

# FRONTLINE FAITH



See how you're  
training believers  
to stand strong and  
share the Gospel

>>

Persecuted  But never alone.

**SEPTEMBER**  
**2019**

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# You're training believers like Anh to stand strong

## *She was equipped for the challenges of sharing the Gospel in Vietnam*

Anh\* from Vietnam had no idea what she'd face when God called her to take the Gospel to another part of her country. But she knew there were risks and He was preparing her for the storm ahead.

Before Anh started her ministry work, she attended *Standing Strong through the Storm (SSTS)*, an Open Doors training programme that friends like you help provide. This training helped her develop a biblical perspective on persecution and strengthened her faith.

When a religious cult was growing in her province, local parents were worried about the teachings of her church. One young church member was reading his Bible in secret at home, but his father saw him and reported it to the authorities.

*"Later that night, when we were having a Bible study, local authorities came over and interrogated us... They mistook us for the religious cult,"* said Anh.

That night, as hostile government officials interrogated them, the Lord enabled Anh and her co-workers to stand strong. The authorities studied Anh's books and materials, trying to find fault in what they were doing. But their strong opposition didn't cause Anh's faith to weaken...

***"I told them, 'Because I believe in Christ and I am His follower, I just want to share about Him to others. I know that God's love is for everyone.'"***

Grateful for your support, Anh says:

*"I thank God for the Standing Strong Through the Storm course all the more now after facing persecution from local authorities. The course helped me know about the reality of persecution. This allowed me to be calm and bold. That's why we were able to respond with kindness when the government officials came and persecuted us. I was even able to share the Gospel with them."*

Thank you for making this training possible to help many persecuted Christians like Anh stand strong in their faith despite increasing opposition! ☺

\*Name changed for security reasons.



## VIETNAM

RANKING #20 | WWL SCORE 70

**Region** Southeast Asia

**2019 World Watch List Position**  
#20 out of top 50

**Population** 96 491 000  
(only 8.8% are Christians)

**Main Religion** Buddhism

**Government** Communist State

**Sources of Persecution**  
Communist and post-Communist oppression

### PRAY

- + That God will build up the faith of new believers in Vietnam, especially those from ethnic minorities
- + For safety for Open Doors workers who are distributing Bibles to believers on your behalf
- + That the Holy Spirit will move government leaders to loosen restrictions on the Christian minority

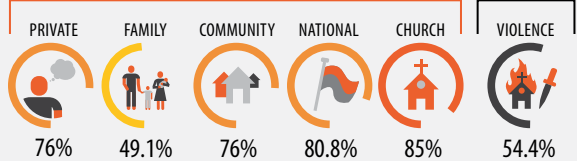


WORLD WATCH LIST

[www.opendoors.org.za/wwl](http://www.opendoors.org.za/wwl)

### Pressure

### Violence



Vietnamese people who follow Jesus are seen as traitors to their culture and identity. They face harassment, violent attacks and social exclusion. Villagers collude with local Communist authorities, beating believers, kicking them out of their villages and stoning places of worship during meetings. Non-Christian relatives often cut family ties and deny inheritance. Local and national government authorities persecute the Christian minority through their laws, and Christian bloggers and political activists have been arrested and sentenced for expressing their beliefs. Christians from ethnic minorities are viewed with suspicion by the government, as their people historically fought on the American side in the Vietnam War and are therefore seen as troublemakers.



Ananda says:

## 'YOU'LL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN' after you open your heart to partner with Open Doors



Ananda, one of Open Doors' prayer partners, recently wrote to say how much the persecuted Church has touched her life...

"I just want to say, with tears in my eyes... I've never felt so much sorrow in my heart and so much love and care since I partnered with Open Doors through prayer (after I was touched last year with godly love and set free).

