

THRIVING ON THE FRONTLINES



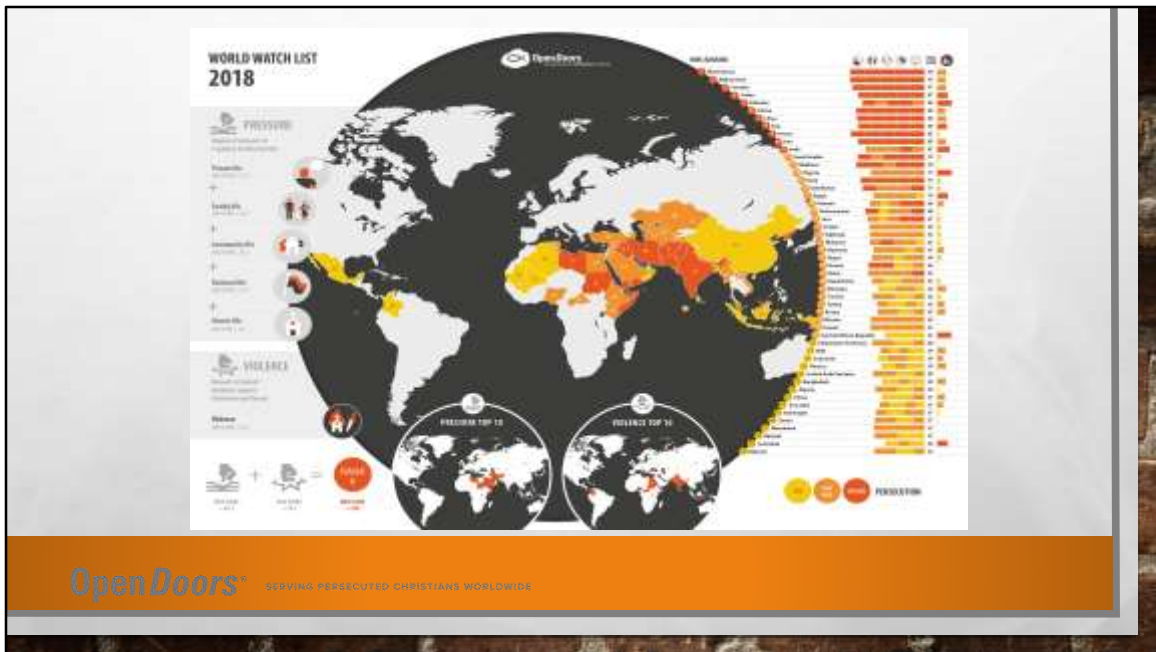
OpenDoors[®]

SERVING PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS WORLDWIDE

Introductory words

The right to believe is a fundamental human right. Yet, around the world, millions are denied this basic freedom. Worse still, they are actively persecuted because of their faith.

Introduction video



For the past 26 years, Open Doors has been publishing the World Watch List – which ranks the top 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian.

The list is compiled by a group of experts, audited by an outside organization specializing in religious freedom and it is trusted as the best and most authoritative list of its kind.

For over 60 years Open Doors has been on the ground with persecuted Christians. Our underground networks are providing them with Bibles and training, providing them with practical and spiritual support and sharing their lives.

It's this first-hand knowledge and experience that makes the WWL a unique window into the world of persecuted Christians.

(Free copies of the WWL available at our table)

KEY AREAS FOR MEASURING FREEDOM



Private Life



Family Life



Community Life



National Life



Church Life



Violence

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KEY AREAS FOR MEASURING FREEDOM

For each country, the list looks at a variety of factors persecuted Christians endure (Information gathered from approximately 90 countries - so good indication of what is happening globally)

PRIVATE LIFE

How free is a Christian to simply believe?

FAMILY LIFE

How free are Christians to express their faith within their family?

Is it possible to live as a Christian family – to celebrate Christian marriages and funerals?

COMMUNITY LIFE

Can Christians live without harassment and discrimination in their local communities?

How does their faith affect their education and employment?

NATIONAL LIFE

Are national institutions – such as government, legal system and media – opposed to Christianity?

CHURCH LIFE

Are Christians allowed to meet?

Can they build churches?

VIOLENCE

Are they arrested, abducted, tortured or even killed?

This year, Open Doors estimates that in the top 50 countries alone, over 215 million believers face intimidation, prison, and even death. That's one in twelve Christians worldwide.

KEY Findings FOR 2017



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LET'S TALK ABOUT THE KEY FINDINGS FOR 2017

NOTE: The following figures do not include North Korea

Worldwide, Christian persecution is rising



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Worldwide, Christian persecution is on the rise

Over 3,000 Christians have been killed for their faith last year – that is more than twice the number in the previous year.

