

THE WALL

Salt of the Earth: Palestinian Christians in the Northern West Bank: A Study Guide (leader version)

<http://www.saltfilms.net>



Summary: This session looks at walls and barriers, in Scripture, in the West Bank, and in our lives. The class should struggle with the positive and negative aspects of walls, and how we as Christians discern their faithfulness.

Supplies: Everyone should have a Bible. Bring copies of the session's student guide. You may want to bring a map of the Separation Barrier. The Sept/Oct 2004 issue of *Church and Society* (Order from Presbyterian Marketplace, Item # 72-630-04-605 www.pcusa.org/marketplace/index.jsp) has a wall-size map enclosed. Mark the town of Jalame (on the northern border of the West Bank, north of Jenin). Also, you may want to print from the internet the Barrier map from B'Tselem and make enough copies for the class (www.btselem.org/English/Maps/Index.asp).

3 *Prayer and introduction*

min Greet everyone and invite people to share any reflections they may have from the previous week's Daily Walk. Hand out the student guides and introduce today's study: *Today, we will examine walls and barriers. We'll meet Sa'ed, an electrician living in Jalame (JAH-lah-may), a town on the Green Line, the border between Israel and the West Bank.* If you have a map, you may point out the location of Jalame on it. Invite someone to open the session in prayer or use the sample prayer at right.

Sample Prayer

Loving God, remove all barriers between us and you. Open our eyes to see your grace. Open our ears to hear your word. Open our minds to understand your message. Open our hearts to share your love. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

3 *Scripture*

min Invite someone to read Ezekiel 13: 8-16 aloud. Invite someone else to read Ephesians 2:11-17 aloud.

15 *Questions*

min As a group, consider the walls that Paul and Ezekiel refer to. *What kind of walls (literal and figurative) should we as people of faith build, and what kind should we seek to demolish?*

Leader Notes Ezekiel

Ezekiel lived as a captive in the Babylonian exile. A priest and prophet during a tragic and hopeless time, he condemns false prophets who point to illusions of security, white-washing over fundamental problems with unfounded assurances of peace. Literally and figuratively, walls can provide security, if their foundation is sound.

Leader Notes Ephesians

Paul frequently shares his hope that divisions between Jew and Gentile disappear. This passage alludes to a vivid symbol of this division. In the Temple at Jerusalem, there was a barrier separating Jews and Gentiles. Gentiles could not enter the temple courts beyond that wall, under pain of death. Paul argues that Christ demolishes this wall through his reconciling love.

17
min

Film

Show “The Wall” segment of the film.

Leader Notes film:

Sa’ed’s family is originally from Muqeible, one of the many Arab towns in the Galilee. After the war of 1947-1949, Muqeible, like the Galilee, became part of the new state of Israel. The border of Israel (the Green Line) cut through Sa’ed’s family’s land. Part was in Israel and part in the West Bank, which was under Jordanian control from 1949 to 1967. (After the Six Day War in 1967, the West Bank and Gaza Strip came under Israeli military occupation.) When their land was split, Sa’ed’s family split, sending a son across the border to Jalame in the West Bank to care for the land on that side, while the rest of the family stayed in Muqeible. The portion of the land in the West Bank is what Sa’ed has now lost to construction of the Separation Barrier.

Approximately 100 Christians live in Jalame, a town of 1500. They used to go to church in Jenin, but travel restrictions imposed in the current conflict have made them generally unable to get there. Consequently, they have started to hold house services, when Jenin’s Roman Catholic priest (whose foreign citizenship grants more freedom of movement) is permitted passage to Jalame. The film opens with one of these home services.

Like Sa’ed’s grandparents, his wife is from Muqeible, which also has a minority Christian presence. Palestinians like her who are Israeli citizens are often referred to as Arab Israelis. They are the Palestinians (and their offspring) who were within the new state’s boundaries at the end of the 1948 war; they were granted Israeli citizenship in 1966. Arab Israelis compose approximately 20% of Israel’s population. Because of her Israeli citizenship, Sa’ed’s wife can enter Israel, where she works. At the time of filming, however, it was becoming more difficult for Israelis, even Arab Israelis like her, to enter the West Bank. Sa’ed was not given Israeli citizenship when he married her.

Towns like Jalame along the Green Line used to have a vibrant border economy, whereby Israelis, both Jewish and Arab, would cross the border to buy merchandise and produce at cheap prices. Border areas were full of small shops and kiosks lining the roads, with signs in Arabic, Hebrew, and often English. As Professor Zaid ‘Oudeh points, out, these areas provided goods and jobs for tens of thousands of people before they were destroyed.

