

**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> November – International Day of Prayer for the persecuted church– Open Doors\* focus**

**Philippians 2:1-11**

*Please do allow enough time for the Witness section this time!*

**Welcome**

Growing up, who was a great example in your life and what was it about their character that you looked up to?

**Worship**

Around the world millions of Christians have to keep their faith secret. In societies that are hostile to Christianity, the cost of following Jesus is violence, imprisonment, or even death. The result is believers meet in secret, pray in silence, worship undercover.

To help people appreciate the freedom we have in our churches to praise God you could consider doing the following;

- Silently read a worship song together.
- Whisper worship – sing very quietly throughout the song until the final verse or chorus where you could raise the roof.

You could do this with a worship song of your choice. One suggestion is;

**Here I am to worship**

<https://youtu.be/FaUTv1pXRyU>

Before you move on ask the group for any thoughts and reflections to worshipping in that way. How did they feel?

**Word** (*Don't let this take to long - so you will have time to pray for the persecuted church!*)

Share and discuss the context of the passage drawing upon insights from Sunday's sermon.

Philippians was written by the apostle Paul when in prison. Paul, once a persecutor of Christians (Acts 8:3), is now in prison for his faith. Amongst others things in this letter he is encouraging the Philippians to stand firm in the face of persecution and rejoice regardless of circumstances (1:27–30; 4:4) and to exhort them to humility and unity (2:1–11; 4:2–5.)

**Read Philippians 1:27- 2:11**

**Imitating Christ's Humility – The great example**

**Being united with Christ**

1a) What is our understanding of being 'united with Christ' cf 2.1? How does that express itself?

1b) What does that mean for our relationship with persecuted Christians? (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 in particular verse 26.)

**One Mind** (*Keep it moving....*)

2a) What is the 'one mind' that Paul says we must have in Philippians 2:2? Are we given any hints in the following verses?

2b) How are you tempted to not live with this Philippians 2 mind?

2c) What does it look like to "do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit" Philippians 2:3?

**Focus on Jesus** (*If tight for time, just use 3a*)

3a) How did Jesus model Philippians 2:3-4 for us?

3b) Explain the exchange being made in Philippians 2:3. Practically, what role does humility play in that transition?

3c) How can we grow in humility?

## Witness

*“If we want to leave an indelible mark on the world, there is no more powerful way to do it than by joining in God’s purposes through prayer. Our prayers can go where we cannot... The political, economic, military, and spiritual leaders of the world may not know our names, but we can have more influence on their plans than all of their closest advisers put together. While many things may seem impossible from a human standpoint, in the realm of prayer there are no impossibilities.” From Prayer: the Real Battle by Brother Andrew (Founder of Open Doors) and Al Janssen.*

When you ask persecuted Christians what they need from Christians in the free world, there is one answer which occurs time and time again: prayer. **They want us to pray.**

You can find resources to help you in your time of prayer [here](#) and further more detailed stories on the links below;

**More about Hannah\*, Ghassan, Wasihun, Meena\* and Fady:**

- [Hannah, North Korea](#)
- [Ghassan, Syria](#)
- [Wasihun, Ethiopia](#)
- [Meena, India](#)
- [Fady, Egypt](#)

Persecuted Christians carry stories of great faith, love and hope, allow them to inspire you. Could you commit to pray for a persecuted Christian, or country?

Perhaps people in the group may like to write letters of encouragement themselves to persecuted Christians through Open Doors. You can find out more [here](#).

*\*“Open Doors is an international ministry serving persecuted Christians and churches worldwide. We supply Bibles, leadership training, literacy programmes, livelihood support and advocacy services. We also seek to mobilise the church in the UK & Ireland to serve Christians living under religious persecution.*

*[www.opendoorsuk.org](http://www.opendoorsuk.org) “*