

Lesson One

Our Priceless Legacy

LESSON IDEA

To explain the basic concept of freedom, and to remind each family member how few have enjoyed its blessings throughout history.

VISUAL AID

The Declaration of Independence; map or globe of the world.

THROUGHOUT the world, something precious has been disappearing. It is something that most Americans have enjoyed from birth, a gift often taken for granted, like the air we breathe.

Because so many of us have merely inherited this gift, we may think little about it, and tend to regard it as something that will always exist, like the sun that lights the day and the moon and stars that shine at night.

Since the people of the United States have enjoyed it to an extent previously unknown in world history, it may never occur to many of us that this precious legacy could slip away, be stolen, or become lost.

What do you think it is? [Ask each family member until someone answers "freedom."]

Yes, freedom is the gift which has distinguished America from other nations, for the United States was conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights. [Call on someone to read the first few words of the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, which include that thought.]

Exactly what does freedom mean? Can it be defined? [Give everyone a chance to answer.]

Here is a simple definition of freedom that will assist us in comprehending its true meaning: Freedom is "the power to act for oneself." To appreciate the importance of being able to act for ourselves, let us first consider a parable about a mythical kingdom ruled by a wise and loving king.

ONE DAY, this great king beckoned his two sons and said, "In all my days I have ruled my kingdom with justice. It is now time for

me to retire. I must decide which of you is best qualified to inherit the kingdom and rule in my place. I therefore wish to ask each of you two questions."

What questions did the king ask to determine which son would make the best leader?

Question One: What would you seek to accomplish as ruler of the kingdom?

Question Two: How would you seek to achieve your objectives?

Were you one of the sons, how would you answer?

The eldest son said, "Father, I would like this land to be known as the kingdom of truth, where men and women are free to find their own happiness. To accomplish this, I would teach them the laws of truth in all things, and seek to make them free, and responsible for their own actions and welfare."

His younger brother said, "I would like to become known as the greatest ruler in history, the one who eliminated such social evils as poverty, famine, crime, and disease. To do so I would select the smartest and best-educated citizens to study those evils and determine the cause of each. Then

FOR YOUNGER AMERICANS

For younger children, our next story may be omitted, so that more time may be devoted to discussing the above parable. Its basic elements will be readily understood by most grade-school children. Here are some questions that may be posed to stimulate further comment about the meaning of freedom:

1. Did the king believe that freedom was important for the citizens of his country? How did he show this?
2. Did the eldest son also believe freedom was important? How do we know this?
3. What was the youngest son's opinion of freedom? What did he believe was more important than freedom?
4. If the king had selected his youngest son, what would likely have happened to freedom in the kingdom? If the scientists and experts ran the country, what freedoms would have been lost first?
5. Which son would you prefer as king? Why?

