

**NCAC Sunday School Class**  
**December 16, 2018**  
**WURMBRAND: *Tortured for Christ***



**WURMBRAND**

**Session 3: The Underground Church**

*I can advance God's eternal kingdom through obedience to God's instruction to encourage and serve other believers.*

**Introduction**

Reflections and thoughts from last week's lesson:

- Greeting an invading army with the love of Christ.
- Into the barracks to "buy a watch."
- Loving the lost leads a Russian soldier to risk everything.

**It's Important We Don't Make Mental Ascension To The Truth!**

- Mens Rea v. Actus Reus

**Today's Video: *The Underground Church***

Finally, near the end of the visit, Sabina's name was called. When she saw her son, she forgot she was a prisoner, forgot what she looked like, forgot where she was, and simply embraced him with her eyes. How thin he was, and how serious! She gazed at him, and he at her, and in a flash the fifteen minutes had passed. They barely spoke, but near the end of the visit and across the thirty feet separating mother from son, Sabina called, "*Mihai, believe in Jesus with all your heart.*"

**LET'S THINK ABOUT THAT ONE**

Imagine how hard that would be! Sabina had no way of knowing if her teenage son, who had lost both of his parents to imprisonment because of their Christian faith, still held on to his faith or if the Communists had stolen the loyalty of his heart and mind.

*What would you want to say to your child or hear from your parent?*

**I. Video Exploration: The Underground Church**

**A. Video Notes: Themes**

- Our testimony of love for one another.
- The church under assault.

- Surviving and serving through the underground church.
- God bless you!
- Taking the risk to gather together.
- Paying the price to continue the work of Christ.
- Willing to invest ourselves for the benefit of others.
- What are we missing?
- We're better together!

## **B. Video Discussion Questions**

1. Consider the children who approached the Russian soldiers and begged for gum, then gave them a blessing. *In even that one small act, how important do you think the house church community was in making their action possible?*
2. In response to her plea for faith, Mihai shouted back, “Mother, if you can still believe in a place like this.... then so must I” *What does Sabina and Mihai’s interaction reveal about the significance of even one sentence of God’s truth spoken in love to encourage a fellow believer?*
3. *What do you value most about NCAC believers with whom you gather for fellowship, prayer, Bible study, outreach, and worship?*

## **II. Growing Into A More Biblical Faith Perspective**

### *Our Study Together: Do We Value Each Other?*

When Sabina was released from prison, her son greeted her with words she would never forget: “Mother, I am on your side, and I love the Lord.” His greeting was possible in large part because of the years of faithful service and sacrifice by “Aunt Alice” who unofficially adopted eleven-year-old Mihai when Sabina was imprisoned. No stranger to punishment for one’s loyalty to Christ, Alice had been relieved of her position as head of an important teaching department because she refused to join the Communist party. She managed to eek out a living by teaching French and helping students prepare for their exams. But it took every penny she earned to provide for herself, her aging father, and Mihai in the one room they called home. When other believers learned of her service and needs, they too sacrificed.

### *Why was Alice and the underground church so wiling to sacrifice so much?*

1. Because of her overflowing joy for the Lord driven by authentic biblical love. In 2 Corinthians 8:1-4, Paul gives us a picture of true biblical love.

*1 We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 2 for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. 3 For they gave according to their means, as I can*

testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, <sup>4</sup> begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the **relief of the saints**.

John Piper expounds on Paul's description of the Macedonians' love this way:

- Love is a work of divine grace. Piper comments, "The generosity of the Macedonians was not of human origin; it was a work of grace in their hearts."
- The Macedonians' joy in God's grace overflowed in generosity to meet the needs of others. Piper writes, "Therefore, the liberality expressed horizontally toward men was an overflow of joy in God's grace."
- The Macedonians sought the opportunity to sacrifice their meager possessions for the needy saints in Jerusalem. Piper: "In other words, the way their joy in God overflowed was in the joy of giving. They wanted to give. It was their joy!" In other words, they had an overflowing joy in God that gladly met the needs of others. **How is that possible?**

2. She was willing to sacrifice because she valued Christ's church.

<sup>12</sup> Put on then, as God's chosen ones, **holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience**, <sup>13</sup> **bearing with one another** and, if one has a complaint against another, **forgiving each other**; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup> And above all these **put on love**, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup> And let the **peace of Christ rule in your hearts**, to which indeed you were called in one body. And **be thankful**. <sup>16</sup> Let the **word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God**. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, in word or deed, **do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:12-17 ESV)

3. She was willing to sacrifice because she trusted in the power of prayer.

<sup>1</sup> About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. <sup>2</sup> He killed James the brother of John with the sword, <sup>3</sup> and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also... <sup>4</sup> And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him... <sup>5</sup> So Peter was kept in prison, **but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church**. <sup>7</sup> And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his hands. (Acts 12:1-7 ESV)

**In what ways does their experience of earnest prayer for a fellow believer cause you to think differently about your prayers for your fellow believers?**

### III. You Can Take the Next Step

#### A. Encourage one another by your faith!

In his later years, Richard wrote fondly of his grandchildren and their growing understanding of life and faith. In one account he wrote, “Ameile remained in the house as we accompanied departing guests to the car. Within minutes she joined us, saying, ‘I was afraid that if I remained alone I might do something stupid.’” Richard continued with his observation: “people are especially prone to doing stupid things when they are on their own and unobserved.”

*1 So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. 2 We sent Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker in God’s service in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, 3 so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. For you know quite well that we are destined for them. 4 In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know. 5 For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter had tempted you and that our labors might have been in vain. 6 But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you. 7 Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we were **encouraged about you because of your faith**. 8 For now we really live, since **you are standing firm in the Lord**. 9 How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? 10 Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. 11 Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. 12 May the Lord make **your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else**, just as ours does for you. 13 May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones. (1 Thessalonians 3: 1-13 NIV)*

**1. What “stupid things” are you at risk for doing in your walk of faith when you are alone and not in regular fellowship with a community of Jesus followers?**

**2. What specific things can you do to stand with your fellow believers during their struggles?**

## **B. Standing firm on the Word of God**

*24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:24-25 ESV)*