

VICTORIOUS IN CHRIST

All Activity Sheets

KEY WORDS

RIGHTEOUSNESS FAITH CONSOLATION PROMISES OF GOD PERSECUTED BEATITUDES

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Matthew 5:10-12, 43-48; Luke 23:26-43.

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To help preadolescents find consolation in the promises of God if they are persecuted for their faith.

MEMORY VERSE

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” (Matthew 5:6, NIV*).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Religious persecution is a painful truth of our day, although people try to cover it under the curtain of tolerance and respect for human rights. With surprise, we can say that those who most demand tolerance are those who tolerate Christians the least. It is common for the media to ridicule or unfavorably represent Christian believers. Although preadolescents may not identify with physical persecution, they must know other forms of persecution that Christians face today.

The Bible tells us about it. The story of the crucifixion of Christ is the ultimate example of persecution. Jesus, who never sinned, suffered persecution until death, giving us the example of how to face it.

This lesson also tells us about the promises that God gives in the Beatitudes to those who suffer persecution for their faith. Preadolescents will learn that God will be with them every time they face persecution.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Read Matthew 5:10-12 and 43-48. What Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount about persecution is fascinating. He stated that

many Christians would be persecuted for their beliefs, and that others had suffered previously because of their faith. Then, he taught us the proper attitude when suffering persecution: be glad and rejoice (5:12), love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (5:44).

Read Luke 23:26-43. Jesus endorsed his words about persecution by giving the supreme example. Although he was innocent, he experienced physical and mental anguish before his crucifixion. He suffered derision, torture and other cruel mistreatments. He faced the hypocrisy of those who had praised him before but now were screaming for him to be crucified.

In Luke 23:34, we read Jesus' answer: "Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing." Jesus practiced what he preached. That is why he prayed for those who sent him to a cross of pain, persecution and death. How much do we need to experience the deep relationship that Jesus had with his Father!

INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Search the concordance

To carry out this activity, it is necessary to have a Bible with a concordance. Ask them to look for the word "blessed", and count how many verses in which this word is mentioned. Next, ask them to look for the word "blessing", and to count the times it is mentioned.

TEACH THE LESSON

Have your group sit down forming a circle. Then ask them to recount an incident in which their friends made fun of them for doing the right thing and not following others. Use the answers to introduce the topic of study. Tell them that today they will talk about how Christians can face persecution.

Beatitudes

Read to the group Matthew 5:10-12 and Matthew 5:43-48. Divide the group into two teams. Tell them they have 5 minutes to put these verses in their own words. If they have Bibles they can refer to them.

Then, come together to listen to the conclusions of each team.

At the end of the activities, tell the biblical story referred to in Luke chapters 22 and 23.

CONNECT THE LESSON

What would you do if you faced persecution?

Have students complete Student Activity Sheet #357-A. Then, divide the class into three groups to read the cases or examples found on Student Activity Sheet #357-B. As a teacher, you will need to become familiar with these examples and then guide the preadolescents in a discussion that everyone participates in. In each case, a question is repeated: "What are you doing?" Allow everyone to give their opinion.

Then, give them time to complete the unit's last project (see the suggestions on Student Activity Sheet #357-C) by making a poster based on the words of Matthew 5:10-12.

PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

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This is the unit's last lesson and surely most of your children already know the verse by heart. If possible, talk with the pastor so your class can say the verse in front of the congregation and relate some more of what they learned in this unit. They could possibly do it in a worship service.

WRAP-UP

Pray

Being persecuted is not something pleasant. It may seem impossible to “rejoice and be happy,” as Jesus taught. However, God tells us that if we face persecution, we can express our concern and fear. We can also pray to try to stop it, just as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane. In addition, we must pray for strength to face the persecution. Pray for the students that during the week they will have strength and confidence in God’s protection. Also, intercede for the brothers and sisters who suffer persecution around the world, especially in some areas of the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

Encourage

Encourage the preadolescents to have the freedom to express if they feel they are being persecuted because they are Christians. Maybe in the family of one of them, the father or the mother does not have the same faith and that creates conflicts. Encourage the group to pray every day for the Christians of a particular country, asking God to protect them and give them the courage to overcome suffering.

Invite

Remind the group that the true secret of happiness is in obeying the teachings of Jesus and living according to the will of God. Then, invite the students to the next session when they will begin a new unit of lessons. Remind them this is a good time to invite new group members.