

Leader's Guide





In the city of Thacora, in the land of Numidia, which we now call Tunisia, lived a woman named Crispina. A wealthy woman, she and her large family were respected by those who knew them, and she was known to be generous with her wealth, giving freely to those who had a need. But there was a problem. Crispina was a Christian, a follower of Jesus of Nazareth, who almost 300 years earlier had turned all of the world upside down with His life and work. While this did not trouble her neighbors very much, it disturbed someone with far greater power: the Emperor Diocletian.

In the year AD 303, he issued a series of edicts ordering Roman citizens throughout the Empire to begin persecuting all Christians. These edicts went into effect on February 23, the feast day of Terminus, the Roman god of boundaries and limits, whose Latin motto, *concedo nulli*, means "Give no ground." Diocletian's meaning was clear: from that day forward, his mission was to see Christianity terminated once and for all. He would give no ground to the Christian faith.

Fire was the preferred tool: it consumed church buildings, it consumed Scriptures. It consumed Christians. Was this necessary? Was Diocletian so unwilling to extend mercy to any Christians at all? In fact, he made a simple offer: those who renounced their Christian faith, publicly prayed to the gods and offered a simple offering in the name of the Emperor would be forgiven and their lives and property spared. Who in their right mind could refuse such clemency?

Crispina, matron, mother — Christian — could not abandon her Jesus so readily. Respectfully, firmly, she proclaimed at her trial that, "I have never sacrificed, nor will I sacrifice to any other than to one God, and to our Lord Jesus Christ His Son, who was born and suffered for us. I have told you again and again that I am ready to endure any tortures rather than worship the idols which are the work of men's hands." The Praetorian judging her case ordered that she have her head shaved in order to publicly humiliate her. He then brought her before his court again, where she once more refused to betray her faith. Stony-faced, the judge ordered that she be tortured in front of her family and then beheaded.

On December 5, AD 304, Crispina was killed by the sword. Right before she entered Paradise and the arms of Jesus, she made the sign of the cross on her forehead. One hundred and fifty years later, another North African, Augustine of Hippo, wrote of her: "See how Crispina despised all things, and life itself, for the love of Jesus Christ. Wisely, therefore, did she prefer to live forever, than to prolong for a short while her temporal existence." The ruins of the church built in her honor are still visible in Algeria. And despite continued persecution, her spiritual descendants are still visible there, as well.

To Crispina, Jesus was more important, more permanent, more *real* than even the Emperor of Rome. Sometimes, we have trouble feeling like we can point to specific evidence of how real Jesus is. Our walk with God is real, but when someone asks us how we can have any confidence in a story that is so old, a story that *must* have been changed so many times through the years, we don't immediately know what to say. Why is that? Can our critics be right? Is our hope based on nothing more than a myth? What evidence do we have that this Gospel is true and can change anything at all?

The good news is that we are not the first to engage these questions! The apostle Paul instructs us to always be ready to give the reason for the hope we have in Christ. Jesus tells us, "You trust in God, trust therefore also in me." The writer to the Hebrews tells us that our confidence in God is justified because we can see His character in the lives of those who have come before us in the faith. Those believers are *part* of our evidence, *part* of our story. Put a different way: **As followers of Jesus, we know that Christ's story is proven through our collective story.** And that is why we have created the Heritage Project: So that all can see how Christ's story is being proven true through the lives of Christians across the ages, and to make those stories available on every platform. We look forward to sharing these stories with you; we look forward to the stories that Jesus will write through you and through us. Happy reading...and happy writing.

The Heritage Project team



Table of Contents

Perpetua	1
The Scillitan Martyrs	8
Tertullian	14
Victor	21



PERPETUA

Themes: Christian equality; the cost of discipleship; hearing God in trials.

Summary: A young noblewoman and her slave become sisters in Christ and in motherhood. With their small group of Christian friends, they face persecution and personal loss together and emerge victorious over death.

Time Period: AD 203.

Location: Carthage, modern-day Tunis, Tunisia and Theburba Minus, modern-day Tebourba, Tunisia.

Interesting Facts: Perpetua's journal is an important example of early Christian writing. It shows that women held equal value to men in the early church, and demonstrates the reality of loving Christ even before family. Perpetua's diary also explores God's use of dreams and visions in encouraging and equipping Christians in distress.

Quotable quotes

"We were in the hands of our persecutors, when my father, out of the affection he bore me, made new efforts to shake my resolution. I said to him: 'Can that vessel, which you see, change its name?' He said: 'No.' I replied: 'Nor can I call myself any other than I am, that is to say, a Christian.'"

"My father [...] continually strove to hurt my faith because of his love"

"That shall be done at this tribunal, whatsoever God shall please; for know that we are not established in our own power, but in God's."

"Then Hilarianus passed sentence upon us all and condemned us to the beasts; and cheerfully we went down to the dungeon."

"And I awoke; and I understood that I should fight, not with beasts but against the devil; but I knew that mine was the victory."



1. The Christian refusal to worship the gods of Rome was seen as intolerant by the Romans. What parallels do you see between secular culture and the church today?

