

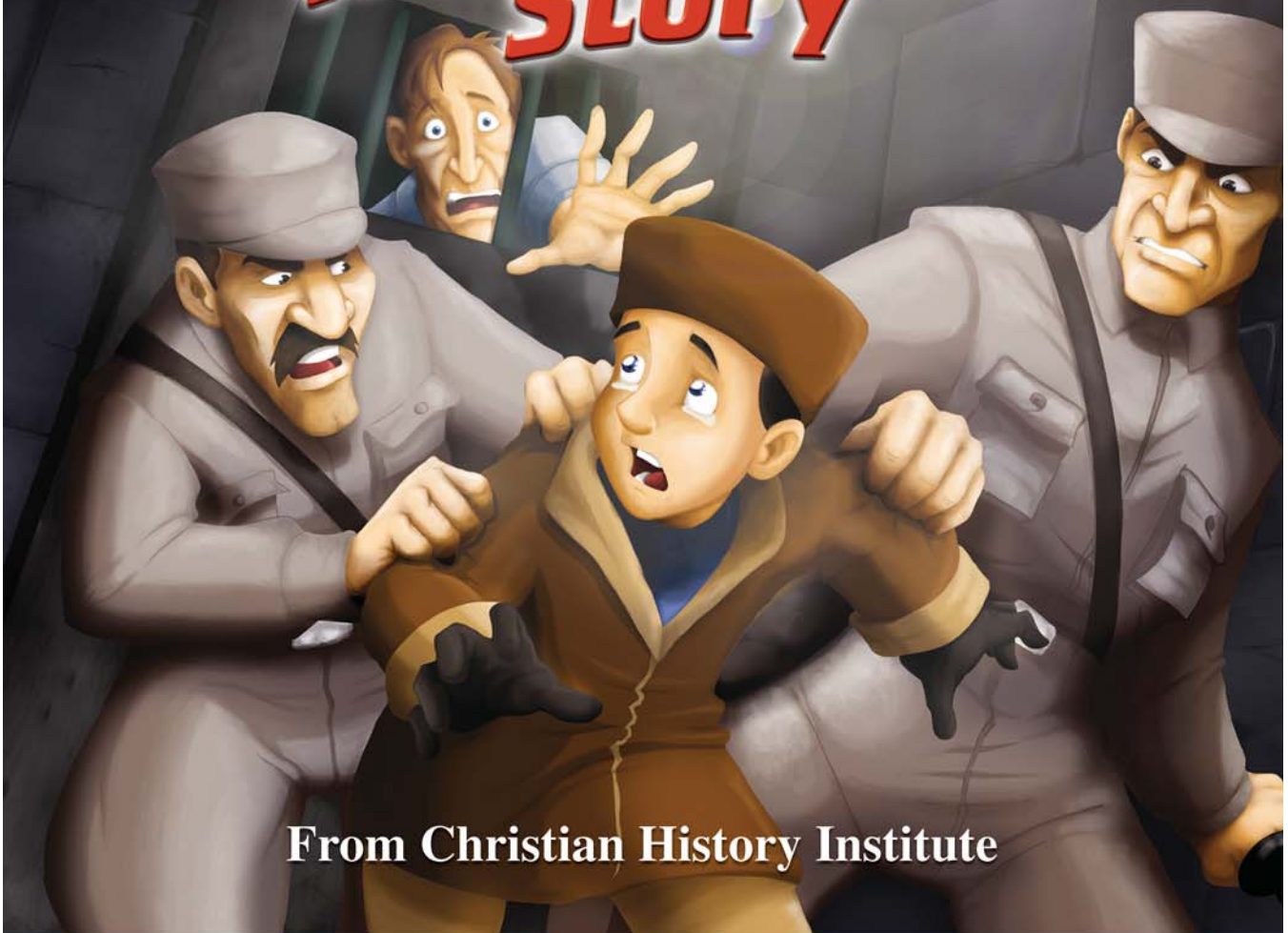


THE TORCHLIGHTERS

HEROES OF THE FAITH

Leader's Guide for the DVD

The *Richard Wurmbrand* Story



From Christian History Institute

L E A D E R



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Introduction to the Torchlighters Series

Torchlighter: *One who commits to serving God
and passing on the light of the Gospel,
even if the going gets tough.*

Kids today have no shortage of heroes. From Hollywood celebrities, to music artists and sports figures, it would seem that there are plenty of heroes to go around. The heroes being offered by popular culture are teaching children that physical perfection, financial success, and fame are the most important goals in life. The morals and values presented by these heroes are often in direct opposition to the standards parents want to pass on to their children. So, while there is no shortage of heroes, there is a dreadful shortage of heroes worth emulating.

The Torchlighters video series has been created to offer children real heroes from history that are worth emulating. The heroes we choose to portray have lived truly great lives—lives marked by moral depth, strength of character, and an unswerving commitment to faith in Christ. The impact of their lives has stood the test of time. These are not passing celebrities, but people who truly made a difference. By sharing in their struggles and small steps of obedience, we are all challenged to live lives of faith. It is our sincere desire that as children get to know these “torchlighters,” they will be challenged to follow in the footsteps of the greatest torchlighter of them all, Jesus Christ.

Learn more about the mission behind this new series and find more free resources at:

www.torchlighters.org



Synopsis of *The Torchlighters: The Richard Wurmbrand Story*

It's a dangerous time to be a Christian in World War II Romania. The Russian Communists are in power, and like the Nazis before them, they are persecuting Christians. Pastor Richard Wurmbrand's church continues meeting secretly, as Richard ministers to his congregation and works to spread the Gospel whenever possible.

