



**Richard Wurmbrand**  
(1909 - 2001)

## A Man of LOVE

### Richard's Story

“Russian communist officials invited thousands of religious leaders to a meeting in the Parliament building. Muslim mullahs, Jewish rabbis, and Christian pastors crowded into the great hall.

“My wife, Sabina, and I joined them. Top communists sat on a stage with a huge picture of Joseph Stalin behind them.

“The audience applauded the communists’ statements, which were broadcast to the whole nation by radio. ‘We want to be friends with church leaders!’ the communists claimed. The crowd cheered. One pastor got up and said, ‘You can count on us!’ Another Christian said, ‘Christianity and communism have a lot in common. Both believe in bringing about justice. We can work together!’

“One leader after another rose to give their comments in support of the Russians. Sabina couldn’t stand it any longer. ‘Richard,’ she said, ‘please stand up and wash away this shame from the face of Christ. They are spitting in His face.’

“‘If I stand up for Christ, you will lose your husband,’ I answered.

“‘I don’t need a husband who is a coward,’ she said. I raised my hand to speak.

“‘It is our duty to glorify God and Christ,’ I said when I reached the microphone. ‘We must first be loyal to Christ, not to earthly leaders. He is the one who died for us on the cross.’

“The people in the crowd seemed to suddenly wake up. A few began to clap. Many began to cheer, ‘Pastor! Pastor!’

“‘Your right to speak is withdrawn!’ shouted a communist leader. ‘Cut the microphone!’ But the crowd cheered so loudly no one could hear him. Finally the wires to the microphone were cut. The shouting and clapping continued. Sabina and I made our way out of the hall through the noise and confusion. ‘I have a powerful Savior. He’ll do what is best for me,’ I said.

“Later, the communists made me suffer for what I did at the meeting, but it was worth it.”

#### Key Bible Verses:

“But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse [mock, insult, dishonor] you.”  
(Luke 6:27-28)

#### Key Word: LOVE

Love: An unselfish attitude of goodwill and concern for the good of others

In the 1940s, German Nazis occupied Romania. Many Christians were arrested. Richard was arrested and questioned three times, just because he was a pastor. After World War II ended, Russian communists took over Romania. Life under communism with the Russians was even more difficult than life under the Nazis had been.



### **Jewish Atheist**

Richard was born in Romania on March 24, 1909. He was the youngest of four boys. Though he was of Jewish descent, he grew up as an atheist, and he did not become a Christian until he was almost 30 years old.



### **Encountered by Jesus**

Richard became a Christian through the prayers of an elderly man located in a remote mountain village who had asked God to let him lead a Jew to Christ. Sabina put her trust in Jesus after Richard came to know Christ.



### **Messenger**

Richard was fluent in nine languages and wrote 18 books. His most well known book, *Tortured for Christ*, has been translated into 60 languages, with more than 3 million copies in print.



### **Prison Sermons**

While in prison, Richard composed sermons, which he committed to memory, and then preached in his cell. After his release, he wrote down the 350 sermons he was able to remember.



### **Imprisonment**

After being released in 1956, a pastor friend betrayed Richard to the authorities. Richard was arrested again in 1959, and released in 1964. He spent a total of 14 years in prison. His wife, Sabina, endured three harsh years in a prison labor camp.



### **Ransom**

Christians from Norway paid a \$10,000 ransom for Richard's release, though the going rate for political prisoners was \$1,900.



### **National Recognition**

Richard was named one of the ten most influential people of Romania.



### **Finishing the Race**

Sabina went to be with the Lord Aug. 11, 2000, at the age of 87. Richard followed on Feb. 17, 2001. He was 91 years old.

