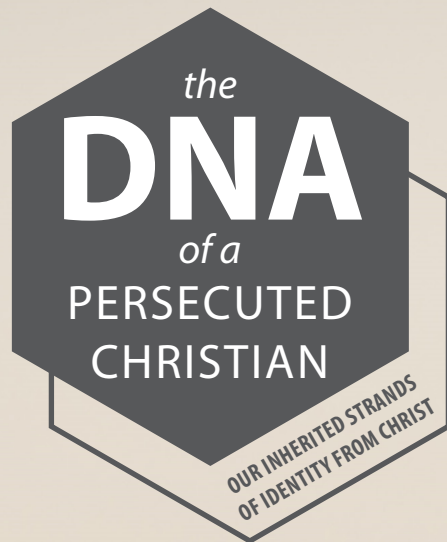




Open Doors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide



ENDURANCE TO THE END

"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 TWO



ENDURANCE TO THE END

In this six part series, **'The DNA of a Persecuted Christian'**, we are looking 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 not only broadens your insight into the lives of our persecuted family but also shows 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

The Christian life is like a marathon. And like a marathon, it's easy to begin well but harder to finish well. The real test comes the further you run. The question then is, "Will you endure to the finish?"

In 2 Timothy 1:8 and 2:3 we see how Paul advises Timothy to remain grounded in the Gospel and to endure suffering during the difficult days to come. Paul's advice is given while he faces execution for being a follower of Jesus, and while Timothy is under pressure to compromise the Gospel as many are abandoning it.

As followers of Jesus, we may find ourselves in situations of suffering and persecution where we need to patiently endure. It's in these times that we, like our persecuted family, need to remember our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who suffered and died for our sins. We, as the body of Christ, can know that He will never leave us or forsake us because His promises are trustworthy and His word is powerful. So persecuted Christians, as well as ourselves, are able to finish the marathon because we are able to say with Paul, *"This is my Gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained,"* (2 Timothy 2:8-9).



READ 2 Timothy 2:1-13


Why are the soldier, athlete, and farmer willing to endure hardship (vv. 3-6)?

What might God be calling you to surrender or endure at the moment, for the sake of the Gospel?

READ Comfort's story on p. 3

What strikes you the most about Comfort's story?

If you were captured and told to convert to another religion, how would you endure?



MY YES TO JESUS IS YES AND MY NO TO ISLAM IS NO

Comfort* is a 50-year-old Christian widow from Mubi, Nigeria. When Boko Haram took the town in October 2014, Comfort and her family tried to flee. But before they could get away, Boko Haram soldiers surrounded them. The attackers killed Comfort's husband and twin sons and put her in a car. They drove her and some other women from the area to a house in Mubi where they locked them up with other abducted Christian women.

Altogether, there were 20 Christian women and 10 children who were moved to a different house every week. Comfort was the eldest of the group, and anticipating the pressure to become Muslims, she encouraged the women soon after their arrival, *"Let our yes be yes and our no be no. These people have already killed one or two of our people; for what reason then will we change? There is no reason to change our religion."*

The fighters taunted the women with the words, *"We have burnt your churches. Where will you hold your services?"* The women replied, *"That is just a building you have burnt. Our God lives in our hearts. Our God is among us."*

"Where is your Jesus now?" the soldiers asked. *"He will rescue us,"* the women answered. *"Then ask Him to rescue you now,"* they challenged. *"We don't tell our God what to do,"* the women replied.

The soldiers gave the women spaghetti and rice to cook but the food made them sick. The rest of the time they spent in prayer.

By God's grace and through persistent prayer they were able to withstand the continuous pressure to convert to Islam. After spending four weeks in captivity, the women were able to escape just as the army started liberating Mubi. After facing great danger, as they fled from the rebels, all the women and their children made it safely to either refugee camps or family members.

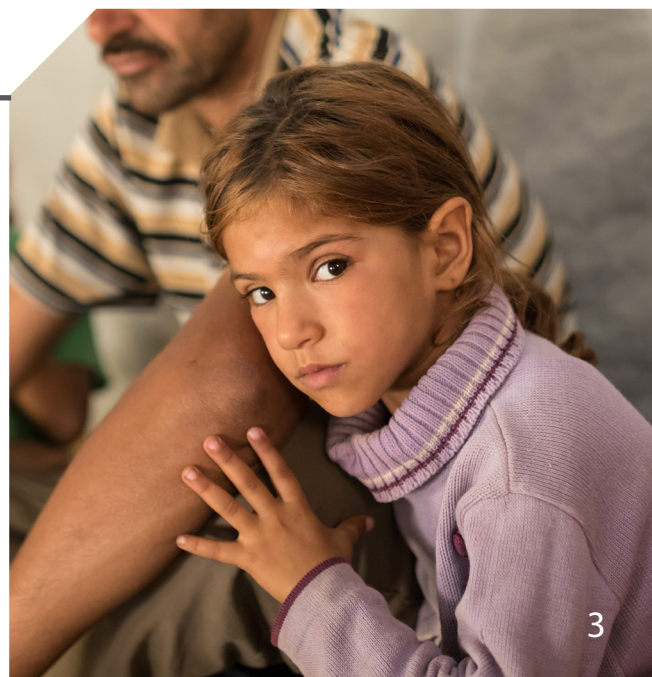
*Name changed for security reasons.

PRAY

Pray Colossians 1:11-12 over our persecuted family, asking God to strengthen them with all power according to His glorious might so that they may have great endurance and patience, and may give joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified them to share in the inheritance of His holy people in the kingdom of light.

Pray that in their suffering and persecution, persecuted believers will feel the presence of the Lord around them and that He will instill in them His peace as they endure for the sake of the Gospel.

Pray that in the midst of any pressure the persecuted Church may face to compromise the Gospel, that like Comfort, their yes to Jesus will be yes and their no to compromise will be no.





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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