But the Communist authorities are scheming. They call a public meeting of the church leaders, offering "protection" to those who will voice support for the government. If they can get the leaders to profess allegiance, they know the rest of the people will be much more manageable. One after another Christian leaders take the stage and give speeches to show their support for the Communists – in return they will enjoy relative safety. When Pastor Wurmbrand is called to the podium, he must decide what to do. With his wife's urging, Richard throws down the gauntlet. He makes a public declaration of his faith and refuses to support the Communists, thereby placing his entire family in danger.



As events unfold, Richard is soon kidnapped by the secret police. Over the next 8 years, they try to break him with every technique in the book, but he will not bend. Not only does Richard hold steadfast to the faith, he serves as a pastor to others in prison. Meanwhile, his family also suffers, but walks on in faith.

Once Richard is finally released, he is overjoyed to discover the underground church still gathering for worship and encouraging one another. Richard went on to use his experience to help people around the world understand how Christians and others were being treated behind the iron curtain. His work continues today through the organization he founded, **The Voice of the Martyrs**.



Teaching Plan for *The Richard Wurmbrand Story*

1. PREVIEW *The Richard Wurmbrand Story* before showing it to your students. This will help you to recognize major themes and teachable moments that occur throughout the video. In addition, you will gain a better understanding of the flow of the story and will be equipped to answer questions your students may have.

Major teaching themes presented in this video and study guide include:

- Stand strong in your faith, no matter what trials you face.
- Even in times of suffering, we can rejoice in the reality of eternal life.
- Love and forgiveness for our enemies is the way of God.
- We can serve God's purposes, even during difficult times.
- We each have a unique story of faith, that we can share with others.
- Christians can stand together to help those who are persecuted for faith.

2. REVIEW Supplementary Information. Review the various supplemental materials we have provided in this guide. The sections entitled "Key People in Richard Wurmbrand's Life" and "Chronology of Richard Wurmbrand's Story" will help to fill in details of Richard's life and prepare you to answer questions. You can find these resources beginning on page 16. Viewing the documentary *Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand*, found on your DVD, is also an excellent way to learn more about the Wurmbrands' amazing story.

3. SELECT and PREPARE Teaching Material - Follow the 4 lessons plans we have provided along with the corresponding pages in the student book, or mix and match the materials in a new way. All material is reproducible and designed to help children apply the teaching themes. Be sure to consider the age of your students and the time you have available. Please take special note of the hands on projects recommended for Session 4. If you decide to include your students in preparing "Action Packs," you may want to introduce the project during Session 1 and invite students to bring in items for the packs. Learn more and order your Action Packs from www.persecution.com.

4. VISIT www.torchlighters.org - The materials in this guide and the student guide are just the beginning. Visit our website for other free resources, such as unique ministry ideas, publicity posters, the *Torchlighters* theme song, interactive quizzes and much more.

Are you planning a *Torchlighters* showing or event?

Publicity is easy when you download free posters at

www.torchlighters.org



Session 1 – Wanted: Believers in Jesus!

FOCUS: In this session, students will explore what it might be like to live in a place where it is illegal to be a Christian.

- **Going to Church** – As students arrive, ASK: *How did you come to church today?* (walk, car, and public transportation are possible answers.) *What was your biggest challenge in coming to church?* (traffic jam, wanted to sleep in, couldn't decide what to wear.) SAY: *In some parts of the world it is not so easy for believers to gather for church. Today we will learn a bit of what it might be like if we lived in a place where Christians are in danger.*
- **The Secret Meeting Spot** – Teaching Tip: *Plan ahead by choosing a “secret meeting spot,” such as an unused corner of your room, an outside location, or another room. Prepare a set of clues, one leading to the next, which students will follow to the spot.* ASK: *What do you think is meant by the words ‘underground church’?* (not a church meeting in the ground, but a church that meets in secret, often with secret codes to gain entrance.) SAY: *We are going to pretend we are all part of an underground church and we must find the location of today’s secret meeting spot. Church members in underground churches must not draw attention to themselves, so they often travel to church in small groups and at slightly different times.* Divide students into groups of 3 or 4, instruct students to take their Bibles along and follow the clues to find the secret meeting. This is a demonstration of going to a lot of effort in order to meet as believers.
- **The Secret Meeting** – Once in the secret meeting spot, softly sing a song together just like an underground church might do to open a meeting. Quietly tell the story of Saul persecuting Christians in Bible times, found in Acts 8:1-3. ASK: *Why did the believers continue to meet even though they were being arrested and even killed? Why did Saul and others want to get rid of the Christians? Do you think there are Christians today who meet in secret churches?* Optional: Share information from p. 24 on the modern persecuted church. Point out that persecution is still a reality all around the world in many nations.
- **Secret Code** – SAY: *Secret churches sometimes use secret codes to identify friends. Does anyone know what symbol early Christians used to identify fellow believers?* (The fish) Break students into groups of four and have them make up a secret code that could be used for believers to gain entrance into church. This could be words, motions, or symbols. Have each group present their idea to the whole class and then choose one secret code for kids to use next week when they come to class. Alternate idea: Have children make a simple craft, such as a white beaded bracelet to represent salvation. Instruct them to wear their bracelet to class next week, in order to gain entrance. Of course you should have extras on hand for visitors or those who may forget.



- **Preview** – Show the video preview teaser, found at the beginning of the video. Invite students to bring a friend next week to see a video about the life of Richard Wurmbrand and his family who lived in Romania during a time of persecution. Explain that the video will show what happened when Richard stood up to the authorities.
- **Pray** – Thank you Lord that we live in a country where we can worship freely. Help us to make the most of this privilege and never take it for granted. Be with us this week as we worship and serve you. Amen.
- **Plan Ahead** – If you plan to do a service project during session 4 of this series, choose your project before the first class. Now is the time to explain the project and invite students to bring in items for the project over the next few weeks. If needed, contact The Voice of the Martyrs for items you will need for your project, such as a map of persecuted countries and Action pack bags. **www.persecution.com**

Note: Refer to the answer key for answers to selected student pages.





