

# SOLITARY REFINEMENT

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION GUIDE  
(Single Session)

presented by



**A NOTE TO MINISTRY LEADERS:** This Follow-Up Discussion Guide is designed to help you debrief with your group or small-group after watching *Solitary Refinement*.

**PRINT OPTION:** Use booklet option on the printer. This document is formatted to print to a half-page size.



*“Richard. Richard, stand up and speak...  
Richard! They are spitting in the face of Jesus:  
You must wash this shame from the face of Christ.  
Richard, you must stand up!”*

- Sabina Wurmbrand's challenge to her husband

## PREPARING FOR DISCUSSION

### Why:

To facilitate discussion on the realities of persecution and its relevance today, as both individuals and as a church group.

### When:

Scheduled after members have watched *Solitary Refinement*.

### What:

As a facilitator, lead discussions and encourage commitments to become a “voice of the martyrs.” Read the book, *Tortured for Christ*, for additional insights.

Digital version - [www.vomcanada.com/tfc-download](http://www.vomcanada.com/tfc-download)

Hard copy - [www.vomcanada.com/tfc](http://www.vomcanada.com/tfc)

### How:

For larger groups, consider dividing into multiple smaller groups consisting of 15 participants in each group.

### Time:

45-60 minutes.

### Handout/Slide:

Pass around the discussion handout or use multimedia projector.

### Where:

Free download at [www.vomcanada.com/solref-studies](http://www.vomcanada.com/solref-studies)

### Invite Social Media Posts:

Encourage members to post promo videos, quotes and talking points from the discussion, etc.

### Use Hashtag:

#SolitaryRefinement

Media link to be shared with members =>

<https://vomcanada.com/Dramas/Drama-Social/>

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# SCHEDULE

Parts marked [\*] may be skipped if time is limited

Introduction	00:00 - 00:05
Opening prayer	
Icebreaker *	00:05 - 00:15
Solitary Confinement Activity *	00:15 - 00:20
Small Group Discussions	00:20 - 00:35
Closing Video & Discussion	00:35 - 00:45
Take Action Challenge	00:45 - 00:50
Open Discussion and Questions	00:50 - 00:55
Closing Remarks and Prayer	00:55 - 60:00

# Optional ICEBREAKER

## “Fear Factor”

### Preparation:

You will need a whistle or some other noisy item to signal the time to move on to the next activity, as well as the items for three stations. Use items from the list below or come up with your own three. If you will be awarding a small prize for each of the winners, remember to have these prizes on hand. Please be aware of allergies and sensory issues. If there's a risk that not everyone can participate, you can ask for volunteers.

Suggested items that you can use for “Fear Factor” (use only three):

- Blended mixture of cucumber, pumpkin and soy sauce (ensure there's enough small Dixie® cups for everyone in the group).
- Spider or bug-shaped candy.
- Single bite-sized pieces of passion fruit, placed in disposable containers.
- Blue cheese, cut into bite-sized pieces.
- Mini marshmallows, dipped in mustard and served with toothpicks.
- Nickels at the bottom of a bucket consisting of live worms (have handwipes for clean-up).
- Small toys buried in spaghetti noodles mixed with thin, green Jell-O®. For an added "slimy" effect, overcook the spaghetti in green tinted water.
- McDonald's Happy Meals®...mixed in a blender.
- Tapioca; for added effect, add food or vegetable colouring.

### GAME INSTRUCTIONS:

A lot of people have phobias; whether it's a fear of heights, spiders, the dark, or any number of other things. What's the strangest phobia you've heard of?

We're going to have a game of "Fear Factor." I'll divide you all into three teams. Each team will start at the station in front of you. I'll give you 30 seconds to get as many people as possible from your team through each station. When I blow the whistle, move to the next station and start with the next person in line.

If you feel you can't do a particular activity, pass your turn on to the next person in line as quickly as possible, so the rest of your team can complete the task. Each team will also assign a "counter" to keep track of the number of people who have finished the tasks. Prizes will be awarded to the winning team.

Divide the participants into teams. Have them line up in front of the stations.

When I blow my whistle, start on the station in front of you. When I blow it again, switch! Any questions? (Briefly answer any that arise.) Ready?

Blow the whistle again in 30-second intervals, until all the teams have completed all three stations.