- 2,000 Christians were killed in Nigeria – up from 695 in 2016 - mostly because of religious cleansing
- 500 killed in Central African Republic – up from 13 in 2016
- Killings in Egypt have gone from 12 to 128 in the last year

INDIA – prime example of the rise of persecution. Gone from #23 in 2014 to #11 in 2018

- Becoming a real hotspot
- 50% increase in attacks on Christians last year
- Many Faith Based NGO's have been forced to leave

**Over 215
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Over 215 million Christians experience high levels of persecution

In Africa, one in every 7.5 Christians experience high levels of persecution

In Asia, one in every 3.5 Christians experiences high levels of persecution

Story:

Young Christian boy went to a new secondary school at the beginning of the year in the last week of August.

That part of the world is very hot, and very humid in the summertime – it was especially hot the first week of school.

He was thirsty and he was in a classroom full of Muslim boys and they were all sharing a glass of water.

Because he was so thirsty, the Christian boy took a drink as well.

But when the Muslim boys saw that he had taken a drink from the glass they were using, they got very angry – because from their perspective, he was an infidel and shouldn't have touched the glass that was being used by Muslims.

So they started to beat him. The teacher was watching and didn't say anything. In the end, they beat him to death.

He was 17 years old - killed all for drinking a glass of water.

When you think of what Jesus said to his disciples: “That if you give a cup of water in His name, you will receive a reward in Heaven.”

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AT LEAST 692 CHURCHES AND CHRISTIAN BUILDINGS WERE ATTACKED

168 Churches were attacked in Pakistan alone.

**More than
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More than 1,922 Christians were detained without trial, arrested, sentenced and imprisoned

Let's talk about NORTH KOREA

- Number 1 for the 17th consecutive year.
- The leaders are worshipped as gods and Christians are considered enemies of the state.
- We estimate that 50-70,000 Christians are imprisoned in brutal labour camps.
- So to follow Jesus means risking everything.
- If you are fortunate enough to own a Bible, you have to keep it hidden.
- You hide your faith - Don't even tell your children in case they accidentally tell their teachers.
- And if you are discovered, then not only you, but your whole family will be sent to a labour camp.

And the secret church is growing!!!

Mention the 40-day faith challenge, "Live life a North Korean"

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Open Doors™ SERVING PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS WORLDWIDE

ON AVERAGE, EVERY MONTH OVER 100 CHRISTIANS ARE FORCIBLY MARRIED

**BLESSED ARE
THE
PERSECUTED**
MATTHEW 5:10-12



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But there is blessing in persecution.

Jesus said, " **BLESSED** are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Matthew 5:10-12

A common question that I am asked is whether I believe that persecution is coming to Canada. In many ways the answer depends on how you define persecution. In the broadest sense I would define Christian persecution as any hostility experienced as a result of proclaiming the name of Jesus.

(For more on defining Christian persecution I can recommend Ron Boyd-McMillen's book entitled, Faith that Endures)

Obviously, we have our challenges in this country and I would say that we shouldn't be fearful of persecution. The truth is, true persecution purifies the church and brings us to a place where we can't sit on the fence. I have never met a nominal Christian in the persecuted church - what I have seen however, is tremendous faith and real-life examples of fully committed followers of Jesus.

Let me share with you some of the striking characteristics that I've noticed when visiting persecuted Christians:

RENEWED HUNGER FOR THE WORD OF GOD



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A Renewed Hunger for the Word of God

Every persecuted Christian that I've met has a great desire to read and to learn scripture.

Many of them don't have easy access to the Bible – in fact, in many cases, it can be fatal to own a Bible. But yet, the bible is valued like gold to them.

Their desire for Biblical training is intense – many will travel for days to attend a teaching (often on foot).

RENEWED DEPENDENCE ON GOD AND COMMITMENT TO PRAYER



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A Renewed Dependence on God and on Prayer

Persecuted Christians depend on God for just about everything - guidance, daily sustenance, strength to stand in the face of persecution... it only follows then that prayer is paramount. The persecuted know the power of prayer.

They understand also that when times get really tough, we actually discover more about who God is and how he works.

Testimony of Wang Ming Dao – Chinese pastor, evangelist and accomplished author who was incarcerated for 23 years.

“I was pushed into a cell, but you will have to push yourself into one. You have no time to know God. You need to build yourself a cell so that you can do for yourself what persecution did for me. Simplify your life and know God.”