Session 2 – A Faithful Response

FOCUS: In this session, students will see an example of Christians standing up for faith in the face of persecution.

- **Review** – Remind students to use the secret code (or secret symbol/craft) for entering class today. If new students arrive, assign someone to teach them the code, so they will feel included. Review concepts covered last time: Persecution of believers and the underground church.
- **Introduce the Video** – *SAY: Today we will see a video about Richard Wurmbrand, his wife Sabina and their son Mihai. The Wurmbrands lived in Romania during World War II when Communists had taken over their country. The Communists used cruel methods to force the Romanian people to support their cause. Christian church leaders were forced to support the Communists or risk being tortured as an enemy. In our video, we'll see how the Wurmbrands responded to the pressure to give in to the Communists. As you watch the video I want you to look for a time when the Wurmbrands made the best of a difficult situation.*
- **Show the 30-minute program *The Torchlighters: The Richard Wurmbrand Story*.**
- **Student Questions** – Allow students time to process the video and ask questions about flow and content.
- **Discussion** – *ASK: Where in the video did you see the Wurmbrands making the best out of a difficult situation?* (Possible answers include the family finding ways to worship God when it was illegal, Richard serving and witnessing in prison, and Sabina joking about enjoying her bath after being thrown into the river.) Select further discussion questions from the “Dig into the Story” and “Dig Deeper” sections (**pp. 3 and 4 in the Student Guide**).
- **Four Things Worksheet** – use this worksheet activity to lead discussion on the Four Things that Richard had on his mind during his years in prison (**p. 5 in the Student Guide**).
- **Parent Letter** – Distribute this letter to help parents understand the lessons you are sharing in class (**p. 15 in the Leader's Guide**).



- **Closing** – Arrange for a visitor to come to your class next week to share their testimony. It would be best to invite someone who became a believer as an adult, as Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand did. *SAY: Many people become Christians when they are young, but Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand did not become believers until they were adults. Next time we will meet with <Fill in person's name> who will tell us how they came to know Jesus.*
- **Prayer** – Lord, when times are tough, help us to hold onto faith and still serve you. Amen.

Note: Refer to the answer key for answers to selected student pages.





Session 3 – A Faithful Link

FOCUS: In this session, students will hear a believer's faith story and consider their own faith journey, along with ways of introducing others to faith in Jesus.

- **Review** the story of Richard Wurmbrand with Story Mix Up (p. 6 in Student Guide).
- **Secret Code Challenge** – *SAY: Even in prison Richard Wurmbrand found ways to share his faith and encourage others in their faith. What unique method did Richard use to communicate to a prisoner in the next cell?* Use the Secret Code Challenge worksheet, p. 7 in the student guide, as a way for students to practice Morse Code and to learn that Richard took every opportunity to share his faith with others. Alternate idea: use Morse Code to tap out your own secret message and see if the students can de-code it.
- **Interview** – Invite an adult from your congregation to class today to share his or her faith story. Find out ahead of time how long they will need. Allow students time to ask a few questions, such as those found in the student guide on page 8.
- **Bible Connection** – Revisit the story of Saul from Session 1, but this time focus on his salvation, found in Acts 9:1-20. Like Richard Wurmbrand, Paul was an adult convert. Also like Richard, Paul had been very opposed to Christianity before his conversion. *ASK: What other similarities do you see in Paul's life and Richard's life?*
- **Tract Fun** – Bring a few Christian tracts to class to show this method of sharing the Gospel. Allow students some time to look at the tracts. *ASK: What message are these pamphlets trying to convey? How might someone use this tool to help others learn about Jesus?* Enrichment Idea: Divide your class into groups of 3 or 4 and challenge them to design their own tract, complete with pictures.
- **A Chain of Faith** – Cut out 12 or more construction paper strips, about 1 inch by 6 inches. On four of the strips write: "Peter," "the village carpenter," "Richard Wurmbrand," and "Sabina Wurmrand." Pick up the Peter strip, form a loop and staple it together. Tell the Chain of Faith Story (on p. 11). As you get to each person, add their strip to the last one, forming a chain.



Chain of Faith Story: *Once upon a time there lived a man named Peter. He lived in a remote village, where he didn't see many people. Peter was a Christian and wanted to live for Jesus. He led one man to Christ, but he always felt he should have done more. The person he led to Christ was the village carpenter (add village carpenter loop). The village carpenter was too old and sick to leave the village. He longed for one thing: to share Christ with a Jew. Since Jesus himself was a Jew, the carpenter wanted desperately to share Christ with a Jew. He prayed and prayed to be able to share Christ with a Jew. But, there were no Jews anywhere near the remote village. One day, Richard Wurmbrand and his wife Sabina visited the village so Richard could recover from an illness. The carpenter rejoiced, for a Jew had come to him! He shared Christ with Richard Wurmbrand and Richard became a believer (add Richard Wurmbrand loop). Before long, Richard's wife Sabina also became a believer (add Sabina Wurmbrand loop). Through their lifetime of work, many many others became believers (add as many loops as possible onto the Richard and Sabina loops).*

ASK: *How would you describe Peter's service to the Lord? What can be the result of leading even one person to God? Imagine if we could make the chain go backwards from Peter. Where would we end up if we could go back far enough? (Jesus!) What happens if one person doesn't pass on the faith? Enrichment Idea: Distribute paper strips to each child and have them form their own "chain of faith" going backwards and forwards if possible.*

- **Closing Prayer** – *Lord, no matter where each of us is on our faith journey, please draw us ever closer to you. Help us to take opportunities to share our faith with others. Amen.*

Note: Refer to the answer key for answers to selected student pages.





