

Along the Way

The following story has been adapted from VOMC's ministry partner, Mission Eurasia Canada.

In a faraway country called Turkmenistan, most people follow the Muslim faith. The government there doesn't let people freely choose how they worship. It controls almost everything – especially religion. If you want to meet with others to pray or read holy books, you have to register with the government. But for years, Christian groups haven't been allowed to register at all.

That means Christians who gather in homes to worship or pray are often in danger. Police can raid their meetings, and people can be fined, beaten or even lose their jobs and homes. It's a tough place to be a Christian.

Yusup knows this all too well. "When I was 16, I heard about Jesus for the first time from my friends," Yusup remembers. "I started going to a secret church that met in someone's house.



One day, while we were reading the Bible and singing songs to God, the police burst in."

They arrested everyone and took them to the station. Yusup was beaten badly. "They told me I'd have huge problems if I kept going to church," he says.

"When I got home, my parents were scared and didn't let me leave the house for a while, so I stopped going."

"My heart started beating faster. It was like a fire was lit inside me."

Years passed, and then one day in 2017, Yusup was invited to a birthday party. There, he saw an old friend – someone who used to go to the secret church with him. “He started talking about Jesus again,” Yusup says. “My heart started beating faster. It was like a fire was lit inside me.”

Yusup began attending underground Bible studies again, moving from house to house to stay safe. Eventually, he joined a special course to learn how to be a leader and help

others grow in their faith. “Thanks to that course, my faith got stronger,” Yusup says. “Now I share about Jesus with others!”

But it’s still risky. “Please pray for me,” Yusup asks. “Pray for my studies, and for the people I talk to about Jesus. Pray that God protects us and our secret meetings. We know it’s dangerous, but we keep going because we need [Christ’s message] to grow.”

Reading Between the Lines

Vocabulary

Match the words with their definitions:

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| 1. Underground church | a) A sudden attack or invasion, often by police or military forces |
| 2. Raid | b) A group that meets secretly to worship |
| 3. Discipleship | c) Strength to do something difficult or dangerous |
| 4. Seized | d) Taken by force |
| 5. Courage | e) The process of learning about and following the teachings of Jesus |

Past Tense Verbs

Underline the past tense verbs in the paragraph below:

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