



CANADA

Voice of the Martyrs

IGNITING HOPE

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

What Does it Mean to Follow Christ in *North Korea?*

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

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

— Matthew 5:8 ESV

In the early 1900s, Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, earned the title, "The Jerusalem of the East," due to its vibrant Christian community. However, over the decades, the political landscape has shifted dramatically, particularly under the regime of the Kim family. Today, Christians in North Korea often find it necessary to practise their faith in secrecy, as the government directs a network of spies and informants to identify those who do not subscribe to the state's official ideology, known as *Juche*. This doctrine emphasizes unwavering loyalty to their leader, Kim Jong Un, and individuals who express any interest in alternative religious beliefs are branded as enemies of the state.

In North Korea, possessing a Bible, or any portion of Scripture, poses significant risks due to the govern-

ment's strict regulations against religious materials. Despite these dangers, determined Christians work tirelessly to share the Gospel message with the North Korean people, many of whom have never had access

to God's Word because of the regime's efforts to prohibit it. To navigate this perilous environment, many underground Christians resort to memorizing Biblical passages, which they find to be the safest and most effective method of retaining their faith.¹ If caught, these individuals often face severe consequences, including imprisonment in labour

camps characterized by starvation, forced labour and torture. Current estimates suggest that around 30,000 Christians are enduring hardships in prisons and labour camps across the country.



The printing of North Korean Bibles.

Photo: VOM Canada

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Scripture quotations are from the English
Standard Version, unless otherwise indicated.

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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In the face of such persecution and societal pressure, many Christians in North Korea hold steadfastly onto their faith. These stalwart believers have demonstrated a remarkable ability to engage in deep spiritual worship, finding strength in their faith even amid hostile environments. They demonstrate that such worship transcends the need for a church building, allowing them to profoundly connect with God anywhere – including street corners, workplaces, homes and schools.

Bible expositor Matthew Henry writes, "True Christianity lies in the heart, the purity of heart; the washing of that from wickedness." North Korean Christian leaders know that in order to survive the coming spiritual storms, they need to prepare their congregations to remain pure in heart and resist the pressures of godless authorities. These Christian leaders have selected four spiritual "pillars" on which the church in North Korea can stand – and therefore endure any raging storm that attempts to quench their faith – with God's grace. These pillars, designed to be passed down to each generation and expressed publicly, are the following:

- The Apostles Creed (the pillar of theology)
- The Ten Commandments (the pillar of ethics), followed by confession of sin
- The Lord's Prayer (the pillar of prayer)
- The Lord's Supper (the pillar of worship)²

Thanks be to God that, today, these pillars are empowering believers in North Korea to resolutely live for Christ. The blessed are characterized by purity of heart, and their greatest comfort lies in the promise of seeing God (Matthew 5:8). As you engage with the testimonies of your North Korean brothers and sisters in the following pages of this publication, may you find common ground in worship – and thus stand united with your global family in Christ.

I pray that you and your loved ones will also experience a deepening wonder this Christmas season as you reflect on God's amazing gift: His one and only Son, who was born to set His people free.

Merry Christmas and blessings for the New Year,

 Floyd

Endnotes:

¹ To learn more about how North Korean Christians have maintained their faith in such harsh anti-Christian conditions, read the incredible story of the Bae family in *These are the Generations* from VOMC's online bookstore: store.vomcanada.org/purchase/these-are-the-generations.

² Dr. Eric Foley, www.dotheword.org.



BEYOND THE FLAMES

Ahn did everything the North Korean government required of him, including nearly sacrificing his life. In the end, though, it still wasn't enough....

After defecting to South Korea, Ahn initially wanted nothing to do with his home country. Now, he embraces God's call to share the Gospel with North Koreans.

North Koreans are required to display portraits of the Kim family in every office, classroom and living room. The portraits are considered holy and must be treated with great care.

Born into an upper-class North Korean family, Ahn's devotion to his country and the dictatorship of the Kim dynasty began at an early age. His father was a member of Kim Jong Il's special military unit, an honour that came with both responsibilities and great privileges. One of those privileges became evident in the mid-1990s when there was a vast nationwide famine known as the Arduous March. Though hundreds of thousands of North Korean citizens died of starvation during the crisis, Ahn's family was largely unaffected.

PORTRAITS RESCUED FROM BLAZING FIRE

As a youth, Ahn was recruited to join the North Korean army. After several years of testing and training, he began his compulsory ten-year military service at the age of 17. While standing watch one night, the barracks where ten of his soldiers were sleeping caught on fire. His primary concern was not the safety of the sleeping soldiers, though, but the beloved portraits of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il that hung on the walls.

North Koreans are required to display portraits of the Kim family in every office, classroom and living room. The portraits, which are considered holy, must be cleaned daily in a ritualistic way. Government officials are known to conduct house checks to ensure the portraits are displayed properly and handled with utmost care.

In emergency situations, North Koreans have a sacred duty to save these portraits, and people who do so are often praised as heroes by state media and rewarded by government officials. If the portraits in the barracks had burned, Ahn most likely would have been sent to a prison camp. Given the requirements, it seemed as if he had no choice but to save the portraits from the blazing fire.

As a result of the critical burns, he spent eight months in the hospital fighting for his life. His hands and head suffered the greatest severity of injuries, and today he wears a wig to cover the scars on his scalp. "During those eight months, there were countless times when I could have possibly died," he explains. "I had surgery around 40 times. When I saw how my face looked for the first time, I fell into despair. Two times I contemplated suicide."

Yet, because the nation had been mourning the death of Kim Jong Il, Ahn received no government reward for his heroic act. In lieu of a more official reward, Ahn's supervisor gave him a certificate that allowed him to leave the military before completing his required ten years of service. But three months

later, a government official called Ahn demanding \$300 for the certificate.

