

HEART CONNEX

Truth Flowing from One Generation to the Next—Through Strong Heart Connections

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Joy Despite Persecution—Richard Ross, Ph.D.

1. Heart Surprise (Today a parent goes first): Say: **In medieval times, someone your age could have been a princess or an aspiring knight. Something I see in you that reminds me of a princess or a knight would be . . .**

2. Read Scripture: Invite a family member to pray. Ask family members to read Matthew 5:11-12 and 2 Timothy 3:12. Discuss the Truth and Untruths in light of these verses.

Truth

- My faith in Christ brings me peace and joy even when I am persecuted.

Untruths

- It's better to fit my beliefs to what's going on around me than to be persecuted.
- Unless they can make me feel happy, there's really no point in religious beliefs.
- Persecution means I must be doing something wrong.

3. Explore Scripture: Read aloud Matthew 5:11-12. Say: **The Jews expected a Savior who would conquer their enemies so they could rule over other nations. They probably didn't think persecution would be part of following Christ.** Remind your family that Jesus said the prophets also had been persecuted. For example, Jeremiah was thrown into a dungeon and threatened with death and Elijah was hunted by Ahab and Jezebel, while tradition says Isaiah was sawed in two. Say: **Jesus clearly promised that those who experience persecution because of Him will receive rewards in heaven. While it doesn't make sense to our minds, persecution for our faith can be a source of great peace and joy because we can bring honor and glory to God.** Read 2 Timothy 3:12 and emphasize the idea that everyone who suffers for their faith is included.

4. Think It Through: A teenager will lead this step.

5. Nail It Down: Encourage family members to suggest ways we show our love for Christ. (*Examples: singing praises to Him, ministering to those in need, or obeying His commands.*) Say: **Those things are great, but we also express our love by accepting persecution for His name. Each member of this family must decide if you love Him that much.**

6. Pray: A teenager will lead this prayer.

7. Blessing: Say: **I bless this family for standing strong for Christ when persecution comes.**

Parent Tip: One of the best ways to develop a heart for missions is to pray for those who are already serving around the world. Encourage family members to pray for missionaries and believers in other countries, including those facing persecution. Visit the International Mission Board's Web site at www.imb.org to learn more about the prayer needs of international missionaries.