LIBERTY

Program Target: To help youth realize the value of religious liberty.

What to do:

Begin your meeting with your usual preliminaries–song service, prayer, etc. Just as you announce that the subject of this meeting will be religious liberty, have several armed and uniformed men burst into the room and announce that according to a new law, worship in the name of Jesus is outlawed. They will give those who claim not to be Christians an opportunity to leave, then divide the remaining worshippers into groups, each guarded by one of the men, who will attempt to convince them to give up their faith in Jesus rather than face arrest and persecution.

Continue the activity for as long as it seems to be generating interesting results for your group–usually about half an hour, but it may be less or more, depending on your group.

When the role-play activity is over, bring everyone back together (including any who may have denied they were Christians and left at the beginning). Spend about 20-30 minutes debriefing the activity, using the discussion questions below as guidelines.

Discussion questions:

1. Was there any point at which you thought this activity was real? How would you have felt if it was?
2. Do you think they way you reacted today is how you would react in such a situation in real life? If not, what would the difference be?
3. How did you feel about those who denied their faith? How did you feel if you were one of those who did? Could such a choice ever be justified?
4. What does it take to stand for your faith under persecution? How can we apply this to our day-to-day lives?

(10-20 minutes) Close by reading a story about someone who actually has had to face persecution. Challenge the youth to think about their own faith, and to be grateful for the gift of freedom to worship.

Preparation Time:

How elaborate you make this activity is limited only by the make-up of your group, your own creativity, and the acting skill of your "soldiers." If possible, choose men who are unknown to your group to play these roles. In costuming and "arming" them, be sensitive to the needs of your group and your local situation (i.e., try to make the activity "real" enough so that the youth get involved, but not so much so that younger or more naive members might be badly frightened). There are many possible variations–i.e., if you want to focus specifically on Adventism rather than on Christianity in general, you can make Sabbath worship, rather than worship in the name of Jesus, the focus of the activity. Be creative!

Bible Text:

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:11, 12, NIV) **Song Service:**

"I'll Be True, Precious Jesus, I'll Be True"
"The Battle Belongs to the Lord"

Vesper or Closing Thought:
Most of your young people enjoy the gift of religious liberty and will not face persecution in their everyday lives. Encourage them to pray for those who *aren't* free to worship as they choose, and also to be true to Jesus in the small choices of daily life so they are prepared when bigger challenges come.

Resources: Find out more about persecuted Christians at http://www.persecution.net . www.persecution.net.Also visit the Adventist Church's Public Affairs and Religious Liberty website at http