"When I am busy in earnest intercessory prayer for these persecuted Christians, tears flow as my heart is torn when I realise what they must be going through. What really touches me deeply is how many Muslims in the world don't know the Lord. Neither my mind nor heart can comprehend it. Every time the thought crosses my mind during the day, tears run over my cheeks because these people don't know what is waiting for them one day. If I feel this way, I can't imagine how Jesus' heart must feel, who gave His life with so much love and pain. And when one finally understands His love, then one deeply comes to love them.

"It's like [your representative] Morné told me last year when he came to visit our church in Nylstroom, that [once you partner with Open Doors]... 'You will never be the same again.'"

Thank you for joining with Ananda and many others to pray for and support our persecuted brothers and sisters!

**WRITE**  
to Open Doors  
like Ananda did

**We would love to hear from you!**  
**We want to bring you closer to your brothers and sisters!**

So, write to us and let us know how the persecuted Church has touched you, or what you would like to see in your newsletters and communications. You can also send us a prayer for the persecuted Church. Email us at [southafrica@od.org](mailto:southafrica@od.org) or post your letter to **Open Doors, P.O. Box 1771, Cresta, 2118**, with the subject line or heading: *My Newsletter Feedback*.

## Persecuted children in China know they're not alone, thanks to you!



Pastor Jacob\* explains why children and teenagers younger than 18 in China are legally forbidden from entering church buildings or participating in church activities:

*"The Communist Party wants young people to believe that Christianity is a 'foreign' religion and that Western powers are attempting to infiltrate China on the back of religious teaching. That is why restrictions have been placed on them."*

In traditional Chinese culture, he says many young people also have to deal with pressure which comes with *"praise or shame based on their performance. It's a life of conditional love."*

Amazingly, many young people are turning to Christ because *"they experience God's unconditional love, and feel valued and respected."*

However, some schoolteachers warn children that if they follow Jesus, they may not be allowed to graduate. This creates a terrible struggle in young people's hearts. They are torn between living free in the truth of who they really are, versus possible punishment at the hands of their teachers or parents. If they admit they follow Jesus, they could lose everything they've worked so hard to achieve. Counting the cost of following Jesus is not just words here; it is a reality that many young believers have to face.

That's just one reason why your support is so important and greatly appreciated. Pastor Jacob says, *"We often tell our youth how a whole army of believers around the world pray for us daily... The [children] are a product of your prayers."*

We also thank you for helping to train many lay leaders like Pastor Jacob, so they can face the challenges of youth ministry in China and know they're not alone. He shares that the training created a *"sense of solidarity [and] gave me a new lease on life."*

Your partnership is helping to encourage the next generation of believers in China. Thank you!

\*Name changed for security reasons.

# Korea's history shows how persecution can ignite faith

If you look at Church history worldwide, a pattern becomes clear – as more people come to faith, persecution increases. But persecution can also increase faith!

Despite some of the worst persecution the world has ever seen, Christianity has survived on the Korean Peninsula. In South Korea, there are about 14 million Christians who worship God openly. And in North Korea, it's estimated that 200 000 to 400 000 believers follow Christ secretly.

And it's all thanks to brave believers like you keeping faith alive throughout the years...

**1603** Korean diplomat Yi Gwang-Jeong distributes theological books from Beijing.

**1758** Catholicism officially outlawed as an "evil practice".

**1785** Roman Catholic Yi Seung-Hun brings Roman Catholicism back to Korea.

**1801** Yi and 300 other Roman Catholics are martyred.

**1866** 8 000 Roman Catholics are killed for their faith, including 9 French monks. A new church is founded as Koreans read pages from missionary Robert J. Thomas's Bible that his killer used as wallpaper.

**1884** First Protestant church is established by Seo Sang-Ryu, and the first foreign Protestant missionary, Horace Newton Allen, enters Korea.

**1903–1906** The Wonsan Revival is the first revival in Korea.

**1907–1910** Pyongyang Great Revival takes place.

**1910–1945** Japan occupies Korea. Koreans, including Christians, are gradually forced to worship at the shrines of the Japanese emperor.

**1945** Soviets and Allied forces defeat Japan. The Soviets established a (temporary) government in the north, and the Allies set up one in the south.

