

DAY 3

GOALS

- A. Participate in experiences demonstrating that moving from bystander to rescuer is a matter of righteousness (meaning virtuousness), not heroism (meaning courage).
- B. Reinforce the terms bystander, perpetrator, victim, and rescuer so students can use them when analyzing literature, history and news events.
- C. Draw closure by assisting students in seeing how people make a difference when they act morally.
- D. Help students see and experience how individuals choose to behave and how bystanders can become rescuers.
- E. Relate the past (the Holocaust, 1960's, Civil Rights Movement) to the present and the future, showing that "making a difference" can cross racial, ethnic and religious boundaries. (See quotation by Leon Bass, p. 21)

ACTIVITY I - OPENING THE LESSON

- A. Teacher distributes Martin Niemoeller quote (page 17) and the pastoral letter from the Lutheran Church of Denmark (page 18). These documents may be photocopied and distributed to groups or used as a transparency and read aloud. The former is best.
- B. Students are placed in groups of five and asked to compare and explain Niemoeller's *bystander, victim, rescuer* decision to the actions of the Danes as evidenced in the 1943 pastoral letter from the Lutheran Church of Denmark.

ACTIVITY II - DEVELOPING THE LESSON

- A. Discuss with the students: Each Dane had to make an individual decision to act in order to make a difference. While the Danes' decision looks like a group decision, in actuality each person had to make an individual decision to act virtuously.
- B. Prepare the students to view the film of *Irene Opdyke*. Ask them to focus on the following:
 - What led her to act virtuously?
 - What were the risks to her as a rescuer?
 - How did she account for her choice to become a rescuer?

Show the video of *Irene Opdyke*, who lived in Nazi controlled Poland as a teenager. Then discuss the ten "Questions for Analysis" (page 20) *Note: Irene did not begin telling her story until after reading a newspaper article in the 1970's that claimed the Holocaust never really happened.*

It is important for students to understand that this was a time in history when the ordinary became the extraordinary. It does not seem ordinary today to give to the poor or to the homeless or to reach out to those less fortunate, but in those times, simple acts of kindness, like giving bits of food or providing shelter to the oppressed were extraordinary acts of courage.

At the same time, seeing people in these kinds of conditions was extremely ordinary, and therefore it would have been very easy to ignore them.

Closing quotation:

"Remember that it is easy to save human lives. One did not need to be heroic or crazy to feel pity for an abandoned or starving child. It was enough to open a door, to throw a piece of bread, a shirt, or a coin; it was enough to feel compassion. In those times one climbed to the summit of humanity by simply remaining human."

Elie Wiesel,
concentration camp
and Holocaust survivor
Nobel prize winning author