



elev8

life on another level

Student Workbook

YEAR 2

Life and Action

**Blessed are the
Persecuted**

Bible Readings

Matthew 5:10

Acts 6:8 – Acts 8:3

1 Peter 3:8-22



Learning Outcomes

At the end of this week you will be able to:

- Gained an appreciation of the hardships of the Christian life.
- Been exposed to the fact of Christian persecution throughout the world.
- Been challenged to evaluate how important Jesus is to you.

Notes from Bible Reading

Scripture A word or phrase that stood out to me:

Observation What is happening in this Bible reading?

Application Something that I learned about who I am or how I should live:

Prayer What I would like to say to God, ask of God, or what I think God is saying to me:

Key Question How far would you go?

Engage

Go around the group and share one thing for each heading that has happened since you last met:

- Plus – What has been good or enjoyable?
- Minus – What has been difficult or painful?
- Interesting – What has been unusual or thought provoking?

Discussion starter:

Have you ever been teased, abused or made fun of for standing up for what you believe in?

OR

Has there been a time when you have gone along with the crowd, but regretted it later?

Some facts:

- To be persecuted means to be badly treated by other people, often due to your race or religion.
- Each of Jesus' twelve disciples was eventually killed for their faith (martyred), except for John (see www.apostles.com/apostlesdied.html).
- History is filled with examples of people being persecuted for their beliefs. Not only Christians, but Jews, Muslims and countless groups have endured torment for their beliefs. It is important to remember that Christians have not only been on the receiving end of persecution, but have also dished it out to others (such as in the 'Crusades' of the Middle Ages).

Explore – Locate

- *What stood out to you in the Bible readings this week?*
- *What did you find meaningful or significant?*
- *Is there anything that you didn't understand or found confusing?*
- *Any questions or comments you may have?*

Read together: 1 Peter 3:8-22

A true story by a teenage boy from Ethiopia...

"The moment I accepted Christ as my personal Saviour, people told my parents that their son had changed his religion. They called me and we discussed my conversion. Finally, they gave me a choice: "Choose between us and Jesus." I decided to follow Jesus. My parents, brothers, and sisters started beating me with sticks and finally chased me out of the house. For three months I slept under a tree. Finally some Christians found out that I slept in the open air, and they gave me some bread. For the last five years I've been living like this, travelling from one Christian's house to the next, sleeping a few nights here and a few nights there.

"When my parents expelled me from home, I was in ninth grade, but with the assistance of other Christians, I have completed twelfth grade. While I was attending school I was not able to buy clothes, textbooks etc. The university doesn't want to accept me because my results are not up to standard. So I am just simply sitting and waiting. If I were to go back to my family, they would tell me to deny Jesus."

There are many, many stories of extreme persecution of people because of their faith in Jesus, or any belief that clashes with the common culture of the day. Yet interestingly, it is often persecuted churches that grow fastest. Perhaps others are inspired by the sacrifices Christians are willing to make for Jesus, and are caused to think, "A relationship with Jesus must be something really special if Christians are willing to suffer so much for it."

And of course, just because we're taught to respect others doesn't mean we always do (and every Christian surely has moments where they put others down, and forget Jesus' command to love others, even our 'enemies'). Do you respect the beliefs of others, or do you give them a hard time because they're different? And how important is Jesus to you? Would you be willing to stand up for Him and to live how He wants you to, even though you will most likely experience teasing and abuse? Is it worth it?

Explore – Express

As a group, or in pair, write a drama telling the story of someone who is persecuted for their beliefs (they don't necessarily have to be a Christian).

Using your drama, demonstrate how another person might help the victim, how the victim might respond to the bullies, or how the victim feels about standing up for their faith.

To finish, act the drama out.

Explore – Integrate

Some questions:

- Have you ever experienced persecution or abuse because of your opinions or beliefs? Share your story.
- The more important something is to you, the more you will be willing to sacrifice for it. What, or who, would you be willing to stand for?
- What can you do to support others around you when they stand up for their beliefs and are teased by others?

Extend

Discuss with your group the challenges you are tackling. Use the time to ask for any help you might need, or to work together on any shared projects that you have.

Questions that may be helpful include:

- What challenges are you working on at the moment?
- Do you need any support or assistance?
- Are there any challenges that you have completed that we need to recognise and celebrate?
- Are there any new challenges that you want to work on?

Encourage

Tell another student in your group something you value or appreciate about them.

Share one thing you would like to pray for and pray for one another.

Here is a prayer you can pray together to finish up:

“For the Persecuted” (BCP 1928):

O blessed Lord, who yourself did go through the pain and suffering of the Cross; Uphold, we plead, with your promised gift of strength all those of our brothers and sisters who are suffering for their faith in you. Grant that in the midst of all persecutions they may hold fast to their faith in you, and that from their strength and courage your Church may grow. Help us also to grow in perseverance,

Amen.