Ahn argued with the man over the phone, stating that he himself should have received the \$300 as a reward instead of having to pay the stipulated amount as a bribe to the government official. "After receiving this phone call," Ahn admits, "I felt betrayed by the North Korean authorities. It was at that time, I decided to defect from North Korea."

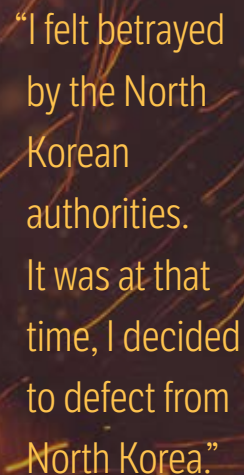
AHN'S ESCAPE TO A NEW LIFE

In 2014, Ahn and his sister defected to China, where they lived for a year before finding someone to help them move to South Korea. Thinking it would be safer for them to make the move separately, Ahn crossed the border first. But before his sister could leave, she was arrested by Chinese authorities who returned her to North Korea where she was subsequently imprisoned. With no way to help his sister, Ahn directed his efforts on getting settled in his new home country. For North Korean defectors, this means spending six months at a resettlement centre, undergoing background checks and learning the basics of life in South Korea, a country far different from their own.

At the resettlement centre, North Koreans are encouraged to explore different religions. So, each week, Ahn attended different worship services, mostly, he admits, for the dried squid they offered attendees. He also went to the services to meet people. Eventually, after exploring various faiths, he attended a Christian worship service. "At first, I just went to the church because I was lonely," he says. "But through the service and love of the Christian people, I became curious about the Jesus they believed in. As I learned more about Jesus...I met Him."

While adjusting to life in South Korea, Ahn never wanted to think about his home country again; it hurt him too much. Then, about four years later, he learned that although his sister had been released from prison, she died a short time later. Ahn was devastated by the news, but he took comfort from reading the Scriptures and going to church.

In 2019, he began attending a 12-week missions program offered by his church. Through the program,



"I felt betrayed by the North Korean authorities. It was at that time, I decided to defect from North Korea."

Ahn visited a shelter in Thailand where North Korean defectors study the Bible for three months and receive various forms of care. While there, he met a woman whom he later married. During that time, he also received new direction for his life: “After going there, I received a calling from the Lord to go to seminary.”

TRUTH IN A NEW LIGHT

Since defecting from North Korea, Ahn has reassessed his former life from the perspective of his new life in South Korea – and his new life in Christ. In North Korea, he had been taught that Christianity was evil. He remembers viewing a government-produced film that depicted Christian missionaries as criminals who came there to corrupt the people. However, having since become aware that the rituals and beliefs taught by the North Korean government mimic Christianity, Ahn now realizes that North Korea’s worship towards the Kim family is a religious cult.

Since surrendering his life to Christ, Ahn has noticed how the *Juche* cult has borrowed certain practices from the Christian faith. For example, morning prayer times are common among Christians in South Korea. Something similar is practised in *Juche*. And while Christians commonly gather for Bible study, North Koreans gather to study the sayings of the Kim family and strive to live according to their teachings. The Bible encourages Christians to confess their sins to one another; North Koreans participate in self-criticism meetings. And while Christians look to the “Ten Commandments” as God’s Laws, North Koreans follow *Juche*’s “Ten Principles.”

In addition, possibly because of Christianity’s strong history in the region prior to the founding of North Korea in 1948, the *Juche* ideology has even tried to adopt the concept of a triune godhead by upholding three separate “gods”: 1) Kim Il Sung as the father; 2) his first wife, Kim Jong Suk, in a supporting role; and 3) Kim Jong Il as the son. After all, *Juche* (the

North Korean philosophy of “self-reliance”), which underlies the nation’s government and way of life, promotes the fallacy that the Kim family is divine, immortal and worthy of all prayer, worship, honour, power and glory.



Photo: VOM International

REMEMBERING FELLOW NORTH KOREANS

Strongly committed to the call of God on his life, Ahn continues to minister to North Koreans through camps for defectors and in various other ways. Recently, he started a prayer group for students who are second-generation North Korean immigrants.

Ahn is also studying theology at a Christian university; while his wife, who recently had a baby, is studying Christian music. “My dream is to prepare well here through God’s Word, and then in the future – when reunification happens – to preach the Gospel to souls in North Korea,” Ahn states.

Although he tries to stay in touch with his mother and older brother, who still live in North Korea, Ahn learned during the previous year that his mother had been imprisoned for ten months merely for talking with him on the phone. He adds that she lost almost 40 pounds from malnutrition while in prison. “I was in the [military’s] Sixth Unit,” he adds, “which means I know a lot of secrets about the North Korean authorities. Since they can’t have revenge on me now, they’re having revenge on my family members.”

In addition to praying for his family’s safety, Ahn asks us to pray for his ministry work and continued studies. He also requests prayer that more North Koreans will come to know Christ. Though they are led by a brutal cultic dictator, God dearly loves the people of North Korea. “You can forget about all of my story if you want,” he concludes, “but don’t forget [the] people in North Korea. I want you to remember and pray for the souls in North Korea whom God loves.” 📞

A LIFE-CHANGING ENCOUNTER THROUGH GOD'S WORD

A North Korean woman is redeemed by Jesus' radical Biblical command to love the Lord our God with all our hearts...and to love others as ourselves – including our enemies.

Growing up in North Korea, Hyun-Ok could never have imagined gathering with others to study the Bible. Under the Communist-inspired dictatorship founded on *Juche*, it would have been far too dangerous to let others know she was even interested in the Bible. After all, the distinctly North Korean religious ideology of *Juche* demands worship and subservience to the Kim family alone.

Hyun-Ok left North Korea when she was in her 40s, defecting to China, where she eventually married a Korean man and started a family. While they lived a comfortable life in China, Hyun-Ok and her husband realized there were better job opportunities in South Korea. So, after getting three-month visas, they travelled to South Korea, hoping to save some money before returning home.

