

LIBERIA

Lessons for Mission Minded Kids

Lesson 3

Tribes of Liberia



Liberia

Lesson 3: Tribes of Liberia

Goals for Lesson 3:

- Students will become familiar with some of the native tribes living in Liberia, and some distinctive characteristics of each.
- Students will begin to understand the tense relationships between the tribes that helped to fuel years of civil war.
- Students will understand that personal and national peace come from God and the hope He brings to His people.

Verse for Liberia:

“Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.” Psalm 25: 4-5

Before Class:

- Read through lesson and decide how you will use the material, according to your age group and time allotted.
- Make a copy of the “Liberia’s Hope” puzzle for each student, or plan to divide your group into pairs or teams to work on the puzzle together.
- Using colored pencils, sketch general boundaries for each of the (15) tribes on the map. ***Note that the Mandingo Tribe is scattered throughout the country and have no special tribal area.*** Fill in each area with a different color to show individual territories. Darken the country’s border and put a star at Monrovia, to give your students a feel for the size and layout of the country of Liberia. Liberia is about the size of Tennessee.
- Print the large tribe names, and the smaller characteristic cards on cardstock (all the same color). Cut out cards and prepare tape or sticky tack for the activity.
- Copy the paper doll sheet on brown construction paper and the clothing sheet on plain white paper for each student. Collect markers or crayons, scissors and scotch tape.

Lesson Plan:

- Open your time together with a welcome, announcements and a brief prayer. (5 min.)
- Read or tell the story part of the lesson as follows: (20-25 minutes, total)
 - Show students the map you prepared, while reading or telling the first six small paragraphs of the story part of the lesson. Explain as necessary, or answer any questions.
 - Hang the map visibly on a whiteboard or the wall, and stick the tribe name cards underneath the map. Pass out small characteristic cards randomly to students.
 - As you begin the next part of the story, tell students to listen carefully for you to mention the characteristic they hold in their hand. As you read about the nine tribes described in the story, each student should get up when you mention their characteristic and come to the board and place it under the appropriate tribe name. (Use masking tape rolls or sticky tack to attach cards to the wall or whiteboard) As you read about each tribe, you can also point out their territory on the colored map. When you are all done, all students should have placed their card under a tribe name, and the board should look like a little visual diagram outlining nine of the sixteen tribes found in Liberia.
 - Finish telling or reading the rest of the story part of the lesson.
- Give students a copy of the “Liberia’s Hope” puzzle, or divide your class into pairs or teams to help younger students complete the puzzle. Give several minutes to work on the puzzle. The letters left over from the word search will spell our “Liberia Verse”. When students are done, read the verse out loud together from their papers. Bring out the poster board of the verse, and sing it together. Discuss how tribes can live in peace if they are putting their hope in Christ. (12-15 minutes)
- Pass out card stock paper dolls, crayons or markers and scissors. Allow students to decorate and cut out clothing for the Liberian paper dolls. Use small rolls of scotch tape to stick hair and clothing onto dolls....**OR....**If you didn’t use the Prayer Walk activity from Lesson 2, use that as an alternative activity during this time. (20-25 minutes)

Lesson 3 Story: Tribes of Liberia

What do you think of when you hear the word tribe? People all over the world that live in social groups are called tribes. You have heard me talk about the native tribes of Liberia, but today we're going to learn a little more about them.

Each tribe has a name that they give themselves. It is not a name that is given to them by another tribe or any government official. They usually create their own system of government with a ruling chief, elders, and a ruling council. They have their own standard of behavior that the ruling body is there to enforce.

Each tribe tends to keep to its own territory, which is an area claimed by the tribe for use in building houses, growing crops, hunting and preparing food. **(Show the colored map you have prepared.)** Tribe members also tend to speak a common language. Sometimes that language is written down with symbols and they teach their children how to read and write in their language. Other tribes have never written their language down. It is just a spoken language, and there is no way to read it or write it.

Family is essential to tribal life. Members of any given tribe can tell who belongs to a tribe and who doesn't and that is because of things like language and customs. Tribal leaders uphold standards that the tribe must live by. Many tribal members can trace their family back 3-5 generations to a single person.

Each tribe also has its own legends and stories about famous ancestors, heroes and how the tribe came to be. There are also customs and practices that only those tribe members participate in. Some customs can be simple like the way to properly greet somebody. Some customs can be more complicated, like the proper way to be married.

