

# FOLLOWING FATIMA

*a 30-day prayer  
journey through  
Yemen's war*

*\*Fatima and her family and friends are completely fictional and are merely inspired by current events in Yemen. The story, all names, characters, and incidents described in this guide are fictitious. No identification with actual people (living or deceased) is intended or should be inferred.*





# ARABIA FELIX

*“Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah. And all from Sheba (modern day Yemen) will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the LORD.” Isaiah 60:6*

Pray that Noah’s legacy of faithfulness to the LORD and that the Queen of Sheba’s testimony as to God’s greatness will resonate in Yemeni hearts and minds today.

Pray that Yemenis will recognize how far they have fallen from former glories as God’s refinement in their lives and His call on them to be happy in Christ. Pray that in their grief, Yemenis will sense that the Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in Spirit (Psalm 34:18).

Pray and meditate on Isaiah 1:16-18 over Yemen, that Yemenis may learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause. “Come now, let us reason together, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow.”

Pray for Yemenis as Jesus does in Luke 4:18-19, that they will receive his message of “good news to the poor, liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people.”

*January 2011.* Before the current war in Yemen began, twelve year old Fatima\* and her family were living a fairly happy life. It was their own “Arabia Felix.” Sure, Yemen had its problems. They faced a large-scale impending water shortage due to the country’s addiction to qat, a narcotic plant. The government suffered corruption and the country’s economy was not strong. But for Fatima and her family, life in Sanaa was routine and normal. She attended a girls’ school down the street from her home. Their large extended family offered the comforts of companionship and mutual support. Her dad was a taxi driver and provided enough for the family, which was comprised of her grandmother, mother, two sisters (Aisha and Heba) and her younger brother Fuad. During Eids (holidays) she would get candy or new clothes and visit all of her cousins. Her little brother annoyed her sometimes, and she looked up to her two older sisters. Fatima enjoyed a happy childhood in Yemen with a family who loved her.

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Yemen is one of the oldest civilizations in the world. According to tradition, two Biblical events are connected to Yemen: Noah’s son Shem reportedly founded the capital, Sanaa, Yemen. And Solomon’s famous visitor, the Queen of Sheba, was from Yemen. Like the Queen of Sheba (of the Sabaeans), the Romans were amazed by Yemen’s wealth based in its spice trade. The Romans called Yemen “Arabia Felix,” or Happy Arabia. However, by 500 A.D. Yemen’s economy fell into despair as Rome traded by sea routes and abandoned Yemen’s overland spice-trading routes. Today Yemen is the most impoverished nation in the Arab world and home to the worst humanitarian crisis in modern history. Food is scarce. Cholera has spread across the country rapidly. Bombs fall on a regular basis.

On *January 27, 2013*, Fatima's sister, Aisha, came home from her University classes breathlessly telling her family about the events of her day. All the students had walked out of their classes to march in the streets. "I painted signs for the boys to carry! We are demanding an end to the corruption of Saleh!" she had defiantly stated. Fatima's parents were not enthused. Saleh may be corrupt, they explained, but he rules with authority and keeps order. "Better to deal with the devil you know than the devil you don't know," her mom said with foreboding. Fatima could tell that her parents wished for more prosperity for Yemen but worried about the instability changes could bring.

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President Ali Abdullah Saleh had been President of Yemen for about thirty years when the Arab Spring came to Yemen in 2012. Protestors demanded that he step down due to government corruption and bad economic conditions. Saleh finally made his exit after a nearly successful assassination attempt but remained very influential in Yemeni politics until his assassination in December 2017.

His vice president, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, became president and convened the National Dialogue Conference along with various other leaders. They began a two-year process of drafting a constitution and making way for a representative government in Yemen. Sadly, the plans they made were never implemented. Forces loyal to Saleh and the Houthis (a faction from the north) exploited a power vacuum left by lengthy government formation and today's war began.

## Day 2

# ARAB SPRING

*"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Colossians 3:13*

Pray for the fatigue of war to bring about a spirit of willingness to reconcile among the various factions.

Pray that Yemenis would leave vengeance to God and seek peace, "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'" Romans 12:19

Begin praying towards the end of the war. Pray for university students because they are tomorrow's leaders of Yemen. They are disillusioned. Pray their heartbreak will turn to wisdom for future leadership. Pray that even now God is giving them wisdom about Yemen's political future and deep convictions regarding honesty, leadership and peace.

Pray that freedom of religion will become part of Yemen's political future and for peace so the church can more easily spread across Yemen.

As we pray over the leaders of Yemen, let us remember that Revelation 1:5-6 proclaims that Jesus is the "prince of the Kings of the earth" and that he is making believers "kings and priests to God. To God be the glory and dominion for ever and ever."

# HOUTHIS

*“A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so also you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.”*  
*John 13:35*

Pray that the fierce independence of Zaydis would translate into a spirit of spiritual independence that leaves freedom for them to identify with Christ.

Pray for Yemeni believers to demonstrate unity through love, just as Jesus prayed for them in John 13:35, and that their love will serve as a powerful testimony in a divided society.

Pray for the Houthis to become zealous for the cause of Christ rather than those things for which they are zealous today.

Pray that their loud anti-Christian rhetoric would prompt Yemenis to investigate the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

As Houthis rule over Yemenis with corruption, violence and greed, and as Saudis bomb without mercy, pray for God to shower His mercy on Yemenis in the confidence of Ephesians 2:4, “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us.”

*September 2014.* Fatima remembers when the Houthis began to invade Sanaa. Fatima’s sister Aisha had felt frustrated to see the Wedding Hall spray painted with the slogan on her wedding day: “Death to America! Death to Israel! Damn the Jews!” Then some Houthis stopped by the party to demand a bribe not to disrupt their celebration. The Houthis didn’t come to Sanaa in a single day. They came over time and with increasing intensity until they ran everything in town. Fatima’s family had once been proud of its connections to Yemen’s former president, but now they kept it as secret as they could. Since the Houthis arrived in town, talk of the Quran and her faith seems different to Fatima. Quranic mantras have gone from background noise, as omnipresent as the air she breathes, to being used as a weapon. Saudi Arabia is home to Mecca, the holiest site in Islam, but now they are bombing her city regularly. Meanwhile, the Houthis preach sermons about holy war and martyrdom. She is confused by how all the warring factions seem to rely on Islam as their inspiration and justification. When visiting Mecca Muslims wear white to symbolize their unity. But she wonders, in all these Muslim hearts, “Where is the brotherhood? Does God wish us all to kill each other?”

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Yemen is home to a unique brand of Islam called Zaydism that exists almost exclusively in Yemen. The Zaydis, also sometimes called “fivers,” spilt with Sunni Islam in the 9<sup>th</sup> century when they chose to follow Zayd, the younger son of the 4<sup>th</sup> Imam (Muslim leader) rather than the previous imam’s older son. Zaydis controlled Northern Yemen for about 1,000 years until 1962 and some Zaydis, known as the Houthis, continue to claim their independence to this day. The Houthis have been actively fighting the Yemeni government on and off since 2004. In 2014, the Houthis took advantage of a power vacuum left by the Arab Spring and took control of Sanaa and much of Yemen. In addition to fighting the government for control in Yemen, Houthis are vocal in their opposition to America, Christians and Jews. The Saudis feel particularly threatened by the growth of Houthi power to their South and have responded aggressively against them. Many Yemenis have been caught in the crossfire.

# SAUDI ARABIA

*“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” Psalm 23:4*

As Yemenis endure nights of terror under bombing raids, pray that the Lord will meet them there with comfort and words of eternal life.

Pray for Saudis - that the Lord will call them to repentance. Pray they will show mercy on Yemeni civilians. Pray that as the Lord works in Yemen, Yemeni Christians will take the gospel to Mecca.

Pray Psalms 27: 1 over Yemenis, “The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?”

Pray with Isaiah 35:3-5, may His Spirit “Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.”

Though Yemenis long for political peace, pray that they will also long for spiritual peace as described in John 14:27, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

Pray that the faith and courage of Yemeni believers will draw others to Christ.