Before their visas expired, however, the South Korean government deported Hyun-Ok's husband

back to China because of issues with his legal documents. Hyun-Ok made the difficult decision to stay in South Korea, hoping her family would eventually be able to join her.

Separated from her husband and son, Hyun-Ok suffered severe depression and began to experience problems with her physical health. She searched for help anywhere she could find it. "I was having a difficult time," she says, "so I turned to Buddhism. I went to a temple, where they told me to do a shamanistic ritual. I did it three times; it didn't help."

As her despair increased, Hyun-Ok isolated herself, rarely leaving the house or communicating with others. Then, a North Korean friend persuaded her to try something new – a Bible study. "All of my closest friends were attending [the Bible study], and one of my friends kept encouraging me to go...." Hyun-Ok



Article Photos: VOM International

YET, THE MORE HYUN-OK STUDIED THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF JESUS IN THE BIBLE, THE MORE SHE WAS DRAWN TO HIS LOVE AND COMPASSION.



Hyun-Ok discovered Christ by reading God's Word. Today, she invites other North Koreans to join her for Bible study.

began by studying the Gospel of Luke. Even though she didn't quite understand what she was reading, she continued to do the homework.

While working through the assignment, Hyun-Ok remembered something she had heard about Christ's teachings while living in North Korea. She decided to search the Scriptures to better understand it. "I studied the parts where Jesus said love God, love your neighbour, and love your enemy too (Luke 6:27; 10:27). I was impressed by this."

The concept of forgiving those who wronged her was foreign to Hyun-Ok, who had been raised in a culture that promoted paranoia and distrust. The everyday lives of North Koreans are governed by the country's "Ten Principles," which demand unconditional obedience to the Kim family's ideology and report on those who do not live up to the regime's standards.

Yet, the more Hyun-Ok studied the life and teach-

ings of Jesus in the Bible, the more she was drawn to His love and compassion. "As I studied about the death of Christ, I understood that [He] died for our sins," she acknowledges. Overwhelmed by Lord's sacrificial love, Hyun-Ok placed her faith in Him.

Today, about two years after her life-changing encounter with God's Word, Hyun-Ok continues to attend the Bible study. She also encourages other North Korean defectors to attend the meetings, which are part of a larger strategy to reach North Koreans with the "Good News" of the Gospel wherever they may be found.

Hyun-Ok asks for prayer that her son would come to know the hope and peace she has found in Christ. And like Ahn, whose testimony is featured on page 4 of this December issue, she also asks us to intercede on behalf of the North Korean people. "I pray that [their] hearts would turn to God." 🙏

North Korea

Table Talk

Veiled Vocabulary!

How to Play: Complete the word search and learn the definitions of terms relating to North Korea. Hidden within the puzzle is one extra word that can be determined by answering the bonus question. Printables and an answer key are available online at: vomcanada.com/TableTalkNorthKorea

WORD BANK:

HANGUL
DICTATORSHIP
STARVATION
DEMILITARIZED
ZONE
WON
PENINSULA
KIMCHI
PYONGYANG
JUCHE
STATUE

K X G D U R U I N H A N G U L W X C
V C H Y I S T A R V A T I O N L K H
S V Q M N C P E N I N S U L A G I R
I A S H U S T H V E L C F Y A Y V I
D E M I L I T A R I Z E D Z O N E S
K Q U Y P Z U A T I N R T J K U U T
Z J P J C H A Z T O P C D C I J P I
C W E C G H V E U U R R G M M U X A
X O U X H C P H J L E S H F C C J N
Q N U E X H O D Q C U J H M H H V I
B W Y P Y O N G Y A N G T I I E D T
X G J X M N T B O G K R B E P C L Y

DEFINITIONS:

1. _____ : The name of the Korean alphabet.

2. _____ : A form of government that gives one person, or a small group of people, absolute power over a nation.

3. _____ : Suffering or death caused by extreme hunger.

4. _____ : An area from which weapons and military forces have been removed.

5. _____ : The official currency of North Korea.

6. _____ : A stretch of land that is mostly surrounded by water.

7. _____ : A staple Korean delicacy consisting of spiced pickled cabbage.

8. _____ : The capital city of North Korea.

