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# The Voice of the Martyrs Canada

A large, ancient stone temple with multiple columns and arches, set against a sunset sky. The temple is made of weathered stone and has several large openings. The sky is a mix of orange, pink, and blue. The temple is the central focus of the image.

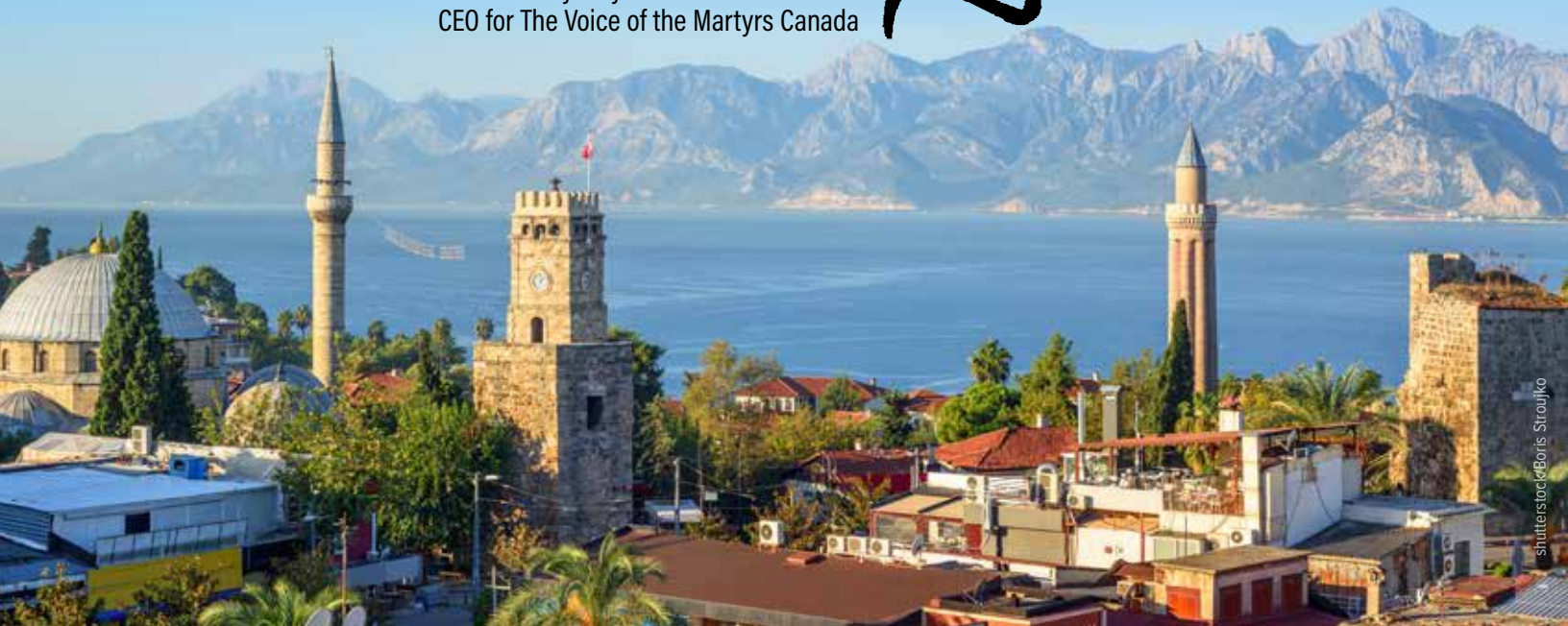
**SPIRITUAL RESTORATION  
IN ANCIENT BIBLE LANDS**

Serving the Persecuted Church for More Than 50 Years | May 2024

# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FOLLOW CHRIST IN

# Türkiye?

By Floyd A. Brobbel  
CEO for The Voice of the Martyrs Canada



*“And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.”*

*Colossians 3:15 ESV*

The majority of Turks regard Islam as the foundational core of their national identity. However, not all Turkish Muslims are well versed in Islamic teaching, nor do they consistently follow its regulations. Rather than adhering to a fundamental Islamic worldview, the average Turk embraces Islam as the central component of their cultural identity. As for Christianity, less than one percent of the country’s population claims to follow the teachings of Christ. And for Turkish citizens who do openly acknowledge their Christian faith, there are challenges to overcome.

Türkiye’s constitution defines the nation as a secular state that gives no special privileges to the Muslim majority. In fact, non-discrimination policies, such as the freedom of worship, are championed within the constitution. Religious conversions among citizens are legally permitted as well. Although this right also applies to those those who convert from Islam, there are cases in which societal and familial condemnation have been experienced.

Despite the country’s constitutional assurances, Turkish Christians find that their freedom of worship is limited. They typically face intense challenges from opposing family members, neighbours and/or employers. In addition to the governmental restrictions imposed on missionary activities, the nation’s small Christian community is further subjected to increased pressure in other ways. Still, while few Turkish churches exist, the country’s believers are willing to share the Gospel of Christ with fellow citizens.

The fundamental fact of life for Turkish Christians is that mainstream Turks do not believe there is a place for them in society. Since those of the minority faith group are characterized as having deliberately sided with Türkiye’s enemies, they do not fit into the country’s nationalist picture. As a result, the Christian’s position in Turkish society is that of vulnerability; for, even when they have not faced violence, the underlying threat is ever present.

How is it that Christians in Türkiye accept the potential

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and her creative team.

