

FOREVER SAFE

THE OPEN DOORS MAGAZINE

He has one wish
this Christmas...

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YOUR IMPACT

Your gift of a brighter future

Jenny had a future of hardship, persecution and struggle ahead of her – until you stepped in to change the story.

Jenny is thriving at school and dreams of being a youth leader or teacher. You've given her a bright future.

Twelve-year-old Jenny can't forget the first time she saw her father cry.

He had returned home from days of demanding work, fishing near their home in the Philippines. Because of his Christian faith he is often restricted to fishing in certain areas – and this time, the other fishers had lashed out with threats and violence. Believers were even killed.

“It was truly heart-breaking to see my father so devastated,” said Jenny, the memory bringing tears to her own eyes. “He couldn't fish for several weeks, but I am grateful God took care of us.”

“We know we have Jesus by our side.”

Jenny and her family live in a stilt home in the southern Philippines. They belong to one of 13 tribes in the region. Of all the groups, theirs is the most discriminated against. In fact, they're known by the government as DOME people: deprived, oppressed, maltreated, exploited.

But Jenny is even more vulnerable because her family follows Jesus. “At school, they treat me badly and say mean things about me,” said Jenny. And what do the coming years have in store? Typically, Jenny might expect to be married soon, with a lifetime of children, chores and hardship ahead.

But that's not Jenny's future. Because you have given her something better.

Thanks to you, Open Doors partners established a literacy programme in the area. Jenny loves learning and is thriving, among the top in her class. It's given her a dream... “I want to make a positive difference in the lives of others. I want to be a teacher or a youth leader in the house church, like my sister, and help others grow in faith,” said Jenny.

And this positivity and resilience is infectious. Right now, Jenny is bursting with excitement

about Christmas. “I absolutely love Christmas because it fills me with happiness,” she smiles. “It's the only time I receive a gift, which makes it special, and we remember how much God loves me and my family.”

“I want to make a positive difference.”

This Christmas Jenny will be remembering you, too – and she wanted to pass on a message to thank you for your gifts and prayers. “I am truly thankful for the support you provided for the literacy class,” she said. “It's inspired me and other children to dream big, knowing we have Jesus by our side.”



PLEASE PRAY

- Give thanks for Jenny's future of hope, made possible through your support. Pray she will one day realise her dream.
- Pray for Jenny's family as they battle economic hardship. Ask for God's protection over them, and an end to persecution.
- Pray for Open Doors partners running the literacy programme in the Philippines.



ONE

CHRISTMAS

WISH



This Christmas, persecuted children like twins Ezana and Fasil long for just one gift – and you can help provide it...

Ezana and Fasil's* eyes shine as they anticipate Christmas. The games, the food, the songs they'll sing, the bustle at home as people come and hear about Jesus... It's a joy shared by so many children at this time of year.

But the excitement of these small boys from rural Ethiopia hides a deep desire. One wish, common to children of the persecuted church: *All they want this Christmas is the gift of a safe childhood.*

Targeted by extremists

In the southern Ethiopian village where the twins live, evangelical Christians are relentlessly targeted. When someone converts to Christianity, they can expect a note on their front door with a deadly threat: *If you don't denounce this God, we will slaughter you.* Stones have been thrown at the church as believers pray inside. And in one horrific incident, Muslim radicals attacked a group of Christian women who were out evangelising, they dragged them to the ground and urinated on them.



Pastor Yohannes*, who leads the local church, summarises the persecution in one chilling sentence: "From the extremists' point of view, an evangelical Christian is as good as a dead and rotting person."

In such a frightening, volatile context, it takes real courage to follow Jesus. But when your faith puts your own children at risk, it's harder than ever...

Vulnerable victims

Ezana and Fasil's parents are dedicated to serving the Lord. Dad, Ermias*, has faced life-long persecution – but he has a kind and humble heart. It fills him with sorrow to see his boys suffer because of the family's Christian faith.

"Even if our children were among the smartest in school, the teachers refused to give them the grades they deserved. Their test scores would be lowered, but we could not afford to send them to another school," said Ermias.

"A Christian is as good as a dead and rotting person."

Without an education, the twins have little hope for the future. With no security, they're in danger. For parents who love God and love their children, it's easy to see why persecution threatens faith.

The sad truth is, children like Ezana and Fasil are among the most vulnerable believers in the world. Bullying, physical attacks, isolation and denying children an education are common tactics of persecutors in many countries. It leaves even the youngest children feeling alone, forgotten and unsafe – and puts the future of the church in peril in the most difficult places to follow Jesus.

**names changed to protect their identities*



Your Christmas gift

But you can make a difference this Christmas.

Thanks to Open Doors, Ezana and Fasil's church opened a school in its compound. The twins joined and now are thriving in class, academically, spiritually and emotionally. "I get an education from my teachers and I really like learning," says Ezana with a broad smile.

Not only does the school provide a safe place for Christian children, it accepts pupils of other faiths. This act of generosity has changed perceptions. "People like the fact we offer free education for the poor," said Pastor Yohannes. "The families who used to throw stones at the church have now started sending their children to this school."

