

OpenDoors
YOUTH

**WORLD
WATCH
LIST
2021**



2021

North Korea
Afghanistan
Somalia
Libya
Pakistan
Eritrea
Yemen
Iran
Nigeria
India
Iraq
Syria
Sudan
Saudi Arabia
Maldives
Egypt
China
Myanmar
Vietnam
Mauritania
Uzbekistan
Laos
Turkmenistan
Algeria
Turkey
Tunisia
Morocco
Mali
Qatar
Colombia
Bangladesh
Burkina Faso
Tajikistan
Nepal
Central African Republic (CAR)
Ethiopia
Mexico
Jordan
Brunei
Congo DR (DRC)
Kazakhstan
Cameroon
Bhutan
Oman
Mozambique
Malaysia
Indonesia
Kuwait
Kenya
Comoros

**YOUTH
LEADER
SESSION**

WHAT IF?

Before you begin

Order copies of the 2021 Open Doors Youth World Watch List Map for each member of your group (and hand them out before or at the start of the session - depending on how lockdown restrictions are working in your area). You can order them for free at:

opendoorsyouth.org/order

AIM: To help youth groups engage with the WWL Map, increase understanding of the global issue of persecution and recognise that their prayers are significant and important.

1. INTRO ACTIVITY:

You will need: Pens and paper

Before the session begins, draw a picture of something - a dog, globe, lightbulb, whatever you fancy. Don't finish the picture. Now, show the picture to your group and ask them to copy it. Then give them a few minutes to finish the picture (and you finish yours too). When finished, ask everyone to show their pictures and explain what they have drawn. How hard did they find the challenge? Did they end up with the same picture as you? Would they have found it easier seeing the whole picture?

Explain: Our session today will look at Christians who are restricted and limited in how they get to express their faith. In the UK, we're able to live out our faith as Christians in freedom, but we're going to zoom out a bit to see the whole global picture.

Ask:

Read through this list. How do people feel about the price many Christians have to pay for their faith in Jesus. Is it right? If not, why not?

- *What if faith in Jesus would land you in prison? What if spies watched your every move? What if your church had to meet in secret? What if your family threw you out because of your beliefs? What if owning a Bible was illegal? What if being a Christian meant experiencing violence or death? What if you were given lower marks at school for being a Christian? What if your faith meant you got bullied or picked on?*

Explain: These questions expose the full picture of what Christianity is like for up to 340 million Christians around the world. One in every eight Christians on the planet faces persecution. That simply means that they have chosen to follow Jesus knowing they could be beaten up, arrested, kicked out of home, lose their job or education opportunities, be imprisoned and even killed. They choose to do this because they think following Jesus is worth it.

So, what if, despite all of the costs, you still chose to follow Jesus?

During the rest of this session, we'll be looking at one of these 'What if' questions...

2. WHAT IF YOUR CHURCH HAD TO MEET IN SECRET...

World Watch List Map: Ask the young people to find Colombia on their map and check what number it is on the 2021 World Watch List (30).

Watch: Now watch Timóteo story: <https://vimeo.com/477557115>

Explain: In Colombia, Christians are often persecuted by drug gangs who control whole areas. There is little protection for Christians who stand up to them. Anyone who dares to stand against their threats, not support their illegal activity or even tries to prevent people from getting involved in their dangerous business, will become a target.

Ask:

- *What do you think some of the main challenges are for Christians living here?*
- *How would you feel about standing up for your faith, despite any threats of violence or being rejected?*

Pastors and their families often face pressure to pay bribes to drug gangs, and those churches helping people get free from drugs or life in a gang can face intimidation and violence. Other rural communities threaten and reject Christians because they see Christianity as a challenge to their traditional indigenous beliefs and way of life.

One way that Christians deal with the threats is to escape to remote places to worship God together in secret.

Watch: Share this video of young Colombian Christians worshipping God in secret: <https://vimeo.com/478892827>

Activity: Tell your young people that this is the last time they can meet together normally. Challenge them to come up with a plan for meeting in secret (if you're meeting via Zoom due to Covid-19 restrictions, get them to imagine a more normal in-person scenario).

They will need:

- *A venue, a time to meet, a way of communicating (is there a simple code they can come up with - e.g. leaving an item in a certain place to represent when and where they are meeting), and an escape plan if they see people coming to 'raid' the meeting (e.g. where they will regroup).*

Give your group 60 seconds to memorise the plan, but for safety, they must destroy any notes they have made. You don't want spies finding out your plan! Test the young people on the plan - how many of them can remember, how many would be caught out?

BIBLE: MEETING IN SECRET

In the book of 1 Samuel, David and Jonathan had to communicate in secret, as the king, Saul (who was also Jonathan's dad), was jealous that David was chosen to be God's next king. Saul wanted to kill David, but Jonathan and David were best friends - he loved David as a brother, as family.

Read: Get a young person to read 1 Samuel 20: 19-22 (if they want to know how the story pans out, you could encourage them to read the rest of chapter 20 later on).

Using elements or all of this session?