### The goals of VOMC are expressed in our "Ministry Purposes" as follows:

1. To encourage and empower persecuted Christians to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).
2. To give practical relief and spiritual support to the families of Christian martyrs (Matthew 25:36).
3. To equip persecuted Christians to love and win to Christ those opposed to the Gospel (Romans 12:14).
4. To help believers rebuild their lives and Christian witness in countries where they have formerly suffered oppression (Nehemiah 1:3; 2:5).
5. To promote the fellowship of all believers by informing the world of the faith and courage of persecuted Christians, thereby inspiring believers to a deeper level of commitment to Christ and involvement in His Great Commission (Hebrews 13:3; Galatians 6:2).

Spending of funds is confined to board-approved programs and projects. Each restricted contribution designated towards a board-approved program or project will be used as designated with the understanding that when the need for such a program or project has been met, or cannot be completed for any reason determined by the board, the remaining restricted contributions designated for such program or project will be used where needed most. Gifts from individual donors of \$10 and more are acknowledged and receipted with an official receipt for income tax purposes.



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backlash of persecution when endeavouring to reach their neighbours for Christ? I believe that His peace rules in their hearts so they can discern the right course of action. After all, we know from God's Word that following His will brings inner peace. Yet, when that peace has lifted, one must stop to consider whether their course of action is Spirit-led or self-directed.



Further, I also believe that Turkish Christians have discovered the peace that comes when in fellowship with other like-minded members of Christ's body – His church. By having fellowship with dedicated believers, members of His church are encouraged and joined together in unity of purpose.

For the past 15 years, VOMC has assisted with the development and production of Bible study group materials so more of them can be made available to Turkish Christians. Written by various contributors in Türkiye, these resources are specifically designed to address the unique spiritual needs of the Turkish church within the context of its culture. Our ministry partners are working hard to continue producing Bible studies that will further support and mentor Turkish Christians – all the while providing encouragement to their team of writers who are willing to use their skills to produce an even wider variety of literature in keeping with the growth of the nation's church.

As you read through this month's issue of *The Voice of the Martyrs Canada* magazine, I would encourage you to join your Turkish brothers and sisters in Christ through prayer. Pray that the peace of Christ would rule in their hearts as they proclaim the "Good News" of the Gospel, which reveals God's wonderful plan of eternal salvation through His Son to all who are seeking truth. Also pray that the members of His church in Türkiye will be united as they fulfill Christ's Great Commission – encouraging and strengthening one another as vital members within His body while doing so. As a result, may a mighty revival sweep throughout this Middle Eastern nation so that many more spiritual seekers will reverently bow to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace,



# A DIVINE “MISDIAL”

An unexpected phone call in Türkiye, from a person who had intended to call someone else of the same first name, led Nurettin to a life-changing encounter with the Living Christ!



Although Nurettin was born into a Kurdish family in eastern Türkiye (Turkey) and raised as a Muslim, he never really believed in the Islamic concept of Allah. “I wasn’t an atheist,” he explains. “I didn’t doubt God’s existence; I just didn’t see Him in Islam.”

With no interest in religion at that time, Nurettin instead focussed on Kurdish politics and making as much money as he could. His political ambitions paved the way for him to become a city councilman, and his business interests flourished. Over time, however, he found these worldly achievements unfulfilling.

When a friend invited him to meet with some foreigners in a part of the country not commonly visited by tourists, Nurettin was intrigued. During the meeting, Nurettin politely listened but wasn’t particularly interested. Then, when the strangers stood to leave, one of them offered him a book he had never read before – the Holy Bible.

“I didn’t expect much of it,” Nurettin admits. “But because he offered [the Bible], I took it. Then I started getting curious [about] what it said, so I started reading it.” As he read the pages of God’s Word, Matthew 7:7-8 specifically spoke to his heart: “*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened*” (ESV).

Since Nurettin had reached a point in life where materialism no longer satisfied him, he was seeking something meaningful to satisfy the tremendous longing of his soul.

## “Wrong” Number; “Right” Person

A year later, Nurettin received an unexpected phone call from the man who had given him the Bible. The foreigner was a Christian ministry worker who had called Nurettin by accident while trying to reach another person of the same name. The worker thought the other man was more interested in meeting to talk about Christ.

Ironically, upon receiving the unexpected call, the “wrong” Nurettin decided that he should meet the

Nurettin knew that his family members and other fervent Muslims in the neighbourhood wouldn't have cared if he had become an atheist. Yet, becoming a Christian would not have been acceptable to them...

Christian again. And so, without knowing about the mistaken identity, the two men arranged to meet at a bus stop. However, after seeing the person whom he had actually called, the Christian worker suddenly realized that he had dialed the wrong number: "When [Nurettin] got off the bus, I thought, 'No, this is the wrong Nurettin!'" Then the worker surmised, "Oh well, God knows...."

During a second meeting with the Christian worker, Nurettin was astonished when another man at their table – who also happened to be Kurdish – prayed over the meal using Jesus' name. Nurettin had never met a Kurdish Christian before. According to his understanding, Kurds primarily followed Islam.

"When he prayed, I realized that he was Kurdish *and...* a follower of Jesus," Nurettin adds. "Something just hit my heart. I thought, 'How is it possible for a Kurd to be a follower of Christ?'" This question remained on his mind in the days that followed, especially as he continued reading the Bible in search of meaning and fulfillment.

Then one day, while reading the book of Revelation, Nurettin experienced a supernatural vision of Christ. "Jesus was standing right in front of me," he recounts of that profound life-transforming moment. "I confessed right then that Jesus was Lord." During the vision, Nurettin sensed that it was God's desire for him to use his life to reach others.

