

INTRODUCTION

Many know the story of Eric Liddell immortalized in *Chariots of Fire*. That movie, which tells of Liddell's Olympic journey, ends with the words, "Eric Liddell, missionary, died in occupied China at the end of World War II. All of Scotland mourned." While the movie is a wonderful homage to a person of great conviction, what happens after the movie truly tells the tale of a man who exhibited the traits Jesus blessed in the Beatitudes. After the Olympics, Liddell became a missionary in China. When Japan invaded China, Liddell sent his pregnant wife and two daughters out of the country. He continued to minister in the country until he was sent to a Japanese internment camp. Survivors of that camp tell of a man who taught the children in the camp, shared what meager food he had, who was "overflowing with good humor and love for life, and with enthusiasm and charm" (Langdon Gilkey). When Winston Churchill arranged for a prisoner exchange to get Liddell released, Liddell offered his spot to a pregnant woman who went home in his stead. What is it that makes it possible for someone like Liddell to be a peacemaker in the midst of persecution?

SCRIPTURE

⁹Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. ¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matthew 5:9-12.

GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Discuss those you know personally, from history, or from current culture who are well-known peacemakers and/or who are well-known for being persecuted.
2. Read Matthew 5:1-12. What part do the previous beatitudes play in becoming a peacemaker?
3. Read Matthew 5:43-45. Do you view this passage as a description of a peacemaker? Why or why not?
4. Is being in a right relationship with God essential to being a peacemaker?
5. Why would peacemakers be seen as children of God?
6. What types of persecution does Jesus mention in Matthew 5:11? Have you experienced any of these? How did you respond? (Did you consider yourself blessed? Did you "rejoice and be glad"?)

Study Questions for Community Groups

7. The Apostle Paul, before he encountered Christ, persecuted believers. In 1 Timothy 1:12-14, he describes God's attitude toward him. Does this alter how you view those who persecute you?
8. What does it look like to rejoice in persecution?

APPLICATION

Is there someone you know you need to reconcile with? Pray for God's guidance and strength from the Holy Spirit as you seek take steps to be a peacemaker.

Visit www.icommittoprayer.com; read prayer requests from around the world and pray this week for those who are being persecuted.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Read Romans 12:14-21. List below the commands Paul gives:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

2. Does this passage change the way you think about your enemies and those who seek to persecute you because of your faith?
3. Which of Paul's encouragements in this passage do you find the most challenging? Why? What will you do about it?