

LIFE



Salt of the Earth: Palestinian Christians in the Northern West Bank

Study Guide (leader version)

<http://www.saltfilms.net>

Summary: This session looks at faithful living in a fearful world. Ninth grader Jeries and sixth grader Elia are typical boys whose days are defined by school, homework, soccer, karate, TV, church, Sunday School. However, these brothers' lives in Nablus are also demarcated by soldiers, tanks, F-16s, and missiles.

Supplies: Everyone should have a Bible. Bring copies of this session's student guide. You should have a board or flipchart. Closing prayers will center on children killed in the conflict, chronicled in the report "Remember These Children" (www.rememberthesechildren.org/remember2000.html) also reprinted as "Who Will Wipe Away Their Tears" ([www.justice-and-peace.org/PolicyAdvocacy/pahome2.5.nsf/0/A26FD9DD5802E1F088256E4600836288/\\$file/WipeAwayTears_web3.pdf](http://www.justice-and-peace.org/PolicyAdvocacy/pahome2.5.nsf/0/A26FD9DD5802E1F088256E4600836288/$file/WipeAwayTears_web3.pdf)). Provide each person with a different page from the report (or if you can, copies of the report itself). Be sure to include information from the spring of 2002, since that period will be discussed in the film.

3 **Prayer and introduction**

min Greet everyone. If your class is following the Daily Walk, you may invite people to share any reflections they may have from the previous week.

Hand out the student guides and introduce today's study:

Today, we will look at faithful living in a fearful world. We will meet two brothers and their family in Nablus. Elia (e-LEE-ah) is in sixth grade and Jeries (je-REES) is in ninth grade. Their lives of school, worship, and play are punctuated by fearful realities.

Invite someone to open the session in prayer or use the sample prayer at right.

Sample Prayer

Merciful God, open our hearts and minds and spirits to your word today. Teach us how to be faithful, fearless disciples of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

3 **Scripture**

min Invite someone to read Romans 8:35-39 aloud.

Invite someone else to read Matthew 8:23-26 aloud.

10 **Questions**

min In groups of 2 to 4, discuss:

In the gospel, Jesus rebukes the disciples for their lack of faith and their fear.

Do we understand that they should not have woken him?

What might have happened if they hadn't?

Leader Notes Matthew

The disciples fear that the boat will sink and they will die even though Jesus is with them. What does it mean that Jesus was asleep? When do we feel that Jesus is asleep in our lives and in the world?

20
min

Film
Show “Life”
segment of the
film.

Leader Notes film

Elia and Jeries are schoolboys who together tell about their lives in the city of Nablus. They both narrate the segment; generally whichever is in the picture is the one speaking. Nablus has a population of more than 100,000, including approximately 700

Christians. It is known Biblically as Shechem or Sychar, one of the cities of refuge. Here, Jacob is believed to have dug a well (Genesis 33), and Joseph's remains were brought back from Egypt to their final resting place. At Jacob's Well (which the boys and their father later visit), Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman about the need for "living water" (John 4). Above Nablus, on Mt. Gerizim, lives the modern remnant of the ancient Samaritans; between Nablus and a community near Tel Aviv, they number just over 600.

The boys live with their parents, grandmother, and aunt in a rented apartment within the Fallscheer Anglican (Episcopal) church compound just outside Nablus's Old City. Abutting the compound is a Muslim prayer tower, from which the call to prayer emanates five times a day. This prayer call is heard a few times during the film. Also living in the compound is Anglican priest Fr. Hosam Naoum and his wife. In another apartment lives Martina, a Dutch nurse who is a mission volunteer at St. Luke's Hospital, one of the Anglican ministries in Nablus.

Like the majority of Palestinian Christians, Elia and Jeries are Greek Orthodox. They study at a Roman Catholic School and attend Anglican Sunday School. Their “Sunday School” is held on Fridays, when all schools are off for the Muslim day of prayer. Christian schools and government (“public”) schools with a large number of Christian students also have Sunday off. Most Christian children in Nablus, regardless of denomination, attend the Catholic school and the Anglican Sunday School. Most students and much of the staff at the Catholic school are Muslim.

After school the boys usually go to their father's goldsmith shop until they all go home for lunch, the main meal of the day. In the afternoons, the boys do their homework, and play sports. They take karate classes three days a week. They also play soccer and basketball in the Anglican church compound's parking lot with mostly Muslim neighborhood boys. The boys giggle as they show photographs of each other speaking at a school assembly, wearing the traditional black-and-white men's headscarf, or keffiyah.

The boys and their father visit Jacob's Well. It is a holy site, venerated since Biblical times. The Greek Orthodox Church, which is the custodian of the site, is reconstructing a cathedral over the well. Previous structures have been damaged over the centuries, most recently by earthquake.

