

40 *minutes of* PRAYER



EVENT SCRIPT

LEADER'S NOTE

The best way to run this event in a home group is using the flashcards, which come with our free 40 Days home group resource pack (available to order at sat7uk.org/resources40). This document contains the script as it appears on the flashcards.

You'll need a Bible, this script, printed-out maps of the MENA (available to download at sat7uk.org/resources40) and colouring pens or pencils (if using), and a screen (if you'd like to show the short prayer videos). The event is made up of three sections: North Africa, the Arab world, and the Turkish and Persian worlds. You'll go through each country in turn, and at the end of each section there is a link to a prayer video*. Then your group can spend 4-5 minutes in prayer, before starting the next section.

*You may prefer to cue up the three videos on a screen such as a TV or tablet before the event, in which case you can find them all at sat7uk.org/video40.

Event Script

INTRODUCTION

In this session, we're going to pray for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), taking a journey of prayer through the 25 countries in which SAT-7 works. SAT-7 is a Christian television ministry, broadcasting faith-filled satellite TV and digital media to millions of viewers across the MENA. Our time will be divided up into three sections: North Africa, the Arab world, and the Turkish and Persian worlds. In each section, we will read out stories of God at work in people's lives, and then spend some time in prayer. As we go, you can colour in your map to help focus your prayers, and write down any prayer points. The idea is that by the end of the evening, we will have covered the whole region in colour, and prayer!

(Read Psalm 67, then open briefly in prayer)

Let our 40 minutes of prayer begin!

NORTH AFRICA

Morocco: We begin our journey in the westernmost reaches of the MENA. If you head into Marrakesh today, you'll see once-beautiful buildings in ruins after last September's terrible earthquake, in which around 3000 people died and thousands more lost their homes. But, God has brought goodness out of the devastation. A Moroccan Christian leader said: "All of this has provided new opportunities to reach more people and respond to their questions about Christ, the Bible and the history of Christianity in this region. God brought life out of death and the disaster was transformed into an opportunity for prayer, unity and showing empathy." Let's give thanks that God is using the situation for good.

Mauritania: Next, we head south to Mauritania, a country with some significant human rights issues. Violence against women and children is common and generally goes unchallenged, with little legal protection. A Mauritanian



40 minutes of PRAYER

viewer of SAT-7, Omar, got in touch asking for advice on how best to deal with his teenage children. He admitted to having used violence against them in the past. Our team were able to gently guide him with resources on how to treat children with love and care, and prayed that God would give him wisdom. Omar replied: "Thank you, you have been really kind and helped me so much." Despite nationwide abuses, we rejoice over one individual in Mauritania who has chosen a better way.

Algeria: We continue across Sahara into Algeria. Did you know that St Augustine, one of the most influential Christian theologians, was born in what is now Algeria? But, if you walk through the towns and cities of Algeria today, you'll see churches locked and boarded up. The government has waged a campaign of closures against Protestant churches in recent years, which has forced many Christians underground. For them, SAT-7 is a lifeline. Algerian viewer Kameel told us, "I am from a non-Christian background. I accepted the Lord Jesus Christ and I adore him. However, it is hard to strive to live out my faith without a church and a congregation." Pray for the churches to open, that viewers like Kameel will find fellowship and discipleship through SAT-7.

Tunisia: We now follow the Mediterranean coastline to Tunisia. Here on the shore, we'll meet viewer Habib. He grew up in the country's majority religion, but found that the religious practices never spoke to his heart as much as simply spending time at the beach. He told us: "I always communed with God the Father in my heart. Spending time near the sea speaking with God gave me deeper comfort than praying within a group. I knew that worshipping Him is a heart practice, not a physical one." Our team were able to share about Jesus with him, and he's now going to a local church nearby. Praise God for Habib's new faith.

Libya: We continue along the coast to Libya, where last September's floods have decimated many of its coastal towns. This was not the first tragedy to occur on Libya's shores. In 2015, Islamic State released a video showing the beheading of 21 Christians here on the beach. The captives were heard crying out to Jesus in the seconds before they were killed. Viewers of SAT-7 were moved and amazed when Bashir, the brother of two of the murdered Christians, appeared on SAT-7 with a message of forgiveness. "This only makes us stronger in our faith because the Bible told us to love our enemies and bless those who curse us." He did just that, praying live on air for the salvation of those who killed his brothers.