*April 2015.* Fatima can’t sleep tonight. The nightly sounds of bombs falling throughout the city leaves her terrified... “Our house could be next... aren’t there Houthis just down the street from us? What if the Saudis miss them and hit us?” So her family huddles in their living room, in pitch dark, waiting for the sun to come up when they can finally get some sleep. This is the third night in a row they’ve sat awake in the dark in fear. Yesterday, Fatima heard her mother talking with a neighbor on the phone about a four-year old girl who had been pulled from the rubble of an apartment building in Faj Attan the morning after a night of bombing. She was the only survivor in her family. Her parents, five siblings and uncle were among the 12 civilians killed in the blast. Fatima’s mother angrily asked her neighbor, “Which of those children was a Houthi fighter?! How could they?” “The four year old’s eyes were still swollen shut, but they believe she will live.” her mother reported. “But as an orphan.” thought Fatima, “I don’t know if I would rather live all alone or have died with my family.”

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Saudi Arabia views the Houthis as a major threat to their national security. The Houthis are Shia, like Iran, and the Saudis suspect Iran is seeking to gain footing on their Southern border. They, along with some Western support, have taken a very aggressive stance by bombing Houthis wherever they may be found, even if that means in populated cities. The result has been the tragic death of scores of civilian Yemenis due to miscalculation or wanton disregard for civilian life, depending on whom you ask. Saudi Arabia has also used food as a weapon. They have closed airports and blockaded ports in an effort to weaken Houthi fighters. As a result, civilians are trapped inside Yemen without enough food.



*May 2015.* Fatima was in the kitchen preparing tea for her father and his guest. They were discussing their plans to have Fatima's sister, Heba, marry her father's friend's son. But, then their conversation turned to recent events in Taiz. "My uncle in Taiz told me that the Houthis have taken over Cairo Castle and the Saudis are bombing it to flush them out," her father's friend reported. Her father was shocked, "That castle was built in the 12th century! Are they trying to destroy us and the memory of our forefathers at the same time!?" Her father's friend retorted, "This isn't the first war that castle has weathered in the last 1,000 years and it won't be the last." Fatima's family had travelled to Taiz once, back when she was very young. From the top of the Castle she could see the whole beautiful city of Taiz. She remembers thinking, as a young girl there, "This must be what God sees when he looks down... a grand beautiful city full of thousands of souls."

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Taiz is an ancient and major city that lies at the foot of Sabr Mountain in the Southern-most part of the former North Yemen. Yemen's most recent president, Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi, named Taiz the "cultural capital" of Yemen, noting that Yemen's finest artisans and scholars hail from this prominent city. It is home to about 600,000 people, many of the most educated in Yemen. Taizi people are marked among Yemenis by a unique friendliness and openness to outside influences. However, Taiz has been a victim of a tug-of-war since the war began alternating between Houthi shellings and Saudi bombs.

## Day 5

# TAIZ

*"The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation." Psalm 18:2*

Pray for Muslim Taizi hearts to be opened to the gospel and opposed to the idea of persecuting those who find Christ.

Pray that the gospel would root in Taiz, a major "artery" into Southern Yemen, and then spread to all the surrounding villages and cities.

Pray that God will redeem Taizi arts, scholarship and friendliness for the sake of the gospel.

Praise God for his heart as displayed in Jonah 4:11, "Should I not care about the great city of Nineveh, which has more than 120,000 people who can't tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well?" Imagine a view of Taiz from the top of Cairo Castle and pray over the great city of Taiz.

Day 6

# ADEN

*"There is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." Romans 13:1*

Pray for His spirit of peace and protection over the many Yemenis in Aden who are trying to escape Yemen or survive there.

While praising God for the presence of His people in Aden over the years, pray also that as the gospel works its way through Yemen, it will be by organic growth and not as a foreign import.

Pray Psalm 56:9-11 for protection over Aden, “The very day I call for help, the tide of battle turns. My enemies flee. This one thing I know: God is for me. I am trusting God—oh, praise his promises. I am not afraid of anything mere man can do to me. Yes, praise his promises.”

*September 2015.* “Hadi’s home!,” Aisha casually declared as she walked in the door to her childhood home for a visit. “What do you mean? Did you change your name to Hadi?” Fatima laughed. “Of course not!” Aisha responded. “Apparently President Hadi has triumphantly returned from Saudi Arabia to the capital of the country he is president of. But of course,” she laughed, “he had to get the Saudis to get it back for him and then move the capital from Sanaa to Aden to do it!” Their mother broke in, “Girls, there is nothing funny about this. The people of Aden have suffered so much since March. I wonder if anything is left in Aden for President Hadi to return to. And now, what if he tries to take Sanaa back? What will become of us while they fight in our streets?” With that, their laughter stopped.

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Aden is best known in the West for being the site of the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole. As a valuable port city on the Red Sea, Aden has been conquered and controlled many times by various peoples. It has also been more dramatically impacted by and open to outside influence than most other areas of Yemen. During the days of British control, Aden was home to over twenty churches, mostly made up of foreigners. Since then those churches have virtually all closed their doors, leaving only a small Catholic and Protestant contingent in Aden. Christ’s Church is an Anglican church in Aden, and its history mirrors the modern history of Southern Yemen. The British, who had taken Aden as a protectorate, built the church in 1863. In 1967, the British withdrew from Yemen, and the new communist government of South Yemen seized the church building in 1970. When the North and South reunified in 1990, the Church was allowed to reopen as a clinic for mothers and infants. Aden has been a strategic city in the ongoing battles in Yemen. When the Houthis took Sanaa, President Hadi fled to Aden. As Houthis advanced on Aden, President Hadi escaped the country by boat. When the Saudi coalition re-took Aden, Hadi returned to Aden, his birthplace, and it now serves as the defacto capital of President Hadi’s government, allied with Saudi Arabia.

*October 2015.* Fatima and her younger brother, Fuad, don't go to school much anymore out of fear of being caught up in street violence. And she overheard her father tell her mother that the Houthis were radicalizing Fuad's school. Sometimes her older sister works with her on math or reading out of boredom or because her mother insists, but Fatima's formal education has ceased. Fatima's mother is so proud of her girls' ability to read since she cannot, and has instilled in her a desire to learn. Fatima heard about a heroic group of teachers in Taiz and wished they lived near her. After their school was shelled, a wealthy man donated a building he owned to be used as a school. A group of teachers donated their time for free after the salaries stopped being paid. It's overcrowded and they have no books or supplies, but how they must love learning! Fatima imagines that she might be a teacher one day...if she ever gets to go to school again.

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Since the war began, education in Yemen has suffered tremendously. Currently more than 2,500 schools are out of use with over 65% of those being damaged by attacks, 27% being permanently closed and at least 7% being seized for military use or as shelters for displaced persons. Of the limited number of higher education institutes, one study by a professor at Sanaa University revealed that at least a dozen public university buildings were completely destroyed and 25 partially destroyed. The damage inflicted on students, staff and families is even more severe. Reportedly over 2 million school-age children were not attending school during the 2017-2018 school year. The inability to attend can be attributed to a number of reasons including lack of access, lack of transportation, lack of funds, or simply the fear of more attacks or of children being kidnapped or recruited from school to fight in the war. Of the government-employed faculty and staff still working in educational institutions, at least 1.2 million have not received a salary since 2017. Other schools have drastically reduced salaries in order to compensate for their crippling financial circumstances.

## Day 7

# SCHOOLS

*“Show me your ways, LORD, teach me your paths.”*

*Psalms 25:4*

Imagine a generation of adults whose formative years of education have been replaced with the devastating realities of war and starvation, and let that drive you to pray earnestly over Yemeni schools.

Pray for the Yemeni believers who are teachers that they would teach with the love and wisdom of Christ.

Pray that Yemeni believers will have the energy and resource to develop their own learning groups to fill the void of education.

Most certainly it is not the Lord's will that future Yemenis be foolish, pray Proverbs 1:7 over Yemen's children, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, fools despise wisdom and instruction.” Yemeni children long for wisdom and instruction, ask God to provide it for them.



# CHILD SOLDIERS

*“See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.” Matthew 18:10*

Pray that Jesus will call little Yemeni children to Himself and give them the kingdom of God.

Pray that the Church in Yemen would rise up and actively pursue justice and freedom for these children. Ask the Lord to give them resource and opportunity to step in and help rescue these children even as they too suffer the effects of the war.

Pray that God would convict the hearts of leaders to send the boys home to their families. Remember Luke 17:2, “It would be better for them to have a millstone hung around their necks and be thrown into the sea than to cause one of these little ones to stumble.”