Increasingly, tolerance means that everyone's worldview is as true as anyone else's worldview. Logically, this cannot be true, and Christians believe that Jesus alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and that, as Lord, we are accountable to Him for everything from our sexuality to our finances to our thoughts. This is a threat to worldly culture.

2. Saturus, the teacher of the young Christians, surrendered himself voluntarily to death. Why did he do this? How does this compare with James 3.1: "Let not many of you be teachers, my brothers, knowing that we will receive heavier judgment."?

Saturus took his role as a church leader very seriously. He wanted to accompany the young Christians under his responsibility all the way through their trials and into eternity. He knew that God expects leaders to lay their lives down like He has done for us. To put it more simply, Saturus loved Christ and he loved these young Christians; he simply couldn't abandon them to their suffering alone.

3. How does Saturus' decision illustrate 1 John 3.16: "By this we know love, because he laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers."?

Saturus shows that he wasn't manipulating the young Christians to his own worldly gain or being hypocritical in encouraging them to be willing to both live and die for Jesus; he was willing to do the same with them.

4. How do you think that a Christian can prepare to stay faithful to God and to the believers under his or her care in advance of persecution?

Consider discussing this point in light of Luke 9:23-24: "He said to all, 'If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever will lose his life for my sake, the same will save it.'"

5. The deacons of the church of Carthage did what they could to improve conditions for their imprisoned brothers and sisters. How can we encourage and help the persecuted church today?

Consider discussing providing financial support to persecuted Christians through a ministry such as Voice of the Martyrs. Can you or your study group commit to taking on such a need?

6. What was the message of Perpetua's first vision (involving the serpent, the armed ladder, and the beautiful garden)?

Perpetua knew that the group's destination was heaven, that the way would be with pain, but that Satan would be defeated.



7. Oppressed by the Roman Imperial government, Perpetua and her fellow Christians took great risks to meet together and study the Scriptures. Why were they willing to so openly defy their governments?

Perpetua and her friends were willing to take such a risk because they loved truth more than safety, even more than life on this earth. They were convinced through faith, the study of scripture, and Christian community that the Gospel was true, and they wanted to live according to it.

8. What are some verses that come to mind when we think of Perpetua's willingness to lose even family for the sake of Jesus?

Consider looking at Matthew 10:34-38 and Luke 14:26-33 as a group and discussing it in light of Perpetua's story.

9. What were the possible consequences for following Jesus at this time? What compromises did the government offer, and why didn't Christians take them up on them? Have you ever been mistreated in some way for being a Christian?

Citizens could have their property seized, be imprisoned and beaten, have their citizenship revoked, and be sentenced to death. Non-citizens could also be tortured and killed. Compromises involved recanting and making an offering to the Roman gods.

10. In which modern-day nation does Perpetua's story take place? What was the name of the ancient city from which she came?

Near modern-day Tunis, in Tunisia. She was from Theburbo Minus, which is modern-day Thebourba, Tunisia.

11. Why would the Romans allow the worship of any number of gods, except for the worship of one god alone?

By allowing for the addition of new gods, the Romans hoped to gain the favor of all of the gods in the world and to unify the people in a common, diverse, faith. The monotheism of the Christians, in Roman eyes, was a declaration of independence from the Roman religion that could result in the gods cursing the Empire.

12. Were you surprised to find out that many women of Perpetua's day could read and write?

13. Perpetua and her brother were catechumens. What was a catechumen?

A catechumen was a Christian convert preparing for baptism.



14. The Roman pagans could not understand the Bible studies and church meetings of the Christians. In what way does Christianity strike non-Christians in your life as strange and possibly threatening?

15. Was Perpetua sinning in defying her father in order to follow Jesus? Why or why not? Look at Luke 14:26. Discuss how this is a common choice facing Christians around the world today.

In many cultures, the shame and honor of a family are of utmost importance, but that ultimately, our relationship with God must come first. See Matthew 10:26-33.





16. Was Perpetua sinning in choosing death even though it meant that her child would grow up without his mother? Why or why not?

This is a sensitive issue, but ultimately, we see that the apostles also died following Jesus, and that the commandment of Jesus is to be willing to give up everything to follow Him.

17. Did Perpetua's father hate her? On what do you base your conclusion?

No, if anything, his love for her was an idol to him. He sought to save her life, and he treated her tenderly except when his grief drove him over the edge into desperation. This is often the case in cultures where the families persecute Christian converts; they are mortally afraid for their loved one's soul and eternity.

18. Match the Roman title from the story with its appropriate role:

Proconsul		A high-ranking Roman official who administrated a Roman province.
Military Tribune		A high-ranking Roman military officer who operated under the promagistrates such as the proconsuls or the consuls.
Procurator		A middle-ranked Roman official in charge of the financial affairs of a province or, in a minor province, the imperial governor.
Pater Familias		A Roman father and head of household, whose will was ultimately decisive in questions concerning anyone in his household.

19. Which woman delivered a baby while in prison: Felicitas or Perpetua? What was miraculous about the timing of the baby's birth?

