



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Session 7: Worthy

Suggested Week of Use: July 14, 2024

Core Passage: Acts 5:29-42

News Story Summary

On June 29, believers all over the world gathered to recognize and honor those who have died because of their faith in Christ. Dubbed the Day of the Christian Martyr, this observance focuses on individuals' ultimate sacrifice for refusing to renounce their faith or convert to another. It is also a time of inspiration for believers to remain steadfast in their faith, no matter the cost.

Each year, a non-profit organization called The Voice of the Martyrs chooses a person who has been martyred as a way to highlight ongoing persecution around the globe. This year, however, the focus is on a group of people: Christians in Northern Iraq and Syria who were persecuted when the Islamic State (ISIS) marched across the area in 2014. These believers were given a choice to convert to Islam or 1) pay a massive "protection tax"; 2) flee; or 3) die. More than 100,000 left everything behind. Many of them died or were captured by ISIS.

For more about this story, search "Day of the Christian Martyr 2024"

Engage

To supplement the Engage activities, distribute paper and pens to adults. Direct them to number their paper 1-5. Explain that you will read five statements (listed below), and they should write down "fact" or "fable" in response to each one. If time allows, invite adults to share the reasons for their answers.

1. Believers can experience joy amid persecution. (*Fact*)
2. God allows Christians to be persecuted and/or killed because it brings Him glory. (*Fact*)
3. God will hold accountable those who persecute and/or kill Christians. (*Fact*)
4. God will reward Christians who are persecuted and/or killed for their faith. (*Fact*)
5. People in the U.S. do not undergo persecution for their faith. (*Fable*)

Share the story above about the Day of the Christian Martyr. (Voice of the Martyrs also has a video of this year's highlighted martyrs you could show.) Ask: *How do you think those 100,000 people might respond to those statements?* Point out that today's lesson will focus on individuals in Scripture who faced persecution. Open in prayer.

Challenge

To supplement the Challenge activities, recall the story of the people who had to flee their country or die for their faith. Direct adults to look back over their answers from the opening activity and to indicate any answers they want to change based on today's Bible study. Allow

adults to share. Ask: *When have you (or someone you know) been persecuted or mistreated because of your faith?* (Possible answers: Being looked over for a promotion; children being taunted or bullied, and so forth.) If there is an ongoing situation someone is facing, stop to pray for this person. Challenge the group to reflect on how they might respond to persecution and to ask God to give each adult the strength to stay steadfast in the face of persecution.