

Briefly BETHEL

A Publication of:
Bethel Evangelical Free Church
Devils Lake, ND

November 13th is the international day of prayer for the persecuted church. Persecution for our faith in our community is something foreign. Few, if any of us have experienced it. In fact, you are much more likely to be persecuted as a Muslim or Buddhist than a Christian. Having traveled all over the world, I am grateful for our religious freedom. This freedom of worship, however, carries its own set of challenges. Primarily, it can lull the church into complacency. As I thought about what to write for this month's *Bethel Briefly*, I thought it be appropriate to look at what we, as a church, might be able to learn from the persecuted church.

1. Persecution Makes a Church Gospel Centered

As a church, when you face persecution you are no longer focused on impressing your friends or people in the community by the size of your congregation, the programs you offer or the beauty of your building. Your focus instead turns to the gospel because the gospel is the only enduring thing you have to offer others.

2. Persecution compels one to take up their cross and follow Christ daily

Persecution places a price tag on following Christ. The gift of religious freedom can often turn faith into easy believism that demands very little and expects to receive much. Under persecution, the reality of taking up one's cross, as defined in Matthew 16:24, become very real as the cost of following Christ is apparent at every turn. Following Christ no longer becomes the easier of two paths. Persecution raises the stakes which in turn raises the commitment of a relationship with God.

3. Persecution gives one an eternal perspective

One of my greatest struggles is investing too much of my time and energy on aspirations that have no eternal significance. These aspirations are not bad in themselves, yet when they take valuable time and energy away from matters of eternal significance, they become dangerous. In Matthew 16:26, Christ asks the telling question, "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?" Persecution raises the price of following Christ, which then challenges believers to daily make the decision to, "focus on things above rather than things below."

4. Persecution Strengthens Faith

In the midst of persecution, the temporal things that one tends to rely on can be shaken or taken away. In the midst of this, one has to place their faith in the only thing that is constant, Christ's promises. Matthew 6:25-33, promises that Christ will meet all our needs. In times of persecution, one's faith in Christ's promises are strengthened as Christ faithfully meets all their needs.

5. Persecution Helps One Find their Sufficiency in Christ

In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul shows us that when we repent of our sins and place our faith in Christ's work on the cross, we are a new creation. Our identity and sufficiency suddenly shifts from our temporal aspirations and accomplishments to the One True God who saved us. Persecution raises the eternal and crushes the temporal forcing us to find our sufficiency and identity in Christ alone. We suddenly find our lives echoing the third verse of the great Hymn, "Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus", which says,

Yes, 'tis sweet to trust in Jesus, just from sin and self to cease;

Just from Jesus simply taking life and rest, and joy and peace.

As we focus this month on the persecuted church, I pray for three things to happen in your life. First, I pray that you pray for the many brothers and sisters in Christ who are persecuted daily for following Jesus. Secondly, I pray that your prayers for the persecuted church expand your own horizons to have a much more global vision of Christ's work. Thirdly, I pray that you can implement the lesson to be learned from our brothers and sisters in Christ suffering for the Gospel.

For more information on how you might better pray and support the persecuted church, go online to:

www.persecution.com.

Blessings, Pastor Ben Luethy

Bethel will be hosting the community Thanksgiving service this year on Sunday, November 20, at 7:00 pm.
*Join us for pie and coffee to follow the service.



During National Collection Week, drop off your Operation Christmas Child Shoe Boxes at Bethel, 1312 E Walnut St, Devils Lake.

Drop off times at Bethel:

Monday, November 14 through Friday, November 18 from 8:00 am to 7:00 pm

Saturday, November 19 from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm

Sunday, November 20 from 9:00 am to Noon

Monday, November 21 this is the last day to drop off boxes 8:00 am to 11:00 am

Sorry, but we can not accept any shoe boxes after the deadline of November 21. Thanks!



Igor Petrov will be with us next Sunday, November 6 in our worship service, sharing God's word and testimony of what God is doing in Russia as well as the work being done through Trinity Video Seminary (where Pastor Bruce has taught several times).

Remember to fall back one hour Saturday night/Sunday morning



The 9th Annual Faithful Friends of Cooperstown Bible Camp Banquet

Saturday, November 19 at 5:30 pm

RSVP at (701) 797-2174 or online at www.cooperstownbiblecamp.com



Pray for persecuted Christians around the world and sign up on the website to receive weekly prayer requests by email. The emails will help you stay informed between each monthly newsletter issue and pray insightfully all year long. The Voice of the Martyrs (VOM) newsletter is FREE. Join in prayer for the persecuted Christians especially on the International Day of Prayer on Sunday, November 13.

Write a letter to a Christian in prison at www.prisoneralert.com. Each month VOM posts a Christian prisoner to write to. This site will even help you write your letter in the language of the prisoner! This is a ministry of VOM.

Send Bibles through VOM's Bibles Unbound program. You may sponsor New Testament Bibles for people living in restricted nations. See www.biblesunbound.com. This is a ministry of VOM.

Fill an Action Pack for persecuted Christians. For a \$7 donation VOM will send you a special vacuum-sealed bag and a list of items to place inside. You fill the bag and return to VOM. They will deliver it to a needy Christian family living under threat of persecution in a restricted nation.

Wild Game Feast

Featuring an evangelistic speaker

A local outreach opportunity for the community

February 4-6, 2012

Thank you volunteers for dedicating your time to plan this great Lake Region area opportunity.

We are expecting 400 participants.

More volunteers are needed to help plan and to work on this event.

Financial contributions will also be needed.

Attention Hunters:

Please keep Bethel in mind while doing your fall/winter hunting and fishing.

We would welcome donations of fish and/or wild game.

If you would like to volunteer to help, please talk to Jon Jensen or Bob Christie.

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Remember to fall back one hour on November 6

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www.bethelfree.com

We exist to
glorify God, point people
to new life in Christ and
help them follow Him as
a way of life.