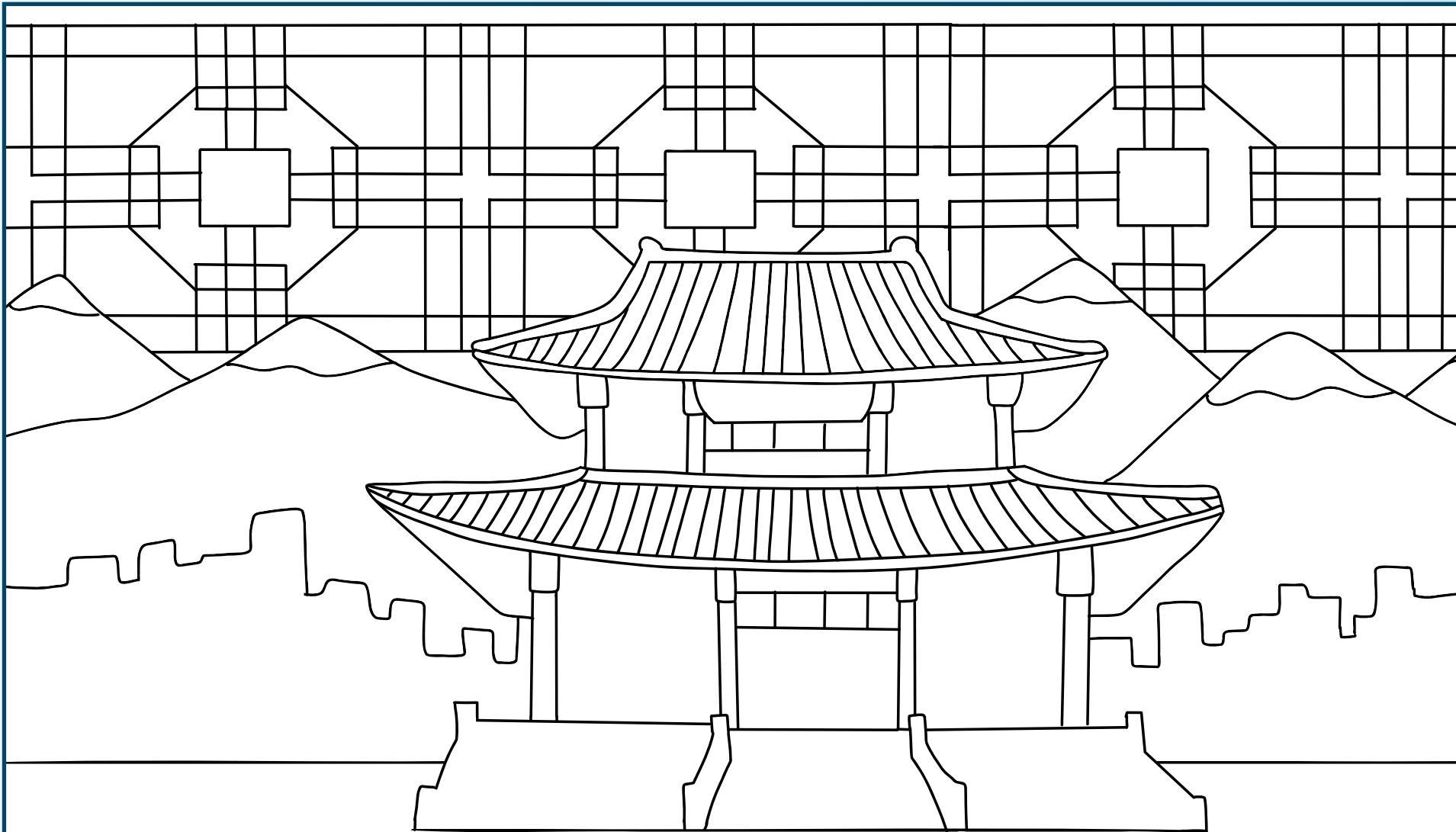
9. _____ : A term referencing the country's political ideology, which translated means "self-reliance." Deliberately built upon a distortion of the Bible, this ideology revolves around the people's worship of the ruling Kim family.

10. _____ : A carved or cast figure of a person or animal, especially one that is life-size or larger.

Bonus Word:

_____ : The religion based on the person and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth.

Start with Your Heart



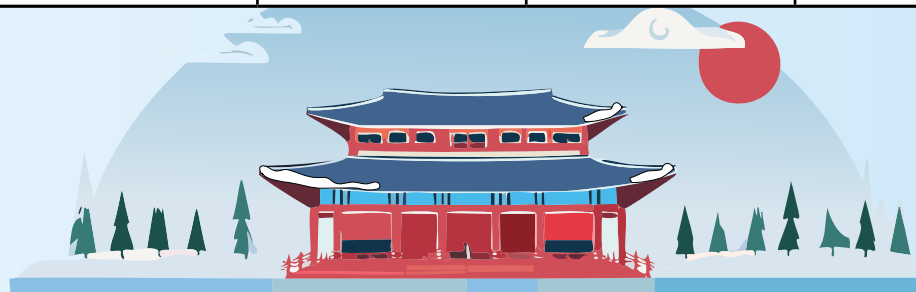
*"Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they shall see God."*

Matthew 5:8 ESV

December 2024

His Way "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." – Matthew 5:8 ESV

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 AZERBAIJAN Pray for Christians who share the Gospel message despite the risk of legal trouble and potential fines.	2 KENYA Pray that local officials and police will protect Christians and their church buildings.	3 BAHRAIN Pray that evangelists will continue to advance the Gospel with zeal and joy.	4 MALDIVES Ask the Lord to expand the discipleship networks of new believers.	5 UNITED ARAB EMIRATES Pray that Emiratis will have continued access to God's Word through the Internet.	6 IRAQ Ask God to strengthen Youhanna, a Christian man who battles chronic pain and has been rejected by his family.	7 LAOS Ask the Lord to give wisdom, courage and joy to ministry workers in remote and difficult areas of Laos.
8 SOMALIA Pray that al-Shabab's terroristic plans will be thwarted, and that God will bring peace to this East African nation.	9 KUWAIT Pray for Christian leaders who are training local believers in evangelism and discipleship.	10 OMAN Pray that governing officials will become more open to the Gospel and respectfully treat those who follow Christ.	11 BENIN Pray for VOM's Bible distributions in a region where most people practise voodoo, a syncretic African religion.	12 QATAR Pray for foreign Christians who have been deported for their evangelistic activities among Qataris.	13 SYRIA Pray that Christians will not lose heart amid the civil war, which has disrupted their lives for more than two decades.	14 ALGERIA Pray that the Bibles confiscated by governing officials will be replaced tenfold!
15 TURKMENISTAN Pray that imprisoned pastors and their families will experience the joy of their salvation amid suffering.	16 UZBEKISTAN Pray for the protection of Christian women who have suffered abuse and rejection from their unbelieving husbands.	17 ETHIOPIA Pray for Christian widows whose husbands were killed because of their faithful witness for Jesus.	18 CAMEROON Pray for the strength of believers who are ministering God's love and comfort to victims of Islamists' attacks.	19 JORDAN Pray that followers of Jesus who have lost jobs because of their faith will trust in God's provision.	20 TANZANIA Ask the Lord to bless the work of missionaries who are spreading the Gospel among remote tribal peoples.	21 COMOROS Pray for the wisdom of ministry workers who are equipping Comorian Christians to share the message of Jesus.
22 VIETNAM Pray for Christians who are being denied medical care and educational opportunities for following Christ.	23 SRI LANKA Pray the unity of Christians will testify of Jesus' love and peace in a nation that has suffered civil war.	24 MALAYSIA Pray that permits will be approved for new church buildings where Christians can meet openly.	25 SAUDI ARABIA Pray that those interested in learning about Christ will not be deterred by fear or opposition.	26 MALI Pray that Islamic extremists will turn to the Lord after seeing His love demonstrated through the body of Christ.	27 KYRGYZSTAN Pray that churches will be well equipped to minister to those who have lost jobs and turned to migrant work.	28 SUDAN Pray that Christian converts from Islam will courageously share the "Good News" of Jesus with their families.
29 BHUTAN Many Bhutanese Christians meet in secret. Pray that they will find ways to be "salt" and "light" in their communities.	30 TAJIKISTAN Praise God for believers who are boldly sharing the Gospel! Pray that their efforts will bear much eternal fruit.	31 COLOMBIA Pray for Andres, an evangelist who desires to "take the Gospel to difficult areas where nobody else wants to go."				



