



THE VOICE OF THE MARTYRS  
DIE STEM VAN DIE MARTELARE

December 2023

OUT OF THE

# DARKNESS

UZBEKISTAN'S  
"MOST WANTED"

STEPPING INTO THE  
LIGHT - SIERRA LEONE

Please be aware that the stories in this newsletter describe acts of witchcraft and cruelty.



"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them." Heb 13:3

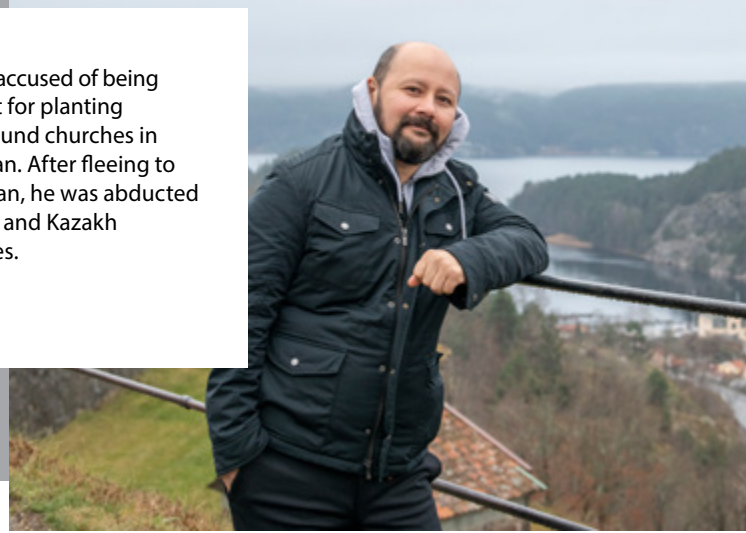
## Miracle

Miracle once belonged to a demonic secret society led by her grandmother. Since Miracle placed her faith in Christ and left the society 10 years ago, her grandmother has tried to kill her.



## Max

Max was accused of being a terrorist for planting underground churches in Uzbekistan. After fleeing to Kazakhstan, he was abducted by Uzbek and Kazakh authorities.



From the Executive Director

# The Shocking Wickedness of Lost Men

**Please be aware that the stories in this newsletter describe acts of cruelty.** We present these true testimonies carefully and responsibly, yet readers will surely experience strong emotions as they enter into fellowship with our precious Christian family members who have suffered. The word “inhuman” is sometimes used to describe acts of cruelty and abuse, and that usage has merit in declaring the truth of evil spiritual powers that inspire the acts of wicked men. However, scripture informs us that abominable acts are inherently part of the fallen condition of lost and sinful people. We may be shocked by cruelty and wickedness, but we should not be surprised.

The Apostle Paul describes the lost as being “*dead in their trespasses and sins*” (Ephesians 2) and quotes the Psalmist in Romans 3:11–18 to explain the extreme depth of this lostness. Apart from God, he says, “*They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*” They attack with words — “*Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: They attack with acts of violence — Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known.*” All of this stems from the fundamental truth of their condition: “*There is no fear of God before their eyes.*” (v. 18).

As we face the reality of extreme depravity and wickedness in the fallen world, we may sorrow but should never despair. Sorrow is an appropriate response to wickedness as it leads us to agree in prayer with God, standing with Him in opposition to wickedness and evil. We join God in hating evil

(Proverbs 8:13; Psalm 97:10; Romans 12:9), and we cry out to Him on behalf of our afflicted Christian brothers and sisters. This results in His leading us to comfort, encourage and support them in their time of need.


In this way, godly sorrow leads us to action, whereas the enemy would like to see us inactive — bogged down in despair, which leaves us hopeless and purposeless. The words “*in Christ*” must be added for it to have meaning and efficacy. Because of our hope in Christ, we rejoice in our sorrow and remain active and full of purpose.