Egypt: The next country on our journey is Egypt, where some of the Bible's most famous stories took place – like the story of Joseph, who was sold by his brothers into slavery in Egypt. When it comes to dysfunctional families, not much has changed – today, difficult family situations are the frequent subject of our conversations with viewers in Egypt. Safiyeh got in touch seeking advice about her relationship with her sister, who had abused her when she was a child. She was full of pain and couldn't move past her suffering. Our team shared with her about Jesus' message of forgiveness, and she got back to us saying: "I want to let you know that I have forgiven my sister with all my heart, and I do not intend to speak to her about the past. I forgave her because there is nothing better than forgiving." Give thanks that, just like Joseph, viewers in Egypt are finding forgiveness and restoration in their family relationships.

Sudan: Now we follow the River Nile from Egypt down into Sudan. Fighting broke out here last Easter and since then, thousands have been killed, millions displaced from their homes and an estimated 18 million people face starvation. Nadia from Khartoum made the heart-wrenching decision to flee her home with her two daughters, and told her story to SAT-7. "We started singing a hymn. If Jesus is in my boat, I won't fear the wind. The road was bleak. No sign of life. But the Lord was with us all the time during our journey." Now they are on the move again, to rebuild their lives in Zanzibar – though their hearts long to return home. And you can read more of their story in our Easter appeal, which is out now. Let's pray for all those caught up in the conflict in Sudan.



South Sudan: And finally, we cross the border into South Sudan, the youngest sovereign state in the world – formed in 2011 after years of bitter conflict with Sudan. The largest ethnic group here is the Dinka tribe, among whom there is a flourishing indigenous church. I'd like to wrap up this section by reading a Dinka hymn written in a refugee camp during the long civil war. It could be the prayer of anyone who finds themselves displaced from their land – and of those across North Africa who find themselves without a church to call their own.

Look upon us, O Creator who made us.

God of all peoples, we are yearning for our land, that we may pray to you in freedom.

Hear the prayer of our souls in the wilderness.

Hear the prayer of our bones in the wilderness.

Hear our prayer as we call out to you.

Hear the cry of our hearts in the wilderness.

Watch over us, O our Creator. Amen.

PRAY FOR NORTH AFRICA: Visit sat7uk.org/video1 to watch a short video showing prayers from North Africa. Then spend 4-5 minutes praying in groups.

THE ARAB WORLD

Yemen: We now cross the Red Sea into the war-torn nation of Yemen, known in Old Testament times as the Kingdom of Sheba. We probably all know the story of the biblical Queen of Sheba, who came to King Solomon seeking the truth about God. Fast forward several thousand years, and our SAT-7 Arabic team had a similar encounter. Nadi from Yemen got in touch with lots of questions about God, like: "Does it make sense that Jesus is God? If he is God, do you think it makes sense that God dies? How could he be fully human and fully divine?" Our team patiently answered his questions, and eventually, just like the Queen of Sheba, Nadi accepted God's love for him. Pray that God stirs up more hearts in Yemen to seek him with all their hearts.

The Gulf: From Yemen, we now head into the Gulf states, which includes Oman, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait. All of these states are monarchies, and are known for their significant riches in oil and natural gas. There are a tiny numbers of Christians in the Gulf, most of them expatriates. One of our viewers in the Gulf, Ronza, moved to the UAE with her husband and young child before falling on hard times, and reached out to our team to ask for prayer. As we spoke, Ronza began to remember the wealth of blessings God had given her. "Before getting in touch with you, I was living in fear of tomorrow, but your messages have filled me with hope." Pray that more viewers in the Gulf will experience the true riches to be found in Christ.