# Morse Code Quote



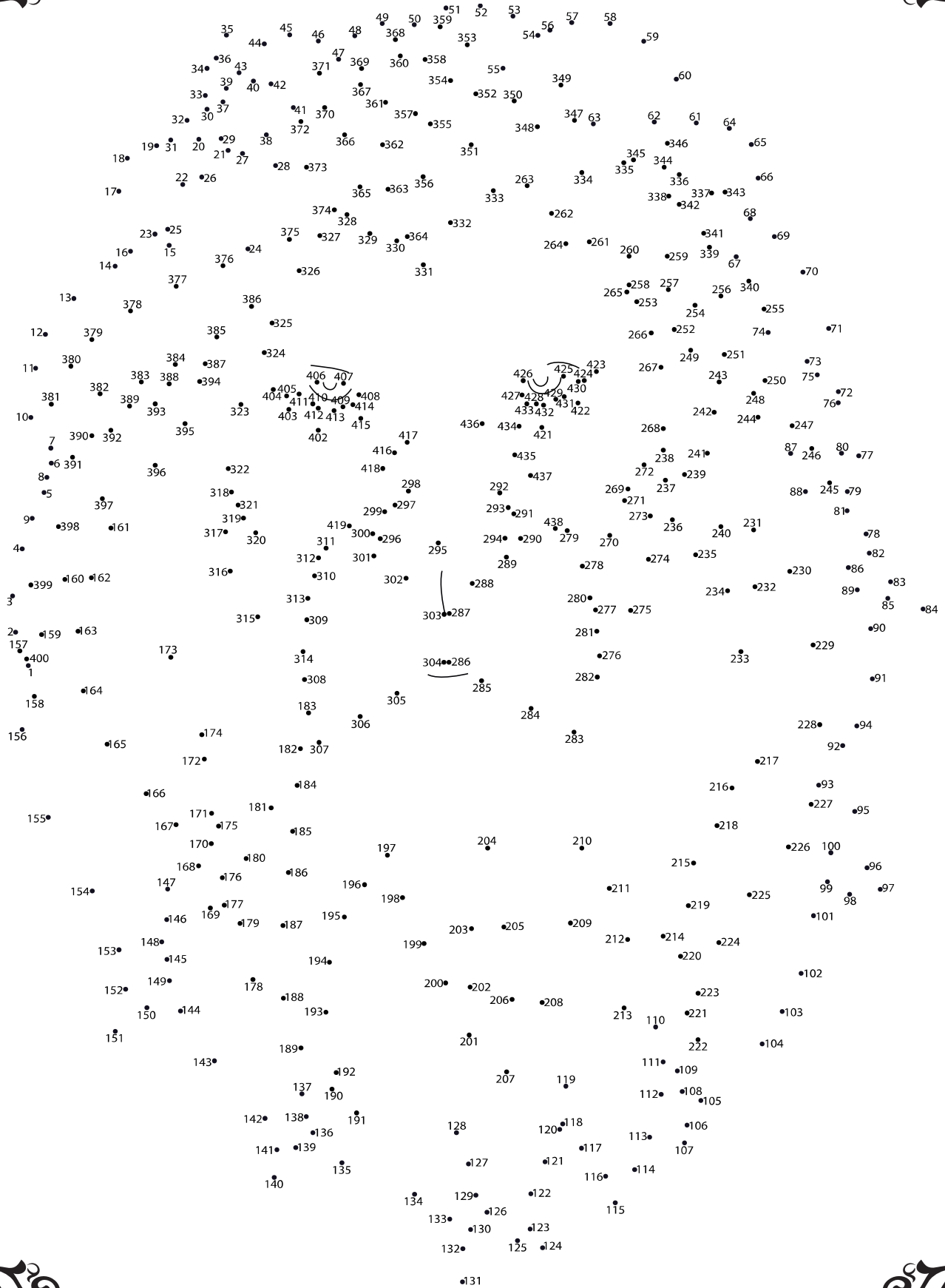
While he was in prison, Richard Wurmbrand used a system based on Morse code to communicate with and witness to prisoners in other cells. The prisoners tapped messages on the walls between their cells.

Using the Morse code alphabet shown in the blue box, decode this quote from Richard Wurmbrand. Write each letter above the corresponding codes below to reveal the message.

The answer is in the Answer Key.

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D	_ . . .	I	. .	N	_ .	S	. . . .	X	_ . . _
E	. .	J	. _ _ _	O	_ _ _ _	T	_	Y	_ . _ _
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Before leaving Romania, Richard took a group of students to the zoo and stopped in front of the lions' cage. God rescued Daniel from the lions, Richard explained, but Daniel was ready to face the lions rather than deny God — without knowing whether or not he would be delivered. Early Christians also faced lions after they refused to deny Christ. Some died, standing firm in the Lord and loving those who tried to separate them from the love of God. "Our faith has not always been easy," Richard told the students.