We must join God in hating and opposing evil yet also join Him in His mission to “*seek and save the lost*” (Luke 19:10). We may struggle with our Lord’s instruction to hate the wicked acts of the lost while joyfully paying any price to seek their salvation, but praise God that our persecuted Christian family members are showing us the way! In this newsletter’s stories, you will see the depravity of wicked men, but you will also see the power of God, who is infinitely greater than any sin and suffering.

Ashley

**About the cover:** As a member of a secret society in Sierra Leone, Miracle performed ancient rituals that involved interacting with demons, casting spells and performing bodily mutilations. Today, she follows Jesus Christ.





From Hooligan

# TO HUNTED

*A former Muslim becomes one of Uzbekistan's "100 Most Wanted" criminals because of his bold witness for Christ.*

As a child, Max dreamed of following his father's career path into the KGB (secret police) or of joining the military, both relatively prestigious professions in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. But at age 12, he learned something that changed the way he viewed his family and himself.

"I heard that I was adopted," Max said. "My biological parents had left me when I was born. In our culture, it's a huge shame. I was so sad this day. I lost my hope in the future." Max vowed revenge against his biological parents, dreaming of finding and punishing them. He also began to pray for a way out of his hopeless life. "Every night I prayed before I slept, 'Please let this night be my last night,'" he said. "'Let me die in this night. I don't want to see tomorrow, because every day for me is dark.'"

Waking up each morning with that darkness still in his heart, Max became a self-described hooligan; he got into fights, caused trouble and cursed shamelessly. But he longed for something different. "I looked for peace in my heart," he said.

In his search for peace, he became a devoted Muslim, visiting a local imam three or four times a week for lessons in Islamic prayers and Islamic history. Max had questions that his studies did not answer, however, and the imam berated him for asking them.

About that time, Max learned that two of his brothers had served jail time for petty crimes, effectively shattering his dream of joining the police or military. Though he continued to pray and look for answers, his heart turned bitter toward Allah.

In early 2000, a friend Max had met at the gym encouraged him to question Islam. Tursyn, a Christian, had experienced the same pressures and poverty as 20-year-old Max, but Max could tell that something powerful had changed Tursyn's life.

Tursyn told Max how he had come to see God in a new way and asked Max thought-provoking questions, though he didn't initially mention Jesus Christ. Since Max's family were among the more than 80% of Uzbeks who are Sunni Muslims, his friend's questions about faith didn't seem unusual. Then Tursyn said something that touched the deep longing in Max's heart.

"Max, you know, this world has a God," Tursyn said. "He is alive, the only one God, and he loves you."

"I heard for the first time about God's love," Max recalled. "Inside, I am thinking, 'How can a holy God love me if my biological parents left me and didn't love me?' Islam never tells about God's love. ... That was completely new."

The powerful message stayed with Max, and three months later he went to Tursyn again.

"Tell me about God," Max said. Tursyn gladly told him about Jesus Christ and the salvation offered through faith in him. Then, on 22 April — once celebrated in Uzbekistan as Lenin's birthday — Max celebrated his own new birth.

Tursyn prayed with Max as he repented and placed his faith in Christ. "I felt that something changed immediately in my life," Max said. "Since I heard that I was adopted, there was no peace, no night ... without asking God to take my life. But this day, I slept well. This day I was so happy."

Over time, a more profound change took place in Max's life, beginning the next day when he read in the Bible that Jesus

taught His followers to love their enemies. Max still struggled to forgive his biological parents.

"I said, 'God, I promised from my childhood that I would punish them; after that, I will obey all of Your Word,'" Max said. But when he met his biological mother one month later, his childhood vow of vengeance yielded to the same grace and forgiveness God had shown him. "When I met with her for the first time, from her eyes I could see that she has no peace in her heart," he said. "I understood, and I forgave her."

**A**t the time of Max's conversion, the Uzbek government routinely tried to infiltrate biblical churches, hoping to gather information that would help them arrest and imprison Christians. Before being allowed to attend a church, therefore, a new Christian was often required to spend a few months being disciplined by a church member to ensure that he or she was not a spy. But Max couldn't wait to tell others how God's grace had changed him, so he began to share the Gospel before he had even started attending the only Christian fellowship in the area.