Iraq: Now let's head north into Iraq, to the Kurdish city of Erbil. Ten years ago, in the wake of the devastating Islamic State takeover, Christians from other parts of Iraq sought refuge here. SAT-7 recently visited the Christians of Erbil to film a documentary, and found that, despite everything they've been through, the Church there is actually growing. If you head out to the suburbs of Erbil, you'll even find a brand new church complex. It's pastor, Malath Baythoon, shared with us: "We always dreamed of having a bigger place. As our church grew after the IS crisis, an urgent need for a new building came up... In this new place, believers get to worship and also to socialise with others. Children can have room to play and learn the word of God." Let's give thanks for new life and hope in Iraq.



Jordan: We zoom down the desert highway to Jordan, a kingdom with a rich and distinct musical culture. Traditional Jordanian music uses a style known as Zajal, a form of sung poetry accompanied by percussion and traditional wind instruments. It bears many similarities to the way the Psalms would have been performed in the courts of ancient Israel. As the Christian population in Jordan has dwindled, however, many have become disconnected from this heritage. When SAT-7 programme Keep on Singing broadcast a special episode from Jordan, many shared how the worship had reignited a sense of their unique Jordanian Christian identity. “We received so many messages about what the Lord did through this episode,” Mawiyah, one of the musicians, shared. “Large numbers of brothers and sisters who used to come to church called us to express their passion to return to the Lord.” Let’s lift our praises to the one whose song brought everything into existence.

The Holy Land: Like the ancient Israelites, we now cross the river Jordan into the Holy Land. Our hearts break for the Holy Land today. The attacks on 7 October shocked the world, and the subsequent conflict has claimed tens of thousands of lives and caused the displacement of around two million people in Gaza. SAT-7 viewer Fahad lives in Nazareth, away from the main conflict zone, but the hostilities have taken their toll on him, and he came to the conclusion that God must be evil to allow all of this to happen. Our viewer support team were able to pray and minister to Fahad. Gradually, the Holy Spirit started to work in his heart. Fahad prayed: “I come before You, Jesus, God of love. I am hurting inside. I want You to dwell in my heart. I’m tired of crying, and I don’t want to spend another day without you.” There’s so much we can pray for the Holy Land in our breakout rooms in a moment, but today we particularly lift up those who are angry with God, that he would soften their hearts like he did with Fahad.

Lebanon: We now cross the border into Lebanon – not something that can actually be done in real life, and a dangerous place to be, given the current border skirmishes between Israel and Hezbollah. So we hurry north into the mountainous region of Bhamdoun. SAT-7 presenter Marianne Awaraji tells the story of her mother, who fled Bhamdoun during the conflict of 1982. When the war finally subsided and they returned to their family home, they found a burnt-out, empty shell. But, Marianne says, “Little did they know that their war-ravaged house, reduced to ashes, would be transformed into a vessel for God’s glory. The ruins were recently reborn as a free studio for SAT-7 KIDS, capturing the heartwarming stories of children who had also experienced trauma. Within those walls, stories of resilience and hope unfolded.” We give thanks that God is bringing beauty out of ashes in Lebanon.

Syria: Finally, we travel from Lebanon into Syria, the reversal of a journey many refugees have had to make since the outbreak of Syria’s bitter civil war in 2011. Among the 14 million refugees who fled Syria was a 13-year-old girl called Aline, who called into SAT-7 KIDS with a message for other children like her. “I’ve personally experienced the hardship of war, and there were nights when fear kept me awake. To the kids facing difficult times, my prayer is to always hold on to Jesus. He will give you the strength to go on, and I encourage you to never stop praying, because it was my only refuge during times of war.” Let’s join in Aline’s plea to never stop praying for the children of Syria.

PRAY FOR THE ARAB WORLD: Visit sat7uk.org/video2 to watch a short video showing prayers from the Arab World. Then spend 4-5 minutes praying in groups.



TURKISH AND PERSIAN WORLDS

Türkiye: Türkiye boasts some of the richest Christian history in the world, but only remnants remain today. We travel into the unique geography of Cappadocia, where the soft volcanic rock allowed inhabitants to create underground cities. During times of persecution, early Christians sought refuge in these ancient caves. It was here that SAT-7 producer Gülsüm heard God speak to her for the first time. "I visited the preserved, centuries-old churches and watched the renowned local potters in their workshops. I suddenly had a vision of myself in a church, and I was praying and making the sign of the cross. I felt so relieved and peaceful in that moment... The prayers of Christians who were persecuted in Cappadocia centuries ago were effective in my life." Pray that Christians in Türkiye will be a powerful witness to those around them.