Session 4 – Making a Difference

FOCUS: Students will learn more about today's persecuted church and ways they can help.

- **Review *The Richard Wurmbbrand Story*** – SAY: *We live in a country where we are free to express our faith and to meet with other believers. Since we don't see persecution in person, it's easy for us to forget our Christian brothers and sisters who live in fear.*
- **Around the World** – Challenge students to complete the worksheet found on p. 10 in the student guide, and then read the story on p. 11 in the student guide. Many more stories of modern day persecution are available from www.kidsofcourage.com. A summary of persecution today is on p. 24.
- **Mamaliga** – Prepare a batch of Mamaliga (recipe on p. 13) before class. Invite the children to try a piece of Mamaliga and consider what it would be like to eat this for every meal for many days. ASK: *What might modern day refugees and persecuted Christian eat?*
- **Project** – ASK: *Does anyone know what a martyr is?* (Someone who is willing to suffer or die rather than deny Christ or His work.) SAY: *The Voice of the Martyrs is the organization that Richard Wurmbbrand began for the purpose of helping the world understand persecution in our time.* Lead students to complete a project from p. 14 to practice supporting those living with persecution. More information about The Voice of the Martyrs and examples of ways people are helping can be found on pp. 22 and 23.
- **Closing Prayer** – *Lord, thank you for helping us to learn more about the difficulties facing our fellow believers around the world. Please be with all who suffer because of their faith. Strengthen them, guide them and comfort them. Help us to do our part to live out our faith in meaningful ways, so the world can come to know you. Amen.*

Note: Refer to the answer key for answers to selected student pages.



Mamaliga

(pronounced: mah-mah-LEE-gah)

This simple dish was common during WWII in Romania, when food was scarce. It was eaten regularly by many people, both in and out of prison. Use this recipe to illustrate the reality of living with very little. Help students to imagine how these conditions may contribute to someone breaking down in their faith commitment.

Boil 2 cups water in a small saucepan.

Gradually pour in 1/2 cup yellow corn meal and 1/4 tsp. salt, stirring constantly with a wire whisk.

Reduce the heat to low and continue stirring about 3 to 5 minutes until thick.

Pour into a bowl or rectangular dish about 6 inches by 9 inches. Cool.

Cut into strips or squares.





Ways to Help the Persecuted Church

Choose one or more of these activities to use with Session 4.

The Voice of the Martyrs Action Packs

Christians in war-torn and persecuted countries are often displaced from their homes without basic necessities. Action packs are large zipper seal bags available from The Voice of the Martyrs. Order your packs from VOM and fill them with necessary items as described at www.persecution.com/actionpacks. After filling the packs, return them to VOM to be delivered. Enrichment Idea: set up an “Action Pack Relay” where kids will relay race to a box to fill their packs with specific items found on a prepared list.

Fund Raiser for Persecuted Christian needs

Choose a project your class can do together in order to raise funds to go towards ministry in persecuted countries. Try a cookie sale or an aluminum can recycling drive. Use the proceeds to support a specific project through The Voice of the Martyrs.

Prayer Reminders

Make bookmarkers to serve as reminders to pray for persecuted Christians. Have the students keep one bookmarker for themselves and give the rest away. Record facts about persecution on the backs (see p. 24) and then take time to pray together in class.

Postcards for persecuted believers

Recycle the fronts of old greeting cards and make postcards for persecuted Christians. Pray specifically for the person who will receive your card. Go to www.prisonalert.com/vompw_faq.htm for guidelines and an address to send your cards.

NOTE: Download free “Bold Believers” books from www.kidsofcourage.com for many more ideas.

Dear Parents,

Today in Sunday school, your child viewed a *Torchlighters* video depicting the life of Richard Wurmbrand, the founder of The Voice of the Martyrs.

Richard Wurmbrand is a terrific role model for children. During World War II, Pastor Wurmbrand stood for his faith in Jesus in Romania, when many believers gave in to pressure to support the reigning Communists. As a result, he spent a total of 14 years in prison, a victim of unthinkable torture.

Pastor Wurmbrand was one of the greatest Christian witnesses of the past 100 years. He showed only love to those who attacked him and his family, and his witness led to the conversion of many of them. Even in prison, Pastor Wurmbrand continued to serve as a pastor to fellow prisoners, encouraging them and ministering grace. His book *Tortured for Christ* has been translated into 65 languages, and millions of copies have been distributed throughout the world. He is the founder of The Voice of the Martyrs, a ministry dedicated to serving persecuted Christians around the world (www.persecution.com).

We hope this experience of learning through one of God's heroes of faith was a meaningful one for your child. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,



Key People in Richard Wurmbrand's Life

Sabina Wurmbrand (1913-2000)

Sabina was born into a Jewish family in Chernowitz, a city in the Austro-Hungarian Empire which became part of Romania after WWI. After high school, Sabina studied languages at the Sorbonne in Paris. She was then employed in Bucharest, Romania. Sabina and Richard married in 1936 and became Christians not long after their marriage. During the WWII German occupation of Romania in 1940-1943, Sabina's parents, two sisters, and a brother were killed in Nazi concentration camps. As a Christian, Sabina forgave her family's killers.

Mihai Wurmbrand (born 1939)

Mihai was Richard and Sabina's only son by birth. As a boy, Mihai was left to the care of Christian friends when both his mother and father were imprisoned for their faith. Today, Rev. Michael (Mihai) Wurmbrand lives in California. He travels to Romania for The Voice of the Martyrs to locate and help families of former prisoners for the Lord.

Various Adopted Children

Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand adopted other children. Six children they took in died at sea on their way to Palestine after the Russian officials who ruled Romania declared that all orphan children who had come out of previously German-occupied territories must be sent to Russia or Palestine.