"The one thing I knew was that I got freedom," he said. "The one thing I knew was that I met with the real living God. I shared my testimony everywhere." But Max's boldness soon began to attract attention, and a local imam warned his parents that they would be shunned by the community if their son continued going "the wrong way."

While Max's father acknowledged the positive change in his son's life, he was concerned about the imam's warning, a serious threat in Uzbekistan's clan-based culture. He suggested that Max keep the life change without following Christ, but Max rejected the idea.

"If I take Jesus from my heart, I will become the old Max again," he said. He struck an agreement with his father: His father would read the New Testament, and if he found anything wrong with it Max would burn the Bible.

A year later, Max's father, mother, wife and siblings had all placed their faith in Christ.

**A** small number of registered Protestant churches were tolerated in Uzbekistan at the time, but biblical Christians in unregistered churches were often fined and detained for holding worship services. So when neighbors heard the unmistakable sound of worship coming from Max's third-floor apartment during a house-church meeting, they reported the meeting to police.

Max was detained and interrogated for three days. Then, at a hearing weeks later, authorities fined him the equivalent of 10 months' wages for his evangelistic work. When he failed to pay the fine, he was summoned to court to answer for the debt.

Max was sent to the office of a court enforcer named Miras, who had the power to send Max to prison or assign him to a work detail cleaning the city. Miras and some of his colleagues took turns bullying Max and questioning him about the faith he would not give up and the debt he could not pay.

Max remembers trembling with fear, but he said he also

felt compelled to preach to his interrogators. As the men saw his boldness, he said they seemed to become embarrassed. Something about Max's answers softened Miras's heart; he became gentler and eventually let Max go without punishment. Upon his release, Max told Miras, "I will pray for you. God bless you. Jesus loves you."

**"How can a holy God love me if my biological parents left me and didn't love me?"**

**B**etween 2001 and 2007, the police, KGB and government prosecutors interrogated Max more than 50 times. He was summoned to appear in court eight times on various charges, including involvement in terrorist groups, despite clear evidence that the former "hooligan" had been transformed into a man of peace and joy.

Throughout those years, outreach efforts by Max and other faithful Christians produced abundant fruit. In Uzbekistan's autonomous republic of Karakalpakstan, where Max lived, the number of underground

house-churches grew from one group in 2000 to 90 groups in 2007. "The persecution helped us to be strong and share the Gospel," Max said. But the explosive growth fueled increasing government opposition.

In August 2007, Max was arrested again, and this time officials confiscated his passport and other official documents. Max's attorney told him that his freedom and even his life were in danger. His best chance was to go someplace safer and hope the Uzbek government would eventually grant him amnesty.

The news broke Max's heart. "I love Karakalpakstan," he said. "I always said, 'I was born here and I will die here.'" But suddenly he had to flee alone, leaving his pregnant wife and two young sons to follow later.

On 9 August, 2007, in the middle of the night, a friend drove him almost 1125km to Uzbekistan's capital, Tashkent. When they stopped to pray on the outskirts of Nukus, Max turned to take a last look at his beloved hometown. He said he felt like God was telling him that he wouldn't see the city again for a long time. "I cried all the way from Nukus to Tashkent," he said.

Max stayed in Tashkent for a month, hoping for better news from his attorney, but his legal situation was deteriorating. After days of fasting and prayer, Max set off on foot to cross the border into Kazakhstan. He avoided detection by disguising himself as a farmer, but he had a long way to go before reaching the relative safety of Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest city.

After crossing the border, a Christian family arranged the next leg of Max's journey — 120 km to Shymkent in a shared taxi. To Max's dismay, the other passenger was a police officer on his way to take up a new post. "I pretended to be asleep," Max said, "but I was really praying."