But Ezana and Fasil are about to graduate, and their father fears what will come next. "They would transfer to another school with risks," said Ermias. "I worry about the future. I wish my children could continue studying in this school."

"They are the next generation for the gospel."

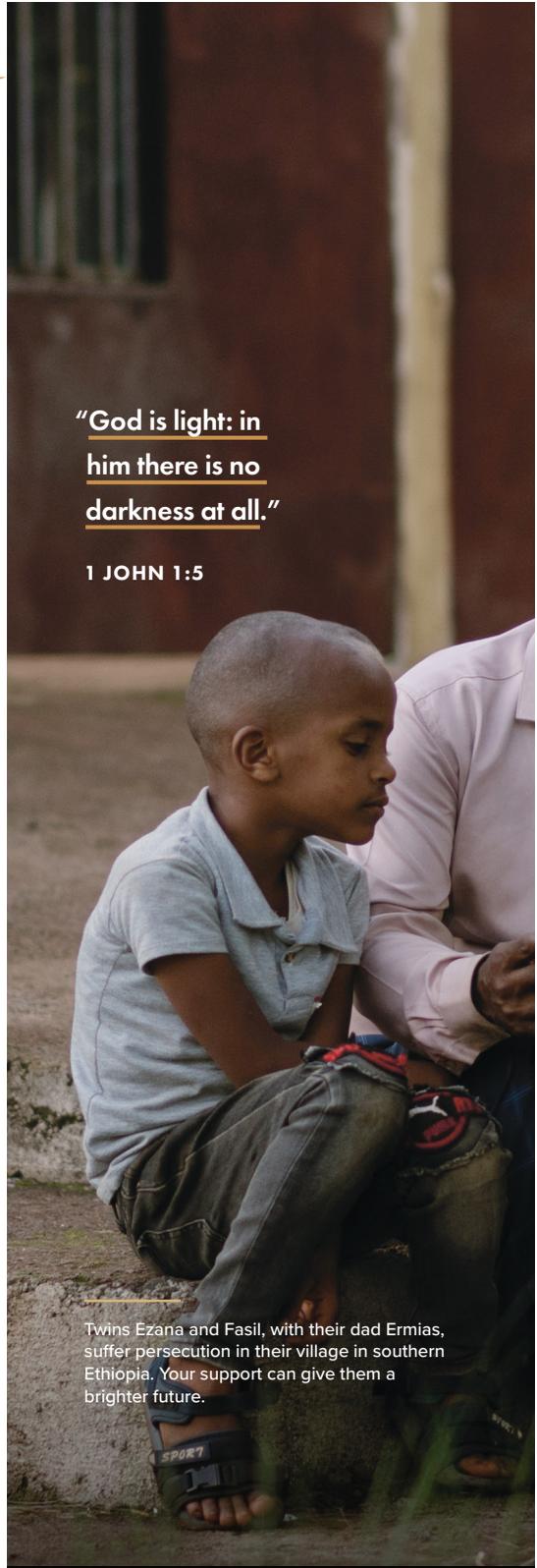
This Christmas, you can give these young twins – and other persecuted children – the one thing they long for: a safer childhood.

Your gift and prayers will ensure children persecuted for their faith are protected, provided for and given an education. With your support, children like Ezana and Fasil will have a bright future – and they'll grow to be strong, resilient and courageous witnesses for Christ.

"Because they are the next generation for the gospel," Ermias, the twins' father, reminds us. "They are the ones to continue the works of God. They are the hope for the church."

"God is light: in him there is no darkness at all."

1 JOHN 1:5



Twins Ezana and Fasil, with their dad Ermias, suffer persecution in their village in southern Ethiopia. Your support can give them a brighter future.



Please will you give the gift of a safer childhood to a persecuted child this Christmas?

PLEASE PRAY

- For God's protection over Ezana and Fasil as they grow in faith, love and wisdom.
- That Christians parents like Ermias will trust God and nurture faith in their children.
- That Open Doors partners will reach the most vulnerable persecuted children, to help those who need it most.

PLEASE GIVE

Every PHP 2,250 provides trauma counselling to a persecuted child, bringing hope and healing.

Every PHP 3,350 provides vital emergency food to three families affected by violent persecution.

Every PHP 4,700 gives a year's education to a persecuted child, helping them have a brighter future.

How you help persecuted children through Open Doors

Children of the persecuted church are often beyond the reach of other charities, so your support is critical. By supporting Open Doors you provide:

Protection

This includes trauma counselling and healing camps which are run during school holidays.



Security

You ensure children have a safe and stable environment, by helping parents be financially independent and providing safe community spaces.



Education

This is key. Your support helps run 'bridging' schools (like the one Ezana and Fasil attend). These schools not only educate children in a safe place, where they can live out their faith, they provide a neutral place to reconcile communities. Your gifts mean scholarships are granted to the poorest children. Your support also trains Sunday school teachers so children are disciplined well and grow spiritually.