Felicitas gave birth in prison. The miracle was that the birth occurred just in time to ensure that she would not die as a common criminal, but as a Christian testimony to her faith in Jesus Christ.



20. Two Roman guards stand out: one who is unnamed and mocked the prisoners, another named Pudens, who gave his life to Christ. How does this remind you of Luke 23:32-43? Have you experienced one or both of these responses in your witnessing?

You may also want to connect these two responses - rejection and repentance - to two further passages from the book of Acts. Acts chapter two tells of a crowd hearing a sermon and being "cut to the heart" (verse 37). In Acts chapter seven, a very similar message is preached by Stephen, and in the New King James Bible, we find the same expression saying that "they were cut to the heart" is used. Look at the two responses of the crowds and discuss it in light of our episode.

21. Saturus took the opportunity to preach a sermon warning of God's judgment on two occasions: at the prisoners' last meal and later on in the arena. According to a recent study (Barna Group, *Reviving Evangelism*, © 2019), 47% of respondents who were Christians of the Millennial generation believed that "it is wrong to share one's personal beliefs with someone of a different faith in hopes that they will one day share the same faith." Is this attitude consistent with the teachings of Christ in Matthew 28:16-20? Why or why not? Is it consistent with the preaching of Peter (Acts 2:14-36) or of Paul (17:16-34)?

The simple truth of the matter is that, no, believing that evangelism with the hope of conversion is wrong is not consistent with the commandments of Christ and the teaching and practice of the apostles.

22. In the same study, respondents stated that "People are more likely now than in the past to see me as offensive if I share my faith." Is this your experience? If so, has this affected your willingness to share the Gospel and to explicitly present God's plan of salvation to others? Is this the example given by Perpetua and the Christians in our story?

Perpetua and her friends understood that their beliefs were offensive to those around them, but they were not fearful of sharing their beliefs because of this...they were bold in sharing their faith at every opportunity!



23. What role do you think that the Christians played in helping each other stay faithful to Christ until the very end? Do you have friends like that? Do you have friends that make it harder for you to faithfully follow Christ?

Some possible ways in which the Christians helped each other would be: praying for each other, sharing personal messages received from God with each other, learning and reflecting on Scripture together, reminding each other of the rewards promised to those who are faithful to the end, confessing to each other, eating communion together, planning evangelistic messages together, changing and holding babies, etc.

24. What was the message of Perpetua's second vision (involving the deacon, the arena, and the giant gladiator)?

The message of Perpetua's second vision was that her struggle would not be against wild beasts, but against the Devil. However, she was assured that victory would be hers in the end.

25. Perpetua received a branch or wreath for defeating the giant in her vision. Read Revelation 2:10. What do you think that this wreath symbolized for Perpetua and the other Christians?

Some good answers would include victory, eternal life, and honor from God for having stayed true to Him.

26. Why did the Christians pray to die in certain ways rather than praying for God to release them from their death sentence?

They had already received confirmation through the vision given to Perpetua that it was not God's will that they should be set free, but that they should die as witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They therefore would not ask God to give them something that He had already said was against His will. Within His will for them to die, they asked to be able to die in certain ways.



Food for thought

As we conclude our study of the story of Perpetua and Felicitas and their fellow believers, what can we hold on to and apply to our own lives? Take a moment to reflect on the teaching that we've learned today in these areas:

- How does a Christian reconcile the commandment to honor their father and mother, while also honoring Christ, who said that "If anyone comes to me, and doesn't disregard his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he can't be my disciple."?
- What can we learn about the role of leaders from Saturus and the deacons in this story? If you are a Christian leader or if you feel called to become one, what are you doing to prepare yourself to serve faithfully as these leaders did?
- What can we learn from the dreams and visions that Perpetua received? Do you believe that God can or does speak to Christians through dreams and visions today? What were the themes of Perpetua's visions, and how did they impact the behavior of the Christians in the story?
- What can we learn about how the early church saw women from this story?
- Many non-Christians are confused or frightened about Christians and their beliefs and practices. How can the church share the Biblical beliefs and practices in such a way as to invite honest questions and to show our Christlike intentions?
- Christ clearly mandates every disciple to share the Gospel with those in their lives, to baptize them, and to teach them all that He has taught, and yet a great percentage of Christians feel that "it is wrong to share one's personal beliefs with someone of a different faith in hopes that they will one day share the same faith." (Barna Group, *Reviving Evangelism*, © 2019)
How would you respond to this false understanding of Scripture?
- Are you frightened of how people will treat you if you begin fulfilling the Great Commission with those around you? Why or why not? Is the Holy Spirit convicting you of your need to trust God and obey His commandments? If so, would you be willing to share this with a fellow Christian who can support you in your desire to be faithful?



The Scillitan Martyrs

Themes: Standing strong together through persecution; honoring government even under unjust trials and persecutions; honoring God before men.

Summary: Twelve innocent Christians faced certain death for not giving into government and social pressure. By going through it together, they stood strong. Their story was told throughout the Empire and has encouraged countless other believers.

