

# Empty Churches Leader's Guide



## Four missions experiences on sharing Jesus with people who don't seem to care

### Location: Norway

**Focus verse:** *I am not ashamed, because I know the One I have believed in and am persuaded that He is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day. 2 Timothy 1:12b (HCSB)*

**Overall message:** Norway is historically and statistically Christian, but missionaries report that most Norwegians today do not have a personal relationship with Jesus and many are not interested in Christianity. Instead, they're exploring Buddhism and Hinduism, attempting to contact angels and the dead or not seeking truth at all. IMB missionaries like the Dove family are looking for ways to replace the empty churches in Norway with hearts full of love for Jesus. In this set of missions experiences, kids will be encouraged to know what they believe about Jesus and be ready to share it through acts of kindness and hospitality to others.

**Before you begin:** This resource is a collection of experiences to plug your kids into global missions. The leader's guide includes plans for four, short missions experiences designed to last 10 to 15 minutes. Add these to existing children's programs or combine them for a longer missions focus. Through these experiences, kids will learn about other cultures and also about developing lifelong patterns of praying, giving and being personally involved in God's plan to reach all nations.

Names of Christians around the world or Christian workers are often changed or withheld to protect the spread of the gospel.

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# Empty Churches Experience 1



## Prepare

- From the DVD-ROM or [kidsonmission.org](http://kidsonmission.org), prepare to show the **Dove boys share Norway** video.
- Download and print the **Empty Churches focus verse, Norway map, Dove family photos** and the **Fact cards**. Tape the first half of each fact on the outside of a mailing envelope. Seal the second half of each fact inside the corresponding envelope. Leave the **Empty Churches focus verse** posted in your room to refer to in each experience.

## Introduction

With your finger or a sticky note, conceal the caption on the **Norway map** and challenge kids to guess the name of the country. Reveal the country name and tell kids Norway is home to around 5 million people. The long, skinny country is nearly as long as the United States' east coast. Invite kids to imagine what kind of weather, climate and culture missionaries experience in Norway. Explain that you will be learning about the people of Norway and how Christians are sharing the gospel there.

## Norway knowledge

- Playfully tell kids that you are going to test their prediction skills. Hand a prepared **Fact card** envelope to a volunteer. Prompt her to read the statement on the outside of the envelope, then allow volunteers to guess the rest of the fact. Let the group do a dramatic “drum roll” on their legs or a tabletop while the volunteer opens the envelope and reads the remaining information aloud. Continue until all the envelopes have been opened.
- Tell the kids that they are going to meet a missionary family in Norway. Show kids the **Dove boys share Norway** video.
- When the video concludes, show the **Dove family photos**. Invite kids to share their observations about the family's work and daily life.

## Pray

Read the **Empty Churches focus verse**. Guide kids to pray that the people of Norway will seek and worship God.



# Empty Churches Experience 2



## Prepare

- From the DVD-ROM or [kidsonmission.org](http://kidsonmission.org), prepare to show the **Norway needs Jesus** video.
- Download and print **Norwegian for beginners**.
- Arrange chairs in a circle for a musical chairs-style game. You'll need one less chair than you have kids.

## Recap

Many Norwegians either seek spiritual truth from false sources or don't seek God at all. The Doves (Zack, Jennifer, William and Daniel) live in Sandefjord, Norway, pointing people to the true God by building relationships and showing hospitality.

## Norwegian for beginners

- Display the Norwegian phrases. Comment that many Norwegian phrases are similar to English words. Challenge kids to examine the words and determine their meanings:

**Stoppe** [*STOP-uh*] = stop

**Gå** [*goh*] = go

**Sirkel** [*SIHR-keh*] = circle

**Trekk** [*trek*] = move

**Sitt ned** [*sitt neh*] = sit down

**Skyn deg** [*shen dye*] = hurry up

- Use *trek*, *stoppe*, and *sitt ned* as commands in a silly 30-second Simon Says game.

## Why are churches empty?

- Lead kids to *sitt ned* (sit down) and tell them you are going to read an observation about Norway from William and Daniel Dove's parents, Jennifer and Zach.

Jennifer Dove says, "One of the things that just broke our hearts here was [that] you see these beautiful church buildings and you see the numbers that say 90-95 percent Christian, but ... the buildings are sitting empty or they've become cafes, and ... there's not really a strong [Christian] presence anymore."

Zach Dove says, "People that are Christians here, it's not acceptable in normal life to talk about issues of faith or to talk about religion or anything. It's just something people don't talk about. It's a very private matter."

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# Empty Churches Experience 2

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- After reading the Dove's statements, ask: Is Norway really a Christian country? Why or why not?
- Follow up with the question: Why do you think many churches in Norway are empty? (Many Norwegians don't feel a need to worship God and are not hearing about the gospel from other believers.)
- Play the **Norway needs Jesus** video to find out how the Doves are helping Christians in Norway share Jesus with others.
- If appropriate with the age of your group, discuss whether or not they believe the U.S. is a Christian country. How should we, as followers of Jesus, respond to our country's spiritual needs?