Navigating North Korea

ONE WAY

Marxism, socialism and communism are often mistakenly referenced interchangeably. Socialism is subtly present in many cultures through the promotion of apparent social justice and equality for everyone. In some cases, socialism can coexist with a limited degree of religious freedom. For example, allowances may include festive Christmas decorations in a public forum, but not a display of the nativity scene featuring baby Jesus.

Marxism is a field of thought, not a specific belief system. A predominant Marxist idea is the need to eradicate hierarchies in the home, religion and morality. Moral actions are based on defined parameters of right and wrong rather than feelings – which are perceived as hostile, oppressive, and something that must be overthrown to achieve a so-called “free” society.

The Marxist version of socialism is the stepping stone to communism, a doctrine based on the utopian concept that all power must be put into the hands of working-class people so they can govern themselves. However, according to communism, human rights and religious freedom do not exist. In fact, anything that gets in the way of this socialistic ideology must be ruthlessly eliminated; and for this reason, communism is the greatest killing force in history.

The sinful nature of humankind is not addressed in the utopian vision of communism. Often, to ignore sin as a problem, the symptoms of sin (racism, sexism, etc.) are considered the main issues of a certain demographic – a group of people who must then be abolished. This only serves to pit sin against sin, and people against people. However, the Bible says that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). While communism involves mass killings in an attempt to eliminate outliers and achieve “utopia,” the true remedy to a society’s demise can only be achieved by acknowledging our all-powerful Creator (God) who offers humanity salvation through His Son Jesus (John 3:16).

Recommended Reads:

The Hero’s Journey by Dr. Hyun Sook Foley (Adult)
These are the Generations by Eric Foley (Adult)
I Escaped North Korea by Ellie Crowe and Scott Peters (Teen)

Activity Answers:

1. Hangul 2. Dictatorship 3. Starvation 4. Demilitarized Zone
5. Won 6. Peninsula 7. Kimchi 8. Pyongyang 9. Juche
10. Statue Bonus Word: Christianity

Sources:

https://world.kbs.co.kr/special/northkorea/contents/news/closeup_view.htm?lang=e&No=376482
<https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/persecution/countries/north-korea/>
Mama Bear Apologetics: Empowering Your Kids to Challenge Cultural Lies by Hillary Morgan Ferrer; Nancy Pearcey
Why You Think the Way You Do by Glenn S. Sunshine

WEIGH IN

1. North Koreans face severe food shortages that leave many throughout the nation hungry. The scarce food supply is supposed to be evenly distributed among all citizens. However, the elite are usually heavily favoured, leaving the poor with barely enough to survive.

Brainstorm some potential solutions that address the food crisis in North Korea. Could the solution be as simple as reallocating food to everyone evenly? Or is the food shortage a symptom of a bigger problem (i.e. greed in human hearts)?

2. North Koreans do not celebrate Christmas. Estimates suggest that 95 percent of the population does not know what Christmas is or why it’s celebrated. Instead, on Christmas Eve, North Koreans celebrate the birthday of Kim Jong-Suk, the former president’s mother.

It is mandatory for all North Korean people to honour the country’s leaders and their family members. What connection might this have to the prominent levels of hopelessness in North Korea and the fact that Christmas is not celebrated?

3. Within four months of Kim Il Sung’s dictatorship, Christians were labelled “anti-revolutionaries,” “anti-people” and “anti-nationalists.” As his family demands reverence and obedience, citizens following Christianity or having a Bible are subjected to persecution – even to the point of possible execution.

Christians who evangelize in North Korea are said to have a life expectancy of three months. Would it be better to have a long, peaceful life without evangelizing, or live three months passionately for the Lord and die a martyr? Which is easier? Support your answer with Scripture.

WAY OUT

During this past year, we hosted Dr. Hyun Sook Foley from the Voice of the Martyrs Korea at our annual *Olympic Faith* women’s ministry retreat. She guided the ladies in a series of interactive seminars, as well as an application project, so they can turn their victim stories into victor testimonies! It was an amazing weekend filled with times of refreshment, joy, the development of life-long connections, and deep healing for the heart.

In January 2025, we are excited to continue this momentum through our women’s winter retreats, which will specially focus on Eritrea. Our theme, “It’s in the Cup,” is based on Luke 22:42. This is a weekend you won’t want to miss! To register for the event, please visit our web page at:

www.vomcanada.com/OlympicFaith





Perfect Peace

By Vanessa Brobbel,
Manager of Special Projects

*"I have said these things to you,
that in Me you may have peace. In the
world you will have tribulation. But take
heart; I have overcome the world."*

~ John 16:33 ESV

Human imagination and perfect peace...these are the two concepts we are asking Canadian artists to combine for VOMC's 2025 *Art Gallery Showing*. (For more details, visit www.vomcanada.com/ArtGalleryShowing.)

