



"And now I am no more in the world,
but these are in the world..." (John 17:11).

Use this recent news story to help your students see the relevance
of this week's lesson from the Standard Lesson Commentary®
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OPPRESSIVE DARKNESS

After eliminating the Christian presence in northern Iraq, militant ISIS forces have caused tens of thousands of adherents to the ancient Yazidi sect to flee their homes. Many Yazidis have taken refuge in a mountainous region that lacks food and water, but there seems to be no better option. It's either (1) flee and take one's chances with starvation or (2) stay and face enslavement, forced conversion, or death.

MERCIFUL LIGHT

We see in Iraq almost daily how religious fanaticism uses a distorted view of God to justify oppression and murder. But a small beam of light will shine every so often. Having already been driven out, no Christians are in the vicinity to help save the Yazidis. Instead, Iraqi Kurds are coming to their rescue. Most of the Kurdish rescuers are Sunni Muslims, the same sect as that of the ISIS militants. A bit of merciful relief may come through supplies dropped by air, but mercy comes mainly through person to person contact. The Kurds are demonstrating mercy in a way that Christians should emulate!

1. How would you argue for or against the idea that God administers his mercy even through people who are not Christians, as in the case of the Kurds?
2. Is evil more prevalent in Iraq than elsewhere in the world? Why, or why not?
3. What can Christians do to bring the light of Matthew 4:16 and 2 Corinthians 4:6 to the Middle East?
4. What does 2 Corinthians 4:7 suggest about your role as a servant of Christ?
5. When was a time you shared Paul's feelings of being perplexed, persecuted, etc., but still sensed God at work in your life? How did things turn out?
6. What is our responsibility when a fellow Christian is undergoing the negative experiences of 2 Corinthians 4:8, 9?

—Charles R. Boatman

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