## Pray

- Comment that Norwegians are willing to talk about spiritual things; however, they are investigating Buddhism, Hinduism, meditation and contacting spirits rather than seeking the one real God.
- Focus attention on the **Empty Churches focus verse** and read it together.
- Using appropriate **Norwegian for beginners** commands in random order (*trekk, sirkel, gå, skyn deg*), guide kids to walk around the circle of chairs. When you say *stoppe* or *sit ned*, kids should sit in the nearest available seat.
- Ask the person left standing to share something he knows to be true about God. Call for a volunteer to pray that Norwegians will learn and understand that truth.
- Play additional rounds of the game as time permits.
- Close with prayer for the Doves and the people they are reaching in Norway.



# Empty Churches Experience 3



## Prepare

- If you have not done so, from the DVD-ROM or [kidsonmission.org](http://kidsonmission.org), prepare to show **Dove boys share Norway** video.
- Download, print and display the **Dove family photos**, if you did not do so for experience 1.
- Provide blank paper and markers.

## Recap

Many Norwegians either seek spiritual truth from false sources or don't seek God at all. The Doves (Zack, Jennifer, William and Daniel) live in Sandefjord, Norway, pointing people to the true God by building relationships and showing hospitality.

## X marks the spot

- Distribute one sheet of blank paper to everyone.
- Tell them to work together to draw a total of 977 dollar signs (\$). For example, if you have 10 kids, nine of them can draw 100 signs each and one can draw 77.
- Ask them what they think the number 977 represents.
- Explain that it costs about \$977 per week to support an IMB missionary.

## A supporting role

- If kids have not seen it, show the **Dove boys share Norway** video or guide kids to recall what they remember about the Dove family using the **Dove family photos** for prompts.
- Remind kids that IMB missionaries like the Doves are supported in at least two ways: by the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering™ and through a portion of the tithes and offerings people give in Southern Baptist churches every week. *Note: If your church is not Southern Baptist or supports missionaries in other ways, explain how to your group.*
- Propose a giving challenge: encourage kids to take the dollar sign pages home with them. Each time they set aside a dollar to give to missions, they may circle a \$.

## Pray

Together, ask God to give Christians a strong desire to help missionaries by giving.



# Empty Churches

## Experience 4



### Prepare

- If you would like to review, from the DVD-ROM or [kidsonmission.org](http://kidsonmission.org), prepare to show **Dove boys share Norway** video
- Bring a package of foam coffee cups.
- Write the letters *H-O-S-P-I-T-A-L-I-T-Y* vertically in the center of a blank poster or large sheet of paper.

### Recap

Many Norwegians either seek spiritual truth from false sources or don't seek God at all. The Doves (Zack, Jennifer, William and Daniel) live in Sandefjord, Norway, pointing people to the true God by building relationships and showing hospitality.

### How many cups?

- If you have not done so, show the **Dove boys share Norway** video.
- Form two teams. Give each team an equal number of cups and conduct a contest to build the tallest cup tower.
- Tell kids that Norwegians are heavy coffee drinkers, at the rate of 2 cups a day per person (730 cups a year). Challenge older kids to estimate how tall their towers would be if they had 730 cups to work with.
- Remind kids that few Norwegians express any interest in attending church, so inviting a new friend to share a cup of coffee provides an opportunity for missionaries like the Doves to talk to people about their faith.

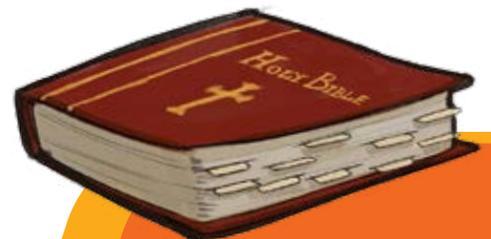
### Hospitality helps

- Comment that a Christian doesn't have to drink coffee to show hospitality to a non-Christian friend. Invite kids to define hospitality (making guests, friends or strangers feel welcome).
- Call attention to the prepared poster. Lead kids to help you build an acrostic that describes ways kids can show hospitality to others. Each phrase should contain a letter in the word "hospitality" but does not necessarily need to begin with the letter; for example:

Invite neighbors to a party.

Serve the guest's favorite food.

Sit beside a guest at church.



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# Empty Churches **Experience 4**

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- Challenge kids to practice hospitality at school and in their communities.

## **Pray**

Ask God to provide many opportunities for the Doves to start conversations about Jesus.



# Empty Churches Going Further



## More ideas using this theme

- Download and print the **Empty Churches parent letter**. Give to parents so they can help kids extend their missions experiences through family activities.
- Search for “Zach and Jennifer Dove” on **imb.org** for more information about their ministry.
- For fun, serve coffee-flavored treats or decaf lattes in conjunction with experience 4.
- Do an online search of the decline in Christianity and closing of churches in post-modern Europe. Read for background as you teach and use as a prompt for your personal prayer time.
- Don't forget to visit **kidsonmission.org** for more activities and KOM experiences you might have missed. Also, like us on Facebook and see how other churches are using KOM.