What does "perfect peace" visually look like? Does this peace appear differently for Christians than it does for non-believers? Before answering that question, please indulge this writer by taking the time to read the following short story of mine:

The Voice of the Martyrs has been part of our entire lives. My parents-in-law, Klaas and Nellie Brobbel, became acquainted with the Wurmbands during the year that my husband Floyd was born, and the Canadian mission was birthed the same month and year that I was born.

It can become difficult to hear all the stories of suffering day after day; and, in some ways, there can be the tendency to close our hearts off a bit to "get the job done." Dealing with issues involving severe persecution in full-time ministry is not always filled with "praises to the Lord" and "sunshine and buttercups." It is very easy to get caught up in the tasks of the day. We're human, and the Lord allows us to go through challenges every once in a while, which rightly draws our attention back to where it should be – zeroing in on why we do what we do, and how much we need to rely on Him in order to do it.

Prior to becoming the CEO of VOMC, Floyd oversaw all of the mission's International Ministry projects. He travelled frequently, often going into countries from which most people were trying to leave. We faithfully prayed, and still do, over the mission trips either of us must make to ensure that they fulfill God's plans and purposes rather than merely those of our own.

Years ago, Floyd was planning a ministry trip to the Kenya-Somalia border. This region tends to be quite volatile, and to be a Christian there is a life-threatening proposition. About a week before Floyd was scheduled to leave, I began having a recurring dream that he was meant to go. However, there was also the implication that he may not necessarily be coming home again. I was afraid to say anything to Floyd, but the dream continued every night until the morning he was to leave.

We went out for breakfast together on our way to the airport. During our meal, I finally confessed what had been plaguing my sleep. Unbeknownst to me, Floyd had been sensing the same thing during his prayer times. We both felt absolutely certain he was supposed to go. We just didn't have any assurances that he would return home.

Needless to say, it was a tearful goodbye at the airport. However, we both love God and have committed our lives to serving Him always, not just when it's easy. We trust that there is no safer place than in the hands of an eternal, almighty God who was willing to give everything for us. How could we give any less?

I'm always telling our kids: "The Lord is far more interested in your character than your comfort. But He is trustworthy; He won't destroy you." I could hear my own words ringing in my ears as I hugged Floyd one more time before he left for his scheduled flight.

After he embarked on that plane, I endured the longest ten days of my life. Whenever Floyd travels, we generally don't have any contact until he arrives home again – for security reasons, and sometimes due to poor cell phone reception. It is an unexpected treat to hear from him during his

overseas trips. So, for the next ten days, I waited in "radio silence"....

When Floyd finally did arrive safely back to our country, and he walked off the landed plane, I was immeasurably relieved; and yet left curiously wondering why the Lord would allow us to go through all that uncertainty!

Floyd's trip was a tremendous success and a monumental boost to his faith walk. He visited one pastor in particular. The man described what it was like to be a Christian there, but added that to be a pastor among people so vehemently opposed to the Gospel was a burden. Then the church leader's wife commented: "Yes, every day he walks out that door, I have no idea if he will ever walk through it again."

Those words powerfully struck us. That was why the Lord had allowed us to experience and feel – on a heart level – what those whom we serve go through every day! Each sunrise, they live by faith that no matter what comes their way, the Lord stands right there in the midst of the fire with them. Like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, they can say in each moment: "...our God whom we serve **is able to rescue us** from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will rescue us from your hand, O king. **But even if He does not...**" still we will follow Him (Daniel 3:17-18 NASB).

William Blake, a 19th-century poet, visionary and artist, once wrote, "A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees."¹ Another inspiring Christian author, Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, interestingly put it this way in his book, *Victorious Faith*: "There was once a fiddler who played so beautifully that everybody danced. A deaf man who could not hear the music considered them all insane. Those who are with Jesus in suffering hear this music to which other men are deaf. They dance and do not care if they are considered insane."²

For all who faithfully follow Jesus, God promises *perfect peace* that "*surpasses all understanding*" (Isaiah 26:3; Philippians 4:7). His gift of peace is not dependant on the logic of the human mind; instead, it is a product of an eternal perspective – eluding those who have yet to discover the abounding love of our Saviour. Therefore, let us pray that such peace is not beyond their grasp, and that even those who torment and persecute Christians would begin to hear the music and dance!

The calling that God has placed on artists is a great one, for imagination can affect our ability to empathize with others. Just as the telling of my personal story in this article enables readers to imagine my own

lived experience, so imagination creatively portrayed tends to make us all more compassionate, gracious and open to wonder. In a world full of God-given wonders, opportunities, gifts and talents, have we become overly fixated on our own needs for comfort and even worldly peace? Have we exchanged our cultural mandate and the Great Commission for ease? Consider the words of this poem by Sir Francis Drake and then contemplate, "What *is* perfect peace?"

Disturb us, Lord, when
We are too pleased with ourselves,
When our dreams have come true
Because we dreamed too little,
When we arrived safely
Because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when
with the abundance of things we possess
We have lost our thirst
For the waters of life;
Having fallen in love with life,
We have ceased to dream of eternity.
And in our efforts to build a new earth,
We have allowed our vision
Of the new Heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,
To venture on wilder seas
Where losing sight of land
We shall find the stars.
We ask You to push back
The horizons of our hopes;
And to push back the future
In strength, courage, hope and love.