Fr. Hosam and the boys' family describe the effects of military incursions on their lives, especially Operation Defensive Shield in the spring of 2002. Fr. Hosam describes how the wall of the church compound was demolished during the operation, which might have destroyed the entire compound, if the outdoor heating gas bottles had exploded

Leader notes film continued
 when the wall fell on them. Throughout the film there are images (such as when the boys walk to their father's shop) showing widespread destruction in Nablus. The footage of tanks in the streets and the family at home under curfew was taken in October 2002, months after Operation Defensive Shield. Curfew is announced as the tanks roll in. Curfew means that no one may go outside, at any time, until the curfew is lifted, which may be hours and may be days later. In 2002, Nablus had more than 200 days of curfew. Fr. Hosam confirms that the incursions, sieges, and violence weren't limited to Operation Defensive Shield; they continue weekly and daily.

Leader notes Issue Background
 March 1 to May 7, 2002, was the bloodiest period of the current conflict, with more than 130 Israelis and nearly 500 Palestinians killed, the majority of them civilians. The incursions that Elia and Jeries describe began in Nablus on April 3rd, part of Operation Defensive Shield, the most extensive Israeli military incursions in a decade. The proximate cause for the operation was a terrorist attack on March 27th, the first evening of Passover. A Palestinian man blew himself up in the Park Hotel in Netanya, killing twenty-eight people gathered for Seder. This was the culmination of perhaps the most costly month ever for Israelis, with eighty-one Israeli civilians and ten soldiers dead from almost daily attacks. Two days later, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) launched Operation Defensive Shield and began occupying six of the largest West Bank population centers. The IDF engaged in unlawful killings of civilians, the use of human shields, arbitrary arrests and torture, and denial of medical treatment, and refusal of access to humanitarian organizations. The IDF used bulldozers, tank shelling and rocket firing, at times from helicopters, in major urban centers. Thousands of homes were demolished or damaged, leaving more than 17,000 Palestinians in need of shelter. The IDF announced the end of the Operation on April 21st, but its consequences lasted far longer.
UN Secretary General's report:
<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2002/SG2077.doc.htm>
Jessica Montell, Executive Director of B'Tselem:
<http://www.ajpme.org/articles/operationd.htm>

20 Questions

min

- 1) As a group, spend 5 to 8 minutes discussing:
Paul's letter listed many things that might cause fear, and then assures us that they cannot separate us from the love of God.
What do these things translate to in our own lives and in the lives of people in the film?
 List responses on the board if you wish.

- 2) Spend 12 to 15 minutes discussing:
As disciples of Christ, we are challenged to live faithfully in a world swamped by these problems, surrounded by death, destruction, sin, and injustice.
Shall we appeal to Christ to act, "waking him up?"
Shall we leave him be, trusting in God's surpassing love?
Shall we appeal to the Church, as the body of Christ, to "wake it up?"
What does faithful living look like?

4 Closing and prayer

min Solicit prayer concerns from the group.

Distribute a page from “Remember these Children” or “Who Will Wipe Away Their Tears” (or the report itself) to each person while you tell them that *prayer time today will have a special focus on children in the region*. Tell them that *in the conflict that began in September 2000, an average of 2 Israeli and 12 Palestinian children are killed every month*; * *each of these pages is selected from a chronicle of those casualties*.

Close in collective prayer by inviting everyone to voice prayers, especially prayers for those named on the sheets you just gave them.

Remind the group of “Daily Walk” opportunities, and plans for next meeting.

*Statistics estimated from www.rememberthesechildren.org

<p>Daily Walk An invitation to daily prayer and witness</p>	
<p>Daily Prayer: <i>Frame your daily walk with this series in prayer—feel free to use your own prayer or the one provided:</i> Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, Lord and Savior, I pray for all the children who have been killed in the land of Your birth. Especially, let your healing and loving presence be felt by the families of these children: [name children who were killed, listed on the page you received in the session*] In Christ’s name. Amen.</p> <p>* data chronicled at http://www.rememberthesechildren.org</p>	<p>Daily Action: Available online: http://www.saltfilms.net/guides/life-student.pdf</p> <p>Day 1) <i>Read Scripture:</i> Matthew 2.</p> <p>Day 2) <i>Hear from a Holy Land Christian:</i> Lutheran Bishop Munib Younan’s Christmas Message from 2001. http://www.elca.org/globalmission/story/jerusalem24.html</p> <p>Day 3) <i>Learn more:</i> Open-Fire Regulations from B’Tselem, The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. http://www.btselem.org/english/publications/summaries/200203_trigger_happy.asp</p> <p>Day 4) <i>Be inspired:</i> Parents’ Circle: Bereaved Families Supporting Peace, Reconciliation, and Tolerance. http://www.theparentscircle.com/Pages.asp?page_id=4</p> <p>Day 5) <i>Share:</i> Take time to tell someone new about how you’ve been moved this week by this Study Series. Invite him/her to pray with you.</p> <p>Day 6) <i>Act:</i> Things you can do in response to child casualties. Pages 20 and 21 of http://www.justice-and-peace.org/PolicyAdvocacy/pahome2.5.nsf/0/A26FD9DD5802E1F088256E4600836288/\$file/WipeAwayTears_web3.pdf</p>