











# 40 *days of* PRAYER

FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

*Study guide*

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**40 Days of Prayer for the Middle East** has taken us on an illuminating journey through the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), learning of the ancient Christian heritage of the region in which the Church was born. But our prayerful journey alongside believers living in difficult and dangerous circumstances in the MENA continues.

**This study guide will help you delve deeper into the themes of the book, and its relevance in our own spiritual lives. It can be used on its own, even if you or your group haven't yet read the whole book.**

Five Bible studies have been provided to deepen your devotional journey. These can be used for personal study or within a group. Going deeper into the Scripture underlying our journey of prayer, we'll find wisdom that has helped believers through the ages to persevere through the greatest of trials. We'll find treasure for our own spiritual formation as well as direction for our prayers for Christians in the MENA.

Also included is an outline for your own 40 Minutes of Prayer event, which can be run with your home group or church. This prayerful event will take you on a whistlestop tour of the entire MENA region, sharing stories of God's hope along the way.

Just for fun, you'll find a colour-in map of the MENA to help you familiarise yourself with the geography of the region, as well as a challenging quiz. Test your own knowledge and challenge those in your church community to see how much they have learned!

We hope this study guide will supplement your growing knowledge of Middle Eastern Christian faith, culture and history, as well as inspiring you with SAT-7's mission of making God's love visible through faith-filled satellite television and digital media.

## LEADER'S NOTE

The material in this guide can be used as a six-week programme for your home group. Go through one Bible study a week for five weeks, and end on week six with a 40 Minutes of Prayer event (see page 30).



## COLOUR-IN MAP



Take some time out to reflect and pray for the Middle East and North Africa, and colour in this map as you pray. You can download more colour-in map sheets at [sat7uk.org/resources40](https://sat7uk.org/resources40).



THE MIDDLE EAST  
AND NORTH AFRICA  
*Our journey of prayer*

# BIBLE STUDY

## The Great Highway

Use this Bible study for personal reflection, or follow the leaders' notes if using with a group.



**Leader's note:** This Bible study covers Isaiah 35, a hopeful and prophetic passage that speaks of the great highway of God's salvation. While the other Bible studies in this resource pack focus on specific regions in the MENA, this first study is more general and can be used as a standalone session if you only have time for one study. We have provided many questions for discussion; feel free to choose the questions that feel most appropriate for your group and the flow of the conversation.

**To begin, read the following introduction aloud to the group:**

In *40 Days of Prayer for the Middle East*, we travelled from Morocco in the west to Tajikistan in the east, learning of the rich Christian heritage and present-day witness in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). In this study, we'll delve into Isaiah 35; a prophecy of God's faithfulness to make a way through the desert for His people.

On God's highway, the redeemed walk in renewed life, despite the dangers and trials on either side. This passage resonates particularly with the experiences of Christians in the MENA today, who have decided to follow Jesus despite the threat of persecution and even death. As fellow travellers on the great highway, let's share in their joys and challenges as we follow our faithful God.

**Leader's note:** Kick off your discussion with these light-hearted starter questions before you dive into the passage, but keep things brief.

### STARTER QUESTIONS

- What's the difference between happiness and joy?
- Has anyone in the group been to a desert before? What were their thoughts and impressions? If not, what do you think it would be like?

### READ ISAIAH 35

### BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

**Leader's Note:** Ask the group for their initial impressions of the passage and answer any basic queries that arise. Then ask the group each of the questions in turn, using them as a springboard for your discussion. Feel free to choose the questions that will be best for your group and the time available.

1. Isaiah 35 comes after a warning of God's judgement against the nations. How do times of suffering and struggle make us view differently the times of peace and joy that follow?
2. This passage foretells the flourishing of King Hezekiah's kingdom in the latter part of his reign, but also clearly looks forward to the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God. Find a couple of examples in the text that refer to the immediate context, and examples that are pointing forward to Christ's Kingdom.
3. Why do you think Isaiah uses ecological imagery to convey these spiritual truths?
4. Can you spot any prophecies here that were fulfilled during Jesus' earthly ministry?
5. The early Christians called themselves 'follower[s] of the Way' (Acts 24:14). Jesus also called Himself 'the way' (John 14:6). Does this inform your understanding of verse 8?
6. As believers, we are on a journey along the Great Highway. Read this excerpt of "A Journey of Prayer" on page 5 of *40 Days of Prayer for the Middle East*:

*"God's purposes are a golden thread running through the rich tapestry of cultures and stories that make up the Middle East. If we take a step back to look at the bigger picture, we can see how God has worked out his plan of redemption in times past and continues to move today."*

Looking back at your own faith journey so far, can you see examples of the "golden thread" of God's purposes running through the tapestry of your own life?

7. Nasim, a woman from Iran, told SAT-7, "I experienced the embrace of the Father when I came to faith in Jesus Christ. I sensed His embrace when I was facing arrest and interrogation, and when I had to choose between Christ and my family. I sensed His embrace when I had to bring up a child completely on my own and when I lived with illness and in deprivation. And now, as I live in exile and face the hardships and uncertainties of asylum, I sense the Father's embrace. My eyes are fixed on Him and my hands are in His. My experience of the Father is security, peace, comfort and patience." (Question overleaf.)