A man named Peter

Peter lived in a small Romanian village. He felt that he had done far too little to serve the Lord and to advance His Kingdom. All he had done was bring one simple carpenter, Christian Wolfkes, to the Lord.

Christian Wolfkes

Christian Wolfkes, a village carpenter, prayed, "My God, I have served You on earth and I wish to have my reward on earth as well as in heaven. And my reward should be that I should not die before I bring a Jew to Christ, because Jesus was from the Jewish people. But I am poor, old, and sick. I cannot go around and seek a Jew. In my village, there are none. Bring a Jew into my village and I will do my best to bring him to Christ." God answered Christian's prayer. Richard Wurmbrand, convalescing from tuberculosis, came to his mountain village. Christian and his wife witnessed to Richard and prayed for him. Not long after, Richard, then Sabina, gave their lives to Christ.

David

David was a young man in Pastor Wurmbrand's congregation in Romania. Pastor Wurmbrand had great hopes for him as a possible future leader. He helped David obtain an education and a job. David assisted in leading the congregation while Pastor Wurmbrand was in prison, but David was jealous of Pastor Wurmbrand. David spread lies about Pastor Wurmbrand in Romania and later in Germany. Pastor Wurmbrand said, "He has done me no harm. No man can hurt me who does not make me wicked like himself. It is those who do evil who suffer from it."



Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (1901-1965)

Gheorghiu-Dej was the Communist leader of Romania from 1948 until 1965, during the times when Pastor Wurmbrand was in prison for his faith. In his book *Tortured for Christ*, Pastor Wurmbrand said that Gheorghiu-Dej surrendered his life to Christ when he was very ill. Pastor Wurmbrand said that earlier, Christians were imprisoned for boldly witnessing to Gheorghiu-Dej, but that their witness bore fruit.

Joseph Stalin (1878-1953)

Joseph Stalin was the leader of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union from 1922 until 1953. Pastor Wurmbrand's Romania was under Soviet control after the Russians defeated the Nazis. Stalin's political policies resulted in the death of millions, including many Christians.

Sister Mena

Sister Mena was one of the few Christians who dared to help the Wurmbrand's during the time when Richard and Sabina were both in prison. She traveled many miles to bring a sack of potatoes to Mihai. The Communist police beat her severely for her kindness to the son of their prisoner. As an adult, Mihai (Michael) was able to take Mena aid from *The Voice of the Martyrs*. He was "incredibly happy" to help her. Mena died in Romania in the 1990s.



Chronology of Richard Wurmbrand's Story

- 1909 Richard Wurmbrand is born in Bucharest, Romania
- 1913 Sabina Oster is born in Czernowitz, Romania.
- 1936 Richard and Sabina are married.
- 1937-1938 Richard and Sabina visit one of the many mountain villages of Romania, so Richard can recover from an illness. There they meet a Godly old carpenter named Christian Wolfkes who has a deep love for the Jews. The elderly carpenter prays fervently for them and gives them a New Testament. Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand eventually dedicate their lives to Jesus Christ.
- 
- 1939 Mihai is born.
- 1941 Romania supports Germany in the war against the USSR and hosts German forces. Richard Wurmbrand, now a pastor, sees a new opportunity among the occupying soldiers and engages in evangelistic activities. During the Nazi terror, Richard and Sabina are repeatedly beaten and arrested. Mrs. Wurmbrand's family perishes in the mass extermination of Jews in concentration camps.
- 1944 Communists seize power in Romania and a million "invited" Russian troops pour into the country. Pastor Wurmbrand engages in a twofold ministry – to his own oppressed countrymen and to the Russians. He boards trains and uses the long journeys to preach the gospel; in disguise, he goes into Russian army camps and expounds on the Word of God.
- 1945 Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand attend the "Congress of Cults" arranged by the Romanian Communist government. As many religious leaders come forward to swear loyalty to the new regime, Sabina tells her husband to "wipe the shame from the face of Jesus." Richard, knowing the outcome of such an act, steps forward. The delegates believe he too will praise the new leadership, but, to their surprise, Richard tells the 4,000 delegates that their duty as a Christian is to glorify God and Christ alone.
- 1947 Richard organizes groups of Christians to smuggle Russian Gospels into Russia. On December 30, the People's Republic of Romania is proclaimed.
- 1948 On Sunday morning, February 29, Pastor Wurmbrand leaves for church. A small group of secret police kidnap Richard and lock him in a solitary cell, designating him as "Prisoner Number 1."



1950 Aware of Sabina's work in the underground church, the Communists arrest her and assign her to forced labor on the Danube Canal. Her 9-year-old son, Mihai, is left alone to live on the streets.

1953 Sabina Wurmbrand is released and continues her work in the underground church. She is told that her husband died in prison. Refusing to believe the report, Sabina retains hopes of one day seeing Richard again.

1956 Richard Wurmbrand is released after serving 8 years in prison. He has undergone horrific tortures and was warned to never preach again. Despite the captors' treatment of him, Richard treats them only with kindness. After his release, Richard resumes his work in the underground church.



1959 Richard is turned over to the authorities by one of his own associates in the underground church. He is re-arrested and sentenced to 25 years.

1964 Pastor Wurmbrand is released from prison and resumes his work. Rev. W. Stuart Harris and Rev. John Moseley of Mission to Europe's Millions arrive in Bucharest. This is the first contact the Wurmbrands have had with outside missionaries since their arrests.

1965 The Wurmbrand family is ransomed from Romania for \$10,000, and Richard is again warned by the secret police to remain silent. The Wurmbrands travel to Scandinavia and England before arriving in the United State. In May, he testifies in Washington, D.C. before the Senate's Internal Security Subcommittee, stripping to the waist and revealing eighteen deep torture wounds on his body. His story spreads rapidly across the country and the world, and hundreds of speaking requests arrive at his home.



