

# LIBERIA

**Lessons for Mission Minded Kids**

**Lesson 2**

## Trouble in Liberia



# **Liberia**

## **Lesson 2: Trouble in Liberia**

### **Goals for Lesson 2:**

- Students will begin to develop a compassionate heart for the people of Liberia.
- Students will understand some of the terrible conditions war has produced in Liberia and how the lives of the children there have been affected by the years of war.
- Students will begin to memorize Psalm 25:4-5 and start to connect its message to the hope God can bring to Liberia.

### **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.
- Prepare pictures as power point slides, or print them and back them with card stock for stability.
- Make a copy of the coloring page for each student.
- Make a copy of the cryptogram for each student, or plan to divide your group into pairs or teams to work on the puzzle together. The answer to the puzzle is the “Liberia Verse”, Psalm 25:4-5.
- Read the “Liberia Fundraisers” section and prayerfully consider practical ways your particular group might invest their time, talent and efforts to bring hope to the people of Liberia.
- If you will not be planning a fundraiser, copy the prayer stars onto white cardstock and cut them out. Gather masking tape, African music or Jungle sounds, a 30 second timer and the Liberian flag for the Prayer Walk activity. Be sure to remove tape from floor when finished with this activity.

## Lesson Plan:

- Open your time together with a welcome, announcements and a brief prayer. (5 min.)
- Give each student, (or pair or team of students) a copy of the cryptogram puzzle. Give them several minutes to work on it, helping as needed. When most are done, read the verse out loud together as a class from their papers. Bring out the poster board verse from Lesson 1 and sing the verse together. Talk about why these words can bring hope to hurting people. (12-15 minutes)
- Read or tell the story part of the lesson, explaining, discussing or adapting as necessary for your group of children, and showing the pictures as indicated. (15-20 minutes)
- Give students the picture of the Liberian Refugees and some colored pencils or crayons. As they color the picture, talk about the problem of refugees, the conditions they live under, and the seeming hopelessness of their situation. (8-10 minutes)
- If you would like to plan a fundraiser, introduce to your class the idea of raising some money to help the churches in Liberia. Brainstorm together about practical and realistic ways that your particular group of kids (and their parents?) could earn money to send to Liberia. If you come up with a great idea, begin to make plans to put it into action. End with a prayer for the people who are still homeless and grieving, and ask for wisdom and help in putting together a plan to reach out compassionately to these people. (20-25 minutes)
- If you do not wish to plan a fundraiser, set up a Prayer Walk as follows and play for the remaining time. (20-25 minutes)
  - *Using masking tape, outline a very rough shape of Liberia on the floor. Make it as large as your space will allow. Cut out the white stars and tape them on the floor in a circle around the Liberia shape, using at least one star for each student. Line students in a circle around the stars. Give one student the flag (or a picture of the flag of Liberia) and the timer. When music starts, students walk around the circle of stars. When music stops, students kneel at the star closest to them and whisper-prays for the item on their star (pair non-readers with readers). The student holding the flag remains standing and times the group for 30 seconds. At a signal, students all stand and a new student receives the flag. Music resumes and students walk around again, stopping at a new star to pray each time.*

## **Lesson 2 Story: Trouble in Liberia**

Do you remember anything about the people who settled in Liberia? Where did they move from? What was their life like before they came to Liberia? That's right, they were slaves living in America. Now like we talked about before, not all Liberians were American slaves. Some of them were tribal natives. We talked about one of the Presidents of Liberia, and how he was stealing money from his own country. What do you think happened to him? Do you think he continued to be the President? No, he was thrown out of office and a new president was put in charge of the country of Liberia.

Sadly, the new president was just as bad and Liberia continued to have money problems. In fact, the debt was so bad, that other countries started talking about dividing the country. In order to avoid this, the leader of Liberia came up with a plan. They decided to make a deal with a Spanish company to provide workers for their cocoa plantations in exchange for money to help pay the national debt. They sent government troops into the native villages to capture men and boys to be sent away as slaves to work on the plantations in Spain.