After Nurettin called some Christian workers to tell them about the vision, and acknowledge that he had accepted Jesus Christ as his Saviour, one of the men began discipling him in the foundational beliefs of Christianity. As the new Kurdish believer eagerly grew in his understanding of the Scriptures during the following year, he decided to keep his newfound faith a secret from his politically active family.

Nurettin knew that his family members and other fervent Muslims in the neighbourhood wouldn't have cared if he had become an atheist. Yet, becoming a Christian would not have been acceptable to them: "In that area of the country, there were some extremely conservative, very religious Muslims. They would have definitely put pressure on me. They were very strong [in their beliefs], and I was just a child in the faith."

On April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010, Nurettin decided to be baptized in secret. Surprisingly, 20 days later, he received an early-morning visit from the police. He was then interrogated for hours, mostly about his Kurdish political activities. Yet, to his surprise, the officers also inquired about his faith. "Are you a follower of Jesus?"

they asked. "How did you become a follower? Why did you become a Christian?" Nurettin later learned that someone had posted information about his baptism online. "I knew the basics," he recounts of the interrogation, "and I shared the Lord's Prayer with them. But all I could explain were the basics about the [Christian] faith and the Gospel."

### Finding a Bible Behind Bars

Although he was eventually locked within the confines of a prison cell, Nurettin felt overcome with joy and peace. He realized that the Holy Spirit had enabled him to answer the interrogators' questions despite his limited knowledge. After being sentenced to two years' imprisonment by Turkish authorities for his political activities, he took great comfort from praying the Lord's Prayer each morning and night – gradually adjusting to life behind bars. Later, after finding a Bible in the prison library, he began reading it eagerly but cautiously. "I would try to read a lot...when other prisoners weren't in the library."

After completing his prison term two years later, Nurettin had no income or social standing. But his faith had grown stronger. He spent hours each day praying and sharing God's Word with his wife: "I would read the Bible to her and with her. I think [when] people come to faith, it is primarily through the reading of the Word. Because through the reading of the Word, the Holy Spirit can touch their hearts." Slowly his wife's heart began to change, until she too came to faith in Christ.

In the months following his release, Nurettin sensed God calling him to leave his former worldly pursuits. So he began to distance himself from politics. However, the Turkish government still considered him a potential threat to national security because of his previous political connections. After 18 months of freedom, authorities rearrested Nurettin and sentenced him to an additional two-and-a-half years behind bars.

Since Nurettin had matured considerably in the Christian faith since his first imprisonment, and the second sentence was far less restrictive, he was able to share the Gospel message more openly. During this term, he had also been allowed to bring Bibles inside the prison to distribute among fellow prisoners. But finding a receptive audience was challenging.

"No one came to faith during that period," he recalls of his second imprisonment. "However, pretty much everyone heard the Gospel. They knew I was a follower of Jesus, so they would always ask me questions and I would answer them."

...continued from previous page

## From Prison to Pulpit

After his second release from prison, Nurettin trained to become a pastor, and today he leads a small thriving congregation of Kurdish believers. Many other Kurds in the community have been knocking at the church door to ask him questions, seeking to know more about the Christian faith.

“People come and sit to observe the worship,” he states, adding that many Kurds are just as surprised as he was to see Kurdish followers of Christ. A Kurdish church is such a rarity that it has even attracted the attention of local newspapers. “Reporters have come inside during worship and written reports about it in the paper,” he informs.

In addition, a few of the men he ministered to while in prison have sought him out since their release, and he prays that they will eventually come to faith in Christ. Nurettin longs for more Kurds to experience what he did when reading that first Bible years ago. “God-willing, I will spend the rest of my life preaching His Word until I reach eternal life.”



Nurettin’s greatest desire is that everyone will tangibly experience God’s love. In fact, he believes it was the Lord’s love that prompted the in-country ministry worker to call him years ago. “It had not been a coincidence,” he concludes. “God was orchestrating His divine purposes.”

*Editor’s note: The translated quotations included in the previous testimonial article were altered slightly so they would be in keeping with Canadian spelling, grammar and punctuation.*

# ART GALLERY SHOWING

## THEME: HEART HEALTH Matthew 5:8 & Proverbs 4:23

**BEST IN SHOW: YOUTH (13-18 YRS) \$250**

**BEST IN SHOW: ADULTS (19+) \$250**

Please send your original artwork submission depicting the theme **"HEART HEALTH"** by 5 PM (EST) on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Find more Art Gallery details at: [www.vomcanada.com/ArtGalleryShowing](http://www.vomcanada.com/ArtGalleryShowing).