## BIBLE STUDY 1 THE MENA

Nasim's remarkable story highlights the difference between physical comfort and spiritual comfort; physical security and spiritual security. How does Nasim's attitude challenge our society's, and perhaps even our own, conceptions of comfort, peace and security?

8. The Great Highway is a place of holiness (v 8). We are not holy of ourselves, but because Jesus has 'redeemed' us. What is it that Jesus has done to make a way for us to walk on the Highway towards eternal life?
9. The Great Highway is a place of safety (v 9). Many believers in the MENA face danger every day for being followers of Jesus. How do you think this promise of spiritual safety helps them live out lives of faith?
10. The Great Highway is a place of joy (v 10). It seems that the Highway itself is not the final destination, but the way to the destination. Yet, it is still a place of joy. How does this translate to our lives as Spirit-filled, redeemed believers today, who are nevertheless waiting for the final fulfilment of our joy?



11. Read this excerpt from "The Great Highway" on page 84 of *40 Days of Prayer for the Middle East*:

*'The book of Isaiah speaks of a promised highway through the desert, "called the Way of Holiness" (Isa 35:8), where the redeemed will walk and those the Lord has rescued will return (vs 9-10). Wherever and whenever each believer throughout history has found themselves, they are all walking the same journey on the highway prepared for us by our God through Jesus Christ. Because of what He has done, "The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom" (v 1).'*

Have you ever gone through a spiritually dry 'desert' time as a believer? What did you find on the other side?

12. What do you think the lives of believers in the MENA can teach us about the journey of faith?

### PRAY

**Leader's Note: Bring your discussions to a close and then lead the group in praying for the following points, as well as whatever else is on your hearts.**

- Give thanks that God has made a way for us – a highway of holiness, safety and joy – through Jesus, and for his promise of a future of 'everlasting joy'.
- Ask God to help us to remember our brothers and sisters across the world, particularly in the MENA region, where it is much harder to practice their faith freely.
- Pray for the work of SAT-7 as we continue to make God's love visible in the MENA, and for those who will be watching.



# BIBLE STUDY

## Sojourners

Use this Bible study for personal reflection, or follow the leaders' notes if using with a group.



**Leader's note:** This Bible study focuses on Hebrews 11:8-16 and explores what it means to be a "sojourner on earth". We have provided many questions for discussion; feel free to choose the questions that feel most appropriate for your group and the flow of the conversation.

**To begin, read the following introduction aloud to the group:**

In *40 Days of Prayer for the Middle East*, we learned about the nomadic lives of the ancient Berbers of Morocco, who carried the Gospel with them on their journeys through the punishing expanse of the Sahara. In the early centuries of the Church, the Gospel spread quickly in North Africa among and through this people group. It appears that Jesus' exhortation to live in the world but not of it, as sojourners in this life enroute to our true home in Heaven, resonated with their wandering lifestyle.

These ancient Christians, and believers in North Africa today, have much to teach us about living minimalistic, self-sacrificial lives. Hebrews 11 delves into what it means to be a sojourner, using the example of Abraham and Sarah, among many others, to demonstrate living with an eternal perspective. Let's explore how this attitude can help direct our own lives as we seek to navigate the world as people of faith.

**Leader's note:** Kick off your discussion with these light-hearted starter questions before you dive into the passage, but keep things brief.

### STARTER QUESTIONS

- Share your best, or worst, camping holiday experiences! How does it feel to return to your normal home life afterwards?
- What does the word "sojourner" mean to you? Come up with a definition as a group and then compare your answer to the dictionary definition.

### READ HEBREWS 11:8-6

### BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

**Leader's Note:** Ask the group for their initial impressions of the passage and answer any basic queries that arise. Then ask the group each of the questions in turn, using them as a springboard for your discussion. Feel free to choose the questions that will be best for your group and the time available.

1. Abraham was "looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (v 10). Which 'city' are Christians today 'looking forward to' that could be foreshadowed in this verse?
2. Sarah believed in the impossible because she "considered him faithful who had made the promise" (v 11). Does God's faithfulness to fulfil his promises in the past shape your expectations of the fulfilment of the promises to believers recorded in the New Testament?
3. Read this excerpt of "Sojourners on Earth" on page 8 of *40 Days of Prayer for the Middle East*:

*'God's people are often described as a wandering people. The Israelites wandered in the desert, awaiting passage into the Promised Land. Likewise, in his letter to the Hebrews, Paul describes believers as "foreigners and strangers on earth" (Heb 11:13), sojourners enroute to their true home. We are to have the attitude of those just passing through, not neglecting our duties on earth, but with eyes fixed on things above (Col 3:1-3). Our true citizenship is in Heaven (Phil 3:20); we are not meant to get too comfortable here. Is it any wonder that the ephemeral quality of the Christian journey, living in the world but not of it (Jn 17:14-15), so appealed to the ancient nomadic Berbers, who knew so well what it meant to be sojourners without an earthly home?'*

How does your life compare to the nomadic lifestyle of the early Berbers, or Abraham and Sarah?

4. How might the image of a tent symbolise being a spiritual sojourner? Can you think of any instances of this image elsewhere in the Bible, and what might that reveal to us?

"...THEY WERE LONGING FOR A BETTER COUNTRY  
—A HEAVENLY ONE."