**This we ask in the name of our Captain,
Who is Jesus Christ!³**

Endnotes: ¹ William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, John W. Luce and Company, 1906 (<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/45315/45315-h/45315-h.htm>) ² Richard Wurmbrand, *Victorious Faith*, New York: Harper & Row, 1975, p. 62 ³ Sir Francis Drake, *Disturb Us, Lord*, 1577 (<https://saltlightblog.com/2015/01/disturb-us-lord-prayer-by-sir-francis.html>)



Christmas Blessing 2024



In collaboration with VOM USA, Voice of the Martyrs Canada is working with on-the-ground ministry partners to bless more than 5,000 children during the Christmas season. The project's primary objective is for children throughout this island nation (which cannot be disclosed due to security concerns) to receive Christmas gifts that will not only bless them practically but also minister to them spiritually.

Each child will be given a backpack containing school supplies, toys, hygienic essentials, and a T-shirt featuring a Godly message. Most importantly, the inclusion of a Bible in every backpack will allow each of the children to read the Gospel in their own language, receive greatly needed encouragement, and be reminded of the Lord's tremendous love for them.



Photo: Shutterstock / BrianScantlebury

The backpacks will be distributed by a team of multi-denominational Christian leaders in various regions across the country, primarily targeting areas where the needs are greatest. Due to a severe lack of resources, many families in these communities are not able to afford several of the items that will be provided in the backpacks – including difficult-to-access school supplies such as notebooks, paper, glue, cellulose tape, etc.

In a country where children are under relentless pressure to reject the Christian faith and instead embrace atheism, this distribution project seeks to share the love, hope and truth of the Gospel in both practical and meaningful ways. Additionally, as copies of God's Word are extremely limited in this nation, the provided Bibles will be greatly cherished gifts for not only these children but also the members of their persecuted families.

If you would like to contribute to this year's
Christmas Blessing project, please contact:
www.vomcanada.com/ChristmasBlessing
1-888-298-6423





A Millisecond of Worship



Christmastime in North Korea

By Rev. Dr. Eric Foley
Co-Founder and CEO for VOM Korea

Since writing *These are the Generations* with underground North Korean Christians, Mr. and Mrs. Bae, I never look at Christmas lights the same way. The following message, which was excerpted from this book, gives new meaning to the lyrics of the old song, *Over the River and Through the Woods*. Mrs. Bae, along with her then pregnant daughter and son, had to flee North Korea by plunging into the frigid waters of the Tumen River at Christmastime. Note the amazing millisecond of worship she offered to the Lord when they all arrived on the other side of the river:

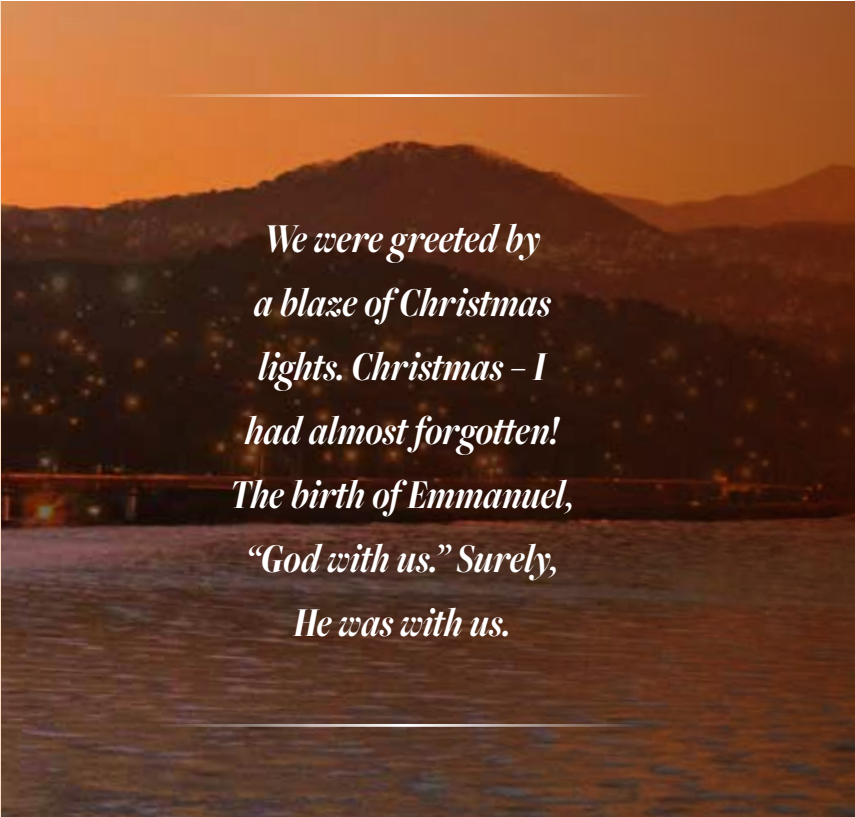
Finally, we selected a location to cross [the river]. The decision came with a lot of concern for me because of my daughter's pregnancy. In order to cross, we'd have to first lower ourselves down a cliff face that was about three-and-a-half metres high. My daughter saw my worry and urged me to trust in God – an admonition that became a whole lot easier when we found

a rope nearby, which I knew was God's provision. So my son jumped down. I jumped down. And my daughter hesitated not at all, scrambling down without a trace of fear and taking off running in a mad dash with the rest of us once she reached the bottom.

The river was about 150 metres wide at that point, and we had to just throw ourselves into it and swim across as fast as we could, ignoring the piercing liquid cold and the possible impact on my daughter's pregnancy. The last voices I heard in North Korea were the shouts of people in the city crying out, "Catch them! Catch them!" Maybe God didn't exactly part the river for us, but He restrained those who sought to do us harm until we could safely reach the other side. That was exodus enough.

Who can forget that first glimpse of the land outside of North Korea? We were greeted by a blaze of Christmas lights. Christmas – I had almost forgotten! The birth of *Emmanuel*, "God with us." Surely, He was with us.

But there was no time to stop, stand, reflect, or even thank Him for this, as guards plied both sides of the river. Still, it was impossible not to be struck by the contrast between the panoply of lights on the China side and the impenetrable blackness of the North Korean night. On the far side of the river, there were North Korean citizens who had no idea that it was Christmas and certainly no concept of the God who is known as "Emmanuel."