Experts have identified three major language groups and sixteen major tribes in Liberia. Each of them has their own history, traditions and beliefs. They also have their own viewpoints about themselves as well as other tribes. Let's take a closer look at some of the tribes.

Bassa – Once known as “people of the forest,” this tribe made a living by hunting animals for food and gathering fruits and vegetables. They also have a long history of serving the Americo-Liberians as nannies, drivers, or housekeepers. The churches that the EC church has established are located in the Bassa territory.

Dei (pronounced “day”) – This tribe was very involved in the slave trade. They lived along the coast and sold the captured Africans to the Europeans. They were also salt traders. One form of art that they are known for is their intricately carved wooden masks.

Gola – They were the middlemen in the slave trade. They transported captured slaves from the inland groups to the Dei and the Vai tribes who in turn sold them to the Europeans. They also kept some slaves

for themselves and depended on them to work their farms – even after slavery was declared illegal in England and the US.

Kissi – They are known to be excellent rice farmers.

Loma - This tribe is considered to be the best farmers in the country.

Kpelle – This was the tribe that was passed through other tribes as slaves. Liberians still to this day have very little respect for anyone who speaks with a Kpelle accent.

Kru (Crew)– This tribe lives along the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. They are considered the masters of sailing and fishing. Many of them work at the Port of Monrovia or for the Liberian Coast Guard.

Mandingo – This tribe has a unique heritage. They are Muslims who came to the area as traders several hundred years ago. The other tribes greatly respected their military and political strength. They also brought with them the Koran, which was a written book. No other tribes had a written language at the time the Mandingos came to Liberia.

Vai (Rhymes with eye) – They were important because they were one of the first tribes to develop their own written script over 100 years ago.

Most of the tribal groups live in a community of 1,000 people or less. They live in huts made out of wood and mud with cone-shaped thatched roofs. **(Show picture of tribal home.)** Inside of the huts, they do not have electricity or indoor plumbing, so you wouldn't be able to flip on a light switch or turn on a faucet in the sink. You wouldn't be able to watch TV or play on the computer or even cook your food on a stove.

All of the cooking is done over an open fire. Children often are given the job of finding enough firewood to keep the cooking fire burning. **(Show picture of girls carrying firewood.)** Imagine how hot it must get to be cooking during the summer over an open fire. Imagine if you wanted to take a bath. How do you think you would get water if there was no running water inside of your hut? Children often have the job of carrying the family's water from a stream or a well. **(Show picture of boy with water jar on his head.)** Would you like to do that every day?