**HEBREWS 11:16**



5. Abraham and Sarah did not see the full fulfilment of "the things promised" (v 13), i.e. their many descendants and the coming of the Messiah from their line, but "saw them and welcomed them from a distance." How might this help us to think about disappointments and unfulfilled longings in our own lives?
6. Read the following excerpt from *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis:  
*"If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. If that is so, I must take care, on the one hand, never to despise, or be unthankful for, these earthly blessings, and on the other, never to mistake them for the something else of which they are only a kind of copy, or echo, or mirage. I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others to do the same."*  
- C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, pp. 135-137.  
How would making the true country "the main object of life" affect your relationships, your conversations, and how you spend your time and money?
7. Believers in the Middle East and North Africa are much more acquainted with the threat of death, while we in the West are constantly distracted from it by our comfort and entertainments. In which circumstances do you think it is easier to "Set [our] minds on things above" (Colossians 3:2)?

8. SAT-7 broadcasts into nations where Christians are persecuted and the Gospel message is suppressed. With an eternal perspective in mind, what can we do to support these Christians and what God is doing in the MENA?
9. Aziza, a young mother from Morocco, contacted SAT-7 for advice.

“Christ sacrificed Himself for our sins, and because of the cross, God forgives us. I learned all that from some Christians. I believed first, followed by my brother, mother, and father. We were all baptised. Morocco forbids natives from going to churches. Only foreigners can go,” Aziza said. “I would like it if you’re able to follow up spiritually with me.” Aziza told the team that she is unable to study the Bible at home because her husband is not a believer. “I pray for him every day. Until the day he puts his trust in Jesus.” Aziza was referred to an online discipleship programme, and later told the team, “I know how to better relate to God now.”

In what ways is Aziza demonstrating an eternal perspective?

10. What can we learn from our brothers and sisters in the MENA? Do you feel challenged to give anything up or readjust your priorities?
11. The Bible passage emphasises faith as that which enabled Abraham and Sarah to do what God had asked. The verses above come in the middle of a passage known as the “Hall of Faith” in Hebrews 11, holding up many faithful Old Testament role models and showing how salvation was always through faith. Paul says, “This is what the ancients were commended for” (Hebrews 11:2), yet, “only together with us would they be made perfect” (v 40). The “us” he mentions are all believers since the time of Jesus. How was the faith of these Old Testament heroes brought to fulfilment in Jesus?

## PRAY

**Leader’s Note: Bring your discussions to a close and then lead the group in praying for the following points, as well as whatever else is on your hearts.**

- Pray that we would be inspired by the examples of Abraham and Sarah, the ancient Christian Berbers and believers in the MENA today to live with an eternal perspective.
- Pray for the Lord to reveal to each of us the changes we need to make in our own lives to prioritise living for His Kingdom first.
- Pray for believers in North Africa who face persecution, and ask that God will show them ways in which they can guide others towards an eternity with Christ.





# BIBLE STUDY

*Gather*



**Leader's note:** This Bible study focuses on Luke 22:14-23 and explores what it means to be united in Christ as a universal body of believers. We have provided many questions for discussion; feel free to choose the questions that feel most appropriate for your group and the flow of the conversation.

**To begin, read the following introduction aloud to the group:**

In *40 Days of Prayer for the Middle East*, we read about the ancient Middle Eastern tradition of the Majlis, when neighbours gather in a specially prepared room adorned with Bedouin-style cushions and seating arrangements, to share refreshments and conversation. This has resonances with the gatherings of Jesus and His followers during the New Testament, particularly the Last Supper.

In this familiar passage, we'll rediscover what communion teaches us about the deeply relational nature of our faith. Let's explore our unity with other believers as part of the Church, both close to home and on the other side of the world.

**Leader's note:** Kick off your discussion with these light-hearted starter questions before you dive into the passage, but keep things brief.

## STARTER QUESTIONS

- What's your favourite meal or dessert to prepare for a big group of people and why?
- Why do you think sharing a meal is something that brings people closer together?

## READ LUKE 22:14-23

## BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

**Leader's note:** Ask the group for their initial impressions of the passage and answer any basic queries that arise. Then ask the group each of the questions in turn, using them as a springboard for your discussion. Feel free to choose the questions that will be best for your group and the time available. Christians use different terminology to refer to communion – the eucharist, the sacrament, the Lord's Supper, etc. Use whichever term is most familiar and comfortable for your group.

1. In light of what Jesus will face just hours from this meal, why do you think He had "eagerly desired" to share this meal with them?
2. How does Jesus and His disciples' celebration of the Passover meal imbue the Old Testament events it commemorates with new meaning? You may want to refer to Exodus 12 to remind yourselves of God's institution of the Passover.
3. Read this excerpt from "Gather" on page 41 of *40 Days of Prayer for the Middle East*:

*'From remote rural villages to bustling cities, the Qataris practise a tradition that has endured for centuries. The "Majlis" is a decorated room in many Qatari homes reserved for special gatherings, where guests come to discuss current events and local issues while enjoying Arabic coffee. The term Majlis also refers to the gathering itself. Originating in pre-Islamic Arabia, the men of Bedouin tribes would congregate to discuss matters of common interest. This heritage is preserved in Majlis culture today, with the circle of large cushions that guests recline on resembling Bedouin living arrangements.'*

In what ways does the tradition of the Majlis remind you of the Last Supper?

