

MercEmail A Weekly Devotional by Steve Higginbotham

Like A Persecuted Church

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Imagine it's Sunday morning. You and your family put on jeans and t-shirts and get ready to go to the mountains. You carry with you a large picnic basket, and your children carry with them a baseball and a couple gloves. You arrive at the mountains, pile out of the car and take about a two mile trek on a trail that apparently leads to your picnic area. As you make your way along the trail, you keep a watchful eye to make sure that no one is following you. Finally, you arrive at a bend in the trail where you are greeted by two men who point to a hidden cave off the trail about a hundred yards away. The two men remain on the trail, keeping a vigilant watch. As you enter the cave, you are warmly greeted with embraces by several other families who have already arrived. The gloves and ball are put aside, the picnic basket is emptied, a false bottom removed, and four Bibles are distributed to your family. Lanterns are lit, and the group moves deeper into the cave. Meanwhile, the two men who were watching the path, now make their way to the cave, cover the entrance with brush, and also join you in a deep recess in the cave. Everything is now ready. It's now time for worship services to begin.

While such a scenario seems so unlikely to ever become a reality for most of us reading this, it is what countless brothers and sisters in Christ have had to do in other times, and in other places in order to worship God without reprisal.

Question: "If you were a member of a persecuted church, how would it change you?"

Would worship become more meaningful to you, and less rote? Would the bonds of fellowship you have with those who share the same convictions about Jesus be strengthened and treasured more so than they are treasured presently? Would your prayer life be stronger and more vital to your daily life? Would you be more willing to overlook personality differences and even conflicts with those who share your faith and who share the willingness to risk their lives? Would you be less likely to pick flaws with each other and more likely to search out ways to maintain peace? Would you be less critical about peripheral matters that really seem to bother you today?

"Lord, help us behave more like a persecuted church!"

By Steve Higginbotham, 2013. Permission is granted to copy these articles.