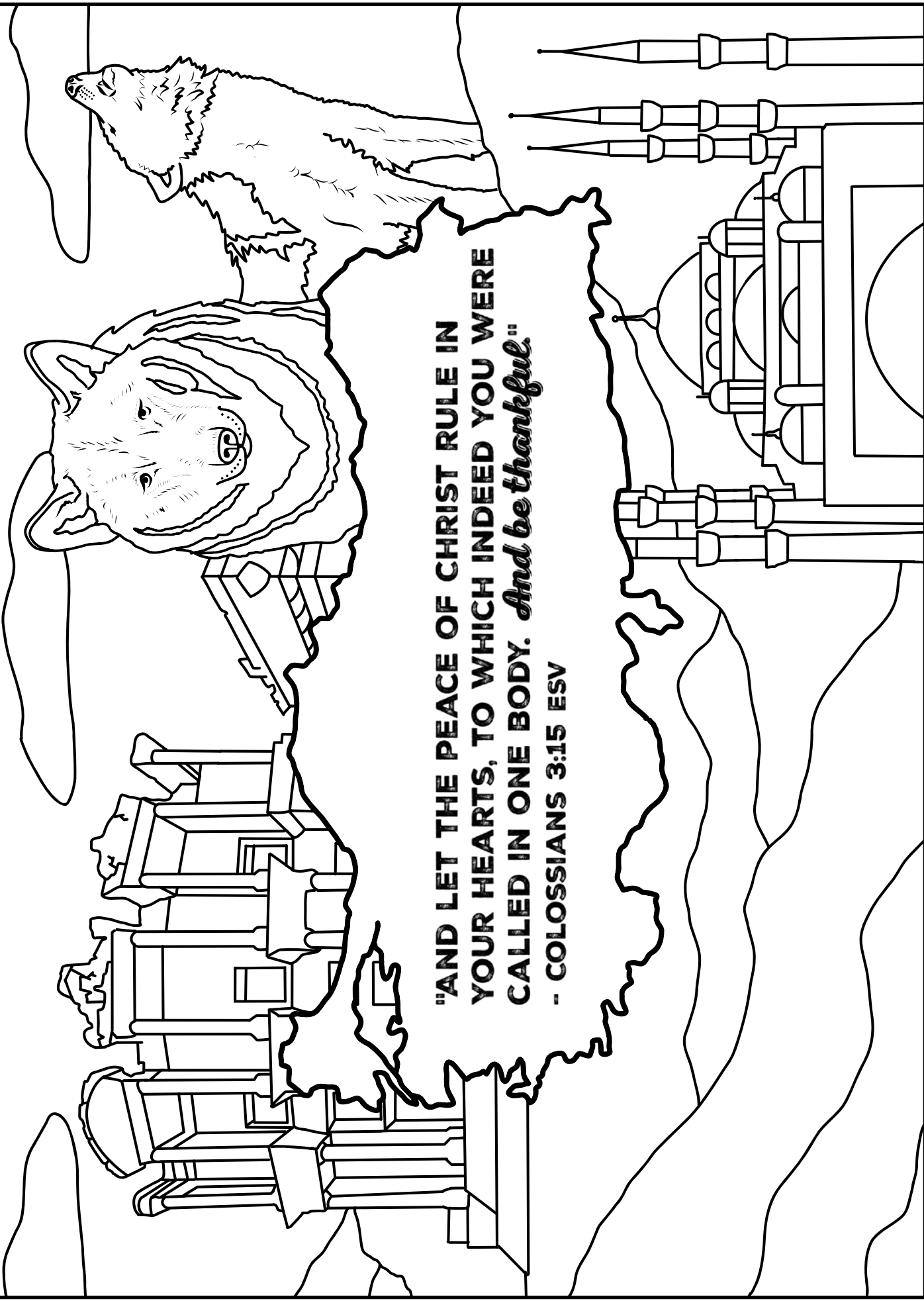
# Table Talk Türkiye



## TÜRKIYE-O!

**How to Play:** Play a round of this “TÜRKIYE-O!” game using the numbered facts about Türkiye. One player will be the caller, pulling one of the 24 facts from a bag. The announced fact can then be marked off on each board. The first person to get a complete line in any direction wins. You can either create your own card or print off additional alternate cards. Printables and extra TÜRKIYE-O! cards can be found at: [vomcanada.com/TableTalk/Turkiye](http://vomcanada.com/TableTalk/Turkiye)

<p><b>13</b></p> <p>About 20 percent of Türkiye’s population lives in the north-western region of the country.</p>	<p><b>6</b></p> <p>Türkiye is a mountainous country.</p>	<p><b>9</b></p> <p>Türkiye is about the same size as Alberta.</p>	<p><b>20</b></p> <p>The crescent of a moon, along with a star, together serve as the national symbol of Türkiye.</p>	<p><b>7</b></p> <p>The capital city of Türkiye is Ankara.</p>
<p><b>18</b></p> <p>Oil wrestling is the national sport of Türkiye.</p>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p>Türkiye has frequent earthquakes, some of which have caused severe damages.</p>	<p><b>19</b></p> <p>Türkiye’s national colours are red and white.</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>Many of the cities mentioned in the Bible are located in modern-day Türkiye.</p>	<p><b>15</b></p> <p>The largest city in Türkiye is Istanbul.</p>
<p><b>2</b></p> <p>Türkiye is home to Mount Ararat, the mountain on which Noah’s Ark rested.</p>	<p><b>22</b></p> <p>Approximately 25 percent of Türkiye’s electricity is generated from hydroelectric sources.</p>		<p><b>1</b></p> <p>The wolf is the national animal of Türkiye.</p>	<p><b>21</b></p> <p>More tea is consumed in Türkiye than any other country.</p>
<p><b>10</b></p> <p>Türkiye shares a border with eight countries.</p>	<p><b>16</b></p> <p>Istanbul was previously called Constantinople.</p>	<p><b>8</b></p> <p>The territory of Türkiye extends to parts of both Europe and Asia.</p>	<p><b>24</b></p> <p>Türkiye has numerous underground cities where early Christians used to hide to escape persecution.</p>	<p><b>17</b></p> <p>Tulips are originally from Türkiye.</p>
<p><b>4</b></p> <p>The population of Türkiye is 99.8 percent Muslim.</p>	<p><b>14</b></p> <p>Türkiye has a hot climate.</p>	<p><b>12</b></p> <p>Turkish and Kurdish are the country’s primary languages.</p>	<p><b>23</b></p> <p>The colour turquoise was named after the colour of the sea in Türkiye.</p>	<p><b>11</b></p> <p>Turkish people are extremely hospitable.</p>