4. Hebrews 9:15 says "...Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant." What is a covenant, and what is the difference between the old and new covenants?
5. Why do you think Jesus instituted the practice of communion?
6. In 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, Paul refers to communion as "participation" in the body and blood of Christ. When we take communion today, how do we participate in something that took place over 2,000 years ago?
7. Communion is about remembering Jesus' sacrifice, but, as the name suggests, it is also about coming together as a community of believers. Why do you think it is important for believers to remember Jesus' sacrifice collectively, not just as individuals?

## BIBLE STUDY 3 THE ARAB WORLD

8. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Paul says “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” As a group, discuss the gifts and skills (e.g. organisation, public speaking, kindness, hospitality, etc.) that each of you bring to your church community, enabling it to work as a functioning body. Are there any untapped gifts among you that could be a blessing to your church?
9. What’s one thing you could do to strengthen your relationships in your church community?
10. The reflection in *40 Days of Prayer* says “when believers in Qatar gather and share in communion, their faith unites them in fellowship to the global Church.” In light of this global fellowship of believers, how can we support our brothers and sisters on the other side of the world?
11. Dalida, a young Arabic-speaking woman, contacted SAT-7’s Facebook page Daily Bread to say:

“I feel a peace that stems from faith; a surrender to God’s will. If my faith wavers, I run to the Word of God, and I’m infused with strength again.” She got in touch a second time to say, “I was going through a hard time when we spoke last, and I wanted God to speak to me through people. God spoke through you and His Word provided a way to regain my strength.”

Has God ever spoken to you through other Christians, or have you ever felt God prompting you to share a Bible verse or insight with a fellow believer?

12. Think about a time when you have gathered to worship with believers from other countries. How did it make you feel about the global body of Christ?

‘AND HE TOOK BREAD, GAVE THANKS AND  
BROKE IT, AND GAVE IT TO THEM, SAYING,  
“THIS IS MY BODY GIVEN FOR YOU; DO THIS IN  
REMEMBRANCE OF ME.”’

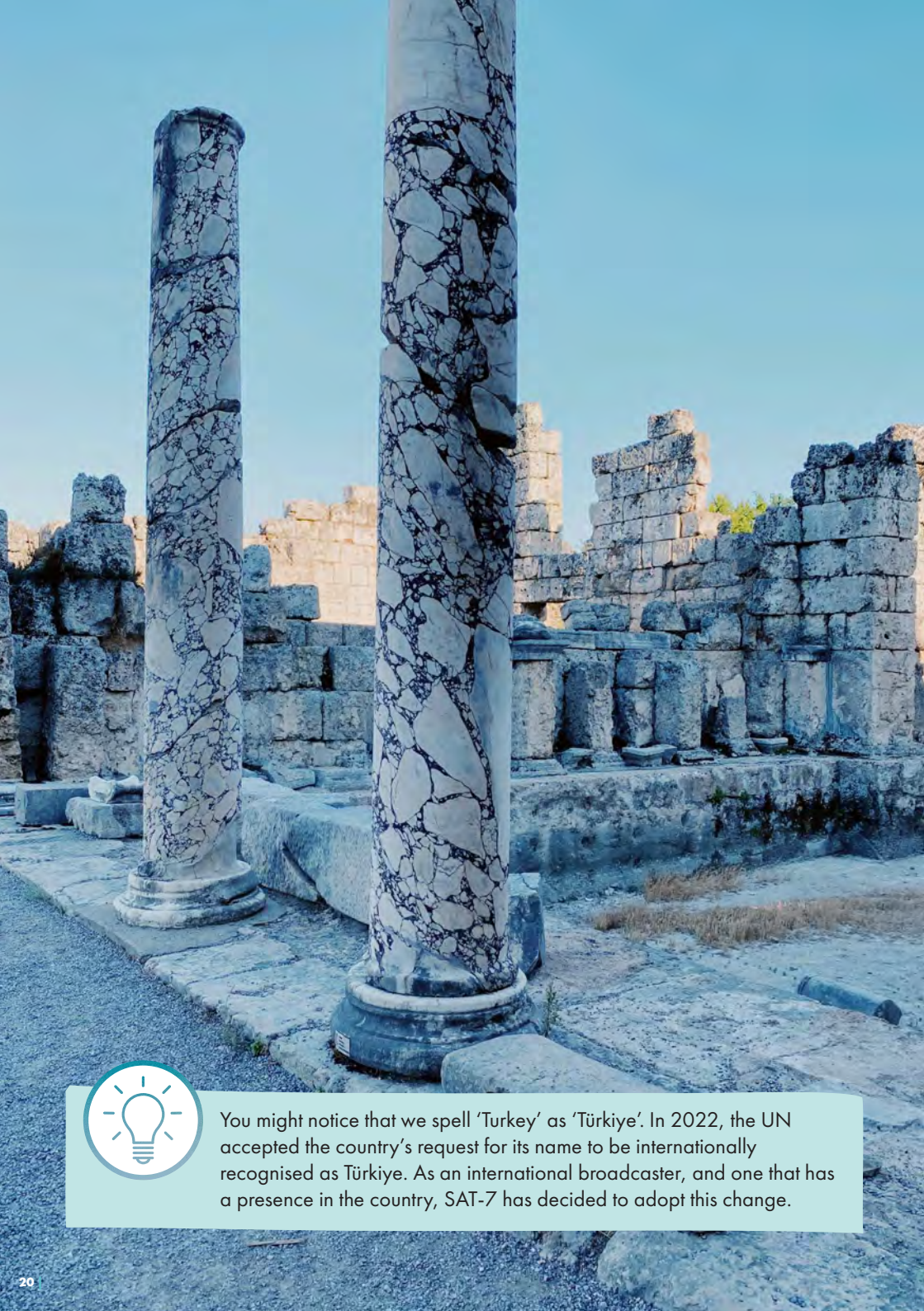
**LUKE 22:19**



### PRAY

**Leader’s note: Bring your discussions to a close and then lead the group in praying for the following points, as well as whatever else is on your hearts.**