Time Period: AD 180.

Location: Scillita and Carthage, in modern-day Kasserine and Tunis, Tunisia.

Interesting Facts: The tomb of the martyrs was found in the early twentieth century. Two of the martyrs were Berbers.

Quotable quotes:

"We have no other to fear but the Lord our God, who is in heaven." Cittinus

"What I am is exactly what I want to be." Secunda

"Today we are martyrs in heaven. Thanks to God." Nartzalus

"Honor as Caesar to Caesar, but fear to God." Donata

"In a cause so just, there is no need for consideration." Speratus



1. In what year were the Scillitan Martyrs persecuted?

The Scillitan Martyrs were persecuted in the year AD 180.

2. In what ancient city did their trial take place? Carthage.

3. With what crime were the Scillitan Martyrs charged?

The Scillitan Martyrs were charged with refusing to offer sacrifices to the divine image or "genius" of the Roman emperor.

4. What did the letters "SPQR" stand for (in English)?

"The Senate and People of Rome."

5. Who was the son of the emperor Marcus Aurelius? Commodus

6. Most of the twelve Scillitan Martyrs had Latin names, except for two: Nartzalus and Scittinus. To what modern-day people group were they related?

The Berbers.

WHO ARE THE BERBERS?

The Berbers are the descendants of the original inhabitants of North Africa. Their languages are not related to Semitic or European languages, but represent a unique heritage. The six largest people groups of Berbers are the Chaoui, the Kabyle, the Riffi, the Tachelhayt, the Tamazight, and the Tamasheq. This project was initially inspired by the lost stories of early Christians from these tribes!

7. The Roman government used tax money to support a religious and political system that was pagan. Why then did the Christians still pay taxes to Rome?

The Christians still paid taxes to Rome because Jesus had commanded to "Then he said to them, 'Give therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.'" (Matthew 22:21). Tertullian, another North African Christian, summarized this as "[render] the image of Caesar, which is on the coin, to Caesar, and the image of God, which is on man, to God; so as to render to Caesar indeed money, to God yourself. Otherwise, what will be God's, if all things are Caesar's?"



8. What were the three factors that worked against the Christians?

- I. They denied all gods except for the God of the Bible. To the Romans, this seemed intolerant.
- II. The Roman suspicion of any group of citizens that met privately, without state supervision.
- III. The absolute refusal of Christians to burn incense to the Emperor's statue and pray to the Emperor's spirit.

9. The Romans had a various forms of superstition, including the sacred chickens. Some might see these traditions as silly and harmless, but the Christians did not. In light of Deuteronomy 18:10-13, what are some superstitions or attempts at fortune-telling that are common today that Christians should avoid?

Some examples might be astrology, horoscopes, chain letters, tarot or tea leaf readings, New Age, lucky charms, transcendental meditation, altered states of consciousness, prosperity gospel, etc.

10. Romans believed that every man had a familiar spirit known as a genius, while every woman had a spirit called a juno. Why were Roman citizens expected to make offerings to the Emperor's genius?



11. The freedom of speech is a right given to us by God, but as with every right, it comes with responsibilities. Why would it have been wrong for the Scillitan Martyrs to give up their freedom of speech to escape persecution?

Christians should be faithful to Christ in speech and in action for a number of reasons (this is just a partial list):

- I. Trials perfect the Christian's character. (James 1:2-4)
- II. Sharing in Christ's sufferings guarantees that we will share fully in His glory. (Romans 8:16-17)
- III. Standing up for the faith often convicts and persuades the persecutor to turn to Christ. (Jonah 3; Matthew 5:44; 1 Timothy 1:13; Luke 23:39-43)
- IV. Being a disciple requires proclaiming the Gospel, no matter what. (Luke 14:27)

12. Have you ever had to be stubborn in sticking to your faith in Jesus Christ in the face of pressure? When? What kind of pressure? Family? Authority figures? The government? Were you strong enough to do it? Why or why not? If not, how could you be better prepared for it next time?

Possible habits for preparing to stand against persecution might be to:

- i. Pray for the Holy Spirit to give you God's perspective on suffering and being a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ no matter the circumstances.
- II. Memorize Scripture.
- III. Set aside regular time each week to fast and pray and to ask God to tear down idols or distractions that cloud your view of reality and lead to false priorities.
- IV. Read biographies of Christian men and women who have stood up in the face of persecution.
- V. Subscribe to Voice of the Martyrs and stay informed and engaged in the lives of suffering Christians around the world.

13. Which writer wrote about the courage of the Scillitan Martyrs? Tertullian.

14. What was different about the Christians who were brought before the court as opposed to criminals?

Normal criminals denied the charges and claimed innocence, but were proven guilty by their habitual dishonesty and criminal behavior.

The Christians were innocent and freely admitted that they were refusing to follow Roman laws that would have violated their conscience, and their innocence was proved by their habitual honesty and upright behavior.



