

When “The World” Supports Our Faith—Or Not

by Travis Riesen and Carol Duerksen

FAITH STORY:

Acts 22:30-23:35

FAITH FOCUS:

Paul is on trial before the council in this passage. He begins to speak and is interrupted and almost slapped because he says his conscience is clear before God. He then says that he is a Pharisee and that he is on trial “concerning the hope of resurrection of the dead.” A dissention between the Sadducees and Pharisees occurs and when it turns violent the tribune saves Paul. The Lord comes to Paul and tells him to keep up his courage and bear witness in Rome. The next morning, some Jews swear not to eat or drink until they killed Paul. Paul’s nephew finds out and informs Paul of the plot. He then informs the tribune and again they save him by escorting him to Caesarea.

MATERIALS AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- Bibles for everyone
- Lots of newsprint and markers
- Contact students prior to class and ask them to go to BibleGateway.com and type in “in the world but not of the world.” Ask them to each bring a list of references to look up that speak to what it means to be a Christian in relationship to the world around us. You should also do this so you are prepared to lead this part of the Apply section.
- Contact students prior to class and ask them to bring secular songs to class that they think have some “good values” in the lyrics.
- CD player

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS:

Greet students as they come in.

Play the songs students brought and discuss the lyrics that they felt had good values.

Discuss: *How often do you find Christian values in secular songs?*

EXPLORE THE BIBLE:

Read the scripture passage together so students have an overview of the story. Then divide it up and ask students to create a story board on the newsprint of the story. Assure them that they don't have to be artists, but that they should create scenes that will show the gist of what is happening throughout the story. The verses/scenes could be divided as follows:

Verses 30-23:1

Verse 2

Verses 3-6

Verses 7-9

Verse 10

Verse 11

Verses 12-15

Verse 16

Verses 17-22

Verses 23-30

Verse 31

Verse 32

Verse 33

Verse 34

When the large storyboard is done, go through the story again, recalling what happened.

Ask: How did people of "the world" help people of faith in this story?

APPLY:

Tell the following story:

Peter Dyck is a Mennonite who was involved with Mennonite Central Committee for many years. One of his stories takes place in the middle of World War II. There was a camp set up in Berlin, Germany for refugees and children. They had a school and even though they did not have supplies, the students would learn as much as they could.

However, the time came that the refugees needed to be transported out of the city and out

of the Soviet Zone. The Soviets would not allow them to go, so

Peter went to a U.S. Army base and worked out a plan to take them through

Soviet territory via train and MCC would find a place for them to go. With the help of the army—an organization that Mennonites have been historically opposed to—the Mennonite refugees were taken out of Berlin.

Say: This is an example of “the world” helping people of faith. The Bible says that Christians should be “in the world but not of the world.” Let’s take a look at the references you brought to class on this topic.

Look up the references and discuss:

How do we decide what parts of “the world” to accept and participate in?

How and when does “the world” support our faith?

RESPOND:

Ask students each to get a large sheet of newsprint and a marker. Tell them to write the words “the world” on top and “my faith” at the bottom. Tell them that the middle of the page represents the interaction between the world and their faith, and ask them to put in the boundaries across the middle that do (or don’t) exist between the two, and to show the ways the two interact. For example, a solid line might mean a boundary between free sex (the world) and purity (their faith.) A fuzzy line might mean a fuzzy boundary in the area of clothing. Nothing at all would mean there is no difference. Those are just examples—students should show a variety of ways that their faith and the world relate to each other, and when the world supports and doesn’t support their faith.

Note: There’s nothing “right” or “wrong” about this exercise—the point is to get youth to think about the interactions.

When students are done, gather together and pray for their lives as represented in their illustrations. If your students are comfortable with praying for each other, do so.