- Give thanks that Jesus has given us the sacrament of communion as a constant reminder of the sacrifice He made for each of us. Pray that we would recognise the spiritual significance of the bread and wine we share.
- Pray that we would understand the communal nature of our faith, both in our own immediate context and across the world.
- Pray for the parts of the body of Christ in the Middle East that are suffering due to persecution and dangerous circumstances.



You might notice that we spell 'Turkey' as 'Türkiye'. In 2022, the UN accepted the country's request for its name to be internationally recognised as Türkiye. As an international broadcaster, and one that has a presence in the country, SAT-7 has decided to adopt this change.

## BIBLE STUDY 4 THE TURKISH WORLD

# BIBLE STUDY

*Written in Stone*

Use this Bible study for personal reflection, or follow the leader's notes if using with a group.



**Leader's note:** This Bible study covers Revelation 2:1-7, highlighting Jesus' call to perseverance in His message to the Church in Ephesus, which is located in what is now Türkiye. We have provided many questions for discussion; as you lead this session, feel free to choose the questions that feel most appropriate for your group and the flow of the conversation.

**To begin, read the following introduction aloud to the group:**

In *40 Days of Prayer for the Middle East*, we read about the rich and fascinating Christian heritage of Türkiye. Despite the survival of the underground cave churches of Cappadocia, the sites of the seven churches of Revelation and the ruins of Constantinople, the country's Christian history is largely unknown to the population.

Our Bible passage from the Book of Revelation centres on Jesus' message to the Church in Ephesus to persevere in times of hardship. The message seems just as relevant to the situation of the tiny Christian minority in Türkiye today, who are praying fervently for their country to return to the love it once had for the Gospel.

**Leader's note:** Kick off your discussion with these light-hearted starter questions before you dive into the passage, but keep things brief.

### STARTER QUESTIONS

- How do the architecture, decoration or objects in your church convey the legacy of faith in your locality?
- What comes to mind when you think of the Book of Revelation? Does it make you feel confused, intrigued, fearful, excited or hopeful, etc.?

### READ REVELATION 2:1-7

### BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

**Leader's note: Ask the group for their initial impressions of the passage and answer any basic queries that arise, but try not to get into any deep conjecture about the meanings of metaphors at this stage. Then ask the group each of the questions in turn, using them as a springboard for your discussion. Feel free to choose the questions that will be best for your group and the time available. Try to steer the conversation away from too much end-times speculation, which may distract from the topic of perseverance.**

1. In Revelation 1:20, Jesus tells John that "the seven lampstands are the seven churches" in Asia Minor, now Türkiye. Why do you think the image of a lampstand is used in John's vision to represent a church?
2. Verse 1 of the passage says that Jesus "walks among the seven golden lampstands." Most scholars believe that the seven lampstands carry a meaning beyond the seven churches in Asia Minor, representing the entire global church. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus walks among us today?
3. Read this excerpt from "Written in Stone" on page 70 of *40 Days of Prayer for the Middle East*:

*"Despite the Christian history of the nation being written in stone, in towering ruins and ancient underground networks of cave churches, this history is largely unknown to the Turkish people. Among SAT 7 TÜRK's programmes are many which seek to uncover the nation's sacred past. As the Book of Revelation urges the church in Ephesus, we must pray for Türkiye to return to the love it had at first for the Gospel (Rev 2:4). Meanwhile, give thanks for the remnant of believers who have persevered, endured hardships for the name of Christ, and have not grown weary (v 3)."*

In Türkiye there is a lot of misinformation about what Christians believe and about Christians themselves. How can Christians, in our own context and in the Middle East, challenge misconceptions about the faith?

4. In verse 2, Jesus says "I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance." In Türkiye, Christians face hostility, the threat of imprisonment and the spread of misinformation about the faith. In this context, what do you think "deeds", "hard work" and "perseverance" look like?
5. Jesus says that the Ephesians "tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false" (v 2). How can Christians identify false teachings?
6. Jesus commended the church, "You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary." Can you think of a time when you had to persevere and endure hardships because of your faith? Did it weaken your faith or strengthen it?
7. Jesus also has a rebuke for the Church of Ephesus: "Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first" (v 4), speaking of the fresh zeal and enthusiasm of the believers when they first came to faith. Can you relate to this, or recall times when your joy in being a Christian has waned?
8. Jesus says that the answer is to "Repent and do the things you did at first" (v 5). Are there things that you did when you first became a believer that could strengthen you in your walk today?
9. Deniz is a Turkish woman who now lives in the UK and is an Ambassador for SAT-7. She has an inspiring story of perseverance from when she was imprisoned for two weeks in Türkiye for her faith.