Pray for mental healing for the boys over what they’ve seen and done during war. Only through the renewal of their minds in Christ can these boys grow up to be fruitful men.

*November 2015.* The day Fuad disappeared is forever seared into Fatima’s brain. Fuad had gone to play with a friend a few blocks over. He didn’t return for dinner, so her mom had called the friend’s mother who confirmed that he’d left for home hours ago. About that time, Fatima’s father came home from searching, pale and shaking. He recounted what he’d learned about Fuad. A group of older teenagers, AK-47s strapped across their chests, approached him on his way home from visiting his friend and told him he was being conscripted to fight with them. They needed him, a 10 year-old boy, to help them carry their gear when they fought. Fatima’s heart broke as she thought of him. She knew how afraid he’d felt huddled in her living room during the bombing raids. How on earth was he surviving in the frontlines of war?

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The total number of children fighting in Yemen’s war is unknown, but conservative estimates indicate thousands have been recruited or forced into military service. The recruitment of children is a well-orchestrated strategy rather than a happenstance of a tragic war. Some among the warring parties have regional representatives who have monthly quotas and cleverly devised centers hosting sermons and lectures calling boys to join the fight. Others take advantage of the failing infrastructure and the fact that most children are no longer in school as a result of the war. Some offer monetary recompense to desperate families for their child’s martyrdom in the war with amounts averaging no more than \$80 to \$120USD per child.

As Saudi Arabia or Western forces bomb and drone strike, the “militants” who are killed are often children who don’t understand what they’re fighting over. Thousands of Yemeni children have been killed by “rebel forces” since the beginning of the war, but at times the “soldiers” committing such atrocities are no more than children themselves.

# PREPARED SOIL

*“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” Psalm 23:4*

*December 2015.* Fatima’s 18 year-old friend Samira has suffered as much loss, if not more than, Fatima and her family have. Samira’s mother died of cholera, her little brother was conscripted to fight, and her new husband, Nabeel, has no job. Samira is sad, like all Fatima’s other friends. But Samira has a unique patience and resolve to have hope that Fatima longs for in her own heart. Whenever Fatima cries or expresses fear, Samira offers to pray with her. This is totally foreign to Fatima. No one else prays with her. It’s awkward, but Fatima senses a profound peace when they pray together. And so, in her bed at night, Fatima has begun saying prayers of her own - not those prescribed by tradition or the Quran, not during her five routine times of prayer, but real prayers pouring out to God from her own heart. She finds some comfort in prayer now and wonders where Samira learned how to do that.

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We must pray for more prayer over Yemen. Pray that God will raise up individuals and prayer groups in the worldwide church committed to fasting and praying for Yemen.

Ask that His Spirit will prompt Brazilian, Filipino, Korean, Chinese, American, Greek, British and South African Christians to pray. Ask that He will call out Christians from every country – and especially Arabic-speaking Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan – to pray for Yemen. The more of us that are praying, the more glory we are able to afford to the Lord as He does miraculous works of salvation in Yemen!

Pray through these Scriptures:

“The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself interceded for us with groaning too deep for words.” Romans 8:26

“If two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my father in heaven.” Matthew 18:19

Also: Ephesians 6:18; Matthew 21:22; John 17:1-26; Psalms 145:18; Proverbs 15:29; Colossians 4:2

When a farmer is preparing a ground for planting, he plows it. He digs it up and removes the big rocks. He agitates it by shaking it up. In the same way, spiritual soil is being prepared in Yemen. Yemen’s spiritual soil is hard and rocky. They are virtually 100% Muslim. Their entire education is laced with Islamic teaching. They have heard virtually nothing of Christ outside of the lies they are told of Him by their religious leaders. Yemen’s people are oppressed by every social ill: addiction to a narcotic, violence, poverty, hunger, war, radicalism, lack of education, child marriage, polygamy, corruption, lack of water, lack of electricity, and lack of medical care. Can you imagine a darker, more difficult place or a rockier, more compact soil?

But, praise God! Beneath that dry cracked land, there is good rich soil. As church father Tertullian said, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” If that is so, then Yemen has rich soil indeed. As early as the sixth century, an entire Christian community was martyred in Yemen. Since that time, many other Christians have given their lives for the gospel in Yemen. And every time their blood was spilled, it cried out to God for justice. And we know that in God’s economy, justice can be achieved for the perpetrators by their faith in Christ’s sacrifice on their behalf. So, how do we till the soil to aerate that quality soil? We do it by prayer. We pray, and we call others to pray.



*“When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous, but terror to evildoers.” Proverbs 21:15*

Pray that the gospel will spread even to the most remote people living across Hadramaut and al-Mahra states. As they travel and roam, pray that they will take the gospel with them.

Pray that Tarim will become known as a center for Christian education.

Pray against the spread of Islamic extremism across Yemen. Pray for the kind of stability required to keep it at bay.

*April 2016.* Fatima was pleased to hear the news that Al Qaeda had been so easily driven out of Mukalla, but worried about where they might have fled. So far as she could tell, AQAP couldn't be destroyed, only re-located. Fatima was 13 years old when she first heard of Al Qaeda. She was so excited that day back in 2012. Her father had come home and quickly packed the whole family into his taxi and driven them over to Sabaen Square to watch the soldiers practice for the big upcoming National Unity Day parade. Thankfully traffic had been slow. They were still a half-mile away when they heard a heart stopping BOOM. For days after that, her father and mother had visited the relatives they knew of several of the 100 soldiers who had been killed that day. When Fatima had inquired who would do such a thing, her mother had answered with anger, “Al Qaeda.”

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The Hadramaut is the eastern area of Yemen that includes the states of Hadramaut and the sparsely populated al-Mahra. Hadramis are very tribal and remote. The cities are often walled in for protection against outsiders. The capital, al-Mukalla, is a beautiful port city. Tarim, a city known for its Islamic education, is also located in Hadramaut. The remote, religious, and tribal nature of the area has made it a safe haven for Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and ISIS. In April 2016, however, Yemeni-Saudi forces were able to re-take Mukalla back from the AQAP. Residents and local officials reported that about 800 AQAP fighters were killed and the rest fled. About 2,000 Yemeni and Emirati troops had advanced into Mukalla and quickly took control of its seaport, oil terminal and airport, and set up checkpoints.

## TWO YEMENS

*“The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation.” Psalm 18:2*

It's *May 4, 2016*. Fatima and her family sing Happy Birthday to her sister, Aisha. She turns 24 today. She and her husband have come to visit. As she does each year, Fatima's mom recounts going into labor with Aisha at home while Southern bombs fell on Sanaa. Fatima's grandmother had blared Ahmad Fathi's music in an effort to conceal the bombing from her laboring daughter, but Fatima assures the group she wasn't fooled. "The bombs weren't keeping time with Ahmad Fathi's beat," her mom always jokes. Gazing at Aisha she always says, "And then we named you Aisha because it means "living" and we were so glad that deadly war ended so quickly." This year the declaration carries a little less weight because now they've endured so many nights of deadly bombs that not even the songs of Ahmad Fathi provide comfort.

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In 1990, after almost twenty years of negotiation, North and South Yemen unified into the Yemen we know today. But after only four years, the South became dissatisfied by the corruption in the national government and launched a brief campaign for its independence. However, Former President Ali Abdullah Saleh recruited an alliance of the many factions of Yemen to put the revolt down. Then in 2009, Tariq al-Fadhil, a prominent Southern leader, joined the southern secessionist movement and gave it new life. The Southern separatists have a strong following in the states of Lahij, Aden, Abyan, Shabwah, Hadramaut, and Al Dali'. The movement's leaders consistently argue that theirs is a peaceful movement. However, as tempers have flared over the years against perceived ill treatment by the North, riots have erupted in major Southern cities with Aden at the helm. As today's war has dragged on, the Saudi-allied Yemeni government has established itself in the South, while the Houthis have taken much of the North, including Sanaa. Some degree of tension has always existed between the North and South in Yemen, and during post-war negotiations, these divisions will certainly be a real concern when attempting to establish national stability.

Pray that Southerners will put violence aside and seek to work for Yemen's greater good.

Pray that God will defend Southern victims of injustice by rooting out corruption in the national government, so that the South can live peacefully and fruitfully as part of one Yemen. Or should God will two separate nations, pray that such a separation might occur in a peaceful manner.