Ten minutes into the trip, the taxi came to a security checkpoint, where Max expected to be arrested if asked for his ID. He considered making a run for it, but Max knew the soldiers would shoot him before he could make it to cover. "My life is finished here," he thought.

When the soldiers saw the other passenger's police insignia designating his high rank, they simply waved the car through.



▲ Above left: Max (top row center on the poster) was falsely accused of leading a terrorist cell and listed as one of Uzbekistan's "100 Most Wanted." Above right: This Bible, smuggled in and out of Max's Kazakh prison cell, provided strength and comfort during his months of imprisonment.

"I wanted to hug this policeman," Max said. "In my eyes, he was an angel from God."

Though now an undocumented refugee, Max continued his evangelism and house-church ministry after arriving in Almaty. But to his surprise and dismay, he soon ran into Miras, the court enforcer from his first arrest.

Quick to ease Max's fears, Miras explained that he had become a Christian pastor since their encounter in Uzbekistan. "Max, you shared the Gospel with me," he said, "and it changed my heart." Their relationship that had begun with persecution became a partnership in the Gospel, as Max soon became Miras's mentor.

When Max had been in Almaty a few months, a friend advised him to seek official refugee status, a process that was expected to take at least 10 months. The evidence of Max's persecution in Uzbekistan was so compelling, however, that the United Nations granted him and his family refugee status after only one month.

Since refugee status did not guarantee Max's safety, his friends carefully guarded his whereabouts while transporting his family to join him in May 2008. They traveled under cover of night, changed cars repeatedly and took circuitous routes. But even these precautions weren't enough. Three days after the family's arrival, Uzbek agents and Kazakh police broke into their home and abducted Max.

"When I asked why they were arresting me, they beat me like I really was a terrorist," Max said. "They asked me, 'Where are your guns? What is your target?'" Max tried to show them his refugee documents, but they were not interested; the Uzbek agents intended to return Max to Uzbekistan.

Max's wife immediately contacted international refugee organizations, which searched for Max for three days. As media attention intensified, the Kazakh government decided to release Max from the secret jail where he had been detained.

News of his abduction prompted several countries to offer Max and his family sanctuary. "A lot of people wait 10 years, and they can't move to these countries," he said. "They want to go,

but I wanted to stay." Max fasted and prayed for 36 days before making a decision. "OK," he told his family, "we will stay here. God will be with us."

In January 2010, the Kazakh government announced that it was deporting all refugees. Those with passports fled to places like Turkey, while those without passports, like Max, had a more uncertain future.

On 5 September, Max was arrested and notified that he had 40 days to appeal his deportation. Meanwhile, during his absence from Uzbekistan, authorities had increased his charges, claiming he was the mastermind of a terrorist cell. He was now on Uzbekistan's "100 Most Wanted" list.

Max assumed that his deportation and "disappearance" were imminent. In jail, he waited and prayed, thinking he would never see his family again. Though Max did not learn the extent of the efforts until later, political pressure from other countries, public protests, international negotiations and a worldwide prayer movement ensued on his behalf.

Then, on 4 December, Max was released from prison and driven straight to the airport, where his family were packed and waiting for him, along with 50 Christian friends who had come to pray for them. Less than 24 hours after stepping out of jail, Max walked into an apartment in Sweden that would be his family's new home.

Having to learn a language and adapt to a different culture didn't slow Max's faithful ministry work. In Sweden, he found fellowship with Believers from many different countries, and he and his wife continue to reach out to the multiethnic Muslim community there.

Max also joined a global Christian organization to lead its Turko-Russian ministries, which cover 230 million people and 37 languages, including the Turkic languages Karakalpak, Kazakh and Uzbek.

When Max teaches Christians now, he prepares them for the likelihood of persecution so they can face it with hope. "Persecution is not new," he said, "but nobody has been able to destroy God's children." ■



▼ Max and his family were granted asylum in Sweden and have since gained citizenship. He leads Bible studies and proclaims the Gospel in a multiethnic Muslim community.