**1948** First elections take place in South Korea. "War hero" Kim Il-Sung becomes leader of the north, where he transforms it into a Communist state with little to no room for religion.

**1950–1953** Tens of thousands of Christians are killed in the Korean War.

**1953–1990s** A personality cult is invented around Kim Il-Sung, and fascist Juche ideology is founded, forbidding Christianity in the country. Many Christians are murdered, imprisoned or banished to remote areas.

**1990s–2011** Kim Il-Sung is succeeded by his son Kim Jong-Il. He vastly expands the re-education camps and camps for political prisoners. During the 1990s famine, many escape to China and return with food and the Gospel, causing a massive growth of the secret Church in North Korea.

**2011–present** In 2011, Kim Jong-Un (still in his 20s) becomes leader following his father's passing. He rules with an iron fist, which increases persecution against Christians.

# You're spreading the light of God's love in North Korea

**Despite the dangers, you're helping the secret Church here grow**



**"We're so encouraged by [your] prayers... We're called to spread His light in such a time as this."**

Looking at the intense persecution that Christians in North Korea went through in the last century alone, it's unbelievable that there's still a vibrant Church here. It's clear that God is doing an amazing work in this oppressed nation.

Here, Christians aren't allowed to speak freely about their faith. Parents can't even share their faith with their children because of the dangers of being discovered. Descendants of Christians face insurmountable social obstacles as they're watched with suspicion due to the guilt-by-association principle.

One church leader told Simon\* (Open Doors' coordinator for North Korean ministries) that the way North Koreans are praying for their country has changed, thanks to the prayer campaigns of Open Doors friends like you:

*"We're so encouraged by [your] prayers that we now pray the prayer of Queen Esther. She was called 'for such a time as this,' as Mordecai told her. That applies to us too. We're called to spread His light in such a time as this and under these difficult circumstances. We experience that God uses the persecution to sanctify His Church and are grateful that we in our weakness receive His strength. We pray that we're able to do His will in every situation. And if we perish, we perish."*

Praise God for the courage of the North Korean Church. And thank you for supporting them so God's Kingdom continues to grow here.

\*Name changed for security reasons.

# YOUR 2018 IMPACT REPORT

See how your prayers and gifts have shown persecuted believers that they are never alone!

BIBLE AND  
CHRISTIAN  
LITERATURE  
DISTRIBUTION

## You placed God's Word into the hands of isolated believers



Representative image used.

Your partnership ensured that Bible delivery remained at the very core of Open Doors' ministry in 2018. Because whatever trials believers may face, God's Word brings new strength, true courage and eternal comfort.

In many regions, the Bible remains a banned book. But thanks to friends like you, many isolated Christians have been able to access the Scriptures for the very first time.

And in those nations where severe persecution is on the rise, you've helped answer countless believers' prayers by providing them with God's Word, despite the restrictions and risks.

Brother Han, from one restricted Asian nation, speaks on behalf of all those you blessed in this way during 2018: *"Thank you so much. I've been dreaming about having a Bible for so long!"*

*"Thank you so much. I've been dreaming about having a Bible for so long!"*

– Brother Han, Asia

Total # of Christian Resources You Helped Distribute in 2018: **2 023 093**





*"I want to develop my skills for His glory." – Akeem, Muslim World*

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## You nurtured the Church through discipleship and training

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When the storms of persecution hit, our brothers and sisters need a firm foundation in order to stand strong. Through Bible-based training, you've helped believers establish deep roots into God's Word – so they can grow strong in the faith.

In 2018, your support helped provide wide-ranging programmes, including essential discipleship and mentoring programmes, trauma counselling, and pastoral leadership training – all designed to nurture and strengthen the Church, especially in the most restricted nations where training opportunities are scarce or even non-existent.

As a young convert living under a strict Islamic regime, Akeem has few resources to help him pursue his pastoral gifting. But thanks to friends like you, he's been able to attend focused leadership training in a neighbouring country.

