

Mission Lesson

November 2024 - February 2025

Persecuted Christians

Goal: To help students understand what persecution looks like and to understand better the experience of their brothers and sisters in Christ around the world.

Supplies:

- Computer connected to a screen or TV to display the PowerPoint
- Whiteboard
- Markers (one per student)
- Half-sheets of cardstock, folded to form a blank greeting card (one per student)
- Optional: Premade cards with a fill-in-the-blank message and a verse inside and a picture on the front (Option 1) or blank on the front (Option 2) (see appendix)
- Top 12 bookmarks (for students to use as a reference as they write in the cards) (see appendix)
- Box to collect cards at the end of the lesson
- Bible (Note: Several verses are read aloud in today's lesson. Mark them in your Bible in advance so you can find them quickly as you teach.)

Leader Resources:

1. <https://worldhelp.net/6-ways-teach-children-christian-persecution/>
2. <https://www.persecution.org/letters/> (This website has all the information you will need for mailing the encouragement cards the kids will be making at the end.)

Ideas to Turbo Charge Your Mission Lesson:

- Instead of collecting the cards in a box, build or use a mailbox for students to put their letters in at the end of the activity. To make it extra exciting, build a colorful, larger-than-life mailbox.
- Set up multiple writing stations for students to use. Use these ideas or come up with your own:
 - Make a more rustic setup by creating tables using cinder blocks with plywood on top. On the plywood, use black paint to write the names of a few countries where Christians are persecuted and use stencils to paint outlines of people, to help remind students of where and to whom they are writing letters.
 - Have a writing station open between services or after service throughout the quarter, so students can continue to write letters/draw pictures weekly.

Lesson Preparation:

This is a long lesson, but it can be adapted to fit your church's time frame and to suit the ages of your students. Please be sensitive to younger students while still communicating the reality of the crisis.

Study the talking points associated with each slide in advance, making sure you understand them and are thoroughly prepared to teach them.

In the closing activity for this lesson, students will write letters of encouragement to persecuted Christians who have been imprisoned for their faith. The second link in the Leader Resources section takes you to a form on International Christian Concern's website where you can download a digital packet containing

information about the prisoners, their mailing addresses, and instructions for letter-writing. Please go over this information in advance.

Lesson:

Slide 1: "Persecution"

This slide should be on the screen as students enter the room. If you're not using the PPT, write the word "Persecution" on a white board.

Slide 2: "What is persecution?"

Ask the class what they think persecution is. Allow a few students to answer.

Slide 3: (pictures of kids at church)

Do you love talking to Jesus, going to church, worshiping God, and learning Bible lessons? Did you know that when you ask Jesus to save you from your sin and you make Him the Lord of your life, you actually become part of a family? God's family! He tells us this in John 1:12. *Read John 1:12 from your Bible.* God says that when He saves us from our sin, He adopts us into His family, and He calls us His sons and daughters. That means that other people who believe in Jesus as their Savior are your brothers and sisters in Christ!

Did you know that in some countries, our brothers and sisters in Christ aren't allowed to pray, go to church, worship God, and read the Bible freely? If they do and are discovered, they are often bullied, treated badly, and even physically hurt very badly, or even put in jail. This poor treatment because of their faith in Jesus has a special name: it is called "persecution".

Slide 4: "What is persecution?"

Persecution is when somebody treats a person badly because of what they believe. But Jesus said to worship Him no matter what. *Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-28 from your Bible.* So, these Christians keep serving Him, reading their Bibles, and going to church despite the persecution. They know they are part of God's family, and that is very important to them.

Can you imagine being forced to leave your home and live in a tent for years, with only the ground to sleep on, because you believe in Jesus? Or being put in prison because you said you loved Jesus? People around the world have had to leave their homes and their cities because of persecution. Many of them are now living in crowded camps without electricity or running water, far away from their homes, just because they believe in Jesus. These people need to be reminded that they belong to a BIG family – God's family – that loves them and remembers them.

Slide 5: "What does persecution look like?"

Ask students what they think persecution might look like in their country and in other countries around the world. What does it mean to be treated badly for believing in Jesus?

Slide 6: "What does persecution look like?"

Read the examples on the slide. Is this what you were expecting? Do you know anyone who has experienced persecution like this?

Slide 7: “What does persecution look like?”

Read the examples on the slide. Is this what you were expecting? Do you know anyone who has experienced persecution like this?

Slide 8: “What can we do about persecution?”

Thinking about all this persecution is kind of scary, isn't it? We wish we could go and make it stop, but most of the time that just isn't possible. What can we do then? Hebrews 13:1 and 3 says that we need to love one another and continually remember our brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering because of their faith in Jesus. What does God ask us to do for those who are persecuted? (Love them and remember them) Our lesson today is a great way to remember them! And in a few minutes, we are going to do a project that will show love to them.

Slide 9: “God is in control”

Even though many Christians are being persecuted around the world, God is in control! We Christians who are safe can be thankful for that. We can pray for those who are being persecuted, and God will hear our prayers for them, just like He will hear their prayers when they cry out to Him. In 1 Peter 5:7, God reminds us that, no matter what kind of hardship people are suffering, He sees them and will take care of them.

Read 1 Peter 5:7 from your Bible.

Transition to closing activity.

Closing Activity: Writing letters of encouragement to persecuted Christians

Goal: To form personal connections between your students and persecuted Christians.

Leader's Note: It is important to thoroughly study the instructions provided by International Christian Concern, so we do not endanger the Christians receiving these letters. These instructions are included in the International Christian Concern's digital download, which includes names, pictures, and profiles of persecuted believers. Some of the content may not be appropriate for younger students, so we suggest that leaders screen these profiles and prepare a brief summary to share with students.

Optional: Have younger students decorate the cards written by the older students. Or have older students make cards using blank cardstock and younger students fill in the premade cards (see appendix) with their first name and age and then color the picture on the front cover.

Before we end this lesson, we will write our brothers and sisters in Christ notes of encouragement. We will collect your cards at the end and mail them to persecuted Christians who are currently in prison because they stood firm for Jesus.

Pass out cards and markers. Write a few sample sentences on the whiteboard to give students inspiration. (Copying them directly into the cards is absolutely fine.) Per International Christian Concern guidelines, it is best to write the card in clear and concise English to make translation easier.

Sample sentences: Hello! My name is _____, and I am ____ years old. I am praying for you and your family. Jesus loves you, and He is always with you.

Close by praying as a class for persecuted Christians.