15. What 3-step pattern did the persecutors of the Christians follow?

- I. **Accusation.**
- II. **Pressure to convert.**
- III. **Punishment for refusal.**

16. Marcus Aurelius was both a Roman emperor and a philosopher. His persecution killed people not for what they had done, but rather for what they believed. To this day, millions of Christians face the same persecution all over the world.

17. Saturninus, the Roman official, wanted to help the Christians, but he was caught between justice and what was politically correct. Do you think that there are officials that face a similar dilemma today? Why or why not?

18. Over the last few years, about 100,000 Christians around the world are killed for their faith, every year. Are you aware of this? Would you like to take an active part in supporting these Christians so that they can endure the persecution in their lives? If so, see the back of this participant guide for some helpful links and start making a difference today!



Food for thought

As we conclude our study of the Scillitan Martyrs, what can we hold on to and apply to our own lives? Take a moment to reflect on the teaching that we've learned today in these areas:

- How are Christians to live in a society whose laws don't honor God?
- Why should Christians obey every law that does not directly violate the commands of Scripture?
- What is the role of personal integrity and respectful discourse in the face of persecution?
- Why is it important to go through difficulty or persecution as a church body, and not just as individual Christians?
- Since many persecutors are confused and scared, why is loving them and praying for them an essential part of representing Christ to them?
- What does it mean to be a Christian in deed, rather than just in name?
- How can you pray for the government and for those who persecute the Church?
- Are you suffering from persecution?
- How is your personal integrity?
- Are you upright before the Lord, or will your testimony under persecution be clouded because you are sinning? What can you do today to make sure that your testimony will be blameless?
- What is your church or small group doing to strengthen each other?
- What can you do to support the global church, which is undergoing persecution on a greater scale than ever before?
- A pastor of the persecuted church in China said, "When you are interrogated by the police for your faith, there are two dangers : one is physical, and one is spiritual. The spiritual one grows the longer that you are there. They may persuade you, or frighten you. So, to eliminate the spiritual danger, I go immediately to the most controversial point. I say, I respect your authority to rule, but the world view that you represent is evil and I will not believe in it. I am a Christian. Now, you must either beat me, imprison me, kill me, or let me go free. The choice is yours." How does this remind you of the Scillitan martyrs' leader, Speratus, and his way of speaking to the Roman official ?



Tertullian

Themes: Confronting injustice with God's Word, Christian compassion, and Christian intellectualism; using your gifts for God's kingdom in the face of persecution.

Summary: Raised a pagan, Tertullian would become the first major Christian writer to write in Latin, and his mountains of books are a rich treasure trove illuminating church and Roman history, examining the Christian response to the pagan worldview, studying the role of Christianity in shaping culture, and explaining key Christian concepts such as the Trinity and the sanctity of human life.

Time Period: AD 197-240.

Location: Carthage, near modern-day Tunis, Tunisia.

Interesting Facts: Very little is known about the personal life of Tertullian, yet we know almost everything imaginable about his Christian faith! The word Trinity was created by Tertullian to describe the God of the Bible, as revealed throughout Scripture.

Quotable quotes

"The blood of Christians is seed."

"The first reaction to truth is hatred."

"You can judge the quality of their [Christian] faith from the way they behave:
Discipline is an index to doctrine."

"Divorce these days is a religious vow, as if the proper offspring of marriage."

"Nothing that is God's is obtainable by money."

"The fullness of the fruit is in the seed." [speaking against infanticide/abortion]

"The Son of God was crucified: I am not ashamed - because it is shameful.
The Son of God died: it is immediately credible - because it is silly.
He was buried, and rose again: it is certain - because it is impossible."



1. Carthage was defeated by her ancient enemy, Rome, which then made Carthage its capital in Africa.
2. Tertullian's father was a centurion.
3. The Emperor during Tertullian's childhood was Marcus Aurelius, and he became known as both a great philosopher and general.
4. Marcus Aurelius ordered the execution of Christians throughout the Empire. He was replaced upon his death by his insane son, Commodus. After Commodus, more emperors came and went before the empire found a stable emperor. Who was this stable emperor? Septimius Severus
5. Tertullian grew up in what kind of household? Pagan or Christian?
6. Tertullian was the first major Christian writer in church history to write in Latin.
7. Tertullian wrote to Christians who were in prison. Tertullian believed that Christians must learn to see prison as a challenge and an opportunity to grow closer to God. If they could do this, prison would lose its power to cause fear to the person of faith.
8. Christians were accused of worshiping a crucified god with the head of a donkey. Because the bread and wine of the communion meal represent the body and blood of Jesus, Christians were accused of cannibalism. Because Christians called each other "brother" and "sister" and would only marry other Christians, they were accused of incest. Because they would not take an oath to the spirit of the emperor, they were accused of disloyalty. In what ways does your culture misunderstand or distort the teachings of Christianity?



9. In AD 197, Tertullian wrote two books to respond to accusations against the Christians.

What were their names? Ad Nationes and Apologeticus

10. What did the title *Ad Nationes* mean? "To the nations"

11. What did the title *Apologeticus* mean? "Apology"

12. In theology, what is an apology?

A reasoned argument in defense against accusations.