*We were greeted by
a blaze of Christmas
lights. Christmas – I
had almost forgotten!
The birth of Emmanuel,
"God with us." Surely,
He was with us.*

Although Mrs. Bae and her family are thankfully now safe in South Korea, please pray for them. As readers of *These are the Generations* know, Mrs. Bae has struggled for years with health issues and requires doctor's care. Thank you for joining me in prayer for the intervention of the Great Physician – and Mrs. Bae's restoration to full health – particularly during this Christmas season. 🙏

Added Note: Rev. Eric Foley recently reported that the growth of Christianity has been exponential since the publishing of his first book, "These are the Generations." He states that there are now an estimated 100,000 underground Christians residing within North Korea who secretly celebrate Christmas. This substantial increase in the number of believers indicates that the church is growing faster in North Korea than in South Korea or Canada.

The Rev. Dr. Eric Foley is CEO and co-founder, along with his wife Dr. Hyun Sook Foley, of Voice of the Martyrs Korea, which is supporting persecuted Christians in North Korea and around the world. The Foleys and their vast ministry team throughout Asia are helping North Korean Christians and believers everywhere grow to fullness in Christ. The couple's books, including *These are the Generations*, may be ordered through VOMC's online store: www.vomcanada.com/store.



VOMC

RESOURCES



Special DVD Bundle Offer!

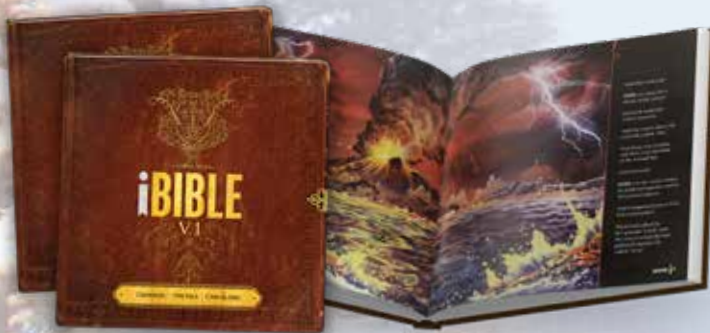
"Sabina: Tortured for Christ, the Nazi Years" & "Tortured for Christ" Biographical Films

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The amazing true story of VOM's international founders, Pastor Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand, is brought to life in this set of inspiring films.... *Tortured for Christ*, which was filmed entirely in Romania (including the very prison where Pastor Wurmbrand endured torture and solitary confinement), uniquely and authentically presents

their story in English, Romanian and Russian.

Sabina: Tortured for Christ, the Nazi Years is an award-winning English production that recounts the Wurmbrands' testimony from the perspective of Sabina, whose courageous witness for Christ during an extremely perilous time in history has also touched the lives of millions around the world. Today, the Wurmbrands' ministry legacy lives on in a worldwide movement that's connecting Christians in the free world with those facing intense persecution for their faith in other parts of the globe.



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This wonderfully written and illustrated six-book gift set includes the stories of Biblical heroes *Stephen*, *Thomas* and the *Apostle Paul*, as well as those of famous influencers *Nicholas*, *Patrick* and *Valentine*, whose faith-motivated actions continue to impact lives around the world today. Learning about these great heroes of the faith will encourage children to become courageous followers of Jesus as well.

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The Pilgrim's Progress

Animated Children's DVD

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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 the author's epic masterpiece, *The Pilgrim's Progress* 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.

Due to scenes of action and violence, which depict the various challenges Christian must overcome along his journey, this movie is recommended for ages 8 and up.

The Pilgrim's Progress

Illustrated Storybook

\$15

Also based on John Bunyan's epic masterpiece, this expanded and improved second edition

of *The Pilgrim's Progress Illustrated Storybook* by RevelationMedia abridges the story of Christian's incredible action-filled 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 older children to follow the right path which ultimately leads to eternity with our King! Hardcover, 96 pages



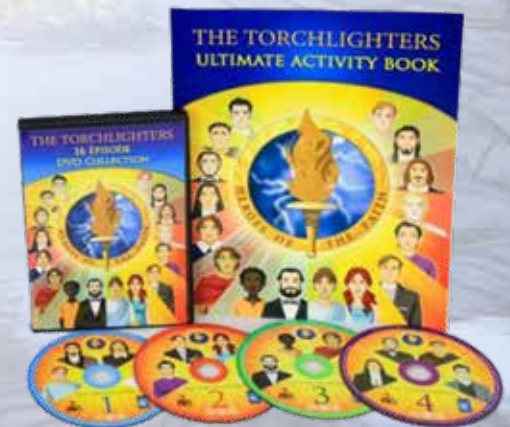
The Torchlighters

Ultimate Activity Book and DVD Set

\$40 for complete set
(including one activity book)

The award-winning *Torchlighters* DVD series now includes a 144-page, full-colour activity book. This book includes historical facts about each hero, devotionals, fun activities, plus additional colouring pages. Offered at exclusive ministry pricing, this bundle contains all 16 episodes of *The Torchlighters* animated series in a four-DVD set, along with an easy-to-carry case and the *Ultimate Activity Book*. This special offer is a valuable resource for Christian schools, homeschoolers, Sunday school classes, as well as family devotional times. (Each episode featured in the set is approximately 30 minutes in length and also contains bonus biographical information for adults.)

The heroes featured in the series include: Amy Carmichael, Corrie ten Boom, Eric Liddell, Gladys Aylward, Jim Elliot, John Bunyan, Perpetua, Richard Wurmbrand, Robert Jermain Thomas, Samuel Morris, St. Augustine, William Booth, William Tyndale, and more....





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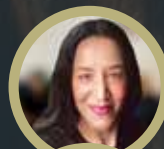
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