Pray that God would bring true reconciliation between North and South Yemenis as people from each side of the conflict learn of forgiveness and peace in Christ.

As the war wages on, the Southern Separatist movement may once again gain ground. Pray that the Lord's hand will orchestrate the political restructuring or stability of Yemen according to His will so that His kingdom would come and His will be done in Yemen as it is in heaven.



# THE DISPLACED

*“You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.”*  
*Exodus 23:9*

Pray Psalm 39:12 over Yemenis in foreign lands, “Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry; hold not your peace at my tears! For I am a sojourner with you, a guest, like all my fathers.”

Pray for believers who are ministering to Yemeni refugees that they will have resource, creativity, and energy. Pray they find open hearts to the gospel. Praise God for their confidence in Philippians 3:20, “But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Pray for the refugee camps in Djibouti and also for those who have fled to other places such as Cairo and Amman.

June 2016. When Fatima’s older sister Heba married in the summer of 2015, her wedding was small and simple. Fatima’s parents had secured a husband for her from a long-time friend of her father’s. Heba reported back that her husband was kind to her and that she was happy. Almost immediately, Heba was pregnant with her first child. Her husband insisted that his son would not be safe in Yemen. He managed to buy a ticket on a small fishing boat leaving the port at Aden. Saying goodbye to Heba was terrible. They felt sure they’d never see her again. But miraculously, Heba’s husband called them two weeks after they left. “We made it, but it’s so hot,” he reported, “and we are living in Markazi refugee camp. We have no privacy and I had to walk many miles to charge my phone and call you. But there is a maternity clinic here. Heba and the baby will be safe.” He explained that he planned to try to get some work so they could rent a place in Djibouti City. But he wasn’t hopeful. The unemployment rate in Djibouti is 60%.

Today Heba’s husband called again, “It’s a boy!” he exclaimed, “We named him Mahmoud!” Later, Heba told her mother that during her last routine visit to the clinic before her due date, she was diagnosed with preeclampsia and her doctor ordered an immediate Caesarean section. Had they stayed in Yemen, she was sure, they both would have died.

*\*Fatima and her family and friends are completely fictional.*

As the effects of war have increased so has the strength of the desire of Yemenis to leave Yemen. The airports have been closed for months, so travel by boat to Djibouti has been one of the more viable options for fleeing the war. Many Yemenis have made the difficult decision to spend all their savings and leave their extended family networks to secure a seat on a small, dangerous boat. These refugees arrive in Djibouti to find a harsh environment - camps or overly crowded rented rooms. The months of waiting for peace and return have turned into years. Many Yemeni families have been holding out for visas to other countries that are later denied or only given to a select few in their family. These families then must make the decision to be broken apart to give the few a better future or to return to a war zone together.

*August 2016.* Fatima's mother keeps telling her not to worry, but she can tell her mom is very concerned. It started as a normal upset stomach, but her grandmother hasn't gotten out of bed in weeks now. She's lost a lot of weight and sometimes has frightening seizures. Fatima's baby cousin died of cholera last month, so she knows it's serious. Aisha and her husband had tried taking her grandmother to the hospital last week, but when they arrived, they discovered people crammed into hallways just lying on the floor. Her sister worried that they were more likely to catch something deadly at the hospital than have any hope of quality treatment. So they returned home to wait and hope for the best. "It's in the water" people keep saying. They always boil their water, but you can't bathe in boiling water. "Maybe she caught it taking a bath," Fatima conjectures, "maybe I will get it soon too." And with that thought, she gets up to go spend time by her grandmother's bedside.

*\*Fatima and her family and friends are completely fictional.*

Due to a lack of good governance, Yemen's sanitation systems are failing. Without sufficient disposal of human waste, cholera is able to spread through contaminated food and water. Since 2016, more than a million suspected cases of cholera have been reported in Yemen while the threat of another epidemic looms over each new day. The very young and very old are at the highest risk of death. Although the disease is easily treatable by rehydration, Yemen lacks a medical infrastructure to address such a large-scale outbreak, and rehydration isn't easy when the water supply is contaminated. Cholera isn't the only disease making the rounds in Yemen. Without vaccination campaigns, old foes are returning: measles, elephantiasis, diphtheria, dengue fever and other illnesses are also on the rise with little access to treatment.

## Day 13

# CHOLERA

*"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed." 1 Peter 2:24*

Pray over Yemenis with Jeremiah 17:14, "Heal them, O Lord, and they will be healed; save them and they will be saved, for you are the one I praise."

Pray James 5:4-15 over the Yemeni church, "Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven."

As Yemenis are healed of disease, pray they will also see salvation of their souls as Isaiah 38:16-17 describes, "You restored me to health and let me live. Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back."

Pray for Christian medical personnel to have access to Yemenis and plenty of resources that they may minister to them in the name of Jesus.

As you pray, remember Matthew 8:2-3, "And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.' And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, 'I will; be clean.' And immediately his leprosy was cleansed." Pray for healing miracles in Yemen.



# UNEMPLOYMENT+INFLATION=DEPRESSION

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

*September 2016.* At first Fatima thought nothing of her father’s increasingly frequent days off from work. But one day she realized that he hadn’t worked in several weeks. She asked her mother why he wasn’t working, and her mother explained that gas prices were going up and fewer people could afford to take a taxi. Whenever the Saudis tried to infuse cash into the Central Bank of Yemen to stabilize inflation, the Houthis retaliated by raising fuel prices. This increase in prices also padded Houthi pockets. So hopelessly, Fatima’s father just stopped trying. With no family income, Fatima noticed her food portions begin to decrease and household items being sold off one by one. Finally, the big item was sold: her father’s taxi. The day he sold his taxi, no one in the family spoke of it. But, Fatima will never forget seeing her father sitting on the *mafrāj* for hours staring blankly into space as one whose shocked grief was so deep he couldn’t cry. From that day forward, Fatima’s father was never the same.

*\*Fatima and her family and friends are completely fictional.*

Pray for stability and an improved economy so that men can work hard and support their families again.

Pray for the Spirit to convict men to turn to Him, rather than to guns in their distress.

Pray for the growth of men’s prayer groups and Bible study sessions. Pray 1 Peter 5:10 over believing men, “And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”

As depression rates grow, suicide is an increasing temptation to Yemeni men. Pray for the birth of hope in their hearts through Christ.

Pray for a spirit of innovation to rise up among Yemenis. Pray that ingenuity and creativity would replace depression and hopelessness.

Try as they might, Yemeni men are in an uphill battle to support their large families in a war-torn and failed economy. In 2010 Yemen’s unemployment rate was at 18%. Just before the Saudi-Houthi war, that rate rose to 40%. Since the war began, the government has failed to pay the salaries of thousands of Yemeni workers. With no salaries, the workers can’t pay shop keepers, taxi drivers or anyone else for goods and services. As a result, the economy has ground to a halt. Meanwhile runaway inflation has dramatically increased the cost of goods. With no job and high prices, who can earn and provide for his family? Yemenis gaze upon fully stocked shelves with no means to acquire food. In the face of their starving children and no options, the men who aren’t rage-filled fighters are in a deep and hopeless depression.

# THE DIASPORA

*“The Lord watches over the sojourners.” Psalm 146:9*

Pray for the Yemeni diaspora and the heartache they feel as they watch their beloved country destroyed, as they grieve the loss of loved ones from afar, and as they do whatever they can to try to help their struggling relatives while also often struggling in their own new homelands.

Pray that Christians will minister to and labor boldly among these diaspora populations. Pray that new Yemeni believers might get the Good News to their Yemeni relatives.

Pray that leaders in their adopted homelands would look to them for wisdom on how to best assist Yemen towards peace.

