

WHAT IS FAITH
REALLY WORTH?

The Cost

THE YOUTH MAG FROM
OPEN DOORS SOUTHERN AFRICA

Winter Edition 2018

- Editorial: Don't give up – keep going
- A history of violence
- Focus on North Korea
- Where a tattoo can cost you your life

Open *Doors*
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Don't give up
- keep going!

Giving up is easy. But to keep going, now that is difficult. As you read through this edition of *The Cost*, you'll pick up on that theme. Whether it's persecution in the Early Church, or being a secret Christian in North Korea, or where a tattoo can cost you your life... choosing to keep going in your faith journey isn't always easy. But it's more than worth it.

In the New Testament, James writes that we should "*Consider it pure joy when we face trials of many kinds...*" (James 1:2). He carries on his thought, saying that our struggles produce perseverance and that perseverance helps us to grow and mature in our faith. To keep going is a sign of maturity; it's a sign that deep down we know God is good, even if what we face is not. It's a sign that we've begun to grasp just how much God loves us and we then begin to frame our view of the world from that perspective. And when we do that, we find that His love is more than enough to see us through.

The people you'll read about and meet in this newsletter have chosen to keep going no matter what. But, there are millions more around the world doing the same; sticking with Jesus, despite fear of arrest, imprisonment, ridicule, beatings and even death.

As we learn more about them and choose to stand with them, let's pray that they will also inspire us to keep going, no matter what we face!

Enjoy the read and let us know via email what you think of our newsletter!

Until next time,

Natasja B

Open Doors Youth Coordinator



**Blackout
is coming**

Could you go at least 24 hours without *Instagram*, *Facebook* or *Twitter*? If you're up for the challenge, we'd love you to join us in November for our annual digital fast from the web: BLACKOUT. The idea is to get sponsored to switch off from social networks in order to make a massive noise for persecuted Christians through our silence on the web, as well as to pray for them.

A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE



Since the Early Church, those who've chosen to follow Jesus have suffered because of their choice. It's sometimes hard to believe that the Church has faced nearly two thousand years of beatings, abuse, ridicule and social shame.



But then, with a history like ours, maybe that is something we shouldn't be so surprised about. Just think about it... Jesus, an innocent man, came to earth to buy our freedom. As a result, He was killed by those who saw Him as a challenge to their power and theological understanding. Jesus's death was brutal. Thousands of years later His message of unity divides the world and instils fear in political powers and religions. And since then, there's been a relentless, unstoppable flow of abuse against Christ-followers. All because they follow Jesus and carry His message of unity which poses a threat to today's power base and worldviews.

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HERE ARE SOME OF THE LOWLIGHTS

AD
30-33

Jesus's crucifixion.

AD
33

Stephen stoned to death (Acts 7).

AD
67-68

Paul and Peter martyred under the reign of Roman Emperor Nero.

AD
150

The persecution in Lyon indicates a wider trend with mob violence, assaults, robberies and stoning directed at Christians.

AD
173

onwards: Emperor Maximinus Thrax targets Christian leaders across the empire.

AD
284

onwards: Emperor Diocletian starts the "Great Persecution" where up to 20 000 Christians are thought to have been killed.

AD
341

Zoroastrian Shapur II orders the massacre of all Christians in the Persian Sassanid Empire, condemning 1 150 Assyrian Christians to death.

AD
614

Jewish/Persian wars saw around 60 000 Christians killed in Jerusalem and across the empire as Christians became caught between various sides.

Fast forward 1 500 years and the last century hasn't been any more peaceful. Persecution of Christians has been on the rise, so much so that it sparked Brother Andrew to respond to God's call and begin the work of Open Doors.

NOW... Thousands of Christians are thought to be killed every year because of their belief in Jesus. Over 10% of the world's Christians live in places where they can't fully practice their faith without fear of punishment. It's easy to see why Christians are considered the most persecuted group on earth.* But despite this, they keep going and keep growing!

PRAY

Head to www.opendoors.org.za or follow us on *Facebook*, *Twitter* or *Instagram* to read stories and get regular updates that will fuel your prayers.



FOCUS ON
NORTH KOREA



North Korea tops the World Watch List, for the 17th year running, making it the number one country where Christians face the worst persecution. If you're from the wrong social class, believe or say the wrong thing, or just step out of line, it's a pretty horrific place to live.

The country is largely closed to the rest of the world. Inside, the vast majority of people aren't supposed to leave. They're told, via state-owned media, education and years of tradition, to love the ruling Kim family like gods.

This puts Christians in a dangerous position. If you're found to be a Christian you'll not only be interrogated to find out about your networks, your family will also be arrested due to the guilt-by-association principle and all will face years of misery in labour camps. Of an estimated 300 000-400 000 Christians in North Korea, up to 70 000 are imprisoned in these camps, which North Korea denies exists. Conditions are horrific. Many starve or die from exhaustion.

Christians, therefore keep their faith a secret, showing God's love through sacrificial acts of kindness such as sharing the little food they have with those in need. It's almost impossible to talk openly about Jesus, but many brave and courageous followers of Jesus are quietly, secretly and miraculously sharing their faith!

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QUICK FACTS

Church meetings might just consist of three people, mouthing hymns and prayers and whispering Bible passages.

There are very few Christians under 18. Parents worry that their children may talk about Jesus and they'll be reported to the police, so they hide their faith from them.

The Church in neighbouring China is a lifeline to North Korean Christians. Churches in towns near the border run safe-houses for those that escape, but also send in food, resources, Bibles and offer training for converts who may become future church leaders.



HEE YOUNG'S STORY

Hee Young's* Christian parents tentatively told her about Jesus as a child. Her parents were part of an underground Christian network. Hee Young and her sister would stand watch while her parents held secret worship services in their home. But the authorities grew suspicious and raided one of the services. The police found one of their hidden Bibles, and arrested Hee Young's father, who she never saw again.

Her whole family was questioned, but all of them said they didn't know anything about the Bible. Devastatingly, as a precaution, they burned all copies of the Bible they owned while they waited to be arrested. Amazingly, instead of being arrested, they were relocated to a smaller village and house. They were still alive.

"I REALISED THAT GOD HAD PREPARED THIS PLACE FOR US. HE TURNED EVIL TO GOOD, JUST AS IN THE STORY OF JOSEPH," SAID HEE YOUNG.

Life was not easy though. There were spies everywhere and their house was bugged. They had no Bible, but Hee Young's sister wrote down the verses she could remember and hid them in the forest. When times were really tough they'd go and find the buried verses for encouragement.

One day, a man knocked on their door every day for a week. The family were worried he was a spy, but he wasn't. He'd been sent by a Chinese pastor who knew Hee Young's grandmother. He'd heard about what had happened and wanted to help. So, with her mother's approval, Hee Young was smuggled out of North Korea and into China, where she then travelled to South Korea. Miraculously, after five years, she was reunited with her remaining family, who also escaped to South Korea.

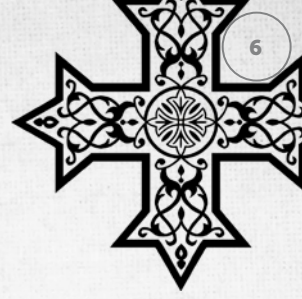
Hee Young is now married to a pastor and has three children. Her family keeps on praying that one day they'll be able to return to their homeland and share the message of Jesus openly and without fear.

PRAYER

Father. You are God. No one is like You. No ruler. No nation. You're bigger, stronger and more powerful. Have Your way in North Korea. Bring an end to evil. Bring hope and love. Holy Spirit, strengthen those 400 000 secret Christians. Give them ways to learn more about You. Provide Bibles and materials. Give them courage. Let their actions point everyone they meet to You. Help them stick with You through trials and pain. And help me use my freedom to speak up for Your children. Amen.



Where a tattoo can cost you your life



Christians in Egypt often get a cross tattooed on their wrists to celebrate their faith. It's a bit of a tradition—one in which they often use the Coptic version of the cross which has four equal sides.

But wearing a cross is not without risks. Recently, 27-year-old Bassem was killed because of a cross tattoo on his wrist. His murderers threatened to repeat their crime and kill more Christians.

The killing of Bassem is an extreme example of what Christians in Egypt face every day—persecution and harassment because of their faith in Jesus. Despite this, they don't hide their cross tattoos.

Below, three Christians share about their love for the cross and what their tattoos mean to them:



Ramzy (25)

"The cross tattoo helps me to get away from starting to do any evil. When I look at the cross on my hand I remember the crucifixion of Christ and the pain He endured for my salvation and that gives me the strength to overcome any devilish thought or sin. The cross protects me from all evil.

"I always go to the homes of our customers to repair their washing machines and refrigerators. Some of the Muslim customers don't allow me to enter their homes when they see the cross tattoo on my hand, and that isn't a strange thing for us; we are often hated and persecuted because of our faith."

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Warda (18)

"I'm very proud of my cross tattoo. The tattoo shows others that I'm a Christian, and I like that. I want all the people to know that I'm a Christian. The Lord is good, He is the source of our strength and protection. I trust Him so much."

"I'm not afraid of persecution. The only one I fear is God. Like the Bible says: 'Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.' (Matthew 10:28)"

"I'm not afraid because there is a cross on my hand. The cross is my life, I can't live without it. May I never boast except in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The cross on my hand shows that I'm Christian to all people. I'm proud of my religion."



Essam (15)



Persecution against Christians in Egypt is increasing. Egypt is number 17 on the 2018 World Watch List, and 128 Christians in Egypt were killed for their faith last year.

Egyptian Christians face violent attacks from Islamic extremists, discrimination by the Islamic society, land theft and stopping them from owning land, and repressive and discriminatory laws set by the state.

Stand with your family in Egypt...

PRAY

Praise God for the faithful and courageous witness of Egypt's Christians. Pray that God will continue to work through them as His ambassadors, for protection over them, and provision for Christians who are denied land, work and access to education because of their faith in Jesus.