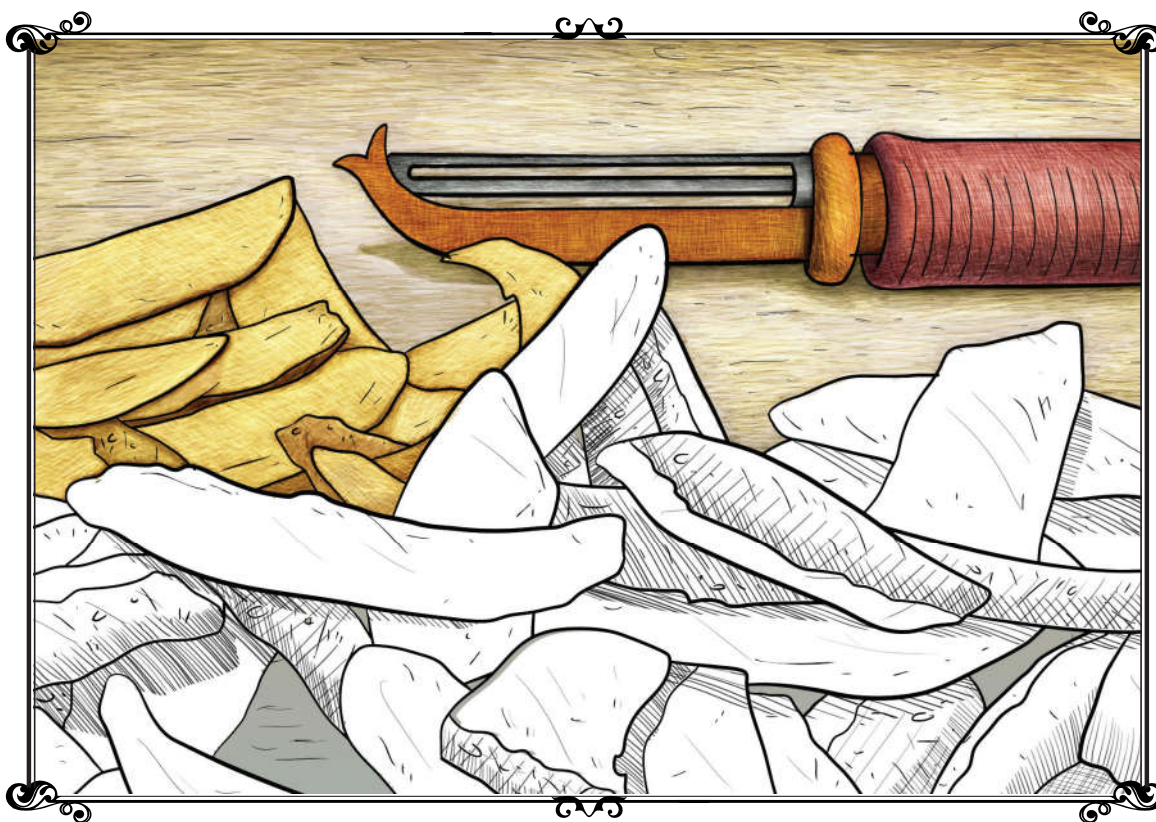


After the Wurmbrands were imprisoned, generous Christians helped take care of Richard and Sabina's son, Mihai. But it was very risky to help the families of imprisoned Christians. One woman traveled many miles facing great difficulty to bring him a sack of potatoes — all she had to offer. The police discovered her kindness, took her to the police station, questioned her, and treated her harshly, just for feeding a child.

Food was scarce in Romania during Richard Wurmbrand's time in prison, both inside and outside of prison. Sometimes people outside of prison ate the same simple food three times a day. In prison, they had much less.

### Try This

Richard Wurmbrand often said that the prison guards ate the potatoes and the prisoners only had the peels made into a soup. Make your own "potato peel soup" by peeling a potato and then putting the peels (only) into a saucepan. **Add two cups of water. Bring the water to a boil for 5 minutes, then lower the heat and simmer for 10 minutes.** Let the "soup" cool, and then taste some. Romanian prisoners were thankful for even a potato peel meal!



## What Do You Think?



### Richard's love for his betrayer

Richard helped out a younger pastor in his underground (secret) congregation, but later the man betrayed him by reporting Richard to the authorities. Richard was sent to prison. He had already been in prison for eight years, so he knew how hard it would be. On his way to prison, he asked Sabina to give his love to their son and to the pastor who betrayed him.

### What would you do?

During his first imprisonment, Richard had suffered from serious illness, lack of food and medicine, beatings from the guards, solitary confinement for years, boredom, poor clothing and shoes, loneliness for his family, unheated cells, and many other miseries.

If you were in his place, how do you think you might feel toward the person who betrayed you, causing you to return to prison? What was Richard's reaction toward the betrayer?

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Romans 12:17

“Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.”

A man in Richard's prison refused to betray even enemies who had mistreated him. Because the man refused to help them, the prison officials withheld medication from him that could have saved his life. He died in Richard's arms while giving glory to God.

### A Christian prisoner's love

Romania's communist officials often did not trust each other. Sometimes they sent their own workers to prison. Sometimes the communist prisoners ended up in cells with Christians they had mistreated in the past. “I have seen Christians give away their last slice of bread (we were given one slice a week) and the medicine that would save their lives to a sick communist torturer who was now a fellow prisoner,” Richard said.

### What would you do?

If you had been in the prison with Christians and their former persecutors, do you think you would you have advised the Christians to give up their food and medicine to their enemies? Or would you have told them to keep the food and medicine for themselves?

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**Note: If someone mistreats you, tell your parents or a trusted adult.**



**Richard Wurmbrand knew that the Bible says, “Love your enemies” (Luke 6:27). How did Richard love his enemies?**

- He forgave them when they wronged him, even those who betrayed and persecuted him.
- He told them how to repent of their sins and follow Christ. Richard said, “Many officers of the secret police to whom we witnessed became Christians and were happy to suffer in prison for having found our Christ. ... Only love can change the communist and the terrorist.”
- He prayed for them. “In prison, I started every day with prayer,” he said. “In my prayers, I traveled through the whole world, praying for every country and town I could remember. I prayed for pilots, sea captains, and those in prison. Then I prayed for my family, my friends, and my persecutors.”

Enemies could take away Richard’s freedom, his comfort, his health, and his Bible, and they could threaten to take away his life. But they couldn’t take away his faith and his willingness to pray for them.

**“Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”** (Luke 6:28, NIV)

Is there any way that a bad situation or an unkind person can stop you from praying?

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Is there something or someone that is troubling you or someone you love? Can you name anyone you need to forgive? Write a prayer for that person.

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