*October 2016.* Fatima groaned. It was her 2nd cousin, Mina, buzzing on WhatsApp again. “Twitter is saying there was another bombing in Sanaa! 140 people are dead!” she had written in a panic. She messaged Fatima every day from Michigan about this time to ask for the news. Fatima didn’t know what to tell her - there had been a bombing on a funeral. Her family had been home at the time. Some friends’ fathers and brothers were dead. And she’d done nothing but sit in the house all day...again. Fatima used to be thrilled to hear from Mina. It was a rare occasion to get a message from her busy cousin. And Fatima loved to talk with her about the idea of joining her in Detroit one day. She’d even googled Detroit and had chosen Wayne State University as her dream destination. But today she didn’t really want to sense the pity in Mina’s tone and didn’t feel like fighting the jealousy she felt about Mina’s luck of not having to live in Yemen right now. Plus, it irritated Fatima that Mina often reminded her that America’s president had established a ban on new Yemeni visas. It felt like she was really just trying to say, “don’t ask me to help you get here.” But Fatima had to respond of course. Mina’s family had begun sending them money after Fuad’s disappeared. Not much money, but enough to keep them from starving. Apparently America was very expensive and Mina’s family was also scraping by. “At least they aren’t being bombed or forced to fight,” thought Fatima. Then she picked up her phone and once again greeted her cousin.

*\*Fatima and her family and friends are completely fictional.*

They seem like the lucky ones. Those of the Yemeni diaspora are scattered around the world having left Yemen before the war. They now catch rare glimpses of Yemen’s war on TV and through the eyes of family members with whom they still talk via WhatsApp on their phone. One of the largest diaspora populations of Yemenis is in the UK where 80,000 Yemenis live. They are one of the longest-residing Muslim groups in the UK. Yemenis also live heavily in the other Middle Eastern countries such as Oman, Egypt, UAE and Bahrain. There are about 30,000 Yemenis living in America. Most Yemeni-Americans live in Dearborn or Detroit, Michigan. The ancient Yemeni Jews have mostly emigrated to Israel today due to a repatriation project in 1950 called "Operation Magic Carpet."



# DEATH AND GRIEF

*“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” Psalm 34:18*

Pray that the Lord will bless those who mourn in Yemen with the knowledge of His comfort through Jesus.

Pray for the day that Yemenis, through Jesus, can experience Revelation 21:4, “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

Pray that the hope Yemeni believers demonstrate during loss will have a profound eternal effect on those around them. Pray that many will seek out the hope they have.

Pray Psalm 147:3 over Yemenis, “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”

Pray against death in Yemen, that it will snatch not one more Yemeni before he or she hears the Good News.

*November 2016.* On the day her little brother Fuad was born, Fatima remembers how her father whispered into his right ear, “God is great, there is no God but Allah. Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. Come to prayer.” That’s what Fatima reflects on as her mother wails beside her watching Fuad’s coffin carried through the street towards the cemetery. He had turned 11 since he’d been gone. He didn’t want to fight, but they needed someone to carry their supplies. They just took him. They didn’t ask. But her mother had mentioned that he might get a meal each day, which was better than staying home. Now rather than the words spoken at his birth, Fatima hears mourners mumbling as he passes by, “O God, admit him to Paradise and protect him from the torment of the grave and the torment of Hell-fire; make his grave spacious and fill it with light.” “Can Hell be worse than this?” Fatima wondered, “At least Fuad’s death was quick - when the bomb hit his caravan. My death will be a slow starvation.”

*\*Fatima and her family and friends are completely fictional.*

Yemen’s infrastructure is so damaged, that it is impossible to know how many to-date have actually died since the war began. At least 50,000 have died in actual combat. But thousands more have died or are dying from starvation, sickness, and as collateral in crossfire. Saudi bombs seeking Houthi stomping grounds have wiped out entire wedding parties, apartment buildings and funeral gatherings. As ports have been closed and opened on a revolving basis, the nation’s population’s food source hangs in the balance. As the Houthis mismanage government and struggle to fund a war with a much stronger power, hospitals, water supplies, and garbage collection have evaporated which has exacerbated the rampant spread of disease. Parents are choosing between feeding their families and buying life saving medications. Either choice means death. Death is pervasive in Yemen.

## GATE OF TEARS

*March 2017.* Fatima sat down with her tea and noticed her father's newspaper on the floor. He still read it sometimes even though he knew the Houthis controlled everything written in it. Today she was horrified by the cover images of dead bodies, including women and children, on the beach in Hodeidah. The headline read, *More than 40 Somali refugees killed in Saudi Helicopter Attack Off Yemen Coast.* Fatima had never really appreciated the Somalis in Yemen. Her parents had taught her to avoid them at all cost and she had been trained to believe them to be dishonest. To Fatima, they were just poor people who did the jobs no one else would do. "But in war time," she thought to herself, "Yemenis and Somalis are suffering together. We may look different on the outside," she glanced down at the paper, "but we all bleed red."

*\*Fatima and her family and friends are completely fictional.*

Bab El Mandeb, translated "Gate of Tears" is appropriately named. It is a strait in the Gulf of Aden between Yemen and Djibouti. Asian exporters must pass through it before approaching the Suez Canal to get their goods to Western markets. Most economic powerhouse countries watch this waterway carefully as it so profoundly impacts their trade options. But for those of us who pray for Yemen, Bab El Mandeb is an important focus because of its human cargo. Migrants traverse its waters as they flee to and from Djibouti and Yemen. At its narrowest points, the trip is an 18 mile journey by boat that takes over 15 hours. Between 50,000 and 100,000 Ethiopians and Somalis have arrived in Yemen by boat each year since the war began. As Yemenis flee towards Djibouti they pass boats hauling Ethiopians and Somalis the other direction towards Yemen. Meanwhile, other East Africans who had long lived and worked in Yemen are trying to flee back to their homeland. For East African migrants, life is one long run from bad to worse and back again.

*"..who knows but that you have come to your position for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14*

Pray for the East Africans traversing the Gate of Tears, "The LORD watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked." Psalm 146:9

Pray on behalf of East Africans feeling trapped in Yemen, "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." Jeremiah 29:7

Some of the foreigners living in Yemen are Christians from Ethiopia and other countries. Pray that they will bear witness to Christ at this time. Pray that their unity with the Yemeni church will be a witness as well. Like Esther, maybe the Lord has put these believing refugees in Yemen for such a time as this.



# CHILD BRIDES

*“Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children...” Psalm 127:3-4*

Pray for Yemeni families to work together to provide for each other so that no one has to sell their daughters into early marriage.

Pray against the desire for a child bride. And pray for a shift in how Yemeni culture views women and girls.

Pray for Jesus to establish Himself in Yemen and protect young girls from the abuse that accompanies instability in a war-ravaged country.

Pray that laws would soon be in place to prohibit child brides and underage marriage.

Pray physical protection and emotional peace over the thousands of young girls who are now married against their will.

Pray that believers in Yemen would intentionally and aggressively minister to, support and counsel families who are considering this step as the only means of survival.

*June 2017.* When she was in third grade, Fatima’s best school friend approached her desk one day to bid her farewell. “Where are you going?” Fatima asked her. “Tomorrow is my wedding day,” the 10 year old told her, “I won’t be in school anymore. I’ll miss you.” As the war has worn on, Fatima’s mother has reassured her of the family’s commitment not to marry her off before she is willing. Her parents know all too well the struggles of marrying so young. Her mom had lost a baby in childbirth and nearly died herself at the age of 15. Aisha and Heba were each 19 when they married and Fatima enjoys the comfort of knowing she still had a few years before her parents began the search for a husband for her. And yet, it still makes Fatima nervous when she remembers the eve of Aisha’s wedding. Aisha was so nervous that the bride and groom’s mothers arranged to have them “meet” before their wedding day. The groom’s mother had a very large old Sanaa style door with a giant keyhole in it. So Aisha’s mother took her to peep through the keyhole simultaneously with her fiancé on the other side of the door. “What did you think of him?” Fatima had asked her afterwards. “His eyes were brown,” Aisha had answered flatly, “he could have been any boy in Yemen.”

*\*Fatima and her family and friends are completely fictional.*

As the devastation of war increases, families are desperately seeking ways to survive. Marrying their daughters off – sometimes at ages as young as 8 and 9 – provides an immediate source of income via their dowry, as well as long-term expense reduction with one less mouth to feed and sick body to care for. Some parents are also motivated by the idea that a husband would provide better protection for their daughter than they might. As a result the percentage of child brides in Yemen has increased from about 50% before the war to over two-thirds now just two years into the war. These girls suffer physically from the complications of giving birth when they are still children themselves. Before the revolution there was a strong campaign for setting a legal age requirements for marriage. That movement has fallen by the wayside as chaos has gripped Yemen.