**"AND LET THE PEACE OF CHRIST RULE IN  
YOUR HEARTS, TO WHICH INDEED YOU WERE  
CALLED IN ONE BODY. *And be thankful.*"**

**- COLOSSIANS 3:15 ESV**



# May 2024

## His Way

"And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful."  
Colossians 3:15 ESV

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>5</b> <b>NIGERIA</b> Pray for Tina whose husband was shot by militant Islamists while working on his vegetable farm.	<b>6</b> <b>BRUNEI</b> Despite surveillance by religious police, pray that spiritual leaders will be fearless in reaching others for Christ.	<b>7</b> <b>LIBYA</b> Pray that the small number of Libyan Christians will have opportunities for fellowship with other believers.	<b>8</b> <b>PHILIPPINES</b> Pray that believers residing on the island of Mindanao will receive peace, joy and courage in the midst of a hostile environment.	<b>9</b> <b>NEPAL</b> Pray for 16-year-old Khushi and her three sisters, whose father abused them because of their Christian faith.	<b>10</b> <b>MOROCCO</b> Pray for Christian ministry workers who are distributing digital Bibles through the use of various creative methods.	<b>11</b> <b>ISRAEL (INCLUDING WEST BANK &amp; GAZA)</b> Pray for those who take the risk of owning a Bible in militant Islamist-controlled areas.
<b>12</b> <b>LEBANON</b> Pray that a church providing needed help and hope to refugees will be free of governmental interference.	<b>13</b> <b>IRAN</b> Pray for imprisoned followers of Christ in Iran who are suffering from various physical ailments.	<b>14</b> <b>AFGHANISTAN</b> Pray that God will raise up new spiritual leaders to disciple young Christians in the country.	<b>15</b> <b>CHINA</b> Pray that invasive technologies, such as facial-recognition software, will not hinder the spread of the Gospel.	<b>16</b> <b>CENTRALAFRICAN REPUBLIC</b> Pray for the successful efforts of ministries endeavouring to ensure that every believer has their own copy of God's Word.	<b>17</b> <b>MOZAMBIQUE</b> Pray that greatly needed audio Bibles will reach the hands of all who are yearning to learn more about the Lord.	<b>18</b> <b>BANGLADESH</b> Pray that house churches in Dhaka, the most densely populated city in the world, will display God's light and hope.
<b>19</b> <b>TUNISIA</b> Pray that Tunisians who have recently committed their lives to Christ will receive greatly needed discipleship.	<b>20</b> <b>BURKINA FASO</b> Pray for a resilient witness who is diligently serving in the church amid a dramatic increase in attacks.	<b>21</b> <b>EGYPT</b> Pray for ministries that are reaching Muslims and cultural Christians with the "Good News" of the Gospel.	<b>22</b> <b>MYANMAR (BURMA)</b> Pray for ministry workers who are demonstrating the compassion of Jesus while serving among Rohingya Muslims.	<b>23</b> <b>DR CONGO</b> Pray that God's Word will reach those residing in remote/rural regions of this Central African nation.	<b>24</b> <b>MAURITANIA</b> Pray for the protection of workers who are courageously smuggling Bibles into the country.	<b>25</b> <b>DJIBOUTI</b> Pray that Christian organizations will be permitted to officially register with the government.
<b>26</b> <b>AZERBAIJAN</b> Pray that members of the secret police, who are assigned to monitor church services, will be receptive to the Gospel.	<b>27</b> <b>KENYA</b> Ask the Lord to bless and multiply the efforts of Christian evangelists who are ministering in Muslim-majority areas.	<b>28</b> <b>BAHRAIN</b> Pray that Bahrainis will find their true treasure in Jesus Christ rather than in the country's oil wealth.	<b>29</b> <b>MALDIVES</b> Though it is illegal to import Bibles, pray that God's Word will be accessible to spiritually seeking Maldivians.	<b>30</b> <b>UNITED ARAB EMIRATES</b> Pray for Christian converts from Islam who often lose their jobs, homes and families because of their faith.	<b>31</b> <b>IRAQ</b> Pray that Bible distributions in this Middle Eastern nation will continue to increase access to God's Word.	
			<b>1</b> <b>SOUTHERN MEXICO</b> Praise God for the vocational training that many Christians are receiving through a VOM ministry project!	<b>2</b> <b>NORTH KOREA</b> Pray for innovative ways to effectively bring the hope of God's Word into North Korea.	<b>3</b> <b>INDIA</b> Pray for pastors, church planters and evangelists who are facing criminal charges due to India's anti-conversion laws.	<b>4</b> <b>TÜRKIYE (TURKEY)</b> Pray for the strength and courage of a teenage boy who was beaten for wearing a cross necklace.



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Digital Calendar

# Let's Talk Türkiye

## Did You Know?

Turkey has been spelled and pronounced Türkiye (Tur-kee-yeah) in Turkish since the country became a republic in 1923. The country requested that the rest of the world adopt the same spelling and pronunciation in 2021. The following year, the country became officially known as Türkiye among the United Nations.

## One Way

The belief in the Holy Spirit is a doctrine that both Muslims and Christians hold, but the understanding of His nature and purpose differs significantly between the two religions.

The nature of the Holy Spirit from a Muslim point of view is much like the Islamic perception of Jesus' divinity. According to Islam, the Holy Spirit is a messenger created by God. Muslims do not believe that the Holy Spirit is God, but rather the angel Gabriel. Thus, the Holy Spirit has little significance or purpose in their daily lives.

