



Learning to Love Like Jesus

Richard and Sabina Wurmbbrand as examples of following Jesus

WHY LEARNING COMMUNITIES? *Circle Two Opportunity...*

To become better and better disciples of Christ TOGETHER so we can face **anything** through...

1. Deeper learning of Biblical truth
2. Stronger "iron sharpening iron" relationships

Ephesians 4:12–16 (ESV) ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Introduction

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It's not about people, but **about Christ**. However, the Bible teaches us to imitate those who have so fully given themselves to Christ that they are conduits, pipelines, clay jars of God's Presence.

1 Corinthians 11:1 (ESV) ¹Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Hebrews 13:7, 17 (ESV) ⁷Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.

¹⁷Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Philippians 3:17–21 (ESV)

This study, then, is about learning to more fully follow Christ in our circumstances, imitating the Wurmbbrands as they imitated Christ

Some background on Richard and Sabina Wurmbbrand

"Not all of us are called to die a martyr's death, but all of us are called to have the same spirit of self-sacrifice and love to the very end as these martyrs had." — Richard Wurmbbrand

Richard Wurmbbrand, born in 1909, was the 4th child of a Jewish Romanian family. He grew up in bitter poverty, was orphaned in childhood, and by 14 had become, in his own words, "as convinced an atheist as any communist." As a young man working as a Romanian stockbroker, he was drawn to left-wing politics that flourished in Bucharest in the 1930s. In 1936 he married Sabina Oster, also a Jew by birth.

Richard's conversion took place two years after his marriage. By his own admission, he considered the very notion of God and Christ harmful to the human mind, but still there was yearning inside him. "I would have liked very much to know that a loving heart existed somewhere in the center of this universe," he wrote in his early book, *"Tortured for Christ."* Since I had known few of the joys of childhood and youth, I longed that there should be a loving heart beating for me, too. I convinced myself that there was no God, but I was sad that such a God of love did not exist."

Wurmbrand's encounter with this God of love came when he was "irresistibly drawn" to a certain village in the Romanian mountains where an old carpenter had been praying to bring a Jew to Christ. Seeing that the new arrival was a Jew, the old carpenter courted him like a young man courting a beautiful girl. Wurmbrand had read the Bible before, but when given one by the carpenter he saw in it not mere words but "flames of love." Weeping, he accepted Christ, and shortly afterward Sabina did as well.

During World War II, Richard and Sabina evangelized the occupying German forces, preached in bomb shelters, caves and to congregations hidden deep within Romanian forests. They rescued scores of Jewish children from ghettos in which the Nazi's forced Jews to live. For these activities they were arrested repeatedly. Wurmbrand's connection with Russia began during this time. His own miraculous conversion had given him an intense sorrow for a people raised from childhood in atheism. During the war he had an opportunity to minister to Russian soldiers held in Romanian prisons. Seeing men who had lost the ability to think for themselves, Wurmbrand vowed to dedicate his life to such men, "to give them back their personalities and to give them faith in God and Christ."

Nine months before the end of the war in Europe, Wurmbrand got all the potential converts he could hope for when 1 million Russian troops marched into Romania. The communists seized control of the government and a nightmare of oppression and capitulation began.

The Russian occupiers convened a congress of religious bodies, attended by over 4,000 ministers, priests, and rabbis. Joseph Stalin was named honorary president of the convocation and, one by one, the religious leaders swore their allegiance to the new government. Sabina turned to her husband and said, "**Richard, stand up and wash away this shame from the face of Christ!**" Richard rose to his feet and told the delegates that their duty was to glorify God and Christ alone.

Over the next two years, the Wurmbrands distributed 1 million Bibles to Russian troops and smuggled Bibles into Russia. By this time he was head of the Norwegian Lutheran Mission in Bucharest, a position which helped cover his underground activities.



His time ran out on February 29, 1948, when the secret police kidnapped him and threw him into prison with the designation "Prisoner Number 1," an enemy of the state. He was held there for over eight years and subjected to horrific torture. In a general amnesty brought about by the Khrushchev-Eisenhower "thaw," Richard was released in 1956. Although warned never to preach again, he courageously and relentlessly resumed his underground work.

In 1959 he was rearrested, this time sentenced to 25 years. Among the tortures was being placed in a wooden box with nails driven through the sides and repeated imprisonment in a "refrigerator cell," where he would be frozen to the point of death, thawed out, and then frozen again. During Richard's imprisonment, Sabina selflessly helped the persecuted church even though she and her young son struggled to survive. She was eventually arrested and spent three years in Romanian slave labor camps and prisons, leaving her young son to live on the streets. After her release was under house arrest for several years. The Communist leaders offered her freedom if she would divorce her husband and renounce her faith. She refused. They then cruelly lied, telling her that her husband died in prison. She refused to believe them, holding on to hope of reunion.

In 1964 Richard was released and resumed his work. In 1965 the family was ransomed for \$10,000 with another warning not to preach. Eventually they settled in the United States where Richard testified before the US Senate Internal-Security Subcommittee. During his testimony, he stripped to the waist to reveal eighteen deep scars from the torture he had experienced in the communist prisons. "*My body represents Romania, my country, which has been tortured to a point that it can no longer weep,*" he told the subcommittee. "*These marks on my body are my credentials.*" They spent the rest of their lives championing the cause of persecuted Christians, establishing "The Voice of the Martyrs."

Richard finally received his eternal reward in 2001, miraculously living to age 92 despite years of torture and deprivation that left him with a permanent limp, pain and scars. Sabina walked into Jesus' arms the previous year at age 87.

<https://christiansforsocialaction.org/resource/heroes-of-the-faith-richard-wurmbrand/>

<https://missionsbox.org/missionary-bio/rev-richard-wurmbrand-voice-persecuted/>

<https://www.wurmbrandfoundation.org/richardwurmbrand>

<https://historywomen.com/womenoffaith/sabina.htm>

<https://www.plough.com/en/topics/faith/witness/richard-and-sabina-wurmbrand>

1. “Acknowledge” Christ/ speak up when it may cost

Matthew 10:32–39 (ESV)

Matthew 10:16–22 (ESV)

2. Recognize how God has prepared, does the heavy lifting and goes ahead of us

Note: Upside-Down self-focus leads us to think of God providing and preparing for the purpose of our comfort (think “enjoyable life”). The Right-Side Up Christ-following Bible teaching is that God provides and prepares us to serve as soldiers on mission - so more people can be reconciled to God.

Ephesians 2:8–10 (ESV)

Deuteronomy 31:7–8 (ESV) ⁷Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land that the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall put them in possession of it. ⁸It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”

Romans 8:31–32 (ESV) ³¹What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

3. Proactively, creatively share God’s love and truth

- A. Bless the soldiers
- B. Bible disguised
- C. “Buy” watches

Matthew 28:18–20 (ESV) ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Luke 16:8–9 (ESV) ⁸The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. ⁹And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

Matthew 5:38–42 (ESV)

Takeaways...



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