At the end of the game:

How many times did your team complete a "Fear Factor" task?

Hand out the prizes to the winning team. For an added segue, ask for one volunteer from each team to stand up and tell the group what Jesus means to him or her.

You may have been reluctant to do some of these activities. When you watched *Solitary Refinement*, you heard Richard Wurmbbrand talk about the ultimate "Fear Factor." He spoke up for Christ when he knew there was a huge risk. As we know from the drama, he ended up in solitary confinement because of his choice. Some of us may have found the drama a bit much. That's okay. We can actually learn from him - not only how to stand for Christ, but to find peace and joy while we're at it. Let's dig in!

# SOLITARY CONFINEMENT ACTIVITY

## “Count the Water Drops”

RESOURCE: URL - [bit.ly/water-dripping](https://bit.ly/water-dripping)



OBJECTIVE: Give the participants a small taste of what Richard faced for years.

## ACTIVITY

If possible, separate the group members from their friends. Spread them out so they're about a metre or two from anyone else. Have the group close their eyes and count in their minds each time they hear a water drop. Start the video and play it for 60 seconds.

## DISCUSS

Richard Wurmbrand spent three years in solitary confinement, and the only sound he heard was that of water dripping. The soldiers wore felt on their soles to avoid making any sound.

- “How many water drops did you count?”
- “How long did I make you count?”
- “How long would it take for you to count 94,608,000 water drops?” (Equals three years of solitary confinement.)

### Leader's note:

For personal study and optional discussion: It is interesting to note that the United Nations organization deems as torture anything in excess of 15 days of solitary confinement. Include this in your discussion if there's time, or if you feel there's an interest for it.

URL - [bit.ly/un-solitary](https://bit.ly/un-solitary)





# GROUP DISCUSSION:

Divide the participants into three groups of preferably four to five people.

READ TO THE ENTIRE GROUP:

Richard Wurmbrand said the following statement: *“I was thrown into solitary confinement for two days. I became afraid. But it became two weeks, and I became...disoriented. Then it became two months and I came to the edge of my sanity. Hell is not screaming or fire or torture. Hell is silence. Two years in solitary feels like eternity.”*

This was his first experience of solitary confinement which lasted three years. With that in mind, take the next ten minutes to discuss the topic assigned to your group.

## DISCUSSION QUESTION #1

READ

*“Communists had taken over Romania and they convened a congress of all Christian bodies. There were four thousand priests, pastors, and ministers of all denominations.... These men of God chose Josef Stalin as honorary president of this congress. One after another, bishops and pastors arose and declared that communism and Christianity are fundamentally the same and could coexist. One minister after another praised communism and assured the new government of the loyalty of the church. My wife and I were present at this congress. Sabina told me, ‘Richard, stand up and wash away this shame from the face of Christ! They are spitting in His face.’ I said to her, ‘If I do so, you lose your husband.’ She replied, ‘I don’t wish to have a coward as a husband.’” (Richard Wurmbrand in *Tortured for Christ*, pg. 14)*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Sabina felt that Richard would have been a coward if he had remained silent. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- You might face times when people will oppose you because of your faith, or pressure you to compromise your commitment to Christ. What do you think that might look like? What promises from Scripture can you think of that would help you?
- Some Biblical examples of those who spoke up are: The Lord Jesus at the temple (John 2:13-17); Peter at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-40); Paul in Athens (Acts 17:16-31). Can you think of others? Can you think of any modern-day examples?

## DISCUSSION QUESTION #2

### READ

*"There is only one method of resistance to brainwashing: it is 'heartwashing.' If your heart is cleansed by the love of Jesus, and if your heart loves Him, one can resist any torture."*

Richard Wurmbrand tells the story of his imprisonment in his book, *Tortured for Christ*. He endured hours of brainwashing and mind-breaking techniques, including the use of a recorded voice that repeated days on end: "Communism is good. Christianity is stupid. Give up." He was also told over and over, "Nobody loves you."

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do you understand what Richard Wurmbrand meant by "heart-washing?" What do you think that means - not just in asking Jesus to come into your heart, but in everyday life?
- You've probably been told that knowing Christ is worth any sacrifice. That sounds ominous. You've also heard that there is great joy in serving Jesus; in fact, Richard said that he discovered unimaginable joy. Why do you think Richard found joy in prison?
- The drama is called "Solitary Refinement." Do you know why it's called that? How was Richard Wurmbrand "refined" by his time in solitary confinement?

# DISCUSSION QUESTION #3

## READ

(Footnote) 1

*“What is hard to comprehend in the midst of suffering is not the misfortune itself, or even the pain or injustice of it. The real sting of suffering is the apparent ‘God-forsakenness’ of it. We cry out, yet it appears that God does not seem to care. The silence of heaven haunts us when God seems either unable or unwilling to do anything about our afflictions.*

*“What is the solution? What did Bonhoeffer mean when he said, ‘Only the suffering God can help’? Is it possible that part of our solution to the questions of suffering and persecution lies in seeing God as a God who suffers too? ...God suffers because He chooses to love.”*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What good or bad responses have you seen when someone is crying? What about God; does He cry? According to these passages, how does God respond when His people are suffering?
  - “In all their affliction *He was afflicted*” (Isaiah 63:9 ESV).
  - “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting *Me*?” (Acts 9:4).
- Sometimes it seems as if God is silent. How does that fit into His promise that He will never leave us?
- In Philippians 1:29, Paul says that it is a privilege to believe in Christ *and a privilege to suffer for Him*. Suffering doesn’t seem like much of a privilege. Can you think of any reasons why Paul had said this?



# FULL GROUP DISCUSSION

## DISCUSS

I'd like all of the groups to read their questions and give us a summary of what was discussed.

Allow no more than a couple of minutes for each group.

## CURRENT TESTIMONY

We're going to watch a testimony of someone who was rejected by her family for following Christ. You'll notice at the end of the video, she thanks those who have helped her take Bible school training. I would like you to think about how you can support persecuted believers while you're watching this.

URL - [tinyurl.com/wahn-4-jesus](http://tinyurl.com/wahn-4-jesus)

Allow a few seconds after the video for the participants to process what they've just seen.

There are thousands of people around the world who, like her, need our prayers. Hebrews 13:3 asks us to, "Remember the prisoners as if chained with them - those who are mistreated - since you yourselves are in the body also."

The "Solitary Refinement" stage play ends with a challenge from Richard Wurmbrand: "Because I am no longer the voice of the martyrs, the voice of the martyrs is YOU." In other words, you are now invited to be a "voice of the voiceless."

## SUPPORTING OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Let's make a list of some ways you can be a "voice" for those who are suffering for their faith.

See [www.vomcanada.com/take-action.htm](http://www.vomcanada.com/take-action.htm) for more details. The participants can come up with their own list. These items should be added if they don't think of them first.

Share stories of the persecuted with friends and family.

Write letters to persecuted Christians and their families.

Get together with some friends to make greeting cards for families of the persecuted.

Be committed to pray, using the VOMC prayer alert: [www.vomcanada.com/pnpord.html](http://www.vomcanada.com/pnpord.html)

Support ongoing projects through fundraisers.



# GROUP PRAYER

SAY SOMETHING LIKE...

Nothing can be done without prayer. Prayer admits that we're weak and reassures us that God will show His power through us.

For ideas on how to pray from Scripture, visit: [www.vomcanada.com/prayer.htm](http://www.vomcanada.com/prayer.htm)



PRAY FOR

The persecutors, that they will know Jesus.

The government and country leaders, so they will lead their people well.

The persecuted. (Those who are imprisoned and/or facing harassment; as well as believers who may have lost property or seen loved ones killed.)

The suffering families of the persecuted who are feeling alone.

CLOSE IN PRAYER FOR THE PERSECUTED,  
THEIR FAMILIES AND FOR THE PERSECUTORS.  
ALSO PRAY FOR STRENGTH, COURAGE  
AND JOY FOR THOSE WHO  
PARTICIPATED IN THIS STUDY.

An immersive live stage experience based on the best-selling books of Richard Wurmbrand, and on persecution around the world today.

*The Voice of the Martyrs Canada makes each performance free to the host church and to audiences in your entire community.*

**Running Time: 75 minutes | For Ages 13+**  
**Free admission | Reception follows**  
**Contributions gratefully accepted**

This fully realized play takes you deep into the underground church, tales of unimaginable suffering -- and unmistakable joy.

In the midst of our deepest darkness,  
comes God's overwhelming light.

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