Hear more of Max's story in his own words at [VOMRadio.net/Uzbek](http://VOMRadio.net/Uzbek).



[www.persecutionsa.org](http://www.persecutionsa.org)

## Where Are They Now?

### **NIGERIA:** Christian Widow and Children Thriving

On 13 January, 2011, militant Fulani Muslims attacked Alice Bulus's village in Plateau state, Nigeria, and shot her husband who died in front of her and her children. About 18 months later, militants attacked the village again, burning her home and forcing her and her four children to flee the village.

VOM has helped the family with living expenses, and they are now thriving with help from the global body of Christ. Through her disciplined and diligent work as a farmer, Alice has purchased some land and built a home. Her children have done well in school, and her oldest son is now awaiting admission to a local university. Alice's faith has continued to grow as she has seen God work in her life since her husband's death.

"God has reminded her that he is a covenant-keeping God," a Front-Line Worker said. "She has learned to give God her problems because she knows that He is faithful to take care of her. She thanks God every day for the support she received, and she expresses her gratitude all the time."



After suffering great loss at the hands of Islamists, Alice and her children are now thriving with help from the global body of Christ.



# FLEEING

## an Ancient Darkness

*As a young girl in Sierra Leone, Miracle was taught by her grandmother to invoke demonic spirits and perform brutal rituals for a secret society. After she became a follower of Jesus Christ, her grandmother tried to kill her.*

Sitting in a home that doubles as a church building in rural Sierra Leone, 24-year-old Miracle Conteh was about to share secrets from her childhood that she knew could get her killed. But then, those who would kill her — members of a secret society to which she once belonged — were already pursuing her for leaving their ranks to follow Christ.

For two years, Miracle, known as Sassa until coming to faith in Christ at age

14, performed ancient rituals that

involved interacting with demons, casting spells and performing bodily mutilations. She learned the rituals from her grandmother, who leads the secret society.

During those two years, Miracle said, she felt no fear of the evil spirits with which she interacted. In fact, she felt comfortable in their presence.

"Wherever I went, I sensed the presence of evil spirits all around me," Miracle said. "There was nothing in me that made me feel like I must come out of it because I never sensed anything like God in me. I was just going forward more deeply into it."



## Marked by a Devil

More than half of Sierra Leoneans are Muslims, and nearly 13% are Christians. Most of the remaining population practice ethnic religions.

Despite this public adherence to religion, an estimated 90% are additionally aligned with secret societies that dominate all aspects of life in Sierra Leone. At about the age of puberty, boys are often initiated into the *Poros* society and girls are initiated into the *Bondo* society, also known as *Bundu* or *Sande*.

Leaders of these societies hold considerable local power, and national politicians even seek their endorsement and promise to protect their rituals and customs. Most politicians approve of the rituals, with some supporting *Poros* and *Bondo* houses financially to ensure that the rituals continue throughout rural Sierra Leone. They believe the societies help create social order and preserve cultural values.

Families that refuse to join or participate in the societies, including Christians, are treated as outcasts. They are denied any decision-making roles in their village.

During the *Poros* initiation ceremonies, boys receive ritualistic cuts on their backs, signifying the teeth marks of a demonic spirit. Likewise, girls who enter *Bondo* suffer ritual genital mutilation as an initiation to womanhood. Nine out of ten girls undergo this ritual in Sierra Leone, which has the highest rate of female genital mutilation in Africa. The

women who administer these rituals are revered and are believed to hold supernatural powers.

Miracle was born into a Muslim family and raised by her grandmother from a young age. Her grandmother is a *zowei*, a *Bondo* leader for her village. And when Miracle turned 12, her grandmother began preparing her to become a *zowei* as well.

At the end of the school year, when the *Bondo* initiation rituals often take place, Miracle's grandmother would send her into the forest to collect leaves for secret rituals. "Before she could send me to the forest to pick specific leaves, she would consult an evil demon spirit," Miracle recalled. "Then I would be able to find the leaves that she needed." The leaves are used to make a potion thought to prevent the girls from feeling pain during the ceremony.