*July 2017.* Returning from a visit with her friend Samira, Fatima stormed into her room seething with anger. But she closed the door gently, so as not to alert her family to her anger. How could Samira have told her such a thing?! First of all, the idea that Jesus was the son of God is blasphemy. It could get her killed if anyone knew she said that. Secondly, now that Fatima knew Samira's new belief, she too was in danger just for knowing her! Samira had even tried to offer her a Bible. Did she want to see Fatima killed?! How irresponsible her friend had been! As Fatima calmed down, she also became very sad. Samira was her most comforting, most loving, least selfish friend and now she could never see her again.

*\*Fatima and her family and friends are completely fictional.*

When farmers prepare soil for planting, they must test the soil's pH level. A soil pH level that is too high or too low can lead to plant nutrient deficiency or toxicity. To remedy this problem, farmers add "organic matter" to the soil to improve its structure and increase beneficial microbial activity. For our purposes, to prepare Yemeni soil for planting the seeds of salvation, we must add the gospel to Yemen's soil. Indeed the gospel is an "organic matter" that will work its way through the soil and prepare hearts and minds for the day they are presented with the call to follow Christ. The gospel can and has entered Yemen in many ways: dreams & visions of Jesus, copies of the Bible, Radio, TV & Internet broadcast and the testimony of Yemeni believers. However it enters, it must work its way through Yemeni soil over time, getting the pH level just right for the moment seeds will take root and sprout.

## Day 19

# PLANTING SEEDS

*"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations." Matthew 24:14*

Pray for Yemenis all across the country to meet Jesus in their dreams. Pray that He will speak to them Himself and draw them to Himself. Pray that they will talk to each other about their dreams and come to Christ as whole families and tribes.

There are Bibles in Yemen. Pray that He will get His Word to those who are seeking Him. And pray that His Spirit will prick their hearts and clarify the gospel in their minds as they read.

There are Christian radio and TV broadcasts accessible in Yemen. Pray that He will speak to Yemeni hearts through these broadcasts and connect seekers and new believers to discipleship through these mediums. Pray that He will also use the internet and other Christian media to seeking Yemeni hearts.

Pray that Jesus would reveal Himself to Yemenis through dreams and visions in order to prepare their hearts for the day when His gospel comes to their ears.

Yemeni believers are a varied group. Some live in fear and caution. Pray that He will embolden those fearful believers to step out in faith and share their testimony with Muslim family and friends. Other believers are bold and mature, ready to share their faith even at great cost to themselves. Pray for open doors for them and a continued work of the Spirit in their lives and ministry. Pray that they will continue multiplying themselves and that God would establish leaders who would shepherd His church. Pray that believers will "declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous deeds among all peoples." (Ps. 96:3)

# JESUS IN ISLAM

*“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”*

*John 10:27*

*October 2017.* Fatima hadn’t spoken to Samira in months. She missed her so much, but was too afraid to talk with her anymore. At night as she lay in her bed, she played their conversation over in her mind and began to think about Isa and the unique hope that Samira seemed to have. She had said that she “knew Isa” in such a personal way. What on earth could that mean? Fatima had heard of Isa before because the Quran mentioned him. She knew she couldn’t read the Bible, but reasoned that it was safe to read about Isa in the Quran. She lit a candle, pulled out a Quran and began to search for the name “Isa” in it.

*\*Fatima and her family and friends are completely fictional.*

Muslims believe that Jesus was born to the virgin Mary and that she was blessed (Quran 3:35-37, 42). They believe that Jesus was the “word of God” (Quran 3:45 & 4:171). The Quran describes Jesus performing miracles (Quran 3:49 & 5:110) and describes Him as mercy and truth (Quran 19:21, 34).

However, the Quran also teaches that Jesus was only human (Quran 3:59) and that God could never have a son (Quran 6:101). The Quran is also clear that at the crucifixion, someone other than Christ was actually hanging on the cross. Muslims claim that God took Jesus up to himself on that day, and that he never actually died (Quran 4:157-158). Though the Quran offers some exposure to Jesus (Isa in Arabic) to Yemenis, it does not lay out a path to salvation to them.

Pray that Muslims will explore the idea of the “Word of God” in Islam and find a bridge to Christ in it.

Pray against the enemy’s schemes to distort crucial spiritual truth through Islam.

Pray that Muslims will be increasingly troubled by the many contradictions in the Quran.

Pray that Muslims will find Isa in Islam and follow Him into the Church.



# HUMANITARIAN AID

*“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:2*

Pray for aid workers to have the resources they need, wisdom in their work, secure access to those in need and that their work will honor God in the hearts of those they serve. Pray the following Scriptures over aid workers who often work at great personal risk to themselves:

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”  
Matthew 5:16

“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” John 15:13

“And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” Hebrews 13:16

“God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.” Hebrews 6:10

*April 2018.* Fatima’s mother had noticed that she’d been depressed and bored lately, so she asked Aisha and her husband to take Fatima out to a coffee shop. At the coffee shop, the three of them chatted and watched people coming and going. Their conversation lulled and Fatima could overhear the foreigners sitting at the table next to her. They were wearing Red Cross shirts and their accents sounded Lebanese, “I am shocked,” said one of the men, “Hanna Lahoud was a young man full of life and was widely known and liked. Why would they shoot him as he travelled? What had they to gain? And who did it? Nothing can justify Hanna's murder.” “Will you travel back to St. Charbel Church in Lebanon for his funeral?” asked his friend. “Of course,” the man replied, “I must be there for his sake. Also, we are taking a collection for his wife that I will deliver.” Another tablemate spoke up quietly, “It could have been any one of us.”

*\*Fatima and her family and friends are completely fictional.*

There is a very large chest of money pledged by the international community to finance large-scale aid work in Yemen. Ironically two of the top donors towards aid pledges are Saudi Arabia and the UAE, two countries who are also regularly dropping bombs on Yemenis. And there is a deep longing in the global aid community to help Yemenis in their distress. Unfortunately and despite a profound desire on the part of many organizations and countries to offer aid to Yemenis in need, getting aid into Yemen is tremendously difficult during the war. The Saudis have closed ports just when aid was most needed and they have completely blocked aid access for those living in Houthi controlled areas. Houthis demand bribes from aid agencies and personnel or steal the aid supplies for sale on the black market. On top of those problems, transportation routes are decimated by the war making distribution increasingly difficult if not impossible. Those doctors and aid workers who are courageous enough to work in Yemen do so at great risk. They could be caught in crossfire or kidnapped for ransom.

## WATER

*“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty,  
I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.”*

*Revelation 21:6*

Pray that Yemenis will have access to clean water. Pray for humanitarian aid agencies to reach them with assistance and be able to address Yemen’s need of long-term solutions. Pray Isaiah 44:3 over Yemen, “For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.”

Ultimately, pray also that Yemenis will learn what it means to drink from the Living Water and never thirst again. Pray Isaiah 12:3 over them, “with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” As Yemenis worry about their water source, pray with Jesus over them, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.” (John 4:10) And pray also with great faith for plenty of clean water for baptisms.

May 2018. Fatima had searched the Quran for verses about Isa, but she knew there had to be more about him out there. She felt very afraid of the dangers involved, but just couldn’t stop herself. She felt so thirsty for knowledge of Him, so thirsty for what she had sensed when Samira prayed over her. She’d invented lots of stories in her mind of what she would say if someone caught her. She rehearsed those stories to herself while she googled “الكتاب المقدس,” the Arabic for Bible, and she began to read.

There was so much she could not understand, so she texted Samira, “can you meet me in Revolution Park today?” Samira responded immediately, “I will see you there in an hour.”

*\*Fatima and her family and friends are completely fictional.*

Water was a severe problem before the war. Yemeni addiction to the narcotic Qat, a highly water intensive crop, has drained the country of its water reservoirs. Hydrologists have long puzzled over how to solve this problem and predicted severe water shortages even before the war. And now over two thirds of Yemen’s population are without a clean water source. For a time, Yemenis had been dependent on water being trucked to their cities and homes until fuel prices made this unaffordable. Now they are drinking unsafe water from old, un-maintained local water pipes or by digging improper wells. As their water source options dwindle, malaria, cholera and diarrhea are on the rise just as health care disappears. Even if peace came today, Yemen would need urgent prayer regarding clean water sources for its population. Without peace, water is yet another weapon used in the war.