RENEWED COMMITMENT TO SPREADING THE GOSPEL



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A Renewed Commitment to Spreading the Gospel

What we think we need in this country is far different from other places in the world. When you lose your home, friends, family and possibly your health because of physical or emotional oppression, your priorities change. You begin to realize that the only thing that has lasting meaning is the hope of the gospel and the treasure of Christ ... nothing else matters!

The majority of our Christian family members around the world are poor – kinda like the early church was primarily poor – tentmakers, often considered the garbage of the world. In the first three centuries they had no church buildings – they met in shops, warehouses and homes – but they LOVED the pure joy of meeting together.

Last Sunday I visited this Roman stadium in Northern Africa

- One of a number of sites where early Christians were killed in the early church
- Perpetua - Other lady

And here's the thing: Without this persecution, the gospel would never have spread the way it did. It is precisely because of the persecution, because of the pains and chains and the floggings and the martyrdoms, that the gospel spread to the ends of the earth.

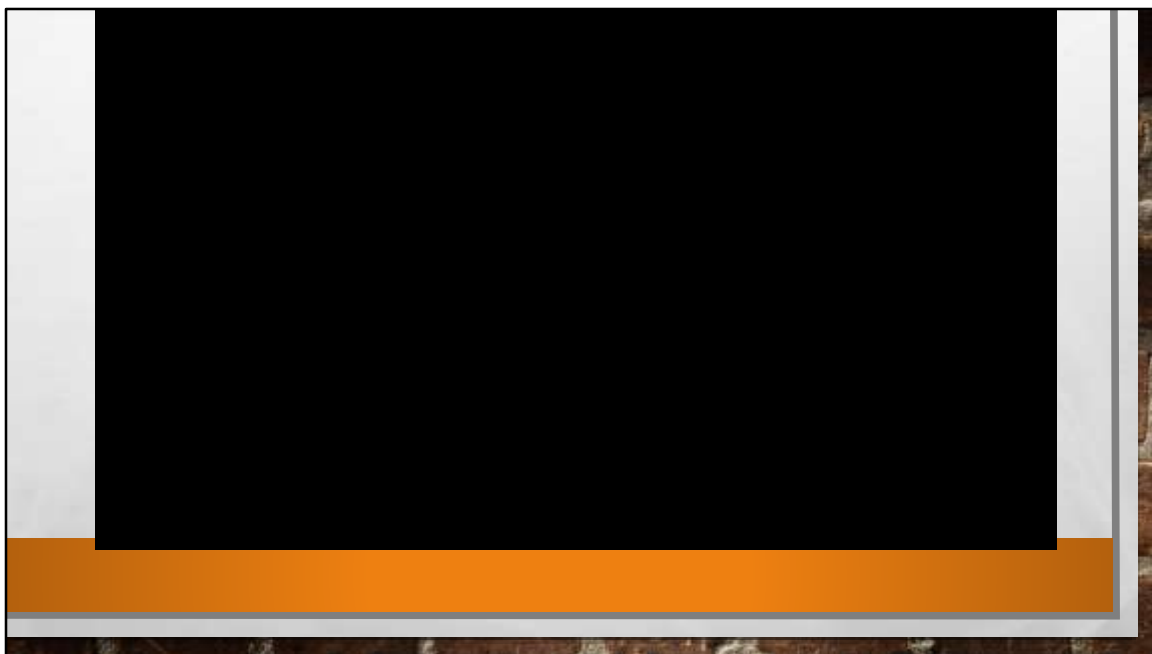
And today the same thing is happening around the world. Today, Christians are being

persecuted and attacked and still the Kingdom of God is growing.

All around the worlds, governments believe that they can control Christianity. They think they can restrict it, monitor it, keep it locked up in a box;

- In Uzbekistan the government monitors religious groups with phone-tapping and spies; house churches are raided and its members arrested; and Christians can be fined for anything from owning a bible to having a Christian song on their phone.
- In Vietnam, churches must provide the authorities with details of their programs a year in advance and it's technically illegal to share anything about Jesus outside of a church building.
- In Laos, religious conversion, sharing the gospel, and conducting church activities all require government permission

Yet, in all of these places where we find these restrictions, Christians find ways to share the good news and the church is growing! Revival is happening!



“If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”

1 Cor. 12:26-27



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not just about numbers and figures. It represents those who have decided to follow Jesus, NO MATTER THE COST.

And if there is anything that I want people to understand, it is that these are our family members. That’s why my title is “Standing with OUR persecuted church family.”

1 Corinthians 12:26-27 says,

“²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

What can we do?

- PRAY
- ACT
- GIVE
- SPEAK