1966 Richard and Sabina begin their international speaking tour, revealing the atrocities committed against their brothers and sisters in Communist countries. Pastor Wurmbrand learns that the Romanian secret police are plotting his death. However, the pastor cannot be silenced. He continues his speaking tour and becomes known as "The Voice of the Underground Church" and "The Iron Curtain St. Paul."



1967 The Wurmbrands officially begin a ministry committed to serving persecuted believers. In April, Jesus to the Communist World, later to be named The Voice of the Martyrs, is formed. *Tortured for Christ*, an account of Pastor Wurmbrand's experience in prison, is released. In October, the first issue of The Voice of the Martyrs monthly newsletter is published.



1970s – Mid 1980s As the Cold War heightens, The Voice of the Martyrs remains true to its calling of serving the persecuted church. The work develops into five main purposes and spans more than 80 nations.

1989 A failed attempt at democracy shows the brutality of Chinese Communists as they massacre an estimated one thousand protesters in Tiananmen Square, Beijing. Demonstrations begin throughout Eastern Europe and on November 9, the Berlin Wall is torn down. A Romanian pastor prays in Timisoara. Soon after, thousands of Romanians gather to protest the oppressive regime of Elena and Nicolae Ceausescu. Many soldiers, overcome by the conviction of the people, turn on the secret police. On December 25, Christmas Day, peace comes to the oppressed nation of Romania.

1990 Within a few days of Romania's newly opened borders, VOM workers bring semi-trucks filled with aid to Romania and other liberated countries. Richard and Sabina return to Romania after 25 years of exile. Richard is widely received by many churches and even preaches on public television. He regrets the execution of Romanian tyrants and preaches a message of love and forgiveness. A Christian printing facility and a bookstore are opened in Bucharest. The city officials offer storage for Christian books in the very site where Richard was held in solitary confinement. A second printing press is uniquely hidden in a rural village of China.

1991 A VOM office is officially opened in Cherkassy, Ukraine, where the VOM newsletter becomes one of the most widely distributed Christian publications in the country. Ten tons of literature and aid are rushed to Siberia. On December 25, Mikhail Gorbachev resigns as president of the USSR. The following day, the Soviet Union officially breaks up, bringing an end to one-party Communist rule for the first time since 1917. VOM increases its work in Saudi Arabia, Cuba, Tibet and Vietnam.





- 1992 Albania's Communist government collapses, ending "the first atheist state. On September 15, VOM opens a Christian bookstore in Moscow and distributes over one million illustrated New Testaments to children in Albania, Romania, Moldavia, Russia, Ukraine, and Bulgaria. Thousands of used Bibles and Christian books, provided by Christians in the United States, are sent to Nigeria for hundreds of churches destroyed by Muslims.
- 1994 Richard Wurmbrand leads an emotional time of prayer in the late Enver Hoxha's palace in Albania. A coffee shop and Christian bookstore, called "The Stephen Center," is officially dedicated to the Lord in the capital city of Tirana. Two Vietnamese pastors are released from prison after a worldwide prayer and publicity campaign. New opportunities arise to assist families victimized by Shining Path terrorists in the mountainous areas of Peru. Imprisoned terrorists are also ministered to and many come to Christ. About 80,000 Scripture balloons are floated across the borders into North Korea.
- 1994–1995 Richard and Sabina return to Romania to officiate at the opening of the Agape Children's Home, a place for Romanian orphans and street children to receive love, care, and the Gospel. Bible distribution into China is increased after the Public Security Bureau continues its crackdown on unregistered house churches and confiscates all Scripture. An estimated 100,000 coats are sent to VOM headquarters, as Christian families around the nation take part in the "Coats for Russia" campaign. Tribal villagers in Vietnam receive Bibles in their own language for the first time. Pakistani Christians begin receiving help from VOM.
- 1996 VOM develops new outreaches into the Communist stronghold of Laos and Islamic-ruled Sudan. The "Bibles to Captive Nations" fund is established and brings a substantial increase of Bible deliveries into closed countries. VOM co-workers begin broadcasting Gospel programs into the Middle East.
- 2000-2001 Sabina Wurmbrand, co-founder of The Voice of the Martyrs, goes home to the Lord on Friday, August 11, 2000. Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, founder of The Voice of the Martyrs, goes home to the Lord Saturday, February 17, 2001.
- 2002 and beyond There are considerable challenges ahead in the 21st century. The countries newly liberated from Communist oppression remain devastated from decades of terror. China, as well as North Korea, Vietnam, Laos, and Cuba are caught in the mouth of a Communist dragon. There are Muslim strongholds such as Bangladesh, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Indonesia, Iran and Nigeria.





The Voice of The Martyrs

Founded in 1967 by Richard Wurmbrand

The Voice of the Martyrs has five main purposes.

Purpose 1: To encourage Christians to obey the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19) in areas of the world where Christians are persecuted for spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. VOM helps Christians do this by providing Bibles, radio broadcasts, medical help, and other forms of aid.

What VOM does: VOM takes Action Packs to Pakistan and Sudan. The packs include warm clothing, a blanket, a toy, soap, a gospel storybook, and more. Needy Christians use the items and share Action Packs with their non-Christian neighbors.

What Christians did: Abby S. in Tennessee invited friends to bring Action Pack items to her birthday party instead of presents. They packed the items in bags provided by VOM for distribution in Pakistan and Sudan.

Results: A Christian in another country received an Action Pack containing socks. The Christian had been walking from place to place with cold feet witnessing among Muslims. He was thankful for the gift. However, he gave the socks to his little brother and continued to work with cold feet.

Purpose 2: To give relief to families of persecuted Christians in these areas of the world.

What VOM does: VOM sponsors a hidden camp in Bangladesh for new Christians escaping harassment and persecution from their Muslim relatives and neighbors.

