

Martin Luther King

Martin Luther King was the minister of a Baptist church in Alabama, U.S.A. In 1955, a Negro woman called Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white person. Although not the first incident of its kind, it stirred King and some others into action. King believed that he must take action against injustice in a non-violent way. He called for a boycott of the city's bus services by the whole Negro population. It was decided that on the Monday, no Negroes would ride on buses. That evening a meeting was held in one of the city's churches. Thousands gathered outside. It was decided that the boycott would continue, and a campaign would be launched. King delivered a speech which explained how the campaign would be run.

He told the crowd that love must be their ideal. 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you.' He believed that if they failed to do that, their protest would be meaningless, and only bring shame upon themselves. He told the people that in spite of the mistreatment they had received, they must not become bitter, and end up hating white people.

The campaign continued for over a year. As they were met with violence, King continually reminded the people of their non-violent stand. One night King's house was bombed while he was at a meeting. He spoke to the crowd who gathered at the scene. After assuring them that his wife and baby were alright, he told them to go home and put to down their weapons. He reminded them that the problem could not be solved through retaliatory violence. Remember the words of Jesus, he said: 'He who lives by the sword will perish by the sword.' King told the people again that they must love their white brothers no matter what they did to the Negroes. He believed that meeting hate with love was the only way.

Just before his death, Martin Luther King said:

*"I still have a dream today,
That one day war will come to an end,
That men will beat their swords into ploughshares
And their spears into pruning hooks...
With this faith we will be able to speed up the day
When there will be peace on earth
And goodwill towards men.
It will be a glorious day
The morning stars will sing together
And the sons of God will shout for joy."*

Shortly before Jesus died, He was arrested. One of His friends reached for his sword, and cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest.

Jesus said: *"Put back your sword, for all those who draw the sword will die by the sword. " Matthew 26:52*

At His death Jesus said, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” Luke 23:34*

God is Peace – Themes for Christian Studies 7

Activities – Martin Luther King

1. Who was Martin Luther King?
2. Why was Rosa Parks arrested?
3. What does this tell us about the laws in the U.S.A. at the time?
4. If you were a black person, how would you feel?
5. How did Martin Luther King stand against the injustice without violence?
6. What is a boycott?
7. How did the boycott affect the government?
8. How long did the campaign go on for?
9. Why did Martin Luther King only believe in protesting in a non-violent way?
10. King told his people that they must not hate white people, even though white people had mistreated them. What did Jesus say about this? (Matthew 5:43-48)
11. How should a Christian react when someone does something wrong to them?
Choose the correct answer:
 - ◆ ignore that person
 - ◆ stand up for the truth in a non-violent way
 - ◆ fight back with violence
12. How did Jesus put His own words into practice at His crucifixion and the time leading up to it? Read...
 - ◆ Luke 23:34
 - ◆ Matthew 26: 50-54

Further research: Find out how Martin Luther King died.