Inform and Involve Readers

by Sophie C. Sabio

I did not know persecution like this still happens today." In places where there is religious freedom, Christians often respond this way to the plight of believers in other areas. Many churches need to be informed and updated on the suffering church, yet this task is not easy. Nothing is more challenging than bringing the message of persecuted Christians to persons who do not experience similar hardships in practicing the faith.

Open Doors Philippines seeks to put into words the silent suffering of the Body of Christ. Its newsletters and publications must not only convey this suffering, but, more importantly, must lead the Church in the "free world" to respond.

Here are a few suggestions that might help turn readers into involved prayer partners.

To involve readers, make sure your articles are as powerful as the images that accompany them.

Precisely the truth

First and foremost, articles must inform truthfully and accurately. Advocacy writers may be tempted to exaggerate information or modify the tone to stress a good point. This can be dangerous. After all, generally readers do not rely on a single source of information. Readers are researchers, too. Accurate information and materials give your audience the confidence that the stories you write are credible and trustworthy. Double-check statistics and data before they are printed.

Express concern

Become so familiar with the information you are sharing about the persecuted church that it becomes your own. When it is close to your own heart as a writer, your words will be much more convincing.

Expose your readers to the history of your ministry. State what you seek to accomplish and why. Share in your writings how the Lord has used your ministry in the furtherance of his kingdom and how you want to fulfill the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20. Give your reader good reasons to be involved in the ministry.

Updates are upbeat

Nothing beats fresh news. Look for sources of new information. Go out of your way to exchange materials with other organizations that share your vision. Join forums and discussion groups to aid you in obtaining data to keep your readers posted. A first-hand, up-to-date testimony relating an experience is an effective way to appeal to readers. Use it as a springboard to your story. A well-written background about the person relating the story is helpful to introduce him or her to your reader. State why the reader must listen to the story and why now.

Prayer is personal

Open Doors staff typically ask persecuted believers what they would have those in the "free" Church pray and do for them. On a recent visit, however, a persecuted brother made no appeal for prayer. Instead, he stated, "Please tell our brothers and sisters, we pray for you." Baffled at the brother's words, the Open Doors staff person said, "Why do you pray for us? We are the ones who must pray for you!" Gently, the man replied, "We pray for you because you are our family." Remember that you, as a writer, act as a link between the church and the ministry. Encouraging readers to pray asks them to make the effort to interest themselves in the ministry. By writing about Christians who do not experience freedom to worship, Open Doors poses the need for intercession to help prayer partners develop a genuine concern for the suffering church.❖

Sophie C. Sabio is a Development Assistant for Open Doors in Quezon City, Philippines.