What Christians did: Rebecca P. in West Virginia collected hundreds of aluminum cans for recycling. She sent the money she earned to VOM's Kids of Courage Fund. Donations to the fund helped build and furnish a dorm for children in the hidden camp.

Results: Jakir, age 10, lives in Bangladesh. After his mother became a Christian, her Muslim husband left her and Muslim neighbors tried to kidnap her. She and Jakir moved to the camp. "Because of their love, we now have a dorm to live in which we needed," Jakir said of the families who donated to provide the dorm.

Purpose 3: To help Christians who live in these areas win persecutors to Christ.

What VOM does: VOM distributes Bibles and Christian literature among Christians in restricted nations. VOM also provides bicycles and other forms of transportation to help the Christians distribute the materials.



What Christians do: American missionary Russell Stendal was kidnapped several years ago by Marxist guerillas in Colombia. He was released after 142 days of captivity. Today his teenage daughter Alethia helps him distribute Christian literature provided by VOM among the guerillas. Alethia believes that everyone is guided either by fear or by love. She chooses love: love for God, and even love for her enemies.

Results: Many guerillas have come to Christ. Some now help pack parachutes full of Christian literature that are dropped into guerilla hideouts in the jungle from a plane.

Purpose 4: To aid Christians in countries that used to be controlled by Communists.

What VOM does: Romania is no longer ruled by Communist dictators, but families of former Christian prisoners are still very poor. VOM helps provide their daily needs.

What Christians do: Rev. Michael (Mihai) Wurmbrand travels to Romania for VOM to locate and help families of former prisoners.

Results: Cristina Moldoveanu is the teenage daughter of Nicolae Moldoveanu, a hymn writer who spent time in prison with Richard Wurmbrand, and who has received aid from VOM. She writes: "When my grandfather was in prison, my grandmother worked day and night to be able to get food for their daughter (my mom). Because she was a Christian, my grandmother was not paid well. My mom couldn't go to college for the same reason. Even after my grandfather got out of prison, the secret police still watched every move they made. I was raised without a father, so my mom and I lived with my grandfather and grandmother. My grandfather was kind of like a father to me. Now my grandfather is 84 years old and my grandmother is 83. They are in love, even at this age."

Purpose 5: To tell the world about the suffering, faith, and courage of persecuted Christians.

What VOM did: To Dinh Trung was imprisoned in Vietnam for evangelizing among a minority tribe. His wife and three children were left to care for themselves. VOM reported the situation in *The Voice of the Martyrs* newsletter.

What Christians did: Christians around the world prayed for To Dinh Trung and wrote letters to Vietnamese officials on his behalf.

Results: Prison officials agreed to let To Dinh Trung out of prison early! But he wasn't ready to leave! He had brought many prisoners to the Lord and he wanted to stay and disciple them. He served out his sentence, was released, and continued to serve the Lord. His example encouraged Christians who had worked and prayed for his early release.



Where Are Persecuted Christians Today?

Communist Countries

The Soviet Union was once a huge Communist country. After years of prayer by Christians around the world, Communism lost its hold over parts of Europe and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union broke up into several smaller nations. Many Christians soon stopped praying about Communism.

But today, more than one billion people are still living in the Communist countries of China, Laos, Vietnam, Cuba, and North Korea. The governments of those countries limit the activities of Christians within their borders.

The Muslim World

Studies have shown that people who live in Islamic countries are less likely to live in a democracy than those in non-Islamic countries. This difference has been called “the democracy gap.” Christians are in the minority in Arab countries and in other mostly-Muslim countries. Their rights are not always protected by law, as they might be in a democracy. They do not enjoy the benefits of freedom of religion, freedom of the press and freedom of speech.

Of the 52 restricted nations/hostile areas served by VOM, 36 of them are Muslim-majority areas. Afghanistan, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Brunei, Comoros, Egypt, Gaza/West Bank, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Mindanao (Philippines), Morocco, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, UAE, Uzbekistan, Yemen. In addition, Ethiopian Christians experience persecution from Muslims (and others.)

Many Islamic militants believe Christians should be driven out or forced to accept Islam. More moderate governments in some Muslim countries often do not protect the rights of Christians in their countries.

The Hindu World

Christians in the mainly-Hindu countries of India and Nepal suffer persecution from radical Hindus and others.

The Buddhist World

Militants encourage harassment of Christians in Bhutan and Sri Lanka, believing Christianity is a threat to their national unity. Burma's military dictatorship also persecutes Christians.

Other

- Christians in some areas of Colombia are persecuted by Marxist guerillas.
- Christians in Chiapas, Mexico, are persecuted by “traditionalists”—those who try to combine Catholic teachings with unbiblical practices of the ancient Mayan religion.
- Christians suffer under Communist-style persecution in Belarus and Eritrea.



Additional Resources

– DVDs (available from Vision Video at www.visionvideo.com or 1-800-523-0226)

- *Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand* - Included on your DVD, this 50-minute documentary uses testimonials, family photos and archival film footage to tell the story of the Wurmbrand family, the persecution they endured, and their ministry as a voice for other persecuted Christians.
- *Beyond Torture* - In this documentary, you'll meet three survivors from the Romanian prison of Pitesti and see shocking paintings that capture the essence of the extreme torture. The DVD also includes an in-depth interview with a prison survivor. Not recommended for children.
- *Stephen's Test of Faith* - 12-year-old Stephen is mocked and ridiculed for his faith. During a dream, he travels through history meeting others who have been persecuted for their faith. When Stephen awakens, his faith is strengthened and he returns to his witnessing. For ages 7-13.
- *Agent Abbey* - Abbey, a Christian teenager, has never heard about other Christians suffering for their faith. While in China with her father, Abbey finds herself on a daring mission and vows to take the message of the persecuted church back to America. For ages 10 and up.

