

OPENING THE RED DOOR

Curriculum Guides – Discussion Questions



LEADER'S GUIDE

Soviet/Russian Interest in Christianity

1. How do you explain the intense interest of Soviets/Russians in spiritual issues in the early 1990s? What were they searching for?
 - pp. 4-5 – Gorbachev's attitude toward religion
 - pp. 30-31 – exchange with Orthodox priest in Moscow
 - pp. 33-34 – prayer before the banquet
 - p. 35 - request for Western professors to teach on the history of Christianity
2. Did you know about Gorbachev's interest in moral and ethical renewal in the USSR? Why was this rarely talked about in western news reports?
3. Gorbachev severed the link between Marxism and atheism when he supported the one thousandth anniversary of Christianity in Russia in 1988, a decision largely ignored in the West? The "Red Door" was opening. What was an appropriate response from Christians in the West?
 - pp. 62-63 – Gorbachev's personal views about religion
4. Did the response of the students and faculty at Nizhni Novgorod State University surprise you, when the Bernbaums arrived there in 1992 as the first Americans in this closed city since the 1930s?
 - pp. 23-27 – the intense interest in religion in Nizhni Novgorod
5. What did the Russian political leaders who invited western Christian leaders to visit their country in 1991 hope to achieve and how would you assess the goals set by the American delegation?
 - pp. 56-63 – invitation and exchange about our visit

6. When and why did this openness to cooperation with Western Christians begin to change?
 - pp. 97 – early signs of opposition to freedom for “foreign religions” in Russia
 - p. 133 – Yeltsin signs a revision of the religious freedom law
 - pp. 182-187 – RACU is attacked on religious grounds
7. At what point did Vladimir Putin make Orthodox Christianity a weapon in a “culture war” against the West and has his policy been successful in Russia?
 - pp. 215-220 – after the anti-Putin riots when he again became president
8. Since RACU closed and many Western Christian ministries have been forced out of Russia, are you aware of any further changes in the status of cooperation between Russian Christians and Christians from other countries?
 - See recent articles in the **East-West Church Report** and other current news sources about religion in Russia.