*'It was a painful time, but it was a time when I probably felt closest to God. Because something happens when you stand for Jesus – you identify with what Jesus Himself went through. I could hear torture happening in other rooms. We hardly had any food, they used to give us olives and bread every so often. I didn't know when it was daytime or night-time. But my comfort was just looking under my door, into a patch of light. There was a little shadow that formed in that light that looked like Jesus' face. I would look at that shadow and sing "You laid aside your majesty", which is an old song. "You laid aside your majesty and gave up everything for me". There was no fear. I don't know why, but there was no fear.'*

What do you think it was that helped Deniz to persevere through her imprisonment and took away her fear?



## BIBLE STUDY 4 THE TURKISH WORLD

10. Can you think of examples in your own life, or the lives of those close to you, of how God has worked powerfully or miraculously in difficult circumstances? How can remembering how God has worked in the past help us to persevere in the present?
11. In Revelation 12:11, John describes a vision of the Church conquering the devil: “They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.” What does this tell us about the power of our testimonies?
12. Jesus ends his message, “Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” What do you think the Spirit may be saying to you, your local church, and the Church in your country?

### PRAY

**Leader’s note: Bring your discussions to a close and then lead the group in praying for the following points, as well as whatever else is on your hearts.**

- Give thanks that Jesus’ words to the churches in Revelation can help us in our own context and personal faith journeys.
- Pray that the small but faithful Church in Türkiye will shine the light of Christ into a place where misinformation and hostility obscure Him from others.
- Pray that God will give Turkish Christians the strength to persevere, until Türkiye rediscovers the love it had at first for the Gospel.
- Pray for the work of SAT-7 TÜRK as they make God’s love visible in an informative, creative and compelling way.

“WHOEVER HAS EARS, LET THEM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAYS TO THE CHURCHES. TO THE ONE WHO IS VICTORIOUS, I WILL GIVE THE RIGHT TO EAT FROM THE TREE OF LIFE, WHICH IS IN THE PARADISE OF GOD.”

**REVELATION 2:7**



# BIBLE STUDY

*For Such a Time as This*

Use this Bible study for personal reflection, or follow the leader's notes if using with a group.



**Leader's note:** This Bible study covers Esther 4:9-17, in which Queen Esther decides to risk her life in order to intercede for her people. We have provided many questions for discussion; feel free to choose the questions that feel most appropriate for your group and the flow of the conversation.

To begin, read the following introduction aloud to the group:



In *40 Days of Prayer for the Middle East*, we read about how the rise of the Persian Empire intertwined with the events of the Book of Esther, the story of a Jewish girl who became a Persian Queen. In this passage, Esther faces a choice. Her cousin, Mordecai, has just told her of a plot of the king's advisor, Haman, to kill all the Jews in the Persian Empire. Esther must enter the court of her husband to plead for her people, but doing so could cost her life.

These events took place in what is now Iran, where Christians face a similar threat of persecution. Christians are choosing to live for Christ, despite the dangers from the government and their communities. Both Esther and these Iranian Christians have much to teach us about being courageous for God.

**Leader's note:** Kick off your discussion with these light-hearted starter questions before you dive into the passage, but keep things brief.

## STARTER QUESTIONS

- How would you define "courage"?
- Can you think of an example of a fictional character who displays exceptional courage?

## READ ESTHER 4:9-17



## BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

**Leader's note:** Ask the group for their initial impressions of the passage and answer any basic queries that arise (as this is a small part of a bigger story in the Book of Esther, make sure you've refreshed yourself on the overall narrative beforehand, so that you can give any needed context). Then ask the group each of the questions in turn, using them as a springboard for your discussion. Feel free to choose the questions that will be best for your group and the time available.

1. Queen Esther was famous throughout Persia for her unmatched beauty, but what are the qualities she is remembered and revered for today?
2. God is not mentioned by name in the Book of Esther, but can you identify a verse in the passage that suggests that God is at work behind the scenes?
3. Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Compare this to King Xerxes's policy towards those who wished to enter his courts (in verse 11).
4. What is it that allows us to boldly approach the throne of God and enter into His presence through prayer?

## BIBLE STUDY 5 THE PERSIAN WORLD

5. Mordecai tells Esther, "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place" (v 14). What does this tell you about how Esther's free will factored into God's plan to rescue the Jews from Haman?
6. Have you ever looked back at a situation retrospectively and realised that God put you in a specific place at a specific time for a reason?
7. Why do you think Esther called for the Jews to fast and pray for her before she went to the king?
8. How do you feel about Esther's resolution: "If I perish, I perish" (v 16)?
9. Read this excerpt from "For Such a Time as This" on page 74 of *40 Days of Prayer for the Middle East*:

*"Xerxes had signed the edict for the elimination of the Jews without a moment's thought, but on learning that his wife was a Jew, he reconsidered. It may be the same for Christians patiently witnessing to their friends and families in Iran. Despite the cultural disdain for God's people, relationships have the power to overcome ingrained prejudices."*

Have you ever had a friend who was very opposed to Christianity, but whom you got on well with? Did your relationship with them soften their attitude towards Christianity and/or Christians?

10. How can we intercede for our fellow Christians who live in places like Iran, where they face discrimination and even the threat of violence?
11. Sina, a man from Iran, contacted SAT-7 to say,

*"I live in a small village and have no fellowship with other believers. I've proclaimed proudly that I'm Christ's - I'm not afraid. My dream is to build a church on my property. If there are other believers in my area, maybe we could gather and worship God together. I fear nothing because ultimately one day we all die. But even death isn't my end, for I will be with my Lord Jesus and will live with Him forever."*

How is Sina's story similar to Queen Esther's?

