

Guidelines for lesson 10

Reacting to Persecution

AIMS OF LESSON 10

For each learner to:

- a. Truly believe that forgiveness is better than revenge.
- b. Take steps to forgive a person who hurt him/her.
- c. Memorize Matthew 5:44.

TO START THE MEETING

START WITH PRAYER

LAST WEEK'S PRACTICAL TASK

- Say: "Our Practical Task last week was to think each day about the different Bible verses in Lesson 9. Which verse struck you most?" *[Each member should mention one of the verses. It does not matter if they all choose the same verse or they all choose different verses.]*

TODAY'S TOPIC

- Say: "Today we learn about how God wants us to react to persecution, and especially how we can forgive our enemies."

ANSWERS TO THE LESSON REVIEW

- Check that members can give correct answers to the Review questions. The correct answers are below:
Question 1: forgiveness
Question 2: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"

A) THE CYCLE OF REVENGE *(Introduction & Questions 1-3)*


Cultural Clue: Revenge and Forgiveness

This lesson was originally written for a country where the 'cycle of revenge' has had devastating effects over a whole generation. Although not all Muslims advocate revenge, yet it is a strong undercurrent in many Muslim cultures. Sinful human nature found in all cultures, combined with a desire to 'look strong' and to 'restore honour' in traditional societies, mean that many Muslims assume it is natural to take revenge. Therefore Muslims who encounter Christ's command to love our enemies (this week's memory verse) find it a radical new teaching, and many have been drawn to him as a result.

Many BMBs hold hurt and resentment in their hearts towards those who persecuted or rejected them for their faith (as in Question 15, for example). Release from this is very important to help them move forward in Christ. It is for this reason that the topic is stressed so much in this lesson, and is illustrated repeatedly. Discussion of this topic may release strong emotion but may this lead to healing.

Question 5 draws a contrast between Jesus who died forgiving his persecutors, with leaders who died on the battlefield cursing their enemies. The hint is to recall the leader Hussein, whose death at the battle of Karbala in 680AD is remembered strongly by Shia Muslims, and which stands in contrast to Christ's death. It might or might not be appropriate to mention this to your learner(s), depending on their attitude to the Shia form of Islam.


Speech Bubbles in Introduction

 **Read** the left speech bubble.

 **Ask:**

- "Have you ever felt like that man?" *[Discuss together. If learners say that it feels hard to forgive and a sign of weakness, then don't challenge them at this time. The rest of the lesson goes to discuss these issues.]*

Question 2


 **Read** the final paragraph.

 **Ask:**

- "What example did you think of here?" *[Discuss.]*
 - "So the way of forgiveness is hard and the way of revenge is easy. But which of them makes the damage worse and worse?" *[The way of revenge.]*
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B) FORGIVENESS INSTEAD OF REVENGE (Questions 4-16)

Question 4

 **Read** the entire question.

Practise Together the memory verse Matthew 5:44.


 **Ask:**

- “It is very hard to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. So why should we try to do it?” *[Because Jesus Christ is our master and he commands it. He himself has given us the example for it. Also it breaks the cycle of revenge, and releases us from bitterness.]*
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Question 5

Say:

- “Today we will think about four people mentioned in lesson 10 who reacted to persecution with forgiveness. The first of these is our Lord Jesus Christ.”

 **Read** the entire question (note the comment in ‘Cultural Clues’ above).


 **Ask:**

- “Was Jesus a weak leader or strong?” *[Strong.]*
 - “But Jesus Christ did not use his strength to curse his enemies. He did not use his strength to destroy his enemies. Instead, for what did he use his strength?” *[To forgive his enemies.]*
 - “What can we learn from his example?” *[To forgive is not a sign of weakness, but of strength and courage.]*
 - “Who will give us the strength to forgive our enemies?” *[Jesus himself, by the power of his Spirit living in us.]*
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Question 9

Say:

- “We are looking today at the example of four people. The first of these is our Lord Jesus and the other three are all Christ’s followers who had come from Islam. Let’s look at Farid’s true story.”

 **Read** Farid’s story (which is taken from the internet and is reported as true).

 **Ask:**

- “What answers did you give for question 9 parts a) and b)?” *[Revenge is like petrol on a fire, forgiveness is like water.]*
- “If Farid had carried out his plan of revenge, what would have been the results?” *[His workmates would have retaliated even more, adding to the ‘cycle of revenge’.]*

Question 10

 **Read** the second part of Farid's story.

 **Ask:**

- “What good result came about because Farid forgave instead of taking revenge? *[His workmate was deeply touched, and later became Jesus' follower.]*

Say:

- “Also there was also another good result, which was not included in the lesson for lack of space. After Farid found the money was missing, he could not sleep that night because he was so worried. He was praying about it late at night. Just then he heard a sound on the balcony outside. He looked and found an envelope on the balcony. He did not know who had thrown it there. But it contained a note saying, ‘I am your fellow-believer, and God told me to give you this’. And in the envelope was just the same amount of money Farid had lost!”

 **Ask:**

- “How do you think Farid felt when he found the money?” *[Learners' responses. In fact, this whole incident strengthened Farid's faith very much.]*
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Question 12

Say:


- “Now let's read about a third person who was able to forgive the person who hurt her. She too was Christ's follower from a Muslim family.”

 **Read** the entire question and story.

 **Ask:**

- “Why do you think God met Farid's financial loss in a marvellous way, but not Miriam's?” *[Discuss together. We don't know the answer. God knows what is best for each one of us at different times. Sometimes he shows us a miracle to strengthen our faith, as with Farid. Sometimes he makes us go the hard way to strengthen our endurance, as with Mariam. Either way, he works for good in our lives.]*
 - “What set Miriam free from hating her husband's aunt?” *[She chose to forgive her. Then joy filled her heart!]*
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Question 13

 **Read** the entire question.

 **Ask:**

- “What did you write here?” *[Discuss different opinions. This is a difficult question. Sometimes it might be right to protest on our own behalf, or especially on behalf of other Christians. Sometimes the apostle Paul protested when he was unjustly treated (e.g. Acts 16:35-37). But it should always be lawful protest, and not seeking revenge.]*
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Question 14

 **Read** the first paragraph including the translated Afghan poem.

 **Ask:**

- “Tell of a time in your own life when you clung tight to resentment and refused to forgive. What was the result for you?” *[Discuss together.]*
 - “To be set free from the ‘scorpion’s sting’ mentioned in the poem, what must we do? *[Forgive our enemies.]*”
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Question 15a

Say:


- “The fourth person we learn about today is from Africa. His Muslim relatives tried to kill him after he turned to Christ.”

 **Read** this person’s words in the box.

 **Ask:**

- “Did this person find it easy or hard to forgive those who beat him?” *[‘Very hard’.]*
 - “This man said, ‘Almost as much as I suffered from the persecution, I suffered afterwards through not forgiving my persecutors’. What did he mean?” *[Discuss together. I think he meant that he suffered a lot from the bitterness inside him.]*
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Question 15b

 **Read** the sentence after the box, and also the speech bubble.

Say:

- “Can you think of someone who hurt you one time? Now let’s all think of that person’s name in the blank spaces, and say it quietly under our breath. So, if the person’s name is Firaz, we will say in our minds “love Firaz and pray for him”. Let’s all do that now”. *[Learners are not asked to speak the name aloud or write it in their book, to avoid disclosing confidences.]*

 **Ask:**

- “Were you able to do that? How did it feel to say those words?”

Say:

- “Remember, we can’t forgive our enemies in our old human nature, but we can in our new nature which is Christ’s nature in us.”
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C) JOY IN OUR SUFFERINGS (Questions 17-19)

 **Read Together** 1 Peter 4:12-16.

? **Ask:**

- “What was your favourite verse in this passage, and why?” *[Different responses.]*
 - “Describe an occasion when God gave you joy in the midst of suffering.” *[Discuss together.]*
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TO FINISH THE MEETING

ASK:

- “What difference will today’s lesson make in your life?”
[Each person should share, including you as advisor.]

READ the Lesson 10 Practical Task

SAY:

- “You have to decide about doing this task yourself, no one can force you to do it. It is a hard task but, if you choose it, God will give you the strength to carry it out. Then it will release great joy in your life!”
- “Do the home study for lesson 11.”

CLOSE IN PRAYER thanking God for showing us that forgiveness is better than revenge. Ask him to give us strength for the Practical Task this week.