

Lesson 9: Reasons for persecution

Aims for each learner:

- Be sure that nothing can separate us from God's love.
- Understand that persecution will happen, but God uses it for our good.
- Learn to act wisely to avoid unnecessary persecution.
- Memorize 1 Peter 2:21.

Cultural clues:

- Advising BMBs in persecution

Prepare: Pieces of paper with words from Romans 8:35 (for q.12)

Opening

Pray for the lesson. Review last week's practical task: What did you do to serve our community or a needy person or someone in authority? How did the other person respond?

Lesson 9 home study review:

Question 1: for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps (1 Peter 2:21).

Question 2: 1) world, hates; 2) God, persecution; 3) act foolishly; 4) Christ's steps

Introduce today's topic: Today's topic is persecution, and it is a very hard subject. Maybe our discussion will bring tears because of hurt we have experienced. But God uses persecution for good, and can heal our pain as we talk about these things.

Discussion

First reason – The world hates us (Questions 1-6)

Question 1-2: Read all of question 1 and the first part of question 2.

- Which answers did you put for q.2? Or have you experienced persecution in other ways? Are you still facing persecution?

Stop now and pray together for anyone in the group who is facing persecution now or is still hurting from earlier opposition.

Let each person talk about his or her experiences. This is an important time of sharing and may bring tears, assure people that this is okay.

Question 5: In the box, read the true story of Haim. What emotions do you feel?

Second reason – God allows persecution (Questions 7-13)

Read 1 Peter 1:3-7



- According to verse 4, where is our inheritance? *In heaven*
- Will it ever 'perish, spoil or fade'? *No – unlike our earthly inheritance!*
- According to verse 5, what shields us at this present time? *God's power*
- When we face 'all kinds of trials' how should we respond, according to v.6? *We greatly rejoice.*
- What does verse 7 say our faith is like? *Like gold, indeed 'of greater worth than gold'.*
- Why does a goldsmith pass gold through fire? *To refine it, e.g. turning 9 carat gold into 24 carat.*
- So, why does God allow us to pass through persecution? *To prove our faith, and to make us pure, patient and strong. His refining fire turns our 9 carat faith into precious 24 carat faith!*

Question 10: Read the entire question. What answers did you tick? How do you feel about this?

Only a) is the 'correct' answer. However, the purpose of this discussion is for the learners to be honest about their personal doubts and struggles. Then they can open themselves up to God's Word in an honest way, so God can change their thinking and give them strength to trust that He is good even in times of suffering.

Question 11: Read the entire question. What did you write for part b)? *Share from your own life too!*

Question 12:



When passing through severe difficulties, believers sometimes feel that God is abandoning or punishing them. The following exercise helps them be more deeply confident that God still loves them and will never let them go. Beforehand, write on separate pieces of paper the words 'trouble', 'hardship', 'persecution', 'famine', 'nakedness', 'danger', 'sword'. Also write on two more papers 'can separate' & 'cannot separate' and

place these on the table or floor. Finally, write a paper with the word 'death'.

- Read **Romans 8:35**. Which of these things can separate us from the love of Christ? Each person take one paper and place it under the heading 'can separate' or 'cannot separate'.
- Read **Romans 8:36**. Does this verse describe Haim's family as they faced death together?
- Read all together with one voice **Romans 8:37-39**. Could even death separate Haim's family from Christ's love? *No! They went straight to be with God.*

Put the paper saying 'death' with the other papers under the heading 'cannot separate'.

- Can anything separate us from Christ's love, anything at all? *No, not even death!*

Third reason – We sometimes act foolishly (Questions 14-17)

Question 14: Read the question after Shakeel's story:

- What is your opinion on this?
- Did Shakeel face necessary persecution or unnecessary?
- How should we avoid unnecessary persecution?
- Should we avoid necessary persecution?

Remind learners that the home study helps them to take part in the discussion time better.

E.g. he behaved foolishly by bringing embarrassment to his family, running away from home, insulting his father.

Unnecessary.

E.g. by respecting our elders, supporting our families, trying not to bring them shame, so far as possible.

We must not deny the name of Christ. But we might choose to move location, see q.17.

Question 17: Read the second paragraph.

- What is your opinion on this question? *The 'right' or 'wrong' answer depends on circumstances. A person in danger of their life needs to consider moving to another place for some time. However, if not in danger they should try if possible to live quietly at home until the situation improves. They should try to prove they are still loyal to their family even though they follow Jesus Christ.*

Fourth reason – We follow in Christ's steps (Questions 19-22)

Read 1 Peter 2:19-21:



- How does verse 20 describe unnecessary suffering?
'How is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong?'
- How does this verse describe necessary suffering?
'If you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.'
- If we have to suffer persecution, whose footsteps do we follow, according to verse 21?
Our master Jesus trod the 'path of thorns' and it is an honour for us to place our steps in his!

Review and reflect on the memory verse 1 Peter 2:21: *As well as learning verses from the Bible, we should meditate on them. This helps us hear what he is saying to us through the verse and how he wants us to respond. You can demonstrate this during the lesson using the following steps:*

- 1) Ask everyone to quieten their hearts before God. Ask God to speak to all of us through his Word.
- 2) Ask everyone to slowly speak the memory verse once out loud.
- 3) Each person should repeat the verse quietly to themselves multiple times, listen to what God is saying and reflect on each part of the verse. *Allow at least 5 minutes for this.*
- 4) Ask God to show each of you how he wants you to respond. *Allow a few minutes for this.*
- 5) Share in the group or in pairs about what God spoke to you through this verse and how you will respond.

Conclusion

Obeying today's teaching:

- What difference will today's lesson make in your life?
- **Read together the practical task.** Learners can use a similar process to today's reflection to meditate on one verse each day. *NB the correct questions are 1,3,7,9,11,15,18,20,22 - not as in the study book 2013 edition.*

Pray together: Ask people to pray short prayers, thanking God for his strong promise in times of persecution. Pray for believers suffering persecution in other countries, especially Christ's followers of Muslim background.