In comparison, the nature and purpose of the Holy Spirit differ dramatically with Christianity. Christians believe that the Holy Spirit is not merely a messenger, but an integral member of the Trinity – along with God the Father and Jesus the Son – each one equally part of the Triune Godhead. Most significantly, the Holy Spirit takes up residence within each believer. This allows Him to fulfill significant roles in their lives, including that of Teacher, Comforter, Counsellor, Advocate..., ultimately empowering them to live like Jesus.

## Way Out ●●●●●●●●●●

With Christians representing only 0.2 percent of the Turkish population, finding Scripturally sound mentorship can be challenging. One of the projects VOMC supports helps believers in Türkiye mature in their faith and supplies them with the tools they need to share the Gospel with those around them. If you would like to contribute to this project, you may do so through our *Equipping the Saints Fund*: [vomcanada.com/donate](http://vomcanada.com/donate)

This month, pray that the Lord will reveal one key thing from His Word to you. Then pray for an opportunity to share with someone else what you've learned.

## Weigh In

1. Formerly spelled "Turkey," the country of Türkiye shares its name with a well-known poultry entrée that is often served during holidays. The turkey was named after this country because of a misconception about the animal's origin.

Research the reason why the turkey (bird) was named after this country. Would it be better if the name was changed to reflect the turkey's true origin rather than the misconception? Defend your answer.

2. Türkiye is part of two continents, Europe and Asia. Around 97 percent of the nation resides in Asia, while the rest is considered to be located in Europe. These zones are separated by a passage of water named the Bosphorus Strait.

Because of the unique geographic position of Türkiye, it's known as the bridge between Europe and Asia. Therefore, this Middle Eastern country is home to a melting pot of cultures and serves as a transportation hub for trade. Name some other benefits of being in a nation spanning across two continents.

3. A rich history of early Christianity exists in Türkiye. The Apostle Paul established churches that still exist in many cities of present-day Türkiye. Several of these historic sites are preserved and toured to this day.

Throughout history, many of these Biblical cities were abandoned and/or reduced to ruins, one being Ephesus. Read Revelation 2:1-7. Do you think members of the Ephesian church heeded Jesus' warning, or was the downfall of their church caused by something else? Research and defend your answer.

4. Turkish ID cards declare a person's religious affiliation. When employers or governing officials scan the cards and see the Christians' identities, there is a high likelihood that these believers will face discrimination.

A Christian's identity in Christ should be obvious by their actions. Is this statement true or false? If true, consider how your faith is being reflected by your actions. Would others recognize that you belong to Christ, or would they be surprised to learn of your Christian faith?

### Recommended Reads:

- *A Child's Geography - Volume 2: Explore the Holy Land* by Ann Voskamp and Tonia Peckover (Children/Homeschools)
- *God's Hostage* by Andrew Brunson (Adult)
- *A Day in Istanbul: A Young Explorer Travel Guide to Istanbul (City Explorer)* by Read With You Center for Excellence in STEAM Education (Children)

### Sources:

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- <https://mustansarjavid.medium.com/religious-wisdom-the-role-of-the-holy-spirit-in-islam-and-christianity-df6fe25c823c>
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# VOM AROUND THE WORLD

## UKRAINE: Rocket Strike Destroys Parsonage

The home of Pastor Vladimir Semenov of the ECB (Registered Baptist) church in Selidovo was destroyed on the night of February 15<sup>th</sup> as a result of a rocket attack perpetrated by the Russian Armed Forces.

“Pastor Semenov and his family were...away from home that night, so they were unharmed, though they lost all of their worldly goods,” states VOM Korea’s representative, Dr. Hyun Sook Foley.

“The church building – or ‘house of prayer,’ as they call it – which is separated from the pastor’s home by a long thick brick wall, remained intact except for a few broken windows and a burned-out electrical meter and wiring,” Dr. Foley continues to explain. “The windows were covered with boards by members of the congregation, and the church’s meetings have continued on as normal.”

Pastor Semenov told the ECB Telegram Channel: “I thought of staying in the house, [yet] the whole family went to [my daughter’s] apartment. But my grandson, four years old, came up and said, ‘Grandfather, I won’t go without you.’ Well, looking at him I said, ‘I’ll go with you.’ At night we heard explosions. Then at 2 a.m., they called me and said that our home was hit by a shell.... Our concrete house, 150 square meters, was completely destroyed.”



Article Photos: ECB Telegram Channel



Dr. Foley of VOM Korea, whose ministry is providing Pastor Semenov with funds for fuel and repairs, further states: “Despite being warned by the city administration that they were targeted, [Pastor Semenov and his family] have continued to serve in the front-line zone – leading the church, doing a rehabilitation centre, visiting places where small groups of Christians gather, evangelizing, delivering humanitarian aid, and generally serving wherever needed.”

Pastor Semenov and his wife are now staying with their daughter, with no plans to leave Selidovo nor curtail their ministry there. “I am not a large-scale person, I do not see the whole world,” Pastor Semenov told a reporter of the ECB Telegram channel. “But I see the patch that Christ gave me (referencing Selidovo). Today, our main task is not to lose a single day in order to preach the Gospel.” 🌐

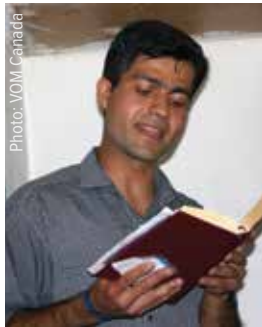
Source: Voice of the Martyrs Korea

# GENERATING STUDY RESOURCES IN TÜRKIYE

Report by VOMC's International Ministry Partner



**H**aving access to suitable discipleship materials is one of the greatest needs of today's Turkish church. Meeting this need is of critical importance if believers in Türkiye are to grow spiritually, reach maturity, and ultimately minister faithfully. It is also the reason why the Bible study project, which focusses on the development of discipleship materials specifically geared for those of the Turkish culture, began 12 years ago and continues to this present day....



