

DIWALI: FESTIVAL OF LIGHT

*Five Days of Prayer for My
Hindu and Sikh Neighbors*

2-6 November 2021



The Diwali festival of light is a sacred celebration for our Hindu and Sikh brothers and sisters. During Diwali, devotees around the world will light diyas (oil lamps) to symbolize the victory of light over darkness and good over evil. This is a wonderful opportunity for us as followers of Jesus Christ to join in prayer that all people may come to know the True Light that lights everyone (John 1:9). With that in mind, the GC Global Mission Center for South Asian Religions (CSAR) offers this prayer guide. In it, you will find a story and prayer list for each of the five days of Diwali, 2-6 November 2021. Please pray with us during this holiday season that South Asians may come to know our loving Creator God.

-The GC Global Mission Center for South Asian Religions (CSAR) Team

What percent of the world's population is Hindu?

The world has approximately 1 billion Hindu adherents representing 15% of the global population.

What is the *Diwali* celebration?

Diwali (“de-VAH-lee”) or *Deepawali* originated in India and marks the final harvest holiday celebration of the year. *Deepawali* means rows (*awali*) of lighted clay lamps (*deeps*). People light up their houses with *diyas*, small cup-shaped oil lamps made of baked clay. The common theme of this harvest festival is “victory of good over evil” and it is also referred to as “the festival of lights.” Traditionally, *Diwali* is celebrated over five days with a different focus each day.



Light is used to symbolize God, faith, and holiness throughout Scripture. As Christians, we are called to not only walk in the light but to be a light for others.



What do *diyas* symbolise?

Diyas (clay lamps) symbolize goodness and purity, and lighting them denotes dispelling of darkness and going into the light. Since *Deepavali* is celebrated on the new moon day, a time of darkness everywhere, lighting these lamps is a means to get rid of the darkness.

How do you greet people during *Diwali*?

When people meet during *Diwali*, they generally greet each other by saying “Happy Diwal” or more traditionally, “May this light (*Diwali*) bring joy and prosperity to your family.”

What does the Bible say about light?

The Bible speaks of Jesus as the True Light. Let us take the opportunity afforded by the celebration of *Diwali*, “the festival of lights,” to introduce our Hindu friends to this True Light who has come to dispel all darkness. Let us share about the victory of light over darkness, of good over evil, in our life.

Story: From a Devotee to a Follower of Christ

Suresh was a follower of the majority religion of his country. Throughout his life, worship was an important part of his religious experience. But even with his ritualistic life, Suresh was not happy at all—something wasn't right.

There was no peace in his life as he suffered from back pain. There were issues with his spine. He could not lie down nor stand up. Suresh couldn't afford to visit a better hospital due to his financial struggles. There was no one to guide him for his condition. His circumstances made him question his devotion: "Where are my gods and goddesses whom I have worshipped my whole life?"

One day Suresh met Mahesh, a servant of God and a Global Mission Pioneer, who offered to pray for him. Mahesh had a polite and kind personality. Mahesh offered to visit but Suresh was hesitant. Later Suresh understood Mahesh's intention and invited him to visit regularly. Mahesh prayed to the Lord Jesus Christ for healing. Mahesh invited Suresh to a church where all the members prayed for him.

Initially Suresh didn't believe that Jesus Christ was the one true God and simply added Him to the list of deities he worshipped. He thought, "After being a devotee my whole life to Sanatan Dharma, no help came. Why will this new God help me as I have done nothing for Him?"

The church pastor made Suresh understand that the living God doesn't expect anything from him, only a true and faithful heart. Church members continued to pray for Suresh's faith and healing. After attending the church, Suresh felt happy and continued to be drawn to the living God.



Diwali Day 1 | *DHANTERUS* (“dhuhn-tay-ruhs”) Rising Hope 2 November 2021

On the first day of Diwali, people take a holy bath at sunset and light a clay lamp. People pray to the goddess Lakshmi, bake sweets, and clean their homes. Devotees shop for gold or kitchen utensils to help bring good fortune, good luck, and prosperity.

Bible Reading: John 8:12, NIV

When Jesus Christ spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Prayer Points: Pray for Fiji

28.6% of Fiji’s population are Hindu.

1. Pray that God will open the hearts of people to receive the True Light.
2. Pray that people will look for a living God and have a deeper understanding of a relationship with God.
3. Pray for the South Asian population to embrace our only Savior, Jesus Christ.
4. Pray for the Adventist family in Fiji to lovingly share the light and hope of the Three Angels Messages with their South Asian neighbors.



