

READ LIKE A **NORTH KOREAN**

Experience life in North Korea: Imagine, Pray, Act



SMALL GROUP INSPIRATIONAL GUIDE **ISSUE FOUR**



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 people are executed for possessing a Bible and where the only 'scriptures' are writings about the 'dear leaders'. A land where stories from the Bible are passed on in disguise, where Bibles are hidden in baskets, under the floor, in the roof... Where people memorise the Bible, hold it close, treasure it, risk everything for it.

This is reading in North Korea.

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



PREPARE THINK TALK



You will need a:

- Bible
- Paper
- Pen

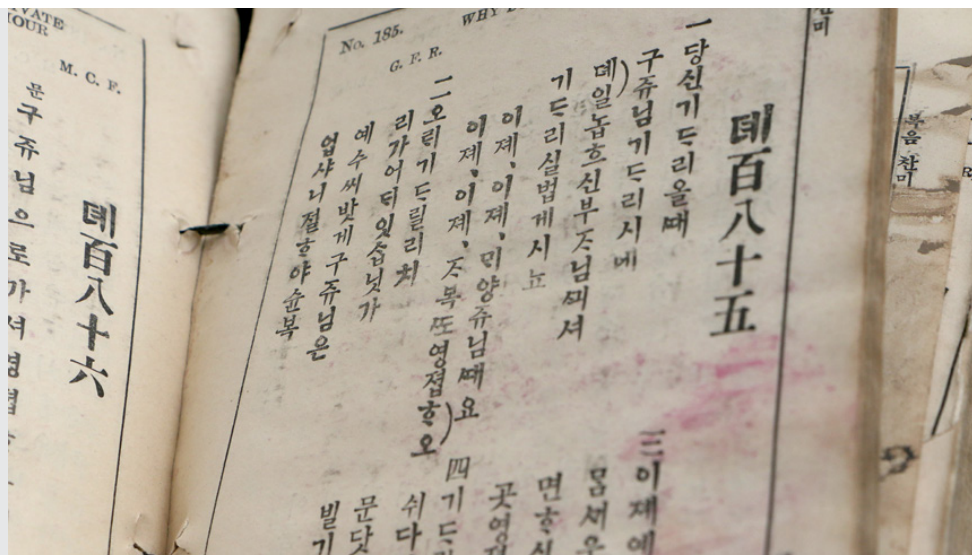
Read: 2 Timothy 3:10-17

"All scripture is God-breathed"

- Paul writes, "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted..." How do you respond to that? Is that your experience?
- What does Paul say is the purpose of the 'God-breathed' scriptures (v.16-17)? List the things he mentions. Have you seen the scriptures used in this way?
- How often do you read the Bible? Daily? Weekly? Less often? What stops you from reading it?
- In North Korea owning a Bible is punishable by death. Do we value the Bible in that way?

IMAGINE

Imagine that all the Bibles you own or have access to have been rounded up and burned. What would you remember? How could you pass it on? What can you do to memorise more Bible verses?



PRAY

- Pray the Lord's Prayer together (from memory of course!)
- Read Psalm 121 slowly:
- *"I lift up my eyes to the mountains – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip – He who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord watches over you – the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all harm – He will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore."*
- Now see if, as a group, you can memorise it and then repeat it as a shared prayer.
- Pray for the protection of Bible-owning believers in North Korea. The government has clamped down on anyone possessing 'illegal materials'. People have been executed for possessing Bibles.

ACT

As individuals: Choose which of the actions you will do this month (see p. 4).

As a group: Commit to learning a passage of scripture – or even a book! This is what many North Korean believers have to do. Perhaps learn a prayer from the Bible and use it at your next meeting.

With Open Doors: Every R260 can help keep 1 believer in North Korea alive with emergency aid and spiritual support. Go to www.opendoors.org.za/giftnk



We had to burn it

Every day when Hye and her sister returned from school, her grandmother would fetch the Bible from its hiding place in a basket and read out Bible verses.

In 1994, though, Hye's father was arrested by the North Korean secret police, and her grandmother decided that it was too dangerous to keep the Bible. *"We had to burn it. My grandmother said it was okay as long as we stayed true to our faith in God. But when the flames devoured the pages, my grandmother wept intensely."* Now, the only scriptures left were what the girls could remember. *"My sister wrote whatever she remembered on paper and hid it somewhere in secret. She would look at those papers whenever she was going through difficult times."*

ACTION

Which of these will you do?

- **Learn then burn.**

Write some Scripture on a piece of paper. Learn it. And then burn the paper just like many North Korean Christians have to do so that they are not found in possession of Scripture.

- **Bury your Bible.**

In North Korea possessing a Bible is illegal and punishable by death. Probably nowhere else in the world are so many copies of God's Word literally hidden underground. This month hide your Bible somewhere outside the house – in a shed, or another dry hiding place for a few days or more. Then, every morning, go out and retrieve it before reading it.



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 aren't 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 can't replicate the reality, but they can, with prayerful reflection, provide a window into the world of North Korean Christians.



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