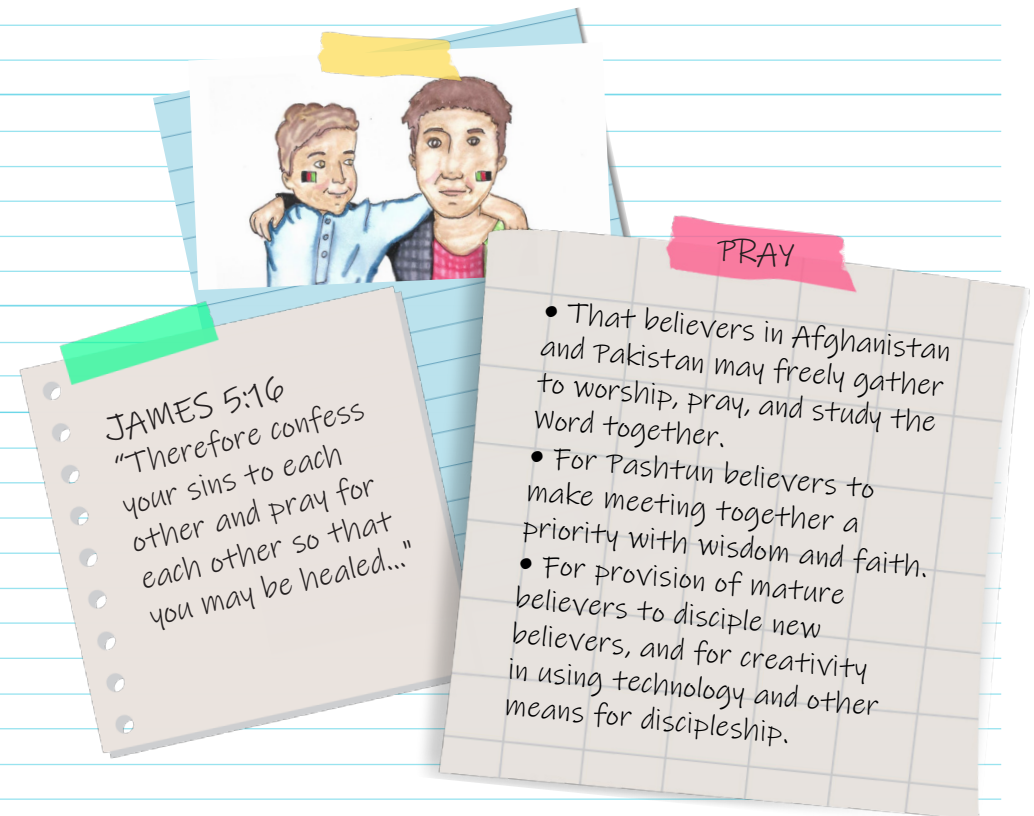
Fellowship and discipleship are essential elements for growth towards maturity in Christ. But for Pashtun believers, these activities can be

extremely dangerous. Pashtun believers need wisdom and creativity to find ways to meet together. Social media and modern technology have been helpful, allowing believers to connect and fellowship online. There is always risk involved, and faith and wisdom must be exercised no matter the situation.

If you are in a country where you can gather openly with other believers for worship, take a moment to reflect on this unique blessing and thank God for it!

*Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. Hebrews 10:24-25*

*... our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus. 2 Corinthians 7:5-6*





## SERVANT LEADERSHIP

### By A Pashtun follower of Jesus Christ

God has called us to love and to serve each other. However, our Pashtun society has a different view of the concept of serving. In our society, leaders are the ones who are served, while the poor or younger ones are generally required to serve the others.

The Word of God teaches us a new concept of what it means to be a leader. It teaches us to lead by serving other people. No matter how wealthy or how highly educated we are, God tells us to be humble and to serve others. I have been amazed by Philippians 2:5-11. Here the Word of God teaches us that Jesus, even though he is God, came down to the earth and lived among us. He exercised his leadership by serving us, and even by dying for us. When I read these verses, I begin to compare Jesus to us Pashtuns. Jesus-- the One in such a high position, the One with the divine nature, God himself, the One to whom the angels in heaven sing songs-- left everything and came down to the earth to serve us.

