

thoughts, ideas & challenges

for youth groups (and others too!)

something to think about...

One in ten Christians around the world face disadvantages, poverty, harassment, violence or persecution because they believe in Jesus Christ and refuse to deny Him. Have a look at the Faith Costs DVD (available to order free of charge from your national Barnabas Fund office). Think about the different types of persecution Christians in other countries suffer.

Think about what you would do if, where **you** live...

...following Jesus meant people looked down on you and treated you like dirt?

...being a Christian meant that you often did not know whether you are going to have anything at all to eat for the next day?

...being a Christian meant you were thrown out of your home, not allowed to go to school and unable to get a job?

...someone offered you a lot of money to buy anything you needed – if you only rejected Jesus?

...following Jesus meant doctors would refuse to treat you when you're ill?

Would you stick to your faith – no matter what the cost?? There are many Christians out there who daily have to face decisions like the ones above. Yet they refuse to give up Jesus. Here are a few examples:

Irfan from Pakistan is 12 years old. His father goes out every day looking for work – often he cannot find any because he has never learned to read or write. His mother works as a cleaner in a Muslim home. Irfan has never been to school. Together with his five brothers and two sisters, he works at home as a kite maker to help his parents earn enough money so the family can have something to eat.

"Moses" is from Amman in Jordan. He grew up in a Muslim family. One day, he watched the film "The Passion of the Christ". After seeing this film, Moses began asking questions about Jesus, even though his family was not happy about this at all. When Moses' dad found him reading the Bible, he took it from Moses and threw it away. Despite this, Moses decided that he wanted to follow Christ. He went to a church to get baptised, but the minister was too scared and refused. Things got really difficult when Moses' boss fired him after finding out that he had become a Christian, and refused to give Moses his final salary and any reference. Moses went to Sudan, but there it was even worse. He was insulted, arrested and beaten. His flat was broken into and someone wrote "maseehi baleed" (Christian fool) all over his car windows. In fear of his life, Moses fled to a Western country.

"Rebekah" lives in a village south of Iraq's capital Baghdad. She has three brothers. Her father used to work as an electrician. After the 2003 invasion he lost his job and began selling electrical items like light bulbs, adapters and hotplates at a stand. There was less and less money but Rebekah's family managed to get by. But then, Muslim extremists began targeting them. Rebekah heard how they demanded money from her father; her brothers were beaten up several times; her mother was insulted and eventually, her father's little shop was burnt by the extremists. Rebekah and her family fled Iraq, leaving everything they had behind.

doing something

Have a look at Matthew 25:31-40. In this passage, Jesus asks us to care for those Christians who are not as well off as we are. He says that we should give them something to eat when they're hungry, give them something to drink when they're thirsty, invite them in when they're lonely or homeless, give them clothes if they don't have any, help them when they're sick and visit them when they're thrown into prison. With its many different projects, Barnabas Fund is doing exactly that. We support many projects all over the world to help

poor and persecuted Christians. There are feeding programmes in countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Iraq, Zimbabwe and Pakistan. There are projects which help poor and despised Christians to start small businesses so they can earn some money. There are projects to help Christians who have been affected by natural disasters and have been left out when help was distributed. And here are some ideas how you can help us do something for those who find every day that faith costs:

1. Let people know Many people just don't know that there are Christians in other countries who are poor, despised and persecuted because of their faith. Get some information together (there is a lot of information in this magazine, and you can also have a look at some of the older issues of *Barnabas Aid* and at our website www.barnabasfund.org) Write it on cards or sheets of paper – one for each country or person. Then put them up where many people can see them (for example, on a big map on the wall). Another idea is to attach the cards to helium-filled balloons. The balloons with the cards can then be released inside the building (you can say a prayer for each country as you release the balloon) and they will float to the ceiling and remain there for about a week as a reminder.

2. Tea box Can be done either at church (if you have coffee and tea afterwards or before) or at home. Put up a collection box and put in 10p (or more) every time you have a cup of tea/coffee/squash to drink. See how much you get together in 10 days!

3. Loose change challenge Take up an offering at church to help persecuted Christians – ask people to give any loose change less than £1 which they are carrying around in their pockets, handbags, purses...If you count the money, you can see what the money we just carry around in our pockets could buy in countries such as Pakistan, Zimbabwe etc.

- 17p = 1kg of flour in Pakistan
- 18p = 1kg of potatoes in Egypt
- 30p = a bottle of milk in Egypt
- 90p = 1/2 kg of tea in Pakistan
- £1 = 1kg of rice in Syria – it used to cost 25p!
- £7 = 1 sack of lentils in Sudan

4. "Buy one, give one" meal Organise a meal or dinner, either at home or at church. Calculate the cost per person. People then buy a ticket for the meal and also give the same amount as a donation. A good idea is to put

together a typical food parcel which Barnabas Fund distributes to poor Christian families (have a look at the previous pages for some information on that) and put up the cost for it as well. See how many food parcels your guests can provide for families in Pakistan/ Zimbabwe/Egypt.

- £17 = family's food parcel in Pakistan
- £10 = family's food parcel in Zimbabwe
- £4 = family's food parcel in Egypt

5. Ready, steady, cook Get together the food that makes up a Barnabas Fund food parcel in a particular country. Invite friends and family and see who can come up with the most creative meal. See what your guests are willing to pay for the individual creations...



A typical selection of foods in a food parcel for Iraqi Christian refugee families in Syria



Refugees use sticks and scraps of plastic to construct makeshift shelters at a refugee camp near Nyala in South Darfur. (Source: USAID)

6. Sponsored shack sleep over Get your youth group together and try to build one of the shacks you can see in the picture of a Darfur refugee camp above (this might be the only home many poor people have!). Organise a sponsored shack sleep over (possibly in your church building). You can even invite people to join your group for an evening meal – perhaps made from a typical food parcel.