Story: Who Do We Worship?

Fifty-year-old Sunita was a religious-minded lady. She visited all the religious places. According to her, all religions are the same as they all teach non-violence. Sunita associated with several friends inviting all of them to every festival that she celebrated. She also made it a point to visit other religious functions whenever she was invited.

One time she offered *prashad* (a devotional offering made to a god) to her friend, Mrs. Sharma, who politely declined it. Sunita got upset for a couple of days and she didn't talk to Mrs. Sharma.

One day Sunita fell sick and Mrs. Sharma paid a visit to her. Mrs. Sharma was curious and asked Sunita, "Why do you have all these illnesses and other problems when you worship so many deities?" Sunita said, "It's like when you have more friends, you feel safer." Mrs. Sharma replied very calmly, "I understand what you are saying sister, yet there can only be one Father. Our true God is enough to take care of us."

Mrs. Sharma explained what the Bible says, that there is one true Father who loves us so much that He gave His one and only Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us and to save us from sin and suffering. Mrs. Sharma continued, "God is our true Father. But we have a choice to accept or reject Him."

After talking to Mrs. Sharma, Sunita felt different. She had learned something opposite to her religious perception. She took time to absorb what she heard. She thanked God for showing her the truth through Mrs. Sharma.



Diwali Day 2 | CHATURDASI (“chatur-dashi”)

Seek the divine blessing of good over evil

3 November 2021

People decorate their homes with clay lamps and create design patterns called *rangoli* on the floor using colored sand, powder, rice, or flower petals.

Bible Reading: Matthew 4:16, KJV

The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

Prayer Points: Pray for Bali

More than 90% of Bali’s population are Hindu.

1. Pray for the Muslim majority in Bali.
2. Seek the divine blessing for pioneers’ work. Pray for all the administrators, pastors, teachers, medical practitioners, Global Mission Pioneers, and media personalities.
3. Pray for the Balinese to receive the blessing of good over evil.
4. Pray for the Hindu background sympathizers.
5. Pray for a care group in Batu Bolong Seririt Singaraja which has approximately 39 Hindu background guests.
6. Pray for the plans to open a new clinic as an urban center of influence.



Story: From an Unclean Life to a Pure Life

Aasha lived a life that was opposite to her name. *Aasha* means “hope” in English. But for Aasha, her name did not bring any hope to her life—she was hopeless. Aasha, 35 years old and married, didn’t have any children. She was considered a lost woman by the villagers. She was a worshipper of the majority religion of her country but she still led a lost life.

Often Aasha was seen amidst a fight; she always got into a mess in her community. Her husband didn’t care about her behavior and her in-laws gave up on her. She led a corrupted and adulterous life wandering in the city. Whenever she got into trouble, no one wanted to support or help her. Life was hell for her—she was possessed by a spirit, which troubled her.

Aasha’s mother visited and was shocked to see her daughter in such a bad condition. She took Aasha home and brought her to many exorcists to get rid of the evil. For a few days Aasha felt better, but the issues spiked. Aasha’s mother took her to the hospital, yet there was no relief.

In the village, there was a small group that met every Saturday. Aasha’s parents gathered all the necessary information about the group then took her to Pastor Ravinder. The pastor read from the Scripture and prayed for Aasha. He assured Aasha’s father that his daughter would be healed.

The next Saturday, Aasha attended church along with her family. During the church service, the evil spirit attacked Aasha and left her unconscious. When she woke up, she felt very heavy.

Pastor Ravinder regularly visited Aasha’s home and prayed for her. He also started giving Bible studies to Aasha. Then one day while Pastor Ravinder was conducting prayer and fasting at Aasha’s home, she began to feel light—she felt that the heaviness was no longer there. She became free from all the bad habits and sinful nature. She had become a new person by the blood of Jesus Christ.



Diwali Day 3 | *DIWALI* (“de-VAH-lee”)

Lighting the lamp represents inner light

4 November 2021

Diwali's third day is its most important: on this day of the festival, families gather together to visit the temple and offer *puja* (prayer) to Lakshmi (goddess of wealth). The *puja* is followed by mouth-watering feasts and firework festivities. Devotees also set ablaze the lamps they had displayed the day before.