Azerbaijan: We next head east, through the mountains of Armenia, into the nation of Azerbaijan on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Swans, flamingos and pelicans flock to this region, and Azerbaijan's seas, rivers and lakes are abundant with different species of fish, which plays a big part in Azerbaijani cuisine. In one traditional recipe, sturgeon fish is served skewered and grilled with a pomegranate sauce. It's these types of traditional recipes that bring local women together on Taste and See, an Azeri-language programme on SAT-7. Each episode of the new programme is filmed in a kitchen studio, where presenters cook simple meals and share biblical wisdom over food. Let's pray that as viewers in Azerbaijan watch this programme, they will taste and see that the Lord is good.

Iran: Our journey continues into Iran, once the heart of the ancient Persian Empire. It was here that Queen Esther, along with a small group of Jews, lived in the Persian capital of Susa. Esther realized God had brought her into her position as Queen "for such a time as this," and put herself at risk to save the lives of her people. In the same way, Iranian Christians are boldly proclaiming Jesus even among friends and family who may be hostile to Him. Viewer Korshed told us: "Having lived through the difficulties and challenges of these times, I have seen that wherever there is more pressure and suffering, God's grace is given in greater measure. We are witnessing many being saved in Iran. Wherever I go, even among my immediate neighbours, people are talking about Christianity. I seek to share the Good News with others." Praise God that, like Esther, Iranian believers refuse to be silenced.

Afghanistan: It's said that the Church in Afghanistan was founded by the apostle Thomas on his way to India. It's a dangerous place to be a Christian today, with believers at risk of death if the Taliban discover their faith. Faraj, a viewer in Afghanistan, had questions about Jesus, and was worried about his wife's poor health. One night in a dream, he saw a man wearing a beautiful white robe, who asked him: "Why are you upset?" Faraj told the man he couldn't afford the medicine his wife needed. The man replied: "Do not worry – I will provide everything." Faraj said he had no money with which to pay, so the man responded: "I don't want money – that which I will give you is completely free." Faraj asked: "Are you a doctor?" The man replied: "I am the Healer. Give me your hand and come with me." Just like the apostle Thomas, Faraj's doubts were cast out by an encounter with the risen Jesus. And he, like Thomas, can now proclaim about Jesus: "My Lord and my God!"

Tajikistan: We end today with an amazing story of radical forgiveness from a viewer called Alborz in Tajikistan. He had a brother who lived in Afghanistan who was hanged upside down and tortured for being a Christian. Alborz told SAT-7's viewer response team: "I was unable to forgive them and I found myself permanently distressed and angry. Soon, I had no friends and at home I did not speak with kindness to those around me. Three years later, I was reading the Sermon on the Mount and was deeply impacted. My tears flowed, my heart softened, and I was able to forgive the extremists. That moment, the burden I had been carrying was lifted from me. And today, I have a great joy in my heart that God has placed there." Thank God for the forgiveness we have received from Jesus, that helps us show radical forgiveness to others.



40 minutes of PRAYER

PRAY FOR THE TURKISH AND PERSIAN WORLDS: Visit sat7uk.org/video3 to watch a short video showing prayers from the Turkish and Persian worlds. Then spend 4-5 minutes praying in groups.

CONCLUSION

We've gone on a whistlestop tour of the MENA region. If you'd like to spend more time in prayer and reflection, I'd recommend SAT-7's new book, *40 Days of Prayer for the Middle East*. You'll find longer versions of some of the stories we've heard today, and lots more stories besides. That's £5 for a printed copy, or you can download the ebook for free. Visit sat7uk.org/40days to order now.

You can also sign up to hear from SAT-7, including more ways to pray, at sat7uk.org/signup.

Thank you so much for running this event. Don't forget to let us know how it went!