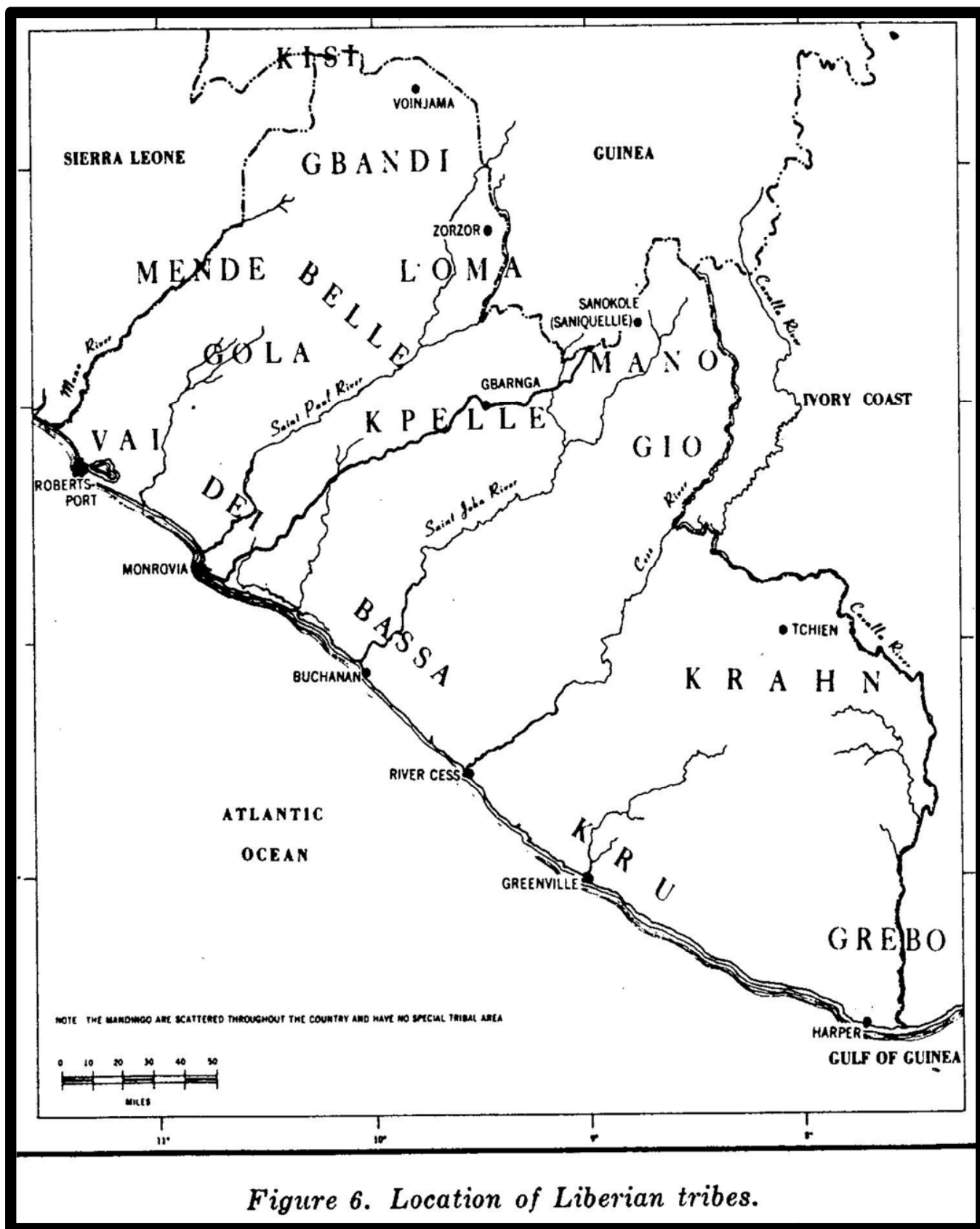
Now that we have learned a little about the many different tribes, it might be easier to understand why Liberia had so many problems creating a united government. Let's pray that the tribes in Liberia can continue to live in peace with each other and not be at war any more.



Traditional village home in the Kpelle Tribe.



Children carry water for the family. An old glass jar will do.



BASSA

DEI

GOLA

KISSI

LOMA

KPELLE

KRU

MANDINGO

VAI

PEOPLE OF THE FOREST	HUNTING AND GATHERING	DEVELOPED OWN WRITING
HOUSE SERVANTS	E.C. CHURCHES	TRANSPORT CAPTURED SLAVES
INVOLVED IN SLAVE TRADE	LIVE ALONG THE COAST	USE SLAVES TO WORK FARMS
SALT TRADERS	CARVED WOODEN MASKS	RICE FARMERS
BEST FARMERS IN COUNTRY	SLAVES	LITTLE RESPECT
LIVE ALONG COAST	SAILING AND FISHING	WORK FOR COAST GUARD
MUSLIM TRADERS	MILITARY STRENGTH	BROUGHT KORAN TO LIBERIA

Liberia's Hope

D S E H E V O W M E Y K O G U
 E R D W L A A Y S O H I L B O
 I R N D L T E I A C H S M A E
 Y O E U E R P A T H S I M N G
 U I M D P E G U R K M A E D I
 N Y O U K R K R A H N T R I U
 T H A O N D T E E D A C H M E
 F O N R Y O U A I B R E G O D
 M A B A S S A N G L O M A Y S
 M A V I O R G I A B E L L E N
 D M Y H O O O P E I S I N Y O
 U A L L D A Y L O N G P S A L
 M T W E N T Y F I G O L A V E
 F O U R A N D F I V E L N Z K
 W J O N C J V E Z Z I F S Y K

BASSA
 GBANDI
 GREBO
 KRAHN
 MANDINGO
 VAI

BELLE
 GIO
 KISI
 KRU
 MANO

DEI
 GOLA
 KPELLE
 LOMA
 MENDE

Circle each of the Liberian tribe names in the puzzle. After you find all of the names, write the extra letters in order in the blanks below the names. God, our Savior is the Hope of Liberia.