*"I read the Bible a lot, and I dig in deeper and deeper," Akeem says. "I want to develop my skills for His glory."*

**Total # of Christians Participating in Discipleship and Training in 2018: 570 702**

## You brought the comfort of Christ to those in distress



Representative image used.

***"[You encourage] us because you share in our suffering."*** – Nicholas, Northern Cameroon

Our persecuted brothers and sisters require more than practical aid. They need to know that they don't have to walk their difficult road alone.

Through your partnership, you've empowered Open Doors' co-workers to be the hands and feet of Jesus – ministering physical comfort and love through personal visits and prayer. And through your prayers and support, you've given new strength to so many, showing them they are never alone and they are loved by God – and by you.

*"For those who are supporting us in prayer, may God bless [you]. And you who come and see us and speak to us face to face... it encourages us because you share in our suffering,"* says Nicholas, a displaced believer from Northern Cameroon.

**Christians Assisted Through Presence Ministry in 2018: 22 035**

## You spoke up on behalf of those with no voice



Representative image used.

***"Open Doors covered the costs of my lawyer who defended my case."***  
– Dinke, Ethiopia

In countries where Christians are oppressed and marginalised, injustice against believers often goes unchecked. But your support has helped right this wrong, by providing legal assistance for Christians who otherwise would have no means of defending themselves.

*"The Lord helped me a lot through [your support],"* shares Dinke from Ethiopia. *"When my husband took everything from me, Open Doors covered the costs of my lawyer who defended my case. I was able to get back my home and land, my children's inheritance."*

What's more, your partnership has fuelled international campaigns and petitions to raise a voice on issues of injustice and oppression – speaking up for those who cannot speak for themselves.

**Total # of Christians Helped Through Advocacy Initiative in 2018: 51 369**

## You empowered hard-pressed believers to provide for their families

Your support helped equip many impoverished and marginalised Christians to become self-sufficient in 2018. Through small loans, literacy training, and micro-enterprises, you not only gave many families the means to support themselves, but also restored their hope and dignity.

Since Beena's family came to Christ in rural India, they've experienced fierce opposition – and attempts have been made on her husband's life. Many Indian families like Beena's have been forced to abandon their homes and villages – which is why they're so grateful for friends like you who stepped in to help them establish a new livelihood.

Beena shares, *"We had walked through the valley of the shadow of death, and God had preserved us."*

**Total # of Christians Assisted Through Socioeconomic Projects in 2018: 372 394**



***"We had walked through the valley of the shadow of death, and God had preserved us."***

**– Beena, India**

# FROM JAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Dear partner of the persecuted Church,

Communism was meant to spread across the world. During the twentieth century, about one-third of the world's population lived under Communist rule. But today, there are only five Communist states left – four of them being found in Asia and one in Latin America. These are North Korea, Vietnam, China, Laos and Cuba.

Some of my most memorable visits to persecuted believers have been in Communist Asia. Here, I met many heroes of the faith. One such man was Pastor Samuel Lamb who was imprisoned for 21 years because he wouldn't stop spreading the Gospel.

On a visit to his house church, I asked Pastor Samuel if he ever felt lonely in prison, to which he replied:

*"Yes, but I never felt alone."*

Another church leader in Vietnam, when he was visited by an Open Doors co-worker who'd brought several gifts for the church, commented:

*"The greatest present to us is your being here. Now we know for sure that we're not forgotten. We often feel lonely, but God is always with us. Your visit means more to us than the presents you brought. Thank you for coming."*

Friend, when you pray for, write to or support a persecuted believer, you help remind them that they are never alone.

As you read through this month's *Frontline Faith*, I pray that you'll be blessed as you see how you're helping your persecuted brothers and sisters stand strong through your support. It's a huge blessing to them knowing that you're standing with them.

Thank you for partnering with us in advancing God's Kingdom where faith costs the most!

Together in His service,



Jan Gouws  
Executive Director  
Open Doors Southern Africa



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