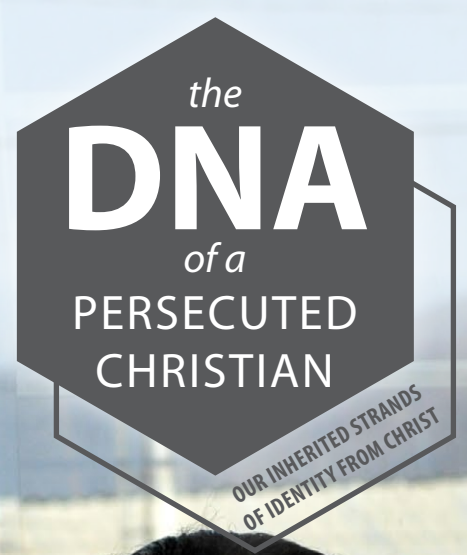




OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide



LIVING A LIFE OF WILLING OBEDIENCE

"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 FOUR



LIVING A LIFE OF WILLING OBEDIENCE

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

In today's society, obedience is sometimes frowned upon and labelled as being unadventurous and boring. People often assume that those who always follow the rules and guidelines miss out on all the fun. Obedience is, therefore, seen as going against one's own will to fulfil the will of someone else. So, willing obedience can be hard to imagine. However, the Bible portrays this phrase differently. In the Bible, willing obedience and service is a great display of love. Christ obeyed God out of love for Him and for us – to the point of death.

Our love for Christ should control our lives resulting in us living to please Christ by obeying His commands. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, *"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."*

Persecuted Christians know what it means to live to please Christ, and not themselves, as new creations in Christ. They willingly choose to follow Christ and obey His commandments, despite knowing that they will be persecuted or even killed!



READ John 14:15-31

What reveals our love for the Lord?

Are people able to tell, by the life you live, that you love Jesus? Give examples.

READ Susan's story on p. 3

What stands out to you from this story?

How can you be more obedient to Jesus this week?



SUSAN'S STORY

Susan, a 17-year-old girl from Uganda, lived in a strict Islamic family. In 2010, a man came to her school and spoke about Jesus being the Son of God. Immediately Susan gave her life to Jesus. When she got home, her father found out and abused her. One day he even grabbed her and her brother, dragged them outside and threatened them with a knife. He said, *"Susan, if you do not stop following Jesus I will kill you and your brother."* Susan refused to deny Jesus. Her father took her to a small room in the house and put a mat on the floor. He told her that she could only move off the mat when she denied Christ as her Lord and Saviour. Her father then locked the door and didn't return to that room for three months. Susan only survived because her brother snuggled her water and food under the door.

**"I cannot
leave Jesus."
–Susan**

After a while, the neighbours began to wonder where Susan was. They called the police who broke into the house and found her sitting on the mat, barely alive. The bones in her legs had begun to grow and conform to the way she had been sitting, and she weighed just 20 kilograms. The police rushed her to hospital and her rehabilitation began. When they asked her why she hadn't tried to move, Susan answered, *"My father said that if I left the mat I would be denying Jesus."*

"I cannot leave Jesus. I decided not to leave Him because He has given me eternal life and even if I died there, I was sure that I would go to Him."

PRAYER

Thank the Lord for the love He has shown us through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, on the cross for our sins. May we fully surrender our thoughts and hearts to our loving God, so that we may be able to step out in faithful obedience in all He has called us to do.

Pray for strength and protection for our persecuted brothers and sisters as they willingly obey God in the midst of persecution. May their obedience serve as a testimony to those around them, including their persecutors.

Pray that when persecuted Christians are pressured into leaving Christ to stay alive, or choosing Christ and possibly being killed – God will give them the strength and courage to choose Christ, just like Susan kept doing.





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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