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### A Living Faith

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## A Living Faith

BY ALDAR NÕMMIK

The odds were stacked against me. I was born and raised in a country that the BBC suggests to be the “least religious” country on Earth<sup>1</sup>, a country in which I also went through the public school system. I was the only regular church-goer (of any denomination) in my entire class. Naturally, my unwillingness to participate in all sorts of illegal, harmful behaviors, widely practiced by other boys my age, made me peculiar and subject to much attention. The pressure to fit in, to be like everyone else, to believe like everyone else was enormous. Every day was a battlefield between the principles I had been taught, by my parents and the church, and the values I saw practiced by classmates and friends.

Why did I stay strong in my faith? Why am I not part of the masses of young people who have left the church and faith? It’s not because I have no doubts — I do — nor is it because I have intellectually waterproofed my beliefs — I haven’t.

In the midst of all the hazardous factors that should have destroyed my faith, there was one factor that trumped them all: the faith of my parents and grandparents. These were and are men and women who were willing to be denied a college diploma rather than deny faith and quit the church; willing to be imprisoned and sent to Siberia rather than break the Sabbath commandment; willing to give up a well-paying job in order to answer the call to ministry; willing to be mistreated rather than curse God; willing to hunger in order to pay tithe and offerings.

Imprisonment, financial predicament, mistreatment and lack of college education sound terrible, and are commonly deemed ingredients of a failed life. Yet, what I saw and experienced was the opposite — a blessed life.

Where people denied, God provided — abundantly. Every single time. I couldn’t then and cannot now deny that theirs was and is life that can be deemed blessed. Everywhere else I looked as a young boy, I saw reasons to deny faith; but when I looked at my parents’ and grandparents’ life, I saw reasons to affirm faith.



Aldar Nõmmik

Pieter Damsteegt

A massive research about the spirituality of American teenagers — the National Study of Youth and Religion — found that “parents matter most in shaping the religious lives of their children.”<sup>2</sup> We can put our kids through the best Christian schools and take them to the most vibrant churches in the nation, but if we don’t live the faith, will it be enough?

The mere presence and rituals of the sanctuary were not enough to prevent a generation of Israelites *who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel* (Judges 2:10 ESV) from rising up after Joshua’s death. Perhaps this happened because the previous generation failed to fulfill God’s instruction to live the Torah at every moment of existence in whatever circumstances, especially at home (see Deuteronomy 6:4–9).

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Aldar Nõmmik, 28, is a member of the Niles Westside Church in Michigan. He attends Andrews University where he is a senior theology major.

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1. Esslemont, Tom. “Spirituality in Estonia - the world’s ‘least religious’ country.” BBC News. Website: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14635021>, retrieved January 29, 2015.
2. Dean, Kenda Creasy. *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church*. New York: Oxford University Press (2010), p. 112.