As the *Bondo* initiation starts, the girls have their faces painted with white clay and are led deep into the forest by a "devil." The *zowei*, who embodies the devil, wears a wooden mask and a costume generally made of palm leaves. The devil typically uses an unsterilised razor or knife to mutilate the girls, who receive no form of anesthesia other than the leaf potion. The girls are often tied down, and their mouths are covered.

Following the ritual, the girls take an oath of secrecy and are told that if they disclose the society's secrets they will be killed. Just discussing the ritual with a non-member, including a doctor, could

be considered breaking the oath.

As Miracle grew in her understanding of *Bondo* rituals, her grandmother allowed her to wear the devil costume and conduct the mutilations herself. She was 13 at the time.

"I was the one actually doing almost everything," Miracle recalled. "At my young age, I initiated 35 girls into the secret society."

Looking back on those two years of her childhood, Miracle said she felt as if she had lost control of her soul, invoking



demons and seeking their guidance. "In the secret society, you are assisted by an evil spirit to carry it out," she said. "In most of my work, I operated alongside the evil spirits and they directed me what to do."

## From a Dark Dimension

In addition to teaching her the initiation rituals, Miracle's grandmother also taught her how to enter a spiritual realm through incantations and by invoking demonic spirits. Then, Miracle said, she could interact with the demons to further learn the ways of the secret society and control people.

Miracle ceremonially entered a witch's coven, or group of witches. And in their presence, she said, she could physically control and harm people in ways similar to voodoo, which originated in the nearby West African country of Benin.

"That attracted many young people to me because I gained power in the spirits," Miracle said. "When I am inside that witch's coven, those in the physical realm, whatever I tell you, no matter how big you are, you listen to me and you do what I tell you to do."

Miracle said that she and her grandmother even killed children by ritually kidnapping their souls. The disturbing details of these "killings" included figuratively "eating" their flesh and "drinking" their blood — all from the spiritual realm. Miracle said that later, in the physical world, parents would find their children's bodies and have no idea what happened to them.

These shocking claims were corroborated by a Christian Front-Line Worker who had escaped the Poro secret society as a young boy and now helps former secret-society members like Miracle. He said stories like hers of demonic-influenced killings are common throughout the region.

"A doctor can't find any blood," the worker said. "The child is plain white, and when you take them to the hospital the



▲ Miracle changed her name to honour how God had brought her from darkness to light.

doctor will tell you, 'There is no blood in this child.'"

Reflecting on her time in the secret society, Miracle recalled limitations to the dark power she gained by invoking the support of demons and witches. Each time her power was limited, a Christian was involved.

"There is something in the Christian ... that prevents you from taking that soul," she said. "I want to tell you that it is not only because my grandmother said it, but I myself tried it and saw it with my naked eyes. I saw it in the children who became Christians; when we wanted to take them, it was difficult. Those children you cannot take. There is a force that fights you."

## Captivated by the Light

One evening when Miracle's grandmother was visiting another village, a Christian pastor arrived with a projector and a small screen. He had come to the village to share the *JESUS* film.

As she watched the life of Jesus projected onto a portable screen that lit up the night, Miracle said she felt moved by Christ's teachings and miracles. She

also realized that she had encountered Jesus in the spiritual realm. He was the force who had protected the Christians she and her grandmother had tried to control.

"My heart was fixed to the Lord Jesus Christ," she said. "I started yearning to give my life to Christ."

At the conclusion of the film, the pastor asked if anyone wanted to place his or her faith in Jesus Christ. Miracle decided to walk forward. "I made an attempt," she said, "but it was like something held me back."

Although she didn't walk forward at that moment, Miracle later joined the pastor

and others at a church in a nearby village, where they prayed together. Miracle still hadn't come to faith in Christ, but she said she felt at peace during the all-night prayer meeting.

When Miracle returned home the next morning, her grandmother, who was back from her visit, asked her where she had been.