13. Roman persecution of the Christians started under which Emperor? Nero

14. The Romans blamed environmental and economic suffering on the Christians. They did this because the Christians refused to see the world the same way that they did. How is this still an issue for the Church today?

Some things for which Christianity has been blamed include suppressing women's rights, taking a stance against abortion, denying climate change, speaking out against homosexual marriage, etc.

15. Tertullian famously said that the blood of Christians is seed. What does this mean?

Tertullian was remarking on the fact that because of how Christians live, the way in which they lived through persecution and died in martyrdom was a power testimony to the truth of the Gospel that made more Christians, not fewer, when they died. You might mention how this fulfills the prophecy of Jesus found in John 12:24.

16. What did Tertullian mean when he said that "Christians are made, not born"?

Being a Christian does not mean having a Christian name, a Christian family, a Christian upbringing, or attending church. Being a Christian means making a conscious decision to accept Christ as Savior and Lord. It is Christ Who, through His indwelling power, then turns sinners into Christians.





17. What does it mean that Jesus is Savior?

It means that a person relies on Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as the Son of God to grant him eternal life.

18. What does it mean that Jesus is Lord?

It means that a person commits to giving Jesus Christ authority over every area of their life, so as to be transformed into His image, to joyfully accomplish His purposes. When a person allows Jesus Christ authority over their actions, thoughts, attitudes, and words, they become a "little Christ", or a Christian. See Acts 11:19-26 and Romans 12:1-2 for more information.

19. Match the Roman Emperor with his description:

Marcus Aurelius (AD 161-180)		The crazed tyrant, not a particular persecutor of Christians
Didius Julianus (AD 193)		The philosopher emperor, but a persecutor of Christians
Septimius Severus (AD 193-211)		The corrupt billionaire, assassinated after only four months on the throne
Commodus (AD 177-192)		A great general, but a persecutor of Christians

20. I Timothy 2 says, "I exhort therefore, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and givings of thanks, be made for all men: for kings and all who are in high places; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who desires all people to be saved and come to full knowledge of the truth."

How did the Christians apply this verse to respond to persecution?

They prayed for their persecutors and for their government's leaders.

21. The pagan Romans didn't understand the Christian concept of prayer. Today, many other groups, such as Muslims or atheists, have a very different understanding of what it means to pray or to read Scriptures. How would you explain to them what a Bible study or a time of individual or corporate prayer is about?



22. What did the letters "SPQR" stand for?
Senatus Populusque Romanus: "The Senate and People of Rome."
23. The father of the Roman family was called the *pater familias* and had absolute power. If the father did not want the baby, it would be exposed. The babies were often eaten by animals, died from exposure, or were picked up by slave traders. The Romans embraced a culture of sexual liberty that cheapened the value of infant life. How is this similar to culture today?
You might want to discuss euthanasia, sexual promiscuity, abortion, infanticide, the media influence, and other aspects of modern life that prioritize sexuality over the sanctity of life.
24. The Bible teaches that life is precious from the moment of conception, because, as Tertullian put it, "He is a man who is destined to become a man, yes, even the whole fruit is in the seed." Is this message acceptable in society today? Why or why not?
25. The episode mentions two passages that mention Jesus, God (the Father), and the Holy Spirit. Which passages are these?
- Matthew 28:19
 - II Corinthians 13:14
26. Which of the following are not Biblical views of the God's nature? Cross them out:
- ~~God is a term we use to describe a partnership made up of three gods.~~
 - God is one essence, Who exists in three Persons: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, similar to, but still different from, how a marriage is a shared essence between three persons: God, a husband, and a wife.
 - ~~There is only one God, Who presents Himself using three different aspects: Sometimes He looks like the Father, sometimes as the Son, and sometimes as the Holy Spirit.~~



27. Tertullian combined the Latin words for "one" and "threeness of being" to create a new term to describe the God of the Bible. What is that term in English?

Trinity.

28. Fill in the missing parts of this episode's definition of the term "Trinity":

"God is one, only one God, Who exists eternally in a threeness of being, revealed to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

29. While no analogy about God's nature is perfect, they can help us to get some idea of the nature of God. What analogy did Tertullian use to describe the threeness of God's being?

He spoke of light, specifically the sun as the source of light, a ray of light or sunbeam, and a point of light at a destination.

30. In the Hebrew Bible (our Old Testament), the Shema Yisrael (Hear, O Israel) of Deuteronomy 6:4 declares:

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!"

Normally, to be clear that God was only one person, the word *yahid* would have been used, but instead the word for "one" that is used here is *echad*, which most often means "a unity made out of compound entities."

Elsewhere, the Bible uses *echad* to describe a cluster of grapes, such as in Numbers 13:23, which is of course an accurate description. In Ezekiel 37:17, Ezekiel was instructed by God to hold two sticks together as if they were one. And what was the word for "one"? *Echad*. This is also the word for "one" used in Genesis 2:24: "Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

Do you find the concept of the Trinity confusing? Do you think that Christians must understand everything about God's nature before trusting in His character? Why or why not?