Some people still try to sell their wares in these areas. A vegetable salesman, whose shop has been repeatedly demolished, says an Israeli soldier told him that he should go to Jordan. The soldier’s comment reflects the increasing acceptability of the notion of Transfer (that all Palestinians should be removed and sent to Jordan). “Jordan is the Palestinian State” is a common slogan on posters and graffiti in Israel. Even if the vegetable salesman wanted to leave his homeland and move to Jordan, he would most likely not be allowed to do so, due to strict limitations on Palestinian immigration and even travel to Jordan. A majority of Jordan’s population is of Palestinian descent, due to floods of refugees from the 1948 and 1967 wars. For political, social, and economic reasons, Jordan has tried to prevent further immigration.

Leader notes film continued

While looking at the Barrier as it is being constructed, Professor 'Oudeh points out the minaret (Muslim prayer tower) of Muqeible, Sa'ed's ancestral home and his wife's hometown, too.

The red sign posted on the barrier states in English: "Mortal Danger-Military Zone: Any person who passes or damages the fence endangers his life." In Arabic it says "Danger of death—Military area: Everyone who passes or touches the wall puts his life in danger."

15 Questions

min

Distribute printed maps and invite people to look at them as individuals read aloud each of the following:

- *The "Separation Barrier," frequently called "the Wall" or "the Fence" is in some places a twenty-five-foot high concrete wall and in others an electronic fence with dirt paths, barbed-wire fences, and trenches on both sides, at an average width of 60 yards.*

- *The Barrier may be as long as 400 miles; ten percent of it is planned to be along the border between Israel and the West Bank. The rest winds deep into the West Bank.*

- *A structure built along the border (the Green Line) would be half the length of the current wall and much easier to patrol.*

- *The Barrier has reduced Israeli deaths from militant attacks.*

- *The Barrier cuts off hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their cities, lands, jobs, schools, hospitals, and places of worship.*

In groups of 2 to 4 discuss the following questions:

How does this wall compare to those which Paul and Ezekiel described?

What is its foundation? Is this a wall that we should seek to build or seek to remove?

Leader Notes Separation Barrier

B'Tselem: The Israeli Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories states: "Israel has the right and duty to protect its citizens from attacks. However, the building of the separation barrier as a means to prevent attacks inside Israel is the most extreme solution that causes the greatest harm to the local population. Israel preferred this solution over alternate options that would cause less harm to the Palestinians. Even if we accept Israel's claim that the only way to prevent attacks is to erect a barrier, it must be built along the Green Line or on Israeli soil."

http://www.btselem.org/English/Separation_Barrier/Index.asp

On July 9, 2004, The International Court of Justice (ICJ) stated that "the construction of the wall being built by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, and its associated regime, are contrary to international law."

http://www.icj-cij.org/icjwww/ipresscom/ipress2004/ipresscom2004-28_mwp_20040709.htm

Avraham Shalom, a former head of Israel's security service, said about the barrier complex: "It creates hatred, it expropriates land and annexes hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to the state of Israel. The result is that the fence achieves the exact opposite of what was intended. The more we support the fence, they lose their dream and hope for an independent Palestinian state."

www.cmep.org/newsletter/2003December.htm

4 min **Closing and prayer**
 Solicit prayer concerns from the group and then close in prayer, using your own or the sample prayer at right.
 Remind the group of “Daily Walk” opportunities, and plans for next meeting.

Sample prayer
God of grace, Protect us from false prophets and illusions of security. Give us courage and strength to build our foundations on the solid rock of Christ. Let Christ use us and our witness to break down the dividing walls of hostility among your children. May there be reconciliation in our hearts, our relationships, the Holy Land, and throughout the world. We especially pray for Sa’ed, his family, and his community. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

<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 your love to break down the dividing walls of hostility in our hearts and in our world. Make us into one new humanity, reconciled to one another and to God through your sacrificial love. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.</p>	<p>Daily Action: Available online: http://www.saltfilms.net/guides/wall-student.pdf</p> <p>Day 1) <i>Read Scripture:</i> 2 Corinthians 5:16-19.</p> <p>Day 2) <i>Hear from a Holy Land Christian:</i> Episcopal priest Naim Ateek’s reflections about the Separation Barrier. http://www.sabeel.org/old/news/cstone29/hafrada.html</p> <p>Day 3) <i>Learn more:</i> A series of multimedia reports from washingtonpost.com. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/world/interactives/israel/israelFence.html (high-speed connection needed for best viewing of video segments)</p> <p>Day 4) <i>Be inspired:</i> Israeli peace activists breaking down barriers. http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/oldnews/2002/02426.htm</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> Tell your elected officials about your concerns in the region. http://www.congress.org</p>