

# Back to the Future

## Week 5 Homework - Being a Church that Faces Persecution

### DAY ONE:

In two or three sentences, describe the worst treatment you have ever received as a DIRECT result of your faith in Jesus. \_\_\_\_\_

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Now read this:

### **Christian Layman Martyred in Vicious Attack**

*January 6, 2010*

Ramesh Chandra Digal was martyred for Jesus Christ during the attacks on Orissa's [India] Christians in August 2008. His death was a testimony to his love for his Savior, just as his life had been.

Ramesh was an active member of a Gospel for Asia-supported congregation and was blessed with a wife and two children. Although he came from a poor background, he was able to support his family by working as a cook in a local elementary school.

On the first day of the August 2008 Orissa attacks, Ramesh was not really alarmed when a group of people entered his village. He recognized several members of the group as friends he had grown up with. But when he saw axes and swords in their hands, he realized the danger and ran toward a village a few miles away where his children attended school.

On his way, he went through a village where some Christians lived. Seeking a hiding place, he looked for an open door to one of their small houses. But before he could find refuge, the anti-Christian mob caught up with him.

After beating him severely, the extremists demanded that Ramesh deny the Lord Jesus. Without hesitation, he refused. And even as he confessed Jesus as his Lord, the mob descended on him and hacked his body into pieces.

Then the mob completely burned Ramesh's mutilated body and threw the ashes into a nearby river. They also looted Ramesh's house and burned it to the ground.

Today his widow and their children are living with his parents.

Ramesh's story is not an isolated incident. More than 100 Christians were killed in the 2008 attacks, including nuns who were raped before they were killed. At least two GFA-supported pastors were martyred, as well.

"We must never forget the sacrifice these faithful believers have made for their faith," said Gospel for Asia President K.P. Yohannan. "We often speak of how our missionaries are ready to suffer and die so the lost can know the love of the Savior, but we know the faithful believers of Asia are willing to lay down their lives for Him, as well.

"As we pray for their families, let us rededicate ourselves to living sacrificially for Christ and to doing whatever is necessary to shine the light of the Gospel into the darkest areas of Asia. These martyrs have set the example. Let us be worthy of their sacrifices."

Look up and read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 and fill in the blanks below.

Outwardly \_\_\_\_\_ ~ ~ ~ Inwardly \_\_\_\_\_

Light and momentary \_\_\_\_\_ ~ ~ ~ Eternal \_\_\_\_\_ that far \_\_\_\_\_

Fix our eyes NOT on \_\_\_\_\_ ~ ~ ~ Fix our eyes ON \_\_\_\_\_

For what is SEEN is \_\_\_\_\_ ~ ~ ~ What is UNSEEN is \_\_\_\_\_

Prayerfully consider the difficulties in your life in light of these four paradoxes from those verses. Are they (your difficulties) ruining your life? Or guaranteeing and enhancing your future?

## DAY TWO:

Read the following passages and write next to the reference the name of the person who endured persecution.

Acts 7:54-60 - \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 12:1-5 - \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 14:19-20 - \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 16:16-24 - \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 17:5-9 - \_\_\_\_\_

These are real people with real stories. Part of the goal of this week is to open our eyes to the real persecution that is happening in our world today. Like this story from the country of Laos:

### Christians Evicted

In January, 48 Christians were forced from their homes by more than 100 officials and villagers in Katin village, Saravan province, Laos, according to Compass Direct News.

After gathering for Sunday worship, the believers were expelled from their church at gunpoint and taken to an open field. Officials then confiscated personal belongings from 11 Christians' homes, and six of the homes were later destroyed. Officials also took a pig, worth the equivalent of six weeks' salary, from one of the believers. When believers refused to renounce their faith, they were forced to leave the village. Officials have posted police at the entrance to the village to prevent the Christians from returning home or retrieving their valuables. At last report, the believers were staying in the woods, with barely any food or survival supplies.

The Christian community in Katin village has endured repeated persecution in recent years. In July 2008, 17 Christian families were detained and ordered to deny their faith. Ten families signed the documents and were able to return to the village, while the other families were evicted. Eventually, the seven evicted families also signed the recantation forms and moved back into the village. At last report, some of these Christians had again begun to gather for prayer and worship.

One more name to write down. James 1:2 - \_\_\_\_\_ (Hint: It is YOUR name.)

Today as we close, I challenge you to do three things:

- 1) Pray for the real people today who are facing real persecution in ways we can't imagine. That they would remain faithful and strong.
- 2) Pray for yourself; that when your faithfulness to Jesus puts you in the path of persecution, you will remain faithful and strong and will "consider it pure joy".
- 3) Keep reading! Below are some websites with LOTS more information, stories, and details about the persecution happening in our world every single day. Read, reflect, and pray!
  - [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com) Check out "Newsroom" and "Pray". Sign up for the e-newsletter. Great resource.
  - [www.persecutionblog.com](http://www.persecutionblog.com) Updated daily with prayer requests and stories from around the world.
  - [www.gfa.org/persecution](http://www.gfa.org/persecution) Great stories, photos, and videos.
  - [www.persecution.org](http://www.persecution.org)
  - [www.christianpersecution.info](http://www.christianpersecution.info)

## DAY THREE:

In a few minutes I will ask you to go visit the Life Groups blog for a very graphic and moving video. But please begin by reading Hebrews chapter 11. If you can, read the entire chapter. If you only have a few minutes, at least read the following verses.

Hebrews 11:35-38 - "Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— **the world was not worthy of them.**\* They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground." [\*Emphasis added.]

If you are interested in learning more, visit the Life Groups blog (<http://lifegroupsblog.wordpress.com>) and watch the video under "**A Church that Faces Persecution**". This is a video by the organization Voice of the Martyrs ([www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com)). It is graphic, moving, and even disturbing. It documents the level of persecution that many of our brothers and sisters in Christ face as a very present reality in their daily lives.