"The people who came, they have a church," Miracle answered.

That was all her grandmother needed to hear. "I have made you a leader in our society!" she shouted. "What are you doing with these ... church people?"

Her grandmother gathered the elder Bondo women and told them that Miracle had attended a church service. "Immediately, a decision was reached that for treading my foot in the church, I should be killed," Miracle said. "I had violated the law."

About 30 women took Miracle into the forest, made her take off her clothes and tied her down.

"They flogged me very seriously that night," Miracle said, crying. "They said, 'If you ever try to follow that pastor, the next time we will kill you.'"

## Finding Refuge

Miracle headed for the pastor's house as soon as she was untied, but the women

## **“There is something in the Christian that prevents you from taking that soul. There is a force that fights you.”**

realized where she was going and recaptured her. They beat her again, and one of the women rubbed a crushed hot pepper in her eyes and elsewhere on her body. Screaming, Miracle broke free from the women and continued running, eventually reaching the pastor's home.

Realizing Miracle's life was in danger, the pastor and his wife immediately let her in their home. When the Bondo women arrived at the house a short time later, they ceremonially cursed an area at the pastor's house where he showed the *JESUS* film and led worship services. Throughout the night and into the morning, they threw stones at the house and ordered the pastor to release Miracle so they could kill her.

Eventually, the pastor was able to take

Miracle to a church, where she stayed with another pastor for about a month.

“You have gone through all of this for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ,” the second pastor told Miracle. “Don't be discouraged. Keep the faith. God is going to provide you a way ... to live from now on.”

The pastor who was taking care of Miracle sensed that she was still controlled by a dark spirit, so for one week he fasted and prayed for her.

“I did not feel the physical world,” Miracle recalled. “I felt the spiritual realm. Prayer is what brought me back to the normal way with people. From what I can remember, I fell to the ground. The pastor was praying, and something came out of me. When that thing came out of

me, I could remember myself and feel the physical again. It was a spirit that was inside my life.”

In her remaining weeks at the church, Miracle said she felt most vulnerable in the evenings, when she could feel the Bondo women attempting to reach her “in the witch way” through the spiritual realm. “At night, the pastor prayed for me,” she said, “that they would not be able to contact me again.”

While still staying at the church, Miracle placed her faith in Christ. After her baptism, she took on the name “Miracle” to honour the way God had brought her out of darkness and into light.

### **Walking in the Light**

Ten years after coming to faith in Christ,





Miracle is part of a vibrant church and continues to grow in faith.

"The church is helping me to understand God's Word," she said. "Whatever comes my way, they come around me to encourage me and pray with me. They are also helping me with small things that make me happy."

In December 2022, Miracle graduated from a three-year sewing programme. She said she is grateful for her sewing machine and the training she received from the school; they are helping her provide for herself and have given her a place in society that doesn't require keeping secrets.

"I want whoever reads my story to be praying for me to stay in the Lord," she said. "That is the most important thing, staying in Christ."

Miracle's grandmother is unable to attack her through the spiritual realm, but Miracle has heard that she is still pursuing her. Still, she doesn't fear her grandmother or the others who wish her harm. She keeps her eyes focused solely on Christ.

"Until I go to glory," she said, "I will be with the family of Jesus. My grandmother, I don't think about her."

Instead of the demons and witches she interacted with as a young girl, Miracle is now filled with the Holy Spirit and

protected by the blood of Christ. She trusts God to continue lighting the path before her in a spiritually dark region of Africa.

"What happened to me in the spirit realm, I didn't understand," Miracle said. "Today, I can call on the name of Jesus and I am able to understand that dark realm and the light of the world. I praise God that I am now in the light." ■

▼ Miracle recently graduated from a three-year sewing programme and is now able to support herself financially.