Food for thought

As we conclude our study of the life of Tertullian, what can we hold on to and apply to our own lives? Take a moment to reflect on the teaching that we've learned today in these areas:

- How are Christians to live in a non-Christian society?
- There is a general ignorance in the non-Christian world about the Bible, the Church, and God. How can we help to correct and inform those around us?
- Like Tertullian, we will at times need to stand up and speak against injustice and persecution. What examples does the Bible give us of how to do this?
- The Bible affirms the sanctity of human life from conception to death. How is this view perceived today? How can the church do a better job affirming this?
- Describe how God's Trinitarian nature is revealed to us all throughout the Scriptures.
- What does it mean to be a Christian in fact, not just in name?
- How can you pray for the government and for those who persecute the Church?
- What is your plan to stand up against false teaching, evil practices, and the persecution of Christians in the world?
- Are you preparing to stand like Tertullian? If not, are you willing to start doing so now? If so, talk too a mature Christian leader about developing a discipleship plan today!



Victor

Theme: Leading towards unity in dangerous times; accepting correction; biblical sexuality versus worldly sexuality; God and heart languages.

Summary: Born a Libyan, Victor became the bishop of Rome during a time of great uncertainty and political upheaval in the Empire. His story continues a line of Christians from Libya that starts with Simon of Cyrene, who carried the cross of Christ, and continues to the persecuted Libyan church of today. He teaches us a great deal about the mistakes and successes that can befall leaders who try to strengthen Christian unity in times of crisis.

Time Period: AD 189-198.

Location: Cyrene and Leptis Magna, modern-day Shahat and Khoms, Libya; Milan and Rome, Italy.

Interesting Facts: During Victor's time as the bishop of Rome, the church and the Roman empire were both led by people from Libya! Victor changed the language of church services to Latin because it was what most people in the Roman Empire spoke at the time, setting an important precedent for the church: worship is meant to be in your heart's language! Sadly, abortion is not a new approach to human sexuality, but an old one, as we can see in this episode. Once again, we find that God's Word has equipped the church for every imaginable moral question.

Quotable quotes:

"The very differences in the fast only serve to illustrate the unity of our faith."
Bishop Irenaeus of Lyon



1. From which modern-day country did Victor come? **Libya**
2. In what year did Victor become the bishop of Rome? **AD 189**
3. The emperor **Commodus** was cruel and probably insane. He liked to dress up as a **gladiator**. His father, **Marcus Aurelius**, was famous as a great **general** and **philosopher**, but he was also a great **persecutor** of the Christian faith.
4. Match the name of the Libyan city with its description.

Leptis Magna		Modern-day Shahhat, Libya.
Cyrene		In the east of Libya; citizens spoke Greek.
		In the west of Libya; citizens spoke Latin.
5. In addition to Latin and Greek, many people spoke one of dozens of **Berber** languages.

WHO ARE THE BERBERS?

The Berbers are the descendants of the original inhabitants of North Africa. Their languages are not related to Semitic or European languages, but represent a unique heritage. The six largest people groups of Berbers are the Chaoui, the Kabyle, the Riffi, the Tachelhayt, the Tamazight, and the Tamasheq. This project was initially inspired by the lost stories of early Christians from these tribes!

6. About four years after Victor arrived in Rome, a new emperor rose to power. What was his name and where was he from?
Septimius Severus, who was from Leptis Magnus in modern-day Libya.
7. The city of Kyrēnē, which we call **Cyrene**, was founded in **631** BC by a Greek explorer named **Battus**, and it was named after a princess named **Cyrene**. She was said to have been a lover of the Greek god, **Apollo**, and the Greeks believed that she became a water nymph.



8. The fertility of the area around Cyrene was legendary and is described for us by the Greek historian Herodotus, who lived between 484 and 425 BC. It was a unique harvesting pattern that comprised eight months out of the year.
9. While the citizens of Cyrene valued the land's fertility, they were less appreciative of human fertility. They used a plant called silphium as an abortifacient. It allowed them to be promiscuous without fearing the consequences. How does this compare with sexual messaging in our culture today?

FOR THE GREATER GOOD?

As we can see, abortion and infanticide have been part of the human race's rebellion against God for thousands of years. Today, a culture of death continues through the abortion movement, the euthanasia movement, state genocide, and the widespread persecution of Christians around the globe. Tertullian, another North African Christian wrote that every life, even the unborn one, is precious because, "He is a man who is destined to become a man; yes even the whole fruit is in the seed."

10. In 74 BC, the Greeks finally lost their hold on the Mediterranean, and North Africa fell to the power of the Roman Republic.
11. By road, traveling from Cyrene to Jerusalem could take more than a month, but by sea, it was a journey of just a few days, depending on the weather.
12. Around the year AD 33, three Libyan men took this journey: Simon, along with his sons Alexander and Rufus.







