**Study Series: The Blessing of Humility**

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**Lesson Title: “Peacemaker and Persecuted” (pp. 157-166)**

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The main point of this lesson is: Humility means properly responding to conflict and persecution.

Focus on this goal: To help adults assess their personal attitudes toward conflict and persecution for needed changes.

Key Bible Passage: Matthew 5:9-12

Before the Session

On a large writing surface **write** conflict and persecution. (Steps 1 and 5)

During the Session[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion**

**Form** small groups.

**Assign** half the groups to identify similarities between the concepts of conflict and persecution.

**Assign** the other half to identify differences between the concepts.

**After** a brief time to work, **invite each group** to share their insights.

**Point out** that conflict and persecution are today’s topics.

**Say:** We end our study of humility by exploring how to be true peacemakers in the face of conflict and persecution.

**Step 2. Day One – Peacemakers, Part 1**

**Lead learners** to read Matthew 5:3-9 together.

**Invite a few volunteers** to highlight what each verse has taught them about living humbly as discussed over the course of this study.

**Using** the questions in the last two Day One paragraphs (pp. 158-159), **guide learners** in how to establish peace within their own hearts.

**Help learners** understand that it’s the sin in our hearts, coming out of our mouths, that often leads to conflict with others.

**Enlist volunteers to read** Galatians 5:15-21 and James 3:6–4:2.

**Say:** Only when we’ve addressed the sin in our own hearts can we begin to follow this last step in biblical humility: being peacemakers.

**Step 3. Day Two – Peacemakers, Part 2**

**Read** Hebrews 12:14 and Philippians 3:12.

**Use** the information in the first paragraph of Day Two (p. 159) to **help learners** understand the word for “strive/press on,” **noting** the intensity of the word.

**Say:** We are not simply to half-heartedly look for peace with others, but to pursue it diligently.

**As a group, consider** what pursuing peace with others looks like in everyday relationships.

**Point** to the Bible’s instructions to bless others by speaking words of hope and truth, praying for them, and even going so far as to absorbing the hurtful words of others without becoming resentful, retaliating, or ending the relationship.

**Say:** Just as these words seem contrary to everything in our world today, they were just as revolutionary at the time Jesus said them.

**Point out** that we glorify Christ when we live at peace with those who do not make peace.

**Step 4. Day Three – Persecuted for Righteousness’ Sake**

**Invite a volunteer to read** Matthew 5:10-12.

**Inquire** if anyone in your group has been openly persecuted for their faith, either physically or through social intimidation. (**See** the Day Three paragraph, p. 162, that begins, “But many people ….”)

**Read** Hebrews 11:35-37 (p. 161) as well as the paragraph following it.

**Say:** Even if we’ve not experienced persecution personally, we need to be aware of persecution around the world, in our own country, and perhaps even in sectors of our own communities.

**Encourage learners** to pray for persecuted believers and offer help as they can in physical, monetary, or spiritual ways.

If you find your group spiraling toward anger at a secular worldview, **be prepared** to read Matthew 5:44.

**Step 5. Day Four – Response to Persecution, Part 1**

**Read** the first Day Four paragraph (p. 163).

**Be ready** to confess your own sin in this area by saying: Jesus calls me to love; but sometimes I fall short of that by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Invite any volunteers** who feel convicted to share a similar statement.

**Number** the board (Step 1) from 1 to 8 in a vertical row.

**Work together** as a group to list the Beatitudes from Matthew 5 in order.

**As you talk** through the list, **mention** that the author said (p. 163), “There is a sense in which this eighth Beatitude is the climax of several preceding ones dealing with our response to the way others treat us.”

**Read** the paragraph (p. 164) that begins, “Surprisingly, in this Beatitude …” **pointing to** Jesus’ instructions of how we respond to persecution both in attitude and in action.

**Step 6. Day Five – Response to Persecution, Part 2**

**Say:** In this last portion of our study on humility, we must consider our submission to authorities.

**Read** 1 Peter 2:13-17, **explaining** that Peter wrote these words during the reign of Nero, who heavily persecuted Christians.

**Invite a volunteer to read** Daniel 4:25, **pointing out** that Daniel served under several authoritarian rulers, none of whom were committed followers of Yahweh; he, too, instructed us to understand that authority is given by God.

**Read** the following from Day Five (p. 166): “A biblical response toward those who might persecute us, and a biblical attitude toward governing authorities over us, are both expressions of humility in action.”

**Step 7. Practical Application - Live Out the Lesson**

**Lead learners** in a closing time of prayer for persecuted Christians around the world to know the blessing of the Lord even as they suffer.

**Invite a volunteer** to search the Internet address at the bottom of page 166 for specific current needs.

**Read** Matthew 5:10-12 and the last paragraph of Day Five (p. 166) and **encourage learners** to maintain their prayers for the persecuted church in their families as a regular habit.

**Additional Questions for Discussion**

1. The author states, “To become peacemakers…we must begin with ourselves.” Why is this true?
2. How can applying each of the previous six Beatitudes be instrumental in setting you up to become a peacemaker?
3. How can Peter’s words to servants in 1 Peter 2:18-20 and the example of Jesus in 1 Peter 2:22-23 make all the difference when someone wrongs you?
4. What evidence in the Bible shows that sins in the area of interpersonal relationships are as important as sins in the area of sexuality and integrity? In light of this, what actions should you take?
5. In what ways have you experienced persecution for your faith in Christ?
6. Do you agree with the author’s view that American has become not just ungodly but actually anti-God? Why or why not?
7. What difference should the command of Jesus in Matthew 5:44 make when you, as a Christian, consider your response to political or legislated opposition to biblical morality?
8. What are we to learn and apply from 1 Peter 2:13-17 and Romans 13:1-7, and especially the biblical mandate to “honor the emperor? Do you believe the Christian mainstream is doing this today? Why or why not?
9. How is seeing persecution as a blessing a tangible way of displaying humility in action?

1. Additional questions for discussion are included on pages 5-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)