– Books (available at www.persecution.com)

- *Imprisoned for Christ*, by The Voice of the Martyrs. This book is written for children and shares various stories from the Wurmbrands. The conversational style is sure to captivate readers of all ages.
- *Bold Believers: The Wurmbrands*, by The Voice of the Martyrs. This informational activity book activities, skits, stories and more. It is perfect for home or classroom use.
- *Tortured for Christ*, by Richard Wurmbrand, gives a firsthand account of Richard's ordeal. This work has been translated into 65 languages and distributed worldwide.
- *The Pastor's Wife*, by Sabina Wurmbrand, shares the Wurmbrands' story from Sabina's perspective.

– Websites

- **www.torchlighters.org** - Visit our website to learn about other exciting Torchlighters episodes. This is also a great place to give us your feedback and suggest heroes for future episodes.
- **www.persecution.com** - This is the primary website of The Voice of the Martyrs, featuring persecution news from around the world, country profiles, a bookstore and much more.
- **www.kidsofcourage.com** - Visit VOM's website for kids to find stories from restricted nations, quizzes, downloadable activity books, and more.

– Newsletters and More

- Sign up for the *Torchlighters* newsletter at **www.torchlighters.org** for periodic electronic updates on the *Torchlighters* series.
- The quarterly *Kids of Courage* newsletter will help you to continue to stay in touch with persecution and needs around the world. Visit **www.persecution.com/link/signup** to order.
- Invite a speaker from The Voice of the Martyrs to share at your organization or church through **www.VOMmeetings.com**.

Give us your feedback: Christian History Institute values your input. If you have comments or recommendations on the *Torchlighters* series, please share them through our website at www.torchlighters.org.



The Torchlighters: Heroes of the Faith Series

Jim Elliot - Jim Elliot spends his youth preparing to share the Gospel with those who have never heard it. But nothing can prepare him for the dangers and challenges he faces in the jungles of Ecuador. Will Jim and his fellow missionaries ever be able to break through and carry a torch of faith to the remote Auca tribe, determined to attack all outsiders?

William Tyndale - In 16th-century England, translating the sacred Scriptures into English is William's calling. It won't be easy with the English government and the established church planted firmly against anyone who even speaks the Scripture in English. Follow this brave fugitive on a journey of faith as he works to complete his task.

John Bunyan - To stop preaching just to save his own skin is unthinkable for this hero. But, how will his work continue from the confines of a cold, hard prison, while his wife and blind daughter struggle to survive alone? Watch as John serves his Lord in the most trying of circumstances, and writes an all-time best seller, *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

Eric Liddell - This hero has committed his Sundays to worship and rest, and he intends to keep that commitment. But with all of Scotland begging him to run for Olympic gold, it will be difficult to stand firm. Watch as the fastest man in the world chooses to honor God rather than chase a gold medal. Then watch how God uses Eric to bring the Gospel to China.

Gladys Aylward - With war raging about her and soldiers closing in, the wounded missionary Gladys Aylward sets out on a 100-mile trek over the mountains to a safe haven. But it's not her own safety that concerns her, it's the safety and well-being of the 100 abandoned children in her care. Watch as Gladys' strength and faith are stretched to the limit, all for the sake of the children.

Richard Wurmbrand - In war-torn Romania, there is only one way for churches to get the protection of the government: give their support and allegiance to the ruling communists. Instead, Pastor Richard Wurmbrand chooses to speak up for Christ. When Richard's choice lands him in a communist prison, his faith and witness are tested to the limits. See how this Torchlighter's amazing story continues to impact the world today.

Perpetua - In the days of the Early Church, this young mother and new believer is imprisoned, charged with being a Christian, a traitor to the Roman gods. A simple offering of incense to the gods would set her free. Will she remain true to her new faith in Jesus?

Amy Carmichael - As she makes her rounds preaching in the countryside of India, Amy learns of the terrible plight of the temple girls. These girls are given to the temple "gods" at a very young age, never again to taste freedom. Though she is warned repeatedly, there is nothing she can do, but Amy will not give up. Can this determined missionary and her team work against entrenched customs and superstitions to free a special girl named Preena?

William Booth - This hero is determined to bring the life-changing Gospel to London's worst neighborhood, the East End. But when the local pub owners realize some of their best customers are becoming Christians, they hire big strong thugs to get rid of the preacher once and for all. Watch as William's ragtag band of followers marches into the East End with Bibles and Prayer as the weapons of choice. William's legacy lives on through The Salvation Army.

Samuel Morris - Since his father can no longer meet his captors' ransom demands, young Prince Kaboo knows he is to be tortured until death. But when a blinding light appears and the ropes that bind him fall away, a heavenly voice urges him, "Run, Kaboo, Run!" The dramatic events that follow lead the boy prince to take the new name "Samuel Morris." Nothing will stop Samuel from sharing his growing faith with all who will listen.



Visit www.torchlighters.org for resources and up-to-date information on new releases.



Answers to Student Handouts

Four Things, page 3

1. God
2. Jesus, prison
3. reality, life
4. love, torture

Story Mix-Up, page 6

<p>3</p>  <p>Richard is taken into prison.</p>	<p>7</p>  <p>Mihai arrives for a visit.</p>
<p>8</p>  <p>Aunt Alice has bad news for Mihai.</p>	<p>4</p>  <p>Richard is questioned by the Communists.</p>
<p>5</p>  <p>Richard suffers in prison.</p>	<p>2</p>  <p>Richard is kidnapped.</p>
<p>1</p>  <p>The Wurmbrands before the arrest.</p>	<p>6</p>  <p>Mihai is looking forward to a visit.</p>

Secret Code Challenge, page 7

MY CONGREGATION