The project began by developing group Bible study materials that addressed relevant topics brought to our attention by church leaders in Türkiye. To be applicable, these Christian resources had to align with the way people learn most effectively within Turkish culture. After produc-

ing 25 topical lesson sets, our International Ministry partners developed study materials that were specifically designed to meet the unique spiritual needs of the country's youth and women. Then they added the publishing of study guides that focussed on various Biblical passages.

Prior to the implementation and development of this project, there had been so few Turkish Christian writers producing written materials. This resulted in a significant deficiency of ministry resources over the years. As the Turkish church lacked institutional memory, historical perspective and self-awareness, Turkish Christian literature was either lacking or virtually non-existent in many areas of the country.

In addition to the publishing of relevant materials, the production process yielded another enormous benefit: the discovery and training of gifted writers from within the Turkish church. By inviting mature believers from various churches in the country to join

the writing program, and thus receive the required training, not only were culturally appropriate disciple-making resources made available, but it also remedied Türkiye's former dearth of Christian writers.

In order to encourage more emerging writers to learn and further develop their craft, opportunities had to be provided for the publishing of their written materials. As the publishing team prayed and reflected on how to further equip those assisting with the production of the study materials, and ultimately increase the impact of the project, they sensed the need to take it to a new level by creating the following greatly needed platforms.

## PLANNED PLATFORMS FOR 2024

### Writers' Workshops

The writers' workshops not only serve as an important means of training new team members, but they also enable these believers to encourage one another as they develop their valuable skills. The goal is for our training team to conduct these workshops every month in one major city, and every three months in other areas of Türkiye.

### Educational Magazine

This bi-monthly magazine, which further educates new writers and allows them to evaluate the materials produced by our publishing team, also provides developing Turkish contributors opportunities to have their written submissions published. These aspiring writers, representing communities all across Türkiye, are mature believers who love writing! And while the magazine features all genres of Christian writing – including stories, articles, poetry, philosophy, theology and history – each issue is themed around one of the Bible study units.

## Book Writing

Our International Ministry partners have recently received a request from a publishing company to produce two series of books for the Turkish church: one based on Christian ethics, and the other on theology. With excitement over these new prospects, the publishing team has started drawing up plans for the new book projects, gathering together a group of well-trained writers to implement them. As with the writing of the Bible study lessons, the book series will be written by Turkish believers and adapted to meet the unique needs of those living within the Turkish culture.

## HOW THE PROJECT IS CHANGING LIVES

Many Bible study lessons have already been implemented, and they are presently benefitting numerous churches throughout Türkiye. All of these study materials are free of charge and readily available for interested participants. Our facilitator recently shared some of the feedback that was expressed by leaders of churches located in various areas of the country.

**Northern Coast:** A leader from a church in one city reported that the project lessons were being used for their women's meetings, and the participants have been finding the lessons very helpful. Congregation



Photo: VOM Canada

members of another church in the city are currently using the materials for their weekly home Bible study groups. The leaders of the latter church are also using lessons from one of the project's series for their women's outreach program.

**Central Coast:** Last September, members of a church in this part of the country

stated that they wanted to use the lessons for their home Bible study groups too. In response, our facilitator conducted a Zoom meeting to train the church's small group leaders, and now all of their home groups are using the provided study materials. Participating church members announced that they especially like the open-ended questions!

**Southern Coast:** The pastor of a church located on the southern coast of Türkiye announced that those participating in the program had successfully completed all of their lessons, and they are now waiting



Photo: VOM Canada

with anticipation for the publishing team to produce new study materials.

**Earthquake Zone:** At the epicentre of the country's earthquake zone, a Turkish pastor's wife has been holding women's meetings every week for the victims of last year's massive earthquake. In the aftermath of the tragedy, the women attending these meetings have suffered tremendous loss. In a letter, the women's ministry leader explained that though she appreciates the teaching methods, there is a need for additional study materials that will further help with the recovery of the women to whom she is ministering. We are hoping to meet their specific needs by producing studies on topics such as inner healing, the value of women, the dangers of the occult, finding freedom in Christ, etc.

Another request for Bible study materials was submitted by a group of Christians who are ministering to young people within the same zone. As there were no lessons available in Turkish to address the specific challenges facing the country's young adults (such as financial struggles, unemployment, relationship issues and marriage), plans are now underway to cover these important topics by producing future studies geared especially for this age group.

## HOW YOU CAN PRAY...

Please prayerfully uphold our International Ministry partners – and the members of their publishing team – as they create and implement the Bible study materials and books. May the Lord bless and multiply the impact these helpful resources are having in the lives of so many Christians and spiritual seekers throughout Türkiye who have begun their exciting faith journey of discovery and restoration through the study of God's Word! 🙏

# Women's Ministry Retreat Olympic Faith Ontario

Training women in the footrace of overcoming hurdles and standing boldly for their faith in Canada...while partnering to heal, disciple, and equip at-risk Christians with the tools needed to carry out the Great Commission as Christ-centred community leaders.



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The following message has been taken from VOM Canada's devotional book, "From Under the Altar." See [www.vomcanada.com/store](http://www.vomcanada.com/store) for more information.