The reason they chose to capture the native Africans and not the Americo-Liberians is because the Americo-Liberians thought that they were better than the native Africans because while they were slaves in America, many of them had learned how to read and write. Some of the native tribes had a written language, but many did not and had no form of education for their children. So the Americo-Liberians excluded the tribal people from voting or holding any sort of government offices, even though the tribal people were by far the majority of the population.

When the government started forcing the natives to work as slaves on cocoa plantations in Spain, one of the tribes had enough and decided they needed to do something about the situation. They decided to kill that president and replace him with a person of their own ethnicity. Unfortunately, their political leader was not very good either, so another ethnic group forced him out of power and put their own candidate in power. With all the changing of political leaders, and none of the native groups and Americo-Liberians agreeing on who should run the government, a war broke out, with each group fighting against the others, and trying to take power over the government.

The people of Liberia fought against each other from 1989-1996 and then again from 1999-2003. For almost 15 years, there was no peace or safety for the Liberian people. During these times more than 200,000 people were killed and over a million more were displaced into refugee camps in neighboring countries.

People from all of the ethnic groups and tribes were involved in the fighting. Even little boys and girls were affected by the fighting. Many of them became orphans when their moms and dads were killed. Others suffered from hunger and homelessness, and from constantly living in fear. Some boys were even forced to become soldiers. They had to learn how to use knives and carry guns. **(Show picture of boy with his damaged home.)** Many families had to leave their homes and walk for hundreds of miles looking for a safer place to live. The people who made it across the border into another country are called refugees. **(Show picture of woman in her refugee shelter.)** They set up temporary living spaces in areas that became large refugee camps. These camps often became overcrowded, dirty and dangerous, with too many frightened people crowded together with not enough to eat.

When the fighting finally stopped, the government did not know what to do to improve the devastated lives of the Liberian people. Unemployment was at 75% because there was no place left to work. No one had been able to go to school for almost 15 years, so only 25% of the people living in the whole country could read or write. There was no running water and no reliable electricity even in the capital city of Monrovia. **(Show picture of young children whose only home has been a refugee camp.)**

In difficult times, it is often the churches and the Christian people who reach out to help others in need. But even the churches had suffered from the long years of war. Many had been stripped of their furniture and all of the windows had been broken. Rebels had stripped off the tin roofs to be melted down for bullets and guns. Pastors had been killed and church buildings had been burned. Christian people had been scattered far from their homes, and had no leaders and no buildings to meet in. They still held on to their faith in God and did their best to help each other through those difficult years.

Since 2005, Liberia has been relatively peaceful. With help from other countries, they held their first peaceful election with 23 candidates from all backgrounds to choose from. The president that was elected, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, is known as being the first woman head of state on the entire continent of Africa. Since coming to power, she has tried to make Liberia more prosperous for all Liberians, not just those that are the same ethnic group as she. Let's remember to pray for the government leaders of Liberia, especially for those like Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, that are trying to make their country a better place to live.





Liberian families walked with what they could carry into another country. They set up makeshift shelters in refugee camps.





Many young Liberian children have never known life outside of a refugee camp.

# HOPE

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
25	3	20	7	24	14	10	1	11	19	9	21	26

N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
17	4	22	6	13	15	8	12	18	16	23	5	2

15 1 4 16      26 24      5 4 12 13      16 25 5 15

4      21 4 13 7      8 24 25 20 1      26 24

11 17      5 4 12 13      8 13 12 8 1      25 17 7

8 24 25 20 1      26 24      14 4 13      5 4 12

25 13 24      10 4 7      26 5      15 25 18 11 4 13

25 17 7      26 5      1 4 22 24      11 15      11 17

5 4 12      7 25 5      21 4 17 10



# Liberian Refugees



## **Liberian Prayer Walk**

*Print as many pages of stars as needed on white cardstock paper. Cut out at least one for each student.*