[www.persecutionsa.org](http://www.persecutionsa.org)

### **Romans 3:10-12**

10. *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:*
11. *There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*
12. *They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*





## Heavenly Father,

*We praise You that You alone are supreme, holding all authority over the forces of darkness.*

*We thank You that Miracle is living in the light of Your Son, Jesus Christ. And we pray that Sierra Leoneans living under the darkness of demonic secret societies and the disillusionment of Islam will respond to the hope found only in Christ.*

*Grant emotional and physical healing to Miracle and others like her. Give them Your peace, and guard their hearts and minds from the trauma they have experienced. We ask that You bless the work of*

*Miracle and others who depend on sewing to support themselves. May they continue to stand firm in You and experience the power of Your might.*

*Thank you for the pastors and Front-Line Workers who help young women like Miracle. We pray that as they boldly proclaim the Gospel, their faith will quench every fear.*

*May the light of Christ permeate every corner of Sierra Leone!*

*Amen.*



# Prayer Diary<sup>®</sup>

December 2023/January 2024

## DECEMBER 2023

S	17	SOMALIA	Pray that the many young people currently disillusioned with Islam will turn to Christ.
M	18	CAR*	Pray that Christians will reflect Christ's love and forgiveness to their persecutors.
T	19	UZBEKISTAN	Pray for creative ways to gather, as Christians can be fined for meeting in unregistered churches.
W	20	SUDAN	Pray for Believers in the Nuba Mountains who are receiving Action Packs and other practical aid.
T	21	OMAN	Pray that new Believers will find a thriving community to help them grow in Christ.
F	22	ERITREA	Pray that Christians will continue to worship together despite the threat of arrest and imprisonment.
S	23	BURKINA FASO	<b>Praise God for Christians in the south who boldly worship despite attacks on their churches.</b>
S	24	ALGERIA	<b>Pray that government efforts to close additional churches will fail.</b>
M	25	IRAQ	Pray that God will provide for the many Christians forced to flee their homes.
T	26	MOZAMBIQUE	Pray for efforts to rebuild churches that were destroyed in Islamist attacks.
W	27	BANGLADESH	Pray that the love and boldness of the church will draw nonbelievers to Christ.
T	28	TURKMENISTAN	Pray for Believers' integrity amid widespread corruption.
F	29	QATAR	Praise God for Christians who take great risks to share the Gospel with Muslims.
S	30	EGYPT	<b>Pray that women expelled from their families because of their Christian faith will find a home.</b>
S	31	JORDAN	<b>Pray that Christians receiving training will be emboldened in their witness.</b>

## JANUARY 2024

M	1	PHILIPPINES	Pray for Christians who have been driven from their homes on Mindanao by Islamic extremists.
T	2	NEPAL	Pray for faithful Believers like Bimala who boldly share the Gospel with their neighbours despite hardships.
W	3	MOROCCO	Pray that more Moroccans will hear the Gospel through digital-media evangelism efforts.
T	4	ISRAEL**	Pray for Messianic (Christian) Jews who are persecuted for their faith in Christ.
F	5	LEBANON	More than 1 million Syrian refugees have entered Lebanon since 2012. Pray for church leaders as they minister to them.
S	6	IRAN	<b>Pray that Christians in Iran will continue to share the Gospel and teach new Believers despite civil unrest.</b>
S	7	AFGHANISTAN	<b>Pray that God will protect Christians being pursued by the Taliban.</b>
M	8	CHINA	Pray that study Bibles distributed to Christian leaders will enable them to teach and train their flocks well.
T	9	CAR*	Pray for Christians who have been beaten by militants. Ask the Lord for their physical, emotional and spiritual healing.
W	10	MOZAMBIQUE	Pray that Christians who have lost everything in recent Islamist attacks will have every need met.
T	11	BANGLADESH	Pray that media outreaches will effectively reach millions of people with the Good News.
F	12	TUNISIA	Pray that Tunisian Christians will continue to have freedom to gather and worship.
S	13	BURKINA FASO	<b>Pray for the grieving families of Christians killed in targeted attacks by Islamic militants.</b>

\*CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

\*\*ISRAEL (INCLUDING WEST BANK & GAZA)

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