13. Simon was forced to carry the cross for Jesus. This is recorded in the gospel of Mark, the earliest gospel to be written.
14. Most scholars agree that the Gospel of Mark was written to the church of the city of Rome and that this church knew Simon, Alexander, and Rufus personally. The Apostle Paul, writing to that church in Romans 16.13, mentions a Rufus by name that was a prominent member of that church.

THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB

Leviticus 15:1-5 states that if a person were to touch any human fluid, including blood, that that person would be unclean until evening. By touching the cross of Christ, Simon would have rendered himself unable to participate in religious events until evening. And what was that evening? It was the evening of Preparation Day, when the Passover meal would be prepared. Because the Lamb of God's blood had touched him, Simon may not have been able to prepare a meal for the Passover. But because of his faith in the Lamb of God, Simon would never again need to prepare a Passover meal!

15. Acts 2 describes the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church, as being attended by people from many parts of the world, including from parts of Libya near Cyrene.
16. Was Peter ridiculed for claiming that Jesus had done miracles?
No.
17. Was the statement that Jesus had been put to death by crucifixion questioned by the crowd?
No.
18. When Peter said that God raised Jesus from the dead, did the crowd ridicule or question him?
No.
19. How did the crowd respond to Peter's presentation of the Gospel message (see Acts 2:37)?
3,000 people believed the message, finding it logical and the reasonable explanation for the recent events that had occurred in the city of Jerusalem. They were "cut to the heart", repented, trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation, and were baptized in His Name.

20. Match the Libyan with their role in this episode:

Septimius Severus		Bishop of Rome, AD 189-199
Simon		Emperor of Rome, AD 193-211
Rufus		A man from Cyrene, carried the cross for Christ
Victor		A man from Cyrene, was perhaps part of the church in Rome, along with his brother Alexander

21. From the time of Caesar Augustus, some Roman emperors were seen as partially divine. Because of this, it was expected for Roman citizens to make offerings to the spirit of the emperor.

22. When Victor became the bishop of Rome, what was a common punishment given to Christians?

They were often sent to work in the mines on the island of Sardinia.

23. A Christian servant named Hyacinthus had educated Marcia, the concubine of the emperor Commodus, and she was described as "one who loves God." Marcia asked for Victor to visit her. He gave her a list of names of prisoners in the mines, and she successfully lobbied the emperor to liberate the Christians.

24. Marcia and the emperor Commodus' other advisors counseled the emperor not to parade himself as a gladiator in front of the public, and so they were condemned to death. Desperate they conspired to assassinate Commodus. This sparked a rapid succession of emperors in the so-called "Year of the Five Emperors", and Marcia was killed along with many others. At the end of this year, the emperor was Septimius Severus, who was a native of Leptis Magna in Libya.



25. Match Victor's attempt at unifying the church on the left with its description on the right:

Changing the date of Easter to a single date for the entire church.

An attempt to unite Christians through what they had in common. It removed a barrier to church unity.

Changing the language of church services from Greek to Latin.

An attempt to unite Christians by punishing their differences. It created a barrier to church unity.

26. As the Bishop of Rome, Victor was in some ways the principal leader of the global Christian community at that time. And yet, another bishop, Irenæus, wrote to correct him for his misguided decision regarding the date of Easter. Did Victor listen to him? What can this teach us about being a leader?

Yes, Victor listened to Irenæus. We can learn that no matter our wisdom or position, we must be willing to let the Holy Spirit speak to us and correct us through other believers in all humility out of a desire to be obedient to God for the good of others.

27. God wants us to read the Bible and pray to him in words we understand. This is seen by God's pouring out the gift of different earthly languages on the day of Pentecost, as recorded in the second chapter of the book of Acts.

28. Have you ever seen others confuse tradition with essential Biblical doctrine? When and how? Have you ever made such a mistake? Were you willing to be corrected?



Food for thought

As we conclude our study of the life of Victor, what can we hold on to and apply to our own lives? Take a moment to reflect on the teaching that we've learned today in these areas:

- What is the danger of relying too heavily on traditions to unite Christians?
- Why is it important for Christians to be present in the lives of government officials?
- How is the world's message of human sexuality today like the Greek and Roman beliefs about sexuality? How does the Bible contradict this message?
- What is the role of language in the Christian life? What did Victor realize about the importance of believers connecting to God in their own language?
- What can we learn from Victor about accepting correction from other Christians when we make a mistake?
- How can you develop as a Christian?
- Are traditions and habits getting in your way of faithfully following Scripture?
- What role can other, more experienced disciples play in helping you to correct mistakes or sinful tendencies and mature as disciple?
- How does your view of sexuality line up with the Bible's view?
- Is the idea of God speaking your language strange to you? Why or why not?





To help get this content into new unreached languages, please join us at:
heritage-project.com

For more great productions like the Heritage Project, please join us at:
vimeo.com/storychannelnetwork
imm.edu

To find out more about unreached peoples, please visit:
joshuaproject.net

To pray for and financially support the persecuted church around the world, please visit:
www.persecution.org

All Scripture citations are from the World English Bible, which is in the public domain.

References to Barna Group, Reviving Evangelism, © 2019
are provided courtesy of Barna Group, © 2019.

