



Open Doors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

the
DNA
of a
PERSECUTED
CHRISTIAN

OUR INHERITED STRANDS
OF IDENTITY FROM CHRIST



FINDING JOY IN SUFFERING

"Through [Jesus] we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." Romans 5:2-4

**SMALL GROUP
INSPIRATIONAL GUIDE**

ISSUE ONE



FINDING JOY IN SUFFERING

In this six part series, **'The DNA of a Persecuted Christian'**, we will look at the strands of identity, which we have inherited from Jesus, that enable our persecuted brothers and sisters to live for Him in spite of hardship and suffering. As you hear some of their stories we hope that you will learn more about the persecuted Church and will continue to pray with us for them. We trust that this series will not only broaden your insight into the lives of our persecuted family but will also show you more clearly the inheritance, or DNA, that the body of Christ, whether free or persecuted, shares. (For more on this series see p. 4.)

EXAMINING OUR FAITH

A story is told of a woman that asks a silversmith how he knows when the silver is ready. The silversmith answers, *"Oh, that's easy – when I see my image in it."*

Isaiah 48:10 says: *"I've refined you, but not without fire. I've tested you like silver in the furnace of affliction."* When going through trials and persecution it is difficult for us to find joy in the suffering. But just as silver is refined to the point that the silversmith sees his image in it, so God refines us until others can see Jesus in our lives. Only then can we find joy in even the worst of suffering.

It is this joy that keeps our persecuted brothers and sisters strong in the faith. Persecuted Christians are able to be joyful during their afflictions because they know the glory of God is being revealed through them. Moreover, God has promised all of us that we will be with Him in glory. Persecuted Christians know that this is an assured glory and the things that they endure here on earth, at the hands of their persecutors, is temporary and will soon pass away.

READ 1 Peter 1:6-7

Why do we as believers suffer and what is the source of our joy during suffering?

What comforts you and challenges you in these verses?

READ Hadija's story on p. 3

What allowed Hadija to persevere despite incredible hardship and pressure?

What lessons can we learn from Hadija and Mellina?





HADIJA PERSEVERES THROUGH SUFFERING

Mellina (left) is in the process of adopting Hadija (right).

Born into a Muslim family in a small Ugandan town, Hadija has an extraordinary testimony of faith for an 11-year-old girl. Hadija began secretly attending services as a 5-year-old. When her father found out about it, he warned her to stop, promising to beat her should she disobey. She wouldn't stop and so endured weekly beatings.

When Hadija was seven her mother died. Soon after, her polygamous father relocated to a town in western Uganda to live with his newest wife. As young as she was, Hadija bravely searched for another church and continued attending Sunday school. She continued attending church despite her stepmother's warnings and the severe beatings and denial of food from her father.

A Christian woman at church, Mellina, befriended Hadija and learned about the abuse. One Sunday in December 2012, the beatings were so bad that Mellina intervened. Mellina became Hadija's guardian and is now in the process of adopting her.

"I want to tell young people that Jesus is good," said Hadija. "I want to tell them that because Jesus is so good, we should please Him and preach the Gospel to other people."

**"I want to tell
young people
that Jesus is
good." –Hadija**

She also has a message for others who are being mistreated or have been abandoned because they believe in Jesus: *"I want to tell them to believe in Jesus and not to give up. Also, I pray that they will find someone like Mellina who encourages me to pray to Jesus."*

PRAY

Lord, we pray that you will continue to instill Your joy in us and our persecuted brothers and sisters as we endure persecution, hardship, and suffering for Your name – may we count it all joy. Be with all of us Lord, as we journey with You this year. May we find joy in all that You have planned for us. And may You give us the strength to follow You throughout this year. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Pray for protection for believers like Hadija who suffer at the hands of family members for choosing to follow Christ.

Pray that as persecution against Christians increase that our persecuted brothers and sisters will continue to hope in the Lord and that He will renew their strength throughout this year.





WHAT THIS SERIES IS ALL ABOUT

So what is the **'The DNA of a persecuted Christian'** series all about? As Christians, one of our core beliefs is that we are all part of one body, the Church, and we are all united under Jesus, the head of the body.

As 1 Corinthians 12:12-14 says, *"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptised into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many."*

We all share the same DNA then – adopted children of God who were once dead in our sins, but now are alive in Christ. And because we are all part of the body of Christ, we believe that the persecuted Church is also part of the **DNA** of every Christian.

As Christians living in 'safer' places in the world, we have a lot to learn from the persecuted Church. Though we live in places where we aren't violently persecuted for our faith, we too face situations in life where we feel afraid, sometimes because of our faith. For many persecuted Christians, danger is never far away and they often fear the consequences of their faith being exposed. But God gives them and us comfort in our fears and teaches us not to be afraid. Persecuted Christians know all too well what it is to face their fears head on with endurance, humility, and boldness.

This is why prayer is so important and it's something that the persecuted Church partakes in daily. As you read about the different characteristics that make up the DNA of persecuted Christians, and, really, the DNA of all Christians, pray for their situation, pray for their safety, and pray for those who persecute them.

Through their stories we can learn to love our enemies, pray for those who persecute us, and endure through hard times: these are all things that persecuted Christians often experience in a very different way to us. And as you go through this series, we hope and pray that you will gain a deeper insight not just into the DNA of persecuted Christians, but the whole body of Christ's DNA. We are, after all, ONE body.



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