Day 23

# MANMADE FAMINE

*"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry..." John 6:35*

Pray that, through dreams, visions and any other means possible, God will draw Tihamis to seek Him and then shield their interest from the view of those who would oppose them.

Pray that the gospel will root in Hodeidah and spread to all the Tihamis.

Pray for peace so that aid agencies can provide assistance and so that Yemenis can build a proper food security infrastructure.

As horrific as today's starvation in Yemen is, pray against an even worse famine afflicting Yemen, "Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord God, "when I will send a famine on the land— not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord." (Amos 8:11)

Pray Psalm 37:19 over Yemeni believers, "They are not put to shame in evil times; in the days of famine they have abundance."

*June 14, 2018.* Eid-al-fitr, the celebration that ends Ramadan is tomorrow. Fatima's mother sent her to buy some dates - the only luxury they will have this year to mark the celebration. Usually this time of year is very festive. The women are cooking while everyone's hunger builds up for the big fast-breaking meal at sunset. But this year fasting hardly seems different given the food shortages across the country. She passes al-Mutawakil Hospital on her way to the date shop. As she approached the hospital, she noticed a baby lying in a cardboard box just ahead of her in the street. With hospital overcrowding, patients often have to wait in the streets to be seen. As she got closer she realized the child was too long to be a baby. He had to be closer to 5 or 6 years old given his length. But she could see every bone in his malnourished body. His eyes were closed. He wasn't moving. His mother sat beside him covered in black from head to toe. Fatima knew this child must have come to Sanaa for help from one of the starving villages she had heard about. She couldn't help herself. She took the money her mother had given her for dates and pressed it into the woman's palm. As she did, she felt like she might break the woman's skeletal hand. The woman took the money quietly and then moved her hand to stroke her child's forehead. Fatima turned to walk back home fighting the sobs building up inside her.

*\*Fatima and her family and friends are completely fictional.*

Hodeidah is the largest city of the Tihami (Red Sea Coastal) people. The Tihamis have built their lives around fishing and sea life, but war has made it dangerous to fish on the open seas near their homes. They have always been proud of their port, but now it has drawn them into the crosshairs of all warring factions in Yemen. Five million children are at risk of famine in Yemen as the Saudi-led coalition carries out a major offensive on the strategic port. The port has often been closed throughout the war, cutting off desperately needed aid supplies. Every time the port is closed, prices on everything in the country jump. Millions of children don't know when or if their next meal will come. Malnourished, starving babies are too weak to cry, their frail bodies exhausted by hunger. If they become sick, they are exponentially more likely die from disease. Entire villages are subsisting on eating only leaves and parents are faced with the anguish of deciding which child to feed. Even if the children received help today, many of them will suffer the injuries for the rest of their lives in the form of stunted brain development.



# NAJRAN

*“Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children...” Psalm 127:3-4*

Pray with Yemeni believers that the Lord will honor the martyrs of Najran with the spread of the gospel across Yemen.

As you pray, recall Revelation 6:9-10, “When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long?”

Pray for Yemeni believers who face persecution for the sake of Jesus. Pray for the strength of their faith to continually grow. Cover them in prayer with his Word:

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:10

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.” Romans 12:14

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” 1 Peter 4:12-14

*June 2018.* “I believe in Jesus,” Fatima complained to Samira, “but no one else in Yemen ever will. It’s hopeless. Their hearts are too hard.” Samira patiently responded, “I used to feel that way too until you believed!” “And why were our hearts soft?” Samira asked rhetorically, “It is time I tell you our history, Habibti.” Samira told Fatima of their Christian forefathers in Najran and then concluded, “Our Christian Yemeni forefathers may have shared the gospel with Muhammad himself! And the blood of the Najranites is still calling on God to move in Yemen. He will not forget their martyrdom or that of so many other Christians who have died for the gospel in Yemen. We are not the first or the only Christians in Yemen and we will not be the last.”

*\*Fatima and her family and friends are completely fictional.*

Muslim historian Ibn Shaq reported that Najran, in Northern Yemen, was the very first place in which Christianity took firm root in South Arabia. According to tradition, a Christian bricklayer named Phemion moved to Najran, told them of Christ and discipled them. Najran became an important trade center from which goods, ideas and even the gospel flowed throughout Arabia. However, a Jewish Yemeni ruler felt threatened by the Christian presence in Najran and invaded the city. He forced thousands of Christians into a pit filled with gasoline and burned them alive.

Remarkably, about a century later, the remaining Christians of Najran travelled to visit with the Prophet Muhammad and made a treaty with him. They paid taxes to him, and in return, the treaty promised that Muhammad's armies would protect them and ensured them the freedom to worship as those saw fit. In fact, he even allowed them to pray in his mosque. They faced east as they prayed. Despite the sympathy and historically peaceful relationship, the 2nd ruler after Muhammad ordered the Christians of Najran to leave the Arabian Peninsula. Most of them moved into Southern Iraq. Najran, as a bustling Christian beacon in the Arabian Peninsula faded into history.

July 2018. Fatima's hand began to shake as she read the text from Samira, "Nabeel was taken." Fatima knew immediately that their worst fears had come true. Who could have told authorities that he was a believer? Who had betrayed him? It didn't really matter now who it was, he was surely being tortured in prison and Samira might never see him again. As planned, Samira would leave for the countryside to hide. Fatima was afraid and heartbroken, but she wasn't surprised. Samira had prepared her for this possibility and she knew what Nabeel and Samira wanted her to do now, so she began to pray, for his freedom, but even more fervently for the strength of his faith and for Samira as she took the Gospel of Jesus with her into the countryside.

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Saudi Arabia, the Houthis, average Yemeni Muslims, and every faction in Yemen agree on one thing: Yemeni Christians are infidels and should be killed. Severe persecution is a virtual certainty as people hear the gospel and come to Christ in Yemen. Persecution is evil. It is sinful to physically abuse, imprison or otherwise harm God's people. And yet, by His grace, God can take that evil and use it for his purpose. Recall Gen. 50:20, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive."

God uses persecution to grow the faith of His Church. In Luke 22 Peter felt sure he was a firm follower of Christ and believed himself willing to die for Jesus. But, Jesus knew better than Peter about his faith and, knowing he needed growth, said to him, "Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." Jesus knew that when believers are tested by persecution, they are strengthened and able to turn and strengthen the others. God also uses persecution to scatter the Church thus spreading the gospel. Remember in Acts 11 when Luke tells us, "Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word. . ."

## Day 25

# PERSECUTION

*"But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."*

*Luke 22:32*

Pray that God will blind the enemy to our new and fearful brothers and sisters in Christ. Pray that He will bind satan in the presence of the Christians and loose them for powerful work in His Name.

Pray that His Spirit and His Word will strengthen believers in the face of fear. Pray that He will give them wisdom as they navigate new and complex problems such as how to raise their children in Christ in a hostile environment.

Pray for mature Christians as they lead new Yemeni believers through basic discipleship. Pray that they will absorb the Word and that their hearts will be transformed by the renewing of their minds. Pray that new believers will immediately obey God's Word and share it with others.

Scripture to pray over your Yemeni brothers and sisters:

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James 4:7

"And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe." 1 Thessalonians 2:13

"And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple." Luke 14:27

"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:31-32

# CHURCH GROWTH

*“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Matthew 16:18*

July 2018. Fatima and Aisha gathered quietly in their room while they parents were out visiting relatives. Aisha had decided follow Jesus about a week after Fatima shared the gospel with her. Together they prayed and prayed and prayed for Nabeel’s freedom and for his faith. They prayed for Samira too. They also prayed together for the salvation of their parents and Aisha’s husband. They prayed for friends, relatives, and neighbors to come to Christ. Death was all around them, but they had never felt so much life before. This bond of sisterhood was like nothing they’d ever shared before as sisters. Together they prayed for their country, their beloved Arabia Felix.

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Pray these Scriptures over Yemen’s young Church:

“So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.” Acts 9:31

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” Acts 2:42

“He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.” Psalm 40:3

In wartime countries of recent history, missiologists have found that war softens the hardest of hearts. In 1946, missionaries who had fled China were stunned to hear reports that people from the educated class, which had always opposed them, were suddenly coming to Christ. Likewise among the Dinka in Sudan, the younger generation had always been more open to “western” ideas, but during and after the war, even the older generations were open to the gospel because their deeply entrenched traditional ways had been so uprooted. As Vietnam has opened up again, the Church has discovered a spiritual awakening in North Vietnam. As the dust on the battlefield has settled, Croatians have been embracing Christ despite having formerly rejected Him as a shadowy cult-figure. There is a reason the Lord allowed such travesty to befall Israel. Brokenness leads to true healing. It is fair to say that Yemen has also been resistant for many generations. A temporal war can soften hearts so that they may be saved in the cosmic war for their souls.



# CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

*“Do not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:25*

Pray for wisdom for Yemeni church leaders in local areas of Yemen as they attempt the very sensitive process of gathering Yemeni believers. Pray for Yemenis to listen carefully to His Spirit about when, where, how and who to meet with.

Some groups of believers are determined to meet together despite danger of persecution. They have a vision for reaching their own people and the nations with the gospel. Praise God for them and pray for their protection, encouragement and exponential fruitfulness! Pray the encouragement of Matthew 18:20 over them, “For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

And again pray 1 Corinthians 5:4, “So when you are assembled and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present.”

Pray that His Spirit will add much power to their meetings as in Acts 4:31, “After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.”

*August 2018.* With Samira gone, Fatima and Aisha felt like a small boat adrift at sea. They were very young in their faith. There was so much of the Bible they couldn’t understand. It was easy to slip into the routines of Muslim family life. They had no connection to a church body. They were afraid to know other Christians, especially with Nabeel’s arrest fresh in their minds. And so, their zeal waned. Fatima went through bouts of guilt over not telling her parents about her new faith, but never felt it was quite the right time. She simply didn’t have the courage she wished she had. She kept promising herself that when she was stronger in her faith, she would tell them. And, she reasoned, when she was stronger in her faith maybe she would seek out the Yemeni church too. For now, she had Jesus and her sister. She hoped that was enough and that God would not be angry with her because of her fear.

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The Yemeni fields are white for the harvest. As Yemenis come to Christ, they must be bound together in the unity of the Spirit. As our brothers and sisters watch salvation come among Yemenis, they will “bind” these new believers together by assembling them into churches. In some parts of Yemen, the single biggest challenge to church growth in Yemen is the believers’ unwillingness to meet together. For fear of persecution and being wiped out all together, believers are reluctant to gather. They exist as silos of light and struggle alone when God intended them to live and love together as many members of one body. They do not easily trust a new believer they’ve never met and assume he/she is trying to find and persecute them, a fact the Enemy exploits to keep the Church divided.

# CHURCH LEADERS

*“Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.” Hebrews 13:7*

The Yemenis are the most effective gospel laborers. They must labor in prayer, in gospel saturation, in planting, watering, watching, harvesting and gleaning. Pray for them as they labor. Pray for the mature believers as they disciple the newer believers. Pray for wisdom for the believers as they appoint Yemeni elders over the new churches.

In a divided country and under the stress of war, it is tempting to allow division in the Church. Pray earnestly with Jesus for unity in the Yemeni church: “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

John 17:20

*August 2018.* Fatima hung up the phone. She was scared, but also very excited. Samira told her that a new sister was traveling to Sanaa. The new believer’s husband had died, so she was coming to live with her daughter’s family in the capital. Samira wanted Fatima to disciple the new sister. Samira was only 21 and Fatima just 19, so she was shocked when Samira told her this new “baby Christian” was 58 years old! How was she, a teenager who had only just come to Christ herself, supposed to disciple this 58 year old grandmother in mourning!? But, Fatima knew this was an answer to her prayer that the Lord would challenge her to be part of something eternal. And Samira had promised to train her in how to disciple someone. “And who knows,” she secretly hoped, “maybe this older woman will have an impact on my mother and grandmother.”

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Church planters often say, “The resource is in the harvest!” By that they mean that in order to glean another harvest in Yemen, we must take the new grains and glean next season’s seeds to plant. We must take the most mature and anointed ones from among the new Yemeni believers to train for leadership as the church grows. Training leaders isn’t easy in Yemen. Persecution can cause fear of leadership roles or rob the Church of leaders just as they emerge. Resources, such as Bible study materials, are scarce and risky. Literacy is low in Yemen anyway. But Yemeni church leaders lack nothing the first apostles had. They are filled with the Holy Spirit. They have hearts of love and mouths ready to give an account for the hope they have. They have wisdom garnered from suffering. Eternity is always on their minds.

*"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry..." John 6:35*

*September 2018.* Fatima's mother was a little confused to see that her young daughter had a visitor even older than she herself was. But, she welcomed her nonetheless. She sat in on their visit. Apparently this woman had known Fatima's friend Samira when she lived in the countryside. The woman was kind, but also sad. She had recently lost her husband. And yet, despite the obvious grief, there was something else about her...serenity, a hope, almost joy, despite her circumstances. Fatima's mother noted that it was the same kind of demeanor Fatima's friend Samira had. And Fatima herself had even been more respectful and loving since befriending Samira. Towards the end of the visit, the woman looked at Fatima's mother and said, "Om Fuad, may I pray with you for your family?" Fatima's mother was shocked, almost offended, by the odd request, but how could she say no to a grieving widow's request? The prayer was so kind and so loving. She hadn't felt peaceful like that in a long time... if ever. As the woman left, Fatima's mother kissed both her cheeks and hoped she'd soon return.

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Serious peace negotiations have yet to materialize during the years-long war in Yemen. Several U.N. attempts have failed before they really even started. In Fall 2018, the U.N. put forth an aggressive plan to bring the Saudis and Houthis to the table for peace talks in Geneva, Switzerland. The Houthis demanded, among other things, the evacuation of some of their wounded from Yemen for treatment. The Saudis control Yemen's air space, so travel was one of their bargaining chips. Despite rumors that this demand would be met and after much build up to the talks, the Houthis did not arrive in Geneva. They blamed the Saudis for blocking their travel plans. The Saudis called the Houthis "totally irresponsible." There is not enough trust among the parties to come to terms on talking, let alone a brokered peace. If peace terms cannot be met, the Yemeni people will suffer until they are no more.

Day 29

# PEACE

As we pray for peace, let us remember these things and pray them over Yemen:

Peace is from God: "God is the author of peace." 1 Corinthians 14:22 and

"O Lord, you establish peace for us, all that we have accomplished you have done for us." Isaiah 26:2

Peace is given by Jesus: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." John 14:27

Even when the world is at war, those who follow the Lord can be at peace: "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace." Colossians 3:15 and "You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast because they trust in You." Isaiah 26:3

Peace is a fruit of His Spirit: "Pray that His Spirit will flood and overflow Yemen and that peace will be a byproduct of that flooding." Galatians 5:22

Pray for Yemeni believers to be part of bringing peace to Yemen by their example of forgiveness and trust in God for justice. Pray that they will "Live at peace with everyone and be holy." (Hebrews 12:14) Ask the Lord to help them "Make sure nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and everyone else." (1 Thessalonians 5:15) Praise the Lord that "Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness." James 3:18



# YEMENIS IN HEAVEN

*“For the Lamb in the midst of the Throne will be their Shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eye.”*

*Revelation 7:17*

Pray with confidence in the future, “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” Revelation 7:9-10

And keep praying continually bearing 2 Corinthians 9:6 in mind, “he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” Invest more and more in seeing Christ exalted in Yemen and invite others to join you. This is an investment whose reward is exponential, God-glorifying and sure. Whatever prayer and effort you sink into the deep soils of Yemen will return as ripe, rich fruits to enjoy in eternity.

*Eternity.* Fatima dressed in white robes sprints towards Nabeel and Samira. “We made it!! Here we are together in the presence of the Lord!” They hugged as they fell before the feet of the Lord. “Look up, sweet children, He says to them, “I want to show you something.” The three raise their eyes, and so do you, for He is speaking to you too. As the four of you look around, you see a rainbow of faces. And as your eyes begin to focus on individual faces you realize that amidst this rainbow of faces are thousands and thousands of Yemeni Christians, including so many of Fatima’s family and friends, praising Jesus in all the dialects of Yemen: San’ani, Tai’izzi, Tihamiyya, Zabidi, Hadhrami, Bathari, Hejazi, Hobyot, Mehri and Socotri. “I did this,” Jesus will say, “and I let you join me as I worked. Well done, my good and faithful servants.” And then you all praise the Lord together with hearts filled with awe at what the Lord has done.

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