

**True story!** On the morning of February 19<sup>th</sup> 2005, 131 children were attending school at an Eritrean Orthodox church in the capital, Asmara, when a truckload of policeman arrived. Everyone was shocked when the police started to load up the children, aged from 2-18 yrs old, and then took them to the police station! They were put in a hall there as their names and addresses were recorded. Soon, with loud voices, the children started to sing with the words: "I'm not afraid of persecution, hardships and even death. Nobody can separate me from the love of Jesus Christ. He died on the Cross and he gave me new life."

The policemen threatened them and told them to stop singing, but they would not. The police turned on a television and turned the volume up high, and then started to beat the children!! After three and a half hours in the police station, the children aged from 2-14 yrs were released and told to return another day, with their parents. The remaining 30 older children were taken to other police stations and now are part of a growing group of Christians who are suffering in appalling conditions, simply for going to church or owning a bible!

A special Task Force set up by the Eritrean government is dedicated to ridding the country of Pentecostal and Evangelical Christians by the end of 2005. There are numerous reports of Christian adults and youth being arrested at weddings, bible studies and even home groups, and locked up inside metal shipping containers for days at a time, without food or water, in the unbearable heat. We can imagine how scared these young children were - but how proud Jesus must be of them, as they boldly sang about their faith in Jesus Christ! But how surprised the police must have been to hear their singing!



We pray that this testimony will be shared and encourage other children all around the world! Let's pray for the Christians in Eritrea.  
'Til next time, love, Shirley.

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Facts and testimonies from Christian Solidarity Worldwide [www.cswusa.com](http://www.cswusa.com) and from the fascinating web page on Eritrea at <http://site.voila.fr/eritrea>

World Kids

PAL Page

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**See if you can find ANYONE who knows where the country of ERITREA is on the map!**



Not many people know about this country, which is our focus this month! That may be because it only gained its independence from a neighboring country, in 1993. Before then, it was part of ETHIOPIA, which is in the northeastern part of Africa (often called the Horn of Africa). Eritrea also borders the country of Sudan and forms part of the southern coast of the Red Sea. It has an area of about 36,170 sq miles, and so is about the size of the state of Indiana or the European country of Portugal.



Eritrea is a country of mostly deserts and magnificent mountain scenery. Its people come from several different groups, and many in the North are nomads who wander around with camels, herding goats, and living in tents.

Eritrea's 4 million or so inhabitants speak 5 different languages!

The Eritrean flag is made up of three triangles - green, red and blue; with a design of yellow leaves on the red triangle.





In the desert, it is terribly hot during the day, but at night, especially in the mountains about 7-8,000 ft above sea level, it can be bitterly cold. Many of the women wear a "chama" which is a kind of veil that keeps them warm. Also, most women in the North wear a special piece of jewelry - a gold ring through their nose!!

The mountains are full of baboons, which live among the cactus, and often rush out into the roadway as vehicles pass! Eritrea is a country that has many hazards for drivers, and many native Eritreans give an offering of money before they take a driving trip, as they believe the gift will help them avoid the "djins" - little devils believed to be wandering in the mountains!

But Eritrea isn't ALL desert and mountains! It also has more than 200 islands off the Red Sea coastline, all of which have clean beaches, and almost NO tourists! A good example of these is Dahlak island - with



beautiful crystal clear water, colorful corals, and playful dolphins. It is amazing to go scuba diving there - but you must also watch out for the sharks! You may wonder why there are so few tourists there - there IS just ONE hotel, but it has very little electricity, NO telephone and NO food!! You must take your own food with you - or hope to catch some fish!



The capital of Eritrea is the beautiful city of Asmara, located in the mountains, about 7,000 ft above sea level. It is a very clean city, and reminds some people of an Italian town. As you wander around the city, you see both Islamic mosques and Christian churches. Remember that Eritrea used to be part of Ethiopia, and Ethiopia was one of the first countries to receive the Gospel in about AD 300. After that time, Orthodox Christianity was the state religion for the next 1,700 years.



In fact, Ethiopia (and Eritrea) has been mentioned several times in the Bible.



Do you know who married an Ethiopian woman in Numbers 12:1?

Maybe you can remember the story of one of the first evangelists in the New Testament, who shared the Gospel with a man from Ethiopia, who was traveling far from home? Look it up in Acts chapter 8.

So we might expect to find Christians in Eritrea today, but also, through the centuries, the Muslims have spread their teachings of Allah across many countries in Northern Africa, including Ethiopia. Then, in 1974, a Communist government took over Ethiopia, and Christianity could no longer be shared openly. When that government was finally overthrown, in 1991, there was a great deal of poverty and unrest, and when Eritrea declared independence, two years later, it was as an Islamic nation!



In the years that followed, there were more and more crackdowns on the Christians - only three Christian denominations are now recognized by the government: Orthodox Christian, Catholic and Lutheran. In May 2002, the government closed down all the country's independent Protestant churches and banned home gatherings. Those caught praying, studying the Bible or worshipping outside of one of the recognized churches are jailed and tortured.

What would YOUR family do, if the government suddenly announced you could not go to church, or even pray or read the Bible in your own home? Would you burn your Bible and never again talk about Jesus? Or would you try to continue in secret, hoping no one would find you? What would you do if you DID get caught?

### SCRIPTURE SCRAMBLE

Arrange these words in the correct order as Jesus spoke them:

IF MY WORDS OF ANYONE WILL BE  
ASHAMED IN THE GLORY OF HIM HIS SON  
AND WHEN MAN COMES HE IS ASHAMED  
OF ME

(Clue: Luke 9:26)