

Lesson 7.8 Taking up the Cross: Suffering

Topic: Model for Peacemaking

Sub-topics: Suffering

3D. God Leads Us

4G. Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace

Class: Standard VII (7th Grade)

Objectives: **Knowledge:** When asked what a peacemaker does, students will know that they bring peace to the world in daily acts of service to others.

Attitude: Students will be willing to face the difficulties and rejection that peacemaking sometimes brings.

Materials:

Chalkboard and chalk

Journals

References: Matthew 10

Memory Verse: Matthew 10:38

Teacher Activities

Introduction: *Optional: Worship*

Ask students what resources they have that they could sacrifice or use to help others.

Bible Story: Listen to Matthew 10 and learn how Jesus trained His disciples to become peacemakers. What was unpleasant or difficult at times?

Application: The life of the peacemaker is not always easy. Our efforts can be misunderstood or unwanted by others. This conflict and rejection by others can pierce our hearts.

Share the story of Elizabeth Fry and lead a short discussion about her peacemaking efforts.

Evaluation: Are students giving thoughtful answers in their journals? Did students relate to the story of Elizabeth Fry? Can they think of individuals they know who model carrying the cross of Christ?

Student Activities

Introduction: Students share answers to the introductory questions, first discussing with a partner, then the large group.

Bible Story: Students listen and answer the Scripture questions.

Application: Discuss the story of Elizabeth Fry with the whole class.

Small Group Discussions

- Have you experienced rejection from others as a result of your witness as a Christian or your peacemaking efforts?
- Why are small deeds of kindness so important to peacemaking?
- How can you practice acts of kindness to those around you?

Journal about deeds of kindness others have shown or you have shown to others.

Evaluation: Are students beginning to be less selfish in their daily actions? Are they looking for opportunities to show kindness?

Extension Activities: *Begin the class with a time of worship.*

*Letter Writing-*Have the classes write short letters addressed to Elizabeth Fry. Encourage them to ask her questions about her work and to tell her about what they would like to get involved in to use their God-given talents for His glory. Invite student volunteers to read their letters aloud to the class.

Acts of Kindness. Is there an act of kindness your class could do today? Are there widows or orphans in your community who would benefit from acts of kindness? Encourage students to look for opportunities to be kind to people who are sometimes overlooked or mistreated.

Examples. Can the students think of someone who suffered or took risks because of their peacemaking efforts or because they were followers of Jesus? (Many of the early Friends including George Fox and William Penn, The Friends Peacemaking teams in Kenya after the 2007 elections, early missionaries, and so on) Why do we admire these people? How can we be like them?

Notes for Teacher

The life of the peacemaker is not always easy or peaceful. Our efforts can be misunderstood or unwanted by others. Our sacrifice of time and money can be seen as a threat by friends and family who want us to spend our time and money on them. This conflict and rejection by others can pierce our hearts like a sword. We can find ourselves facing people in power who question our efforts. That is why Jesus says His followers will not always have peace. They will have to take up the cross.

Key Concept: The cross is the persecution and anger of those who don't understand this way of peace and who fight against it. Followers of Jesus and those who would be peacemakers must be willing to face this kind of resistance.

Bible Story: Have student Readers read the following scriptures from Matthew 10. After each passage is read, ask the class the corresponding question.

- Matthew 10:1, 7-8 – What is Jesus sending the disciples out to do?
- Matthew 10:16-20 – Jesus compares the disciples to sheep, snakes and doves. What do these analogies mean?
- Matthew 10:34-39 – Jesus warns here that even our loved ones may fight against us when we are followers of Jesus. Why would that be?
- I Corinthians 1:18, 21-24 –Why does the message of the cross offend some people and seem foolish to others? (Self-righteous people or religious people who do not want to accept God's offer of salvation through the cross are offended by Christians and by God who says Jesus is the only way to be forgiven. They want to earn their salvation some other way. People who do not know that they are sinners do not know they need to be forgiven. For them the cross is "foolishness" or unnecessary.)
- Have someone read the memory verse again (Matthew 10:38) What do you think it means to "take up your cross"? *The cross is the persecution and anger of those who don't understand this way of peace and who fight against it.*

When Jesus sent out his disciples to minister to the lost sheep of Israel, he warned them to be "as cautious as snakes (snakes are cunning and wise) and as gentle as doves (doves and sheep would not hurt any one)." If they were handed over to the councils, they were not to worry. The Holy Spirit would give them what they were to say. They were not to fear persecution or be afraid. As we are tested by persecution, we are to remember how important we are to God who even knows the number of hairs on our head. God even knows when a sparrow falls to the ground. Peacemaking can be difficult. We may at times want to take the easy road. Yet we cannot deny Christ Jesus before others. *Matthew 10:32-33 says,*

*If anyone declares publicly that he belongs to me, I will do the same for him before my Father;
But if anyone rejects me publicly, I will reject him before my Father in heaven.*

This promise gives us peace in the midst of persecution. Sometimes our faith will call us to take up the cross to follow Jesus Christ. In visible ways our witness may be difficult. Yet as we daily deny ourselves, we are able to pick up the cross of Christ and walk obedient to Him. This is the true baptism of the Holy Spirit, which at times can be a “deep baptism.” It is dying to selfishness and walking in love. Inner peace empowers us to be peacemakers in the world even in the midst of suffering.

Have a student read Matthew 10:40-42. Peacemaking occurs each day as we consider how we might be a blessing to those we meet. A random act of kindness can bring peace in our community. It might be as simple as giving a cup of cold water to a little one. God says He notices and rewards those who are kind. In daily acts of service to others we bring peace to the world.

Application: *Share the Story of Elizabeth Fry.*

A historic Friend who let her life speak of peace was Elizabeth Fry. As a teenager, Elizabeth heard a traveling Friends minister preach a sermon which changed her life. She started a school for children in her community and taught them about the Bible, and started collecting clothes for the poor and visiting the sick in her neighborhood. As an adult she became a recorded Friends minister. Even though she married and became the mother of eleven children, Elizabeth found time to visit Newgate Prison in England with her friends. There she found deplorable conditions for the women and their children in jail with them. These prisoners were overcrowded into filthy rooms where they cooked all their food, ate, washed their clothes and slept. Elizabeth helped to organize a school for the children, began training for the mothers – teaching them to sew and read – and offered Bible classes for the residents. She started a group which eventually sparked the creation of another group called the British Ladies’ Society for Promoting the Reformation of Female Prisoners – this group was the first “nationwide” women’s organization in England!

Fry’s brother-in-law, Thomas Fowell Buxton, was elected to Parliament and he began to promote her work there. In 1818, she became the first woman to present evidence in Parliament when she spoke to a committee in the House of Commons about the conditions of British prisons! She was also admired by the current queen of England, Queen Victoria, who often granted her audiences and gave money to her cause. Because of Elizabeth Fry’s dedication to the well-being of all of God’s children, God continued to give her opportunities. Her efforts led to prison reform throughout England. She let her life speak for her faith and for God’s love by taking up a cross that was sometimes difficult or not fun to bear.

- How was Elizabeth Fry “taking up the cross” for peacemaking?
- What deeds of kindness did she do and how did they help bring peace?

Discussion Groups

- Have you experienced rejection from others as a result of your witness as a Christian or your peacemaking efforts?
- Why are small deeds of kindness so important to peacemaking?
- How can you practice acts of kindness to those around you?

Journal: 1.) How have you felt as the result of deeds of kindness you have received?
2.) What deeds of kindness have you done (or could you do) for others?