We'd love to get your feedback.

youth@opendoorsuk.org

Want more resources to inspire and

challenge your youth group? Visit:

opendoorsyouth.org/youthleaders

Explain: David and Jonathan needed to meet in secret because of the threat from the Saul, just as drug gangs are a threat to Christians in Colombia. David and Jonathan's plan was pretty elaborate (involving arrows and a big rock) and probably very different to the plan you came up with to communicate in secret with each other. But it was worth it - David and Jonathan were the closest of friends and David remained alive.

BIBLE: ONE BODY, ONE FAMILY

Read: Ask a young person to read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Ask:

- In v27 Paul writes, "Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it." Do you feel like a part of the body, the church family?

Take time with your group to point out that they all have something different, something unique and valuable to offer the wider church family. You could even spend time naming the skills and gifts that each member of the group bring! Explain that it would be a weaker church, not stronger, without any of them.

Explain: This idea of a body or family doesn't just mean you are connected to the people who go to church with you on a Sunday. This family extends around the world. You have a worldwide church family, and that includes millions who face restrictions, threats and pressure simply because they love Jesus. And when they hurt, we should hurt too (1 Corinthians 12:26).

Ask:

- How many Christians are facing high to extreme levels of persecution?

Answer: 1 in 8 Christians on the planet or 340 million

Get the group to do some quick maths:

- How many people are there in your local church?
- If 1 in 8 were being persecuted, how many would that be?
- If some people in your church were living through attacks, or were at risk of arrest or being chased from their homes, what would you do as a community to support them?
- Could you come up with a practical plan to help them? For example, where could they live, how would they get food, who would help them take the issue to the police, who could comfort them, who would pray with them?

Now apply this to your global church family:

- How many of the things from your support plan can you do for your worldwide church family facing persecution?

What about you? After all you've heard, think about these:

- What if, despite all of the costs, you still chose to follow Jesus?
- Do you think you would still want to follow Jesus if you lived in a place where you would face persecution?

PRAY:

IN PERSON (AND IF GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE ALLOWS):

Before the session, use masking tape to mark out on the floor a series of rectangles about 85cm by 150cm (the average size of a toilet cubicle). You'll need one rectangle for every three people.

Explain: In North Korea, Christians can face life imprisonment simply because they love Jesus. One lady, Hae Woo, started a small secret church in some prison camp toilets - one of the only places the prison guards wouldn't visit. Hae Woo and just a couple of others would meet

quickly to share Bible verses, whisper worship songs and pray with each other. Like Hae Woo, stand in the small toilet cubicle spaces with one or two other people. Use your World Watch List Map to pray for any five of the top ten countries on the map (facts to pray about are included around the map).

IN PERSON AND ONLINE:

Watch: North Korea: Open Doors Fieldworker Peter

<https://vimeo.com/493407556>

Ask:

North Korea is the most dangerous place in the world to be a Christian. Which of the following statements do you think are true?

- In schools, pupils are taught languages, maths, science and how to spy on their parents - spotting an illegal Bible is a key skill.
- Those found with a Bible can be sent, along with their whole family, to a notorious prison camp and never seen again.
- In North Korea, more Bibles can be found hidden underground than on bookshelves.

Explain: All of these are true statements highlighting why North Korea has been the most dangerous place in the world to be a Christian for twenty years. In the video, Peter, talking about North Korea Christians, says, "Even at this moment, they go through tribulations and pain, but they still look to God and pray to God... We need to pour out our hearts for believers. Your prayers will strengthen them to worship God in the land."

Our prayers make a difference for Christians around the world. Open Doors founder Brother Andrew once said, "If we fully understood the power of prayer, we would be on our knees day and night asking God to turn the world upside down." God hears our prayers and is able to move in ways we often never see or understand.

Let us pray for our church family who are facing beatings, hunger, threats, violence, exclusion and imprisonment because of their faith in Jesus. Let's pour out our hearts to God for them, asking that they will be strong in their faith, even if it means losing everything.

Use this prayer to bring people's prayers to a close:

Father God, we thank You for believers around the world, our global church family. We pray for our brothers like Timóteo in Colombia and Peter working with North Korean Christians in China. We pour out our hearts for believers like them who take risks to follow You. Please keep them strong, help them to meet secretly and safely with other believers, and protect them as they show incredibly brave faith. Amen.

END: #WORLDWATCHLISTWEDNESDAYS - A YEAR OF PRAYER

Get the group to look at their World Watch List Maps and mark the countries that you've talked about. Explain that using this map to pray can change things. There are 50 countries on the map - that's almost one a week for a whole year. Why not commit to praying through the map for a year, and adding Bible verses, prayers and pictures to your map as you go? You can do this together over Zoom (with everyone annotating their own maps each week) or in person in a real venue with a map on the wall. The Open Doors Youth team will be doing just that live on [Instagram](#) every **Wednesday at 5pm** - head to [@opendoorsyouthuk](#) to hear some stories and facts about each country and be inspired to pray!

Look out for an Open Doors Youth series with Pete Greig on encouraging your youth group in prayer, coming Spring 2021.

Using elements or all of this session?

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