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LESSON 3 *PEACE AND PROTECTION IN PERSECUTION*

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AIM

To tell the stories of Nazarene missionaries who have suffered persecution in the past and to inspire us to pray for the safety of missionaries who serve today.

LESSON INFORMATION

Introduction

Approximately 70 million Christians have given their lives, rather than deny their faith, *since the crucifixion of Christ*. More than 40 million Christians were martyred *in the 20th century*. About a billion Christians live in countries where their religious liberty is restricted. Almost 156,000 Christians worldwide were martyred in 1998.

“Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also” —JESUS (John 15:20).

The word persecution causes us to think of images of torture, fear, and death. Many want to believe that persecution happens only to people we will never know or see in faraway countries. Others believe persecution is reserved for the end-time tribulation and will never happen to us. However, even the Early Christians knew persecution. Scripture documents Stephen’s death by stoning and Saul’s persecution of Christians in Acts 7 and 8.

Pain, torture, and death are not the only ways God’s people suffer. Persecution also includes loss of freedom, separation from life’s work and loved ones, uncertainty of the future, and deprivation of life’s basic necessities. All these types of persecution have been faced by Nazarene missionaries and faithful Nazarenes around the world.

Evelyn Witthoff and Geraldine Chappell

During World War II, Dr. Evelyn Witthoff and Geraldine Chappell, R.N., were traveling to India to work at Reynolds Memorial Hospital. They were delayed in Manila, Philippines, along with 3,700 Allied citizens and imprisoned within the walls of an old university. For 37 months they endured sickness and near starvation at Santo Tomas Internment Camp. Upon their release in 1945, Dr. Witthoff and Nurse Chappell published their memoirs of inconvenience, deprivation, and God’s deliverance in a book titled *Three Years Internment in Santo Tomas*. Although imprisonment had harmed them physically, both Dr. Witthoff and Nurse Chappell served in India after the war.

Mary Scott

Three years into World War II, Mary Scott began teaching-related responsibilities in Taming, China. One day soldiers informed missionaries to pack; they were leaving in two hours. Mary took clothing, bedding, and a typewriter. She and other missionary ladies were loaded onto an army truck and driven to the Mennonite single ladies home inside the city. Thirteen ladies crowded into a home built for three or four women.

A few weeks later Mary’s group was sent to Peking (now Beijing) to the Oriental Missionary Society. For six months they were restricted only within the walls of the city. Then came new orders; the missionaries hurriedly packed and were marched to Chien Men railroad station. They boarded a crowded train furnished with only hard, wooden benches and traveled to Tientsin. There they boarded another train, went on to waiting buses, and finally were herded to a ball field. Camp rules were read,

and the missionaries were assigned temporary quarters for the night. This camp was their home for the next two and a half years.

“Home” was an enclosed compound surrounded by eight-foot walls with machine gun slots. The missionaries slept on the floor the first few nights, waiting for their bags and bedding to arrive. Housing was crowded; sanitation was a challenge. Bedbugs were a constant battle. Organization of camp duties began immediately; the first task was to clean this former mission station. Sanitizing and organizing the hospital was top priority, and the clinic/hospital was functioning within eight days. Four hundred children in the camp needed to be schooled. Gradually, life in the camp found a routine.

After three and a half years of struggle and hardship, word of victory came to the prisoners. Cheers rang through the camp. When airplanes were spotted in the sky, people rushed outside to wave sheets, blankets, and towels. Parachutes dropped from the plane; rescue was at hand! Mary was one of the last prisoners to leave. She recalled that the difficult China experience did leave her with rich rewards and memories. Mary later said she “wouldn’t take \$1 million dollars for the experience—or give a nickel for another one” unless it came in the path of duty and God’s will.

Mary Scott’s distinguished career of missionary service included responsibilities in North China, the internment in China for three and a half years, and then ministry for a second term in South China until forced out by the communists. In 1950 she was elected the executive secretary of the Women’s Foreign Missionary Society (now Nazarene Missions International) for the Church of the Nazarene; she served in that capacity until 1975.