The Scriptures also talk about Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. This is a perfect example of being a servant leader. Jesus as a servant leader washed the feet of his disciples. In traditional Pashtun culture when we serve food, the youngest and the poorest wash the hands of the people before serving them the food. However, Jesus Christ, who is divine and holy, washed the feet of his disciples.

Please pray with me that God will raise up multitudes of Pashtun Christian leaders and will give them servant hearts to lead by serving like Jesus Christ. May our Lord Jesus Christ bless you.

*"If you say, 'life is about me', and I say, 'life is about me', neither you nor I will survive." - Pashtun saying*



PRAY

- That there will be dramatic transformation in perspective of what it means to be a leader as Pashtuns encounter the servant-leader Jesus.
- That "washing of feet" will occur among men and women, including in cross-gender relationships in appropriate, though sometimes counter-cultural ways. May men be gentle with their wives and sisters, and may women not push their men to take revenge.
- That male and female Pashtun believers will rise up who will serve in such a way that others will be drawn to follow their example.

Look up the following verses and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you as you intercede for the Pashtun church:  
 MARK 10:42-45  
 JOHN 13:14-15  
 1 PETER 5:1-4



## BOLDNESS

### By a Pashtun Sister

*Keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel. Ephesians 6:18-19*

I had been sharing stories from the Bible with a girl named Khyberi. She would come to my home, and together we would learn the stories. She started sharing the stories with her family, her father told her that these things were not in Islam, and he stopped allowing his daughter to come to my house. One day, expecting Khyberi to show up at my house for our usual Bible story time, I opened the door, and it was her father! He was angry, and he had a gun with him. He accused me of teaching things from Jews and Christians because he had noticed that the stories his daughter told had some differences from what Muslims believe. I turned to God and prayed in my heart. What should I do? As I surrendered myself to God in that moment and asked for wisdom, God gave me words to say. I began to speak in Pashto to him, and when he realized I was a Pashto speaker, he relaxed and became more friendly. Even though I was afraid, God told me to talk with him, and I obeyed.

After reasoning with this father for a long time, he calmed down and was not angry with me anymore. Now he does not have any problem with me, in fact, he allows me to teach the stories to all the women in his family!

God is doing a great work in this family. Many of the women have been finding peace through the stories, discovering that God really does love and care for them. Instead of allowing fear to control our hearts, we can trust God to give strength and wisdom to share and live his Word. If we fear man, we will fall into a trap; but we can trust God. He is always with us.

*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. Matthew 10:28-31*



### PRAY

- For Pashtun believers to be filled with boldness and faith by the Holy Spirit to share their faith with others who so desperately need it.
- For Pashtun believers to fear God more than man.
- For more Pashtuns to know Jesus and share his Word.

### PROVERBS

29:25

"Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe."

## **THIS RESOURCE WAS DEVELOPED AS A COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE PAN AND RAP NETWORKS**

### **PASHTUN ADVOCACY NETWORK (PAN)**

The PAN network is focused on fostering collaboration and synergy among ongoing efforts towards reaching the Pashtuns around the globe with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

To connect with the PAN Network, please email:

USA/Canada: [ppeopleinfo@gmail.com](mailto:ppeopleinfo@gmail.com)

Europe: [panconnectioneurope@gmail.com](mailto:panconnectioneurope@gmail.com)

### **RED DE ADOPCIÓN POR LOS PASTUNES (RAP)**

The RAP network exists to facilitate a movement of Latin-American missions towards the Pashtuns globally.

To connect with the RAP Network, please email:

English: [rap@reflejo.org](mailto:rap@reflejo.org)

Spanish: [rap@reflejo.org](mailto:rap@reflejo.org)

Portuguese: [rap.brasil@reflejo.org](mailto:rap.brasil@reflejo.org)

Or send us a WhatsApp message (any language) to: +1 (404) 590-4041