12. How can Queen Esther and courageous believers in Iran today inspire us to live boldly for Christ, no matter the cost?

## PRAY

**Leader's note: Bring your discussions to a close and then lead the group in praying for the following points, as well as whatever else is on your hearts.**

- Give thanks for the examples of courage and self-sacrifice we see in Queen Esther and Christians in Iran today. May they help us to be more courageous in our own lives.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will help us to see how God is working in our circumstances and that we will follow His leading in our lives.
- Pray for the persecuted church in Iran as they face pressure from the authorities, the threat of imprisonment and harassment from their communities.



# 40 MINUTES OF PRAYER

*For the Middle East and North Africa*

## Could you and your home group or church spend 40 dedicated minutes praying for the Middle East and North Africa?

Never-ending conflicts, natural disasters, religious persecution... The news headlines paint a worrying picture of the MENA. But God is at work, and through SAT-7 we hear stories of lives changed across the region every day!

Our "40 Minutes of Prayer" event can be run in a home group or in a church service. In around 40 minutes, you'll go on a whistlestop virtual journey from Morocco in the west to Tajikistan in the east, hearing stories of how God is at work in people's lives along the way, and spending time in prayer together.

You'll need your pack of flashcards, which contains the script and instructions. If you received this study guide as part of our home group pack, you should already have your flashcards. If not, you can order your free pack at [sat7uk.org/resources40](http://sat7uk.org/resources40). This webpage also includes the other resources you'll need, including colour-in maps and prayer videos. Then you're ready to get praying!



## RUNNING THE EVENT IN A HOME GROUP

### You'll need:

- Set of flashcards
- Colour-in MENA maps (enough for one per participant)
- Colouring pens or pencils
- A screen (if you want to show prayer videos)

All the instructions you need to run the event are on the flashcards. Each flashcard contains a story from one of the 25 countries that SAT-7 works in, which can be read out in turn around the group. The event is split into three sections: North Africa; the Arab world; and the Turkish and Persian worlds. While you are praying, participants can colour in their map of the MENA, and make notes and prayer points. The pack also includes links to prayer videos from our staff in the region, to help guide you into prayer. By the end, you will have covered the whole map in prayer – and colour!

## RUNNING THE EVENT IN A CHURCH SERVICE

### You'll need:

- Set of flashcards
- Map PowerPoint slides (available at [sat7uk.org/40resources](http://sat7uk.org/40resources))
- A big screen

To adapt the event for a church service, you can use the script from the flashcards alongside the event Powerpoint slides. As you read out each country, show that country's slide on the screen. The event is split into three sections: North Africa; the Arab world; and the Turkish and Persian worlds. At the end of each section, play the prayer video from that region, then invite the congregation to break into small groups to pray for 4-5 minutes.



*After the event...*

Use your flashcards and A3 map to make an interactive prayer map, and display it in your church.





# QUIZ

Challenge yourself or bring your friends together for some friendly competition!



**It's time to test how much knowledge you have absorbed along your journey through the Middle East and North Africa with our 40 Days of Prayer Quiz! Do you know your Emirates from your Amorites? Challenge yourself or bring your friends together for some friendly competition. We hope you've been reading closely!**

1. Which modern-day Middle Eastern country is generally said to be where the Queen of Sheba was from?

- a. Iraq
- b. Libya
- c. Yemen
- d. Iran

2. Which North African country was the birthplace of famous Christian theologian St Augustine?

- a. Egypt
- b. Morocco
- c. Algeria
- d. Tunisia

3. Which disciple and Gospel-writer is said to have brought the Gospel to Egypt?

- a. Matthew
- b. Mark
- c. Luke
- d. John

4. In which modern-day country would the biblical city of Babylon be found?

- a. Iraq
- b. Iran
- c. Qatar
- d. UAE

5. Who first discovered the biblical manuscripts known as the Dead Sea Scrolls in a cave in the Holy Land in 1946?

- a. A Bedouin shepherd boy
- b. A British soldier
- c. An Egyptian monk
- d. An American archaeologist

6. Lebanon has the second largest population of Christians in the Middle East, but to which church denomination do most of them belong?

- a. Maronite
- b. Greek Orthodox
- c. Evangelical Protestant
- d. Coptic Orthodox

7. Saul was on the road to which Syrian city when he was famously blinded in a vision of Jesus?

- a. Aleppo
- b. Damascus
- c. Palmyra
- d. Emmaus

8. From which modern-day country was Simon of Cyrene, the man forced by the Romans to carry Jesus' cross?

- a. Jordan
- b. Sudan
- c. Libya
- d. Lebanon

9. True or false: The seven churches mentioned in Revelation are all situated in modern-day Türkiye?

- a. True
- b. False

10. Queen Esther lived in the Persian empire, now modern-day Iran. But which biblical Persian king was she married to?

- a. Cyrus
- b. Xerxes
- c. Artaxerxes
- d. Darius



**Find the answers on page 35!**





# FIND OUT MORE

To keep praying with SAT-7 and hear more stories from the Middle East and North Africa, sign up to our mailing list at: [sat7uk.org/signup](https://sat7uk.org/signup)

Find more resources, including videos, Powerpoint slides and printable sheets, at [sat7uk.org/resources40](https://sat7uk.org/resources40)



Order your copy of *40 Days of Prayer for the Middle East* at [sat7uk.org/40days](https://sat7uk.org/40days). It's £5 (including P&P) for a printed book, or you can download the ebook version for free.

## QUIZ ANSWERS

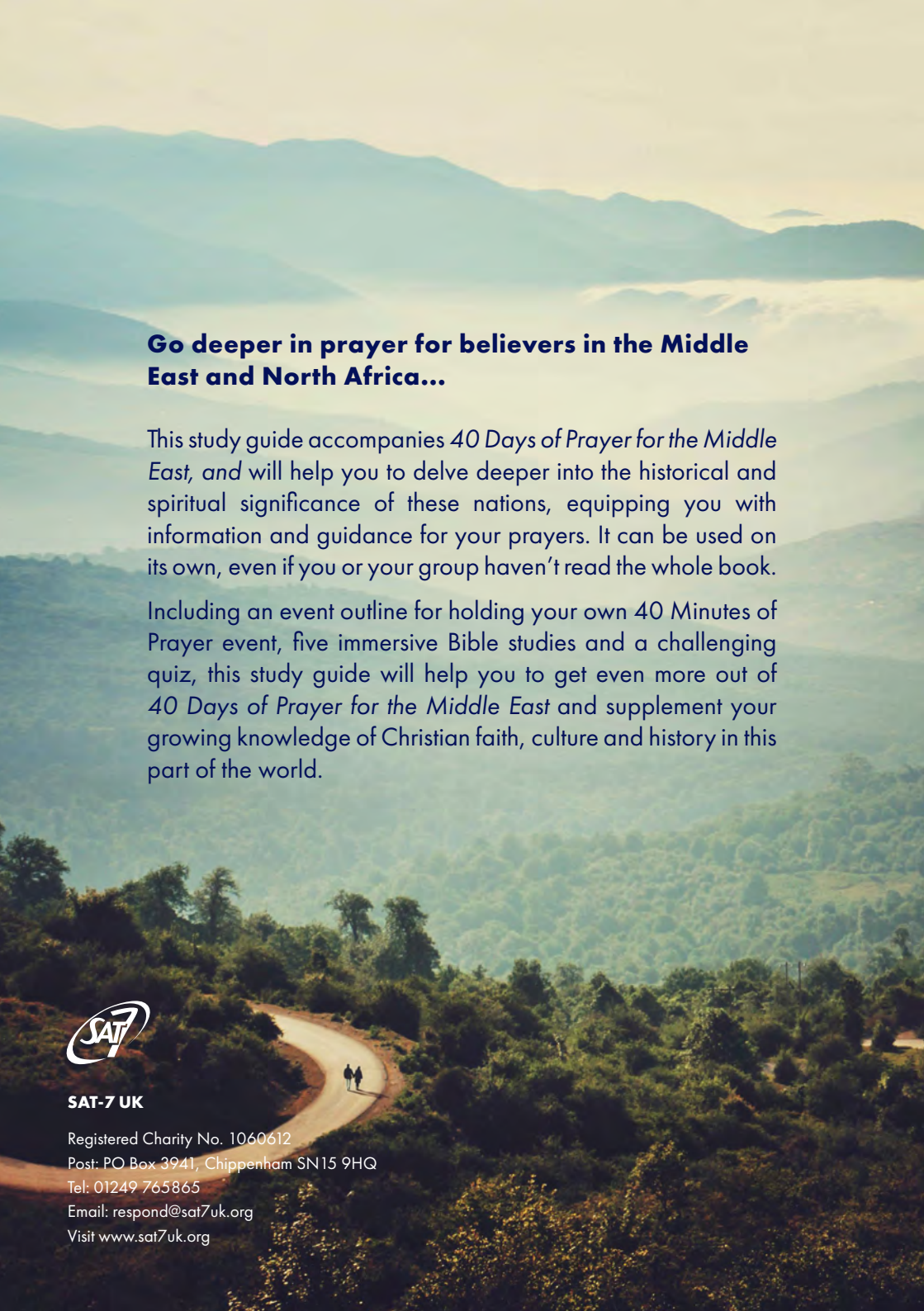
1. c   2. c   3. b   4. a   5. a   6. a   7. b   8. c   9. a   10. b



Names of viewers throughout have been changed for security reasons and images used for representation only.

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## **Go deeper in prayer for believers in the Middle East and North Africa...**

This study guide accompanies *40 Days of Prayer for the Middle East*, and will help you to delve deeper into the historical and spiritual significance of these nations, equipping you with information and guidance for your prayers. It can be used on its own, even if you or your group haven't read the whole book.

Including an event outline for holding your own 40 Minutes of Prayer event, five immersive Bible studies and a challenging quiz, this study guide will help you to get even more out of *40 Days of Prayer for the Middle East* and supplement your growing knowledge of Christian faith, culture and history in this part of the world.



**SAT-7 UK**

Registered Charity No. 1060612

Post: PO Box 3941, Chippenham SN15 9HQ

Tel: 01249 765865

Email: [respond@sat7uk.org](mailto:respond@sat7uk.org)

Visit [www.sat7uk.org](http://www.sat7uk.org)