

SAUDI ARABIA: praying light into darkness

During the previous three weeks we prayed for Iran, Israel and Lebanon. This week we continue the journey of prayer in the war zones of the Middle East by calling **light into darkness** as we turn our attention to one of the most strategic, complex, and spiritually significant nations of the world: **SAUDI ARABIA**.

Print out the information below, and at any time of day, place the map of Saudi Arabia before you, light a candle, and hold the nation before God. Let the flame remind you that Christ's light still shines in the midst of fear and fire.

INFORMATION

Saudi Arabia occupies most of the Arabian Peninsula and is home to more than 35 million people—similar to the population of California. However, while the population density of California is about 97 people per km², the population density of Saudi Arabia is only about 15.8 people per km².

Over the past 50 years there has been a dramatic shift in age demographics and the national fertility rate. In 1976 the median age was 16.6 years compared to 29.8 years currently. The fertility rate stood at 7.37 children per woman in 1976 compared to 2.3 today.

Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam and one of the most religiously conservative nations in the world. About 85–90% of the population is Sunni Muslim, while 10–15% are Shia Muslim, primarily in the eastern provinces. There are no churches in Saudi Arabia and Christians are almost entirely expatriates, numbering an estimated 1.2–1.5 million, though public Christian worship is restricted and conversions will receive the death penalty.

There are over 100 people groups in Saudi Arabia, of which 34 are considered unreached with the gospel. An estimated over 90% of the population lives within these unreached groups.

In recent years, Saudi Arabia has undergone rapid transformation: economic diversification, social reforms, and major infrastructure development. At the same time, the nation has faced regional conflict, cross-border tensions, and the long-term impact of economic fluctuations. Migrant workers, refugees, and low-income communities often carry the heaviest burdens.

The recent Israel–Iran conflict has heightened instability across the region, affecting trade routes, border security, and civilian safety. Since the war started on 28 February, 3 people have been killed and 29 injured. On March 8, two people were killed and 22 injured, including 12 in the central governorate of Al-Kharj, when a projectile fell on a residential area.

While Saudi Arabia has not experienced destruction on the scale of neighbouring countries, communities near conflict zones have faced displacement, fear, and uncertainty.

And yet, Saudi Arabia remains a nation of profound spiritual significance. It is home to Mecca and Medina, the two holiest cities in Islam, drawing millions of pilgrims every year. It is also a nation where quiet, unseen movements of faith continue to grow among expatriates and migrant communities.

The convergence of spiritual hunger, social change, and regional instability makes Saudi Arabia one of the most strategic nations in the Middle East. Many believers—both expatriate and local—testify to renewed courage, deeper unity, and surprising openness in conversations about hope and peace.

This is the Saudi Arabia we hold before God: vast, young, spiritually restless, strategically placed, and profoundly loved by God.

INSPIRATION

In the midst of uncertainty, restrictions, and regional tension, small Christian fellowships—often hidden, often transient—continue to shine like quiet lamps in the desert. The following testimony was shared by a Saudi convert, *Al Fadi*, who currently teaches courses in biblical theology, business, and comparative religion at Arizona Christian University.

“ I was born and raised in Saudi Arabia in a devout Muslim family, and from an early age I embraced Islam with complete conviction. I believed it was the only true faith and that anyone who rejected Allah and Muhammad was destined for hell. Christianity, in my mind, was misguided at best and dangerous at worst. I viewed Muslims as superior, considered non-Muslims as unbelievers, and saw Jesus only as a prophet—not the Son of God, not crucified, not risen. By age twelve I had memorized half the Qur'an —half of all 114 chapters, all 6,236 verses, and by fifteen I was ready to give my life in what I believed was a holy cause, joining young men who travelled to Afghanistan to fight the Soviets. Only my mother's desperate pleas kept me from going.

As I grew older, doubts quietly surfaced. The more I understood the Qur'an's language, the more I struggled with passages that seemed filled with hostility. I wondered how a loving God could hate His own creation simply for disbelief. But voicing such questions in my context was dangerous.

After university, I moved to the United States for graduate studies. I arrived fearful, believing—as many in my world did—that America was a Christian nation and that Christians were hostile toward Muslims. Seeking help with language and culture, I joined an international friendship program, unaware it was run by Christians. The family assigned to me showed a depth of kindness I had never experienced. Their love challenged everything I believed about Christians.

Years later, another Christian family displayed the same peace and joy. My curiosity grew until I finally visited a church in 2001. Through studying the Gospel of John, I encountered Christ as He truly is. In November 2001, I surrendered my life to Him.

My journey since has been marked by trials, growth, and transformation. Today I lead a ministry equipping believers to share Christ's love with Muslims—the same love that first opened my heart.”

To read Al's full testimony: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/2023/01/al-fadi-muslim-holy-warrior-saudi-arabia-allah-jesus/>

INTERPRETATION

We pray to the Lord of light and mercy. As we light our candles, we hold **Saudi Arabia** before Him now as we pray for:

The Indigenous and Expatriate Church

Lord, strengthen Your people in Saudi Arabia. Root them in courage, surround them with Your presence, and let their witness shine like a hidden flame. Give them unity, endurance, and hope that outlasts darkness.

Peace

Lord, Your people hunger for peace. Regional conflict has caused fear and instability. We pray that Your peace will rest on Saudi Arabia—calming anxiety, silencing violence, and opening a path toward healing.

Reconciliation

Heal divides between communities, tribes, sects, and generations. Where bitterness has grown, plant mercy.

Protection of Civilians

Guard the innocent, shield the vulnerable, and let no life be lost to the cruelty of conflict. Protect migrant workers, refugees, and all who have no safety net.

Wisdom for Leaders

Lord, we pray for the political and religious leadership of Saudi Arabia. Being an **absolute monarchy**, where the king holds ultimate executive, legislative, and judicial authority, we pray for **King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud** – Head of State and Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. We also pray for the **Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (MBS)** who oversees major national councils and reforms. We also lift the **Minister of Foreign Affairs: Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud** and **Minister of Interior: Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Naif** up to you.

Turn their hearts toward justice, humility, and restraint. Give them wisdom that protects life and dignity. Draw them closer to you we pray

Comfort for the Grieving

Hold every grieving family close. Let Your comfort be deeper than their sorrow and Your nearness stronger than their pain.

Hope for the Future

Plant hope in the soil of uncertainty. Let new possibilities rise, and let Saudi Arabia's future be shaped by peace, dignity, and renewal.

Lord, let Your light shine over Saudi Arabia, and let the darkness not overcome it. Amen.