Bible Reading: 1 John 1:7, NIV

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

Prayer Points: Pray for Guyana

29.1% of Guyana's population are Hindu.

1. Pray that the people of Guyana will have spiritual hunger to seek the truth.
2. Pray for the workers who are in the field for God's work, for them to be filled with the Holy Spirit.
3. Pray for more light bearers in the form of workers.
4. Pray that the identified area for new projects will be fruitful.
5. Pray that more local church members will be involved in cross-cultural ministry.
6. Pray that more funding will be available for mission.



Story: Accepting Christianity for Its Benefits

Tulsi Bhanji, 53 years old, and his wife worked as farm labourers. They had two sons, both in college. Tulsi shares that he joined the Christian church after meeting a spiritual leader ten years ago. He and his wife discussed the benefits of accepting Christianity. He never thought of salvation and the grace of God. His family attended the church for years but never felt peace of mind.

One day, Tulsi met Brother Rajesh, a Global Mission pioneer who introduced himself as an Adventist. Tulsi asked Brother Rajesh some questions regarding the Adventist Church. Tulsi got confused as he was from a different religion and joined a Christian church for his gain. He did not understand the Sabbath, salvation, or grace. His meeting with Brother Rajesh made him question the ways of his church as well as his motives.

As Brother Rajesh regularly visited and prayed, Tulsi eventually understood the relationship between God and salvation, grace, and Sabbath-keeping. Now Tulsi and his family are thrilled with their love for God. Tulsi wants to grow more in Jesus Christ and spread the love of God.



Diwali Day 4 | GOVARDHAN PUJA (“goh-vuhr--dhuhn poo-juh”)

Prayer for prosperity

5 November 2021

The fourth day of Diwali marks the first day of the new year, a time when friends and relatives visit with each other to exchange gifts and well wishes for the season.

Bible Reading: Psalm 18:28, KJV

For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.

Prayer Points: Pray for Mauritius

48.5% of Mauritius’s population are Hindu.

1. Pray that God will open the hearts of people to receive Jesus Christ.
2. Pray for all the pastors and pioneers working to spread the gospel among other religious populations.
3. Pray for disciple making and church planting.
4. Pray for the house churches among South Asians.
5. Pray for our South Asian brothers and sisters partnering with us on our discipleship journey with Jesus Christ.
6. Pray for the Adventist members working alongside South Asians.
7. Pray for the church leaders with regards to reaching out to South Asians.



Story: The Light of God

A day before Diwali, Bela was invited by her friend, Kita, for a Diwali celebration. This was the first time that Bela got invited to a Hindu festival. Since Kita and Bela have been friends for the past three years, Kita knew that Bela was a Christian and had never celebrated Diwali at home.

On the day of Diwali at Kita's house, everyone got up early, took a bath, and wore new festival clothes. Since Kita's family belonged to the Sanatan Dharma religion, they worship chanting some prayers. In the evening, it was time for a delicious dinner and everyone sat at the dining table. Before anyone could start eating, Bela said, "*Kya mai ek dhanyaawad prartha kar sakti hun?* (Can I offer a thank you prayer before we eat?)" The family knew that Bela believed in Jesus Christ, and prayer seemed like a nice thing to do so they agreed to the prayer of thanks. Bela prayed, thanking God for all the things He had given and for everyone present to enjoy the family time during the festival. She closed her prayer in the name of Jesus Christ.

Kita's mother was touched by the prayer and said that it was a beautiful thing to be thankful to God for all the blessings. "So do you offer all your prayers in Jesus Christ's name?" Kita's mother asked. Bela said yes and explained that God is the provider and Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the true Light. Bela continued, "Today is Diwali, a celebration of victory of light over darkness. In Jesus Christ, we receive true light." Because of the prayer, Kita got interested in attending church. Let's pray that the light of God may reach every household this Diwali.



Diwali Day 5 | *BHAI DHOOJ* (“*bhai-dooj*”) Celebrate the victory of light 6 November 2021

Brothers visit their married sisters who welcome them with love and a lavish meal. The fifth day is typically a day to honor one's siblings.

Bible Reading: John 1:5, KJV

And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

Prayer Points: Pray for India and its neighboring countries

80% of India's population are Hindu.

1. Pray for our South Asian neighbors.
2. Pray for Global Mission Pioneers working in India and Bhutan.
3. Pray that during this Diwali, we will have opportunities to let our neighbors know about the True Light, Jesus Christ.



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