Armand Doll and Hugh Friberg

Armand Doll was arrested in Mozambique on August 28, 1975. His colleague Hugh Friberg was imprisoned the next day. The new government suspected that the two men were government agents. Although housed in the same building in Maputo, Armand and Hugh saw one another only occasionally during the first several weeks of their imprisonment. They were not allowed to speak together during that time.

Armand was finally transferred downstairs into the same room with Hugh and other prisoners. They were questioned about the church organization, finances, literature, and promotion. One day they discovered a pump organ in a side room; Armand played and the men sang together. Eventually 35 inmates heard the Word preached and enjoyed great fellowship. Then one gloomy Thursday all the prisoners were locked in their cells for four hours as guards went cell to cell and ordered them to hand over all books, Bibles, and money. Fortunately, Hugh kept his *Living New Testament* hidden in a box, and the men took turns reading it.

Armand told about the months of imprisonment in letters he wrote to his wife, Pauline. The secret letters were smuggled out of the prison; some of them were written on tiny scraps of paper placed in toothpaste tubes. He wrote that his worst pain came from separation from loved ones and knowing that the families felt great anxiety while Armand and Hugh were locked away. Tensions in the country mounted; a top government official was assassinated. Soldiers’ raids brought more prisoners to the facility; then chapel services were banned. Getting the letters out of prison became increasingly difficult as prisoners were searched from head to toe.

After eight months in prison, Hugh and another missionary were released. Armand was told that they were still “working” on his release, but nothing was in sight. Concerned about the impact Hugh’s release would have on Pauline, Armand wrote her with instructions to be brave. Time dragged on and Armand remained in prison. The Dolls’ anniversary came and went. A year passed. Armand was reminded of God’s closeness as he read of the Lord’s impending mercy and justice in Isaiah 50:7–8.

In June of 1976, Hugh was greeted with cheers, thunderous applause, tears of thanksgiving, and a standing ovation when he was introduced to the General Assembly delegates and friends in Dallas, Texas. His release was an answer to prayer. Nazarenes committed to further prayer for Armand Doll.

Armand continued to write the secret notes and letters. He looked forward to times when he could listen to the prison radio. One day he heard a quartet sing, “Count Your Blessings.” So he did. He wrote to Pauline, “If they think they are breaking me, they’re mistaken. Instead of being broken,

I'm feeling stronger in spirit and body than ever. And more determined to serve the Lord and fight the devil than at any time in the past."

The afternoon of September 17, 1976, the United States ambassador informed Armand that his release was imminent. The letter Armand had penned earlier in the day would be the last one he would write in captivity. Armand expected only a small group of people to greet him when he arrived in New York on September 19. Instead, the welcome was large and jubilant. His wife and family, along with Hugh and Evelyn Friberg and 300 other Nazarene friends and church officials, greeted him with singing as he walked off the plane. Missionary friend Howard Culbertson said of Armand, "This missionary colleague of mine is a special testimony to the promises of Isaiah 40:21–31. Months in prison have left him undaunted. His testimony to the greatness of God so affects young people that they willingly offer themselves for missionary service, knowing full well the kind of risks they face."

Don Cox

Who could have known that the simple act of showing a car for sale would have such dire results? Missionary Don Cox worked in the regional office in Quito, Ecuador, as the financial and business administrator.

The three men who came to see the car that a departing missionary had been unable to sell were well-dressed and well-spoken—seemingly legitimate buyers. During a test drive, with Don in the car, the driver quickly drove away from the office and then stopped to allow three more men into the car. As Don was shoved into the backseat, he became ill as he realized the truth: he was being kidnapped! Don was taken into the Andean forest and told to walk ahead of his kidnappers. The trail soon vanished, and the group traversed through dense underbrush. For four hours they trudged higher and higher until they finally came to a clearing at the top of the mountain. Don was pushed onto a platform. The next morning he was given some coffee and a piece of bread. Then two men led him down the mountain to a platform extending from the mountainside and left him there.

As Don realized this was his final destination, he knew the coat and blanket he had with him would not provide sufficient protection. Mosquitoes were ferociously attacking him. One captor finally had compassion on him and gave him a shirt that he could pull over his head. He lived with the buzz and bites of mosquitoes day after day.

Meanwhile, Don's wife, Cheryl, received a phone call asking for money. The kidnappers demanded \$500,000. Don was stunned when he received news of the demand for half a million dollars; no one he knew had that kind of money. Because he needed to "combat a fainting heart," Don asked to pray aloud. His captors agreed, and his prayers loudly filled the forest. Don then gathered the nerve to ask for a Bible, and his captors gave him one.

Many weeks passed as the church tried to gain Don's freedom. A negotiator from Kansas City came to take the kidnappers' calls. Crisis Consulting International sent a representative. Information relayed from Don in a "proof of life" test assured his family and friends that he was, indeed, still alive. However, Don was suffering; the unrelenting mosquitoes, dysentery, dehydration, and other stomach ailments plagued him.

Don's family spent many sleepless nights and fretful hours as they, and other Nazarenes around the world, prayed and hoped for Don's safe return. Cheryl and the children were advised to return to the United States. Although she understood the need to keep her family safe, Cheryl struggled with a feeling that she was abandoning Don. God was with him, though. Rescue finally came at Christmas when the police located the camp of Don's kidnappers and brought him down from the mountain. Keith Schwanz provides details of Don's ordeal and release in the 2006-07 NMI missions book *Shouts at Sunrise*.

PRESENTATION IDEA: "LESSONS IN GOD'S PROVISIONS"

Prepare and Present

1. In a classroom setting, select a way to present the Lesson Information:
 - a. a teacher presents the material or
 - b. students give oral book reports or
 - c. pre-print information as in a textbook

2. Form learning groups and enlist the help of “students” (attendees) to work on components of a display to place in the church or classroom. Be sure to have materials for each group provided.
 - a. GEOGRAPHY—make and color a map of the areas where these incidents take place.
 - b. WRITING—write a news article about each incident.
 - c. ART—make a full-size poster about each story
 - d. BANNER—make a banner about one word that best describes the impact of each story.
 - e. POEM—write a poem about persecution and hope.
 - f. MURAL—using large paper, make and color a mural about how God works.
 - g. ART—make a bookmark or refrigerator magnet.
 - h. MUSIC—teach the group “We’ve a Story to Tell to the Congregation” or a similar mission song.

Option 2: “Set Free!”—Testimonials

- **Opening Song**—“And Can It Be” or another appropriate song
- **Introduction**—Paragraph 1 of Lesson Information
- **Additional Comments**—Today we will hear testimonies of God’s grace and help in difficult circumstances. He keeps His promise to never leave us, nor forsake us.
- **Testimony**—Don Cox
- **Song**—“Surely Goodness and Mercy” or another song/chorus
- **Testimony**—Dr. Evelyn Witthoff
- **Song**—“Jesus Will Walk with Me” or another song/chorus
- **Testimony**—Armand Doll
- **Scripture**—Isaiah 50:7-8
- **Testimony**—Mary Scott
- **Song**—“Because He Lives” or another song/chorus
- **Time of Prayer and Commitment**

Option 3: “SURVIVOR—Nazarene Style”

This lesson introduces Nazarene missionaries who have suffered hardships and persecution away from home.

Carefully select five people to represent the missionaries whose stories appear in this lesson. Recreate the conditions in which each individual faces his or her persecution. The lesson presenter lists the “challenges” each individual must face. The “missionaries” then either tell the missionaries’ stories OR pantomime their responses as narrators read the stories from the lessons.

For example:

- Armand Doll, dressed in prison garb, writing on scraps of paper and rolling them up to place in a toothpaste tube
- Mary Scott, hurriedly gathering her suitcase and typewriter, quickly moving from one crowded, bug-infested place to another, traveling on wooden benches in train
- Don Cox, sitting on a ledge, fighting mosquitoes with a shirt pulled over his head, praying aloud with the guards in the forest

CALL TO ACTION

- Make a magnet or bookmark. Use it as a reminder to pray for Christians facing persecution today.
- Research countries on the Internet that restrict religious freedom and read about them. Share the information with someone.
- Speak with your pastor about the possibility of your church sponsoring a Day of Remembrance for the Persecuted.
- Encourage people to be involved in the annual International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church the second Sunday of November.