

# LIVE LIKE A **NORTH KOREAN**

*Experience life in North Korea: Imagine, Pray, Act*



SMALL GROUP INSPIRATIONAL GUIDE **ISSUE ONE**



**OpenDoors**

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

*"To crush underfoot all prisoners in the land, to deny people their rights before the Most High, to deprive them of justice – would not the Lord see such things?" – Lamentations 3:34-36*



## IMAGINE A LAND...

Where the state decides where you live, chooses your profession for you, what sports you may play, what food you may eat – even if you may eat. A colourless land: drab clothing, concrete buildings, where the only colour is in the propaganda images of the Great Leader who, though dead for 25 years, is still president and must be worshipped as a god. And where, despite that, hundreds of thousands of people choose to secretly worship the only true God.

**This is life in North Korea.**

(For more info on this series see p.4)



## PREPARE THINK TALK



You will need:

- Candles for people to light.
- News stories from North Korea – pin these up or pass them around.

**Read: Daniel, chapter 3**

“We will not serve your gods.”

- What is the background to this chapter in Daniel? What is happening? Where is it taking place?
- Share the information about ‘Kimilsungism’ (see bottom of p. 3). How does this story relate to North Korea? What do you think it is like to live in such an atmosphere?
- How can we in the ‘free’ Church walk alongside and support Christians in the furnace of persecution?
- What are the ‘golden statues’ in our country and context?
- How can we make sure that we keep God at the centre of our lives?



## IMAGINE

Get hold of news stories from North Korea, either from newspapers or the Internet.

What do these tell you about life inside the country?

What do you imagine life is like for the citizens?

## PRAY

Life for a North Korean citizen has been described as like a candle: all it takes to be blown out is one wrong word or contact with one wrong person. And this is especially true for Christians. Light a candle in the group and pray together that God will nourish and protect the faith of these fragile believers. In a musical about North Korea's infamous Yodok prison camp, the actors sing the prayer of many North Korean Christians.

You could pray this silently, or together:

If there's someone out there, can you hear this cry?  
If there is someone out there, please listen to us.  
Oh God, look at that blood,  
Wind, please stop blowing.  
Our lives are like candles.  
Wind, please stop blowing, don't blow, you will blow out the candles.  
Sun, please don't rise, don't rise, someday it will be over.  
Heaven will not forsake us forever.  
If only we had wings, we would fly away.

North Korean Christians take a stand against the idols in their society. As you pray, ask God to reveal more of the 'idols' we are also told or tempted to worship in this world. Pray for the strength to stand against the pressure to conform.

## ACT

**As individuals:** Choose which of the weekly actions you will do (see top of p. 4).

**As a group:** Look out for news and information in the media about North Korea. Try to learn as much as you can.

**With Open Doors:** A gift of R260 can help keep 1 believer in North Korea alive with emergency aid and spiritual support. Go to [www.opendoors.org.za/giftnk](http://www.opendoors.org.za/giftnk)

## INSIGHT INTO NORTH KOREA



### Kimilsungism

*"We cover the portraits of the leaders on the wall and then we kneel down in a circle. We pray for strength and endurance. We pray that God will keep our country."* – North Korean Christian

North Korea is a country dominated by a personality cult.

Known as 'Kimilsungism', it revolves around the effective worship of the leading dynasty founded by Kim Il-Sung, his son Kim Jong-Il, and his grandson – and present leader – Kim Jong-Un. Everyone must attend at least weekly meetings and memorise more than 100 pages of ideological learning materials, including documents that praise the morals and majesty of Kim Il-Sung, Kim Jong-Il and Kim Jong-Un, and various poems and songs praising them.



# ACTION

Which of these will you do?

- **Turn off the power.**

North Korea suffers from routine and extended power shortages. Turn off the electricity for a whole day. Turn it on in the evening for an hour. Then switch it off again...

- **Eat like a North Korean.**

Try living for a day on the diet of an ordinary North Korean citizen. Eat a bowl of soup and some bread – and that's all for the day. Remember that for prisoners it is even less.



Source: yahoo.com

Satellite image of North- and South Korea at night showing the electricity shortage in North Korea.



The lives of North Koreans are constantly scrutinised. Every Saturday, citizens attend their local Kim Il-Sung research centre where they study the teachings of the great leaders and take part in 'criticism' sessions to address the ways they have failed the state. Every citizen is also part of the 'Inminban' – a kind of neighbourhood watch system. No North Korean person exists outside the inminban system; everyone is a member. The leaders of these inminban groups write reports on their neighbours: Have their members had visitors? Been away from home for any reason? Are the portraits of the leaders kept clean?

For Christians – who believe that there is a higher authority than the nation's leaders – life is perilous. *"I was afraid, every day, for my life,"* said one. This is one reason why Christian parents don't often tell their children about their faith. Children might let something slip, sing a song, say a prayer, which could result in their entire family disappearing, them being executed or more likely sent to labour camps.

Even for those who are not locked up, life is incredibly hard. The economy is in a state of collapse. And it's estimated that famine has killed between two and three million people in

North Korea since the early 1990s.

While living under such conditions, North Korean Christians and citizens alike need much prayer...

In this resource you will find readings and prayers to help you pray with the underground Church in North Korea. The stories you will read show the hardship, pain and suffering of North Korean believers, but also their joy, courage and faith – because, amazingly, despite the secrecy and pressure and fear, the Church is growing!

But what makes this resource different is that it also challenges **you** to live like a North Korean.

Along with Bible readings and prayers, there are actions that will help you experience a little of what North Korean Christians endure every day. You might end up living without electricity (or food). You might bury your Bible or learn long political thoughts of the 'Dear Leader'. These actions cannot replicate the reality, but they can, with prayerful reflection, provide a window into the world of North Korean Christians.



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