# My Friend Jeremiah

Devotional Message by Doug J. McKenzie  
CEO Emeritus for The Voice of the Martyrs Canada

*"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;  
His mercies never come to an end;  
they are new every morning;  
great is Your faithfulness.  
'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul,  
'therefore I will hope in Him.'"*

~ Lamentations 3:22-24 ESV

AS I lean back in my easy chair and rest in comfort undeserved, my mind engages with Scripture verses that became increasingly familiar to me during my eight-year term as Chief Executive Officer for VOMC. At the outset, I had much to learn about the persecution of Christ's ancient followers and, most notably, about the growing reality of such abuse occurring in today's world and in my lifetime.

By way of consensus, the prophetic Old Testament book of Lamentations is attributed to the quill of Jeremiah. Here we experience the pure heart of one of God's great prophets who laments over the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. This is painfully described in five melancholy poems, with the noteworthy exception of the author's audacious declaration of hope in chapter 3, verses 22 to 24.

Through these passages, I've learned how the sorrow of Jerusalem's peril compares with certain evil targets of Christian persecution around the world today. According to the prophet, God's promises are fulfilled, and they also apply to our contemporary world. When things seem to be insurmountable, there is always hope. As Jeremiah states, "*Great is [God's] faithfulness.*"

So, where are Jeremiah's inspired words about hope when we need to tap into his prophecies? Where's my "easy chair" solution? Am I destined to lounge my way into heaven? Well, it turns out that's not what my time at VOMC taught me, and it's not what I've had the privilege of teaching others then and thereafter.

Following my term as Chief Executive Officer, I was privileged by God's grace through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross to subsequently accept an ambassadorial post as CEO Emeritus in service to Christ's Kingdom on earth. This post came not as an "easy chair" assignment, but a prophetic decree from Jesus' own mouth that we, His followers, through an army of love, will endure consistent abuse and suffering until He returns to finally wield His full authority.

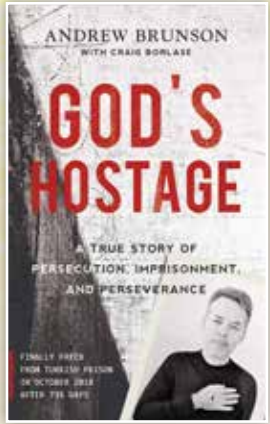
My Old Testament friend Jeremiah stated it well: God's mercies are "*new every morning*"; indeed, they are new every moment! I would add that they serve as a wake-up call to get up out of our easy chairs and stand faithfully alongside fellow persecuted believers, as we await the inauguration of the "*King of kings.*"

*Editor's note: Please join us in the call to pray for all people groups residing in modern-day Israel, which is another war-torn country greatly in need of prayer. Pray that God's love and peace will reign over the nation as a whole – and within the hearts of all its inhabitants.*

Doug J. McKenzie was officially appointed by VOMC's Board of Directors as Chief Executive Officer in 2012. Following the eight-year term in which he devotedly fulfilled this leadership role, Doug subsequently served the ministry as CEO Emeritus. Today, he continues to serve God faithfully in his personal life as a well-proven ambassador for Christ, esteemed colleague to fellow established Christian leaders, and beloved mentor to the developing leaders of today's younger generation.



# VOMC RESOURCES



**God's Hostage**  
Sale Price \$10  
(Regular Price \$18)

In 1993, Pastor Andrew Brunson and his wife Norine were asked to serve as missionaries in Türkiye – the world's largest unevangelized country at that

time. Though reluctant at first because of the daunting task that lay ahead, they became convinced that this assignment was God's plan for them. Despite the difficulties and threats, successes were achieved through the planting of new churches in a place where many people had never met a Christian before.

As their ministry among Syrian refugees – including Kurds – gained the attention and suspicion of Turkish authorities, Andrew and Norine diligently carried on with their mission work. In 2016, they were both arrested. Though the state quickly released Norine, Andrew was accused of spying and subsequently incarcerated. *God's Hostage* is the incredible story of his imprisonment, brokenness, faithfulness...and ultimate freedom. Paperback, 251 pages



**NEW**

Also available on Blue Ray DVD for the same price.

**The Pilgrim's Progress DVD**  
Animated Children's Movie

\$10

Known as one of the most popular classic books of all time, *The Pilgrim's Progress* conveys to young and old alike the important key elements of our

Christian faith. Second to the Bible, in regards to the total number of copies printed and translations published, this timeless story was written by John Bunyan, a pastor who was imprisoned for sharing his faith. Through this powerful allegory, he teaches readers the importance of staying on the right path, even when facing obstacles and difficulties along the narrow way.

Based on author John Bunyan's epic masterpiece, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, this animated film brings to life the incredible story of Christian and his travels to the Celestial City – helping families to understand that the spiritual journey is the most significant one of them all. Recommended for ages 8 and up. Approximately 110 minutes

**The Pilgrim's Progress Illustrated Storybook**

\$15

**NEW**



This expanded and improved second edition of *The Pilgrim's Progress Illustrated Storybook*, published by RevelationMedia, abridges the story of Christian's journey. Although this latest edition of the famous illustrated storybook for children contains most of the highlights from the original text – including Christian's glorious arrival to the Celestial City – it also features retouched images, updated text, plus an additional 14 pages. With its unique blend of whimsical characters, stunning imagery and spiritual truths, this book is sure to encourage young readers to follow the right path which ultimately leads to eternity with our King! Hardcover, 96 pages

For more helpful resources, browse VOMC's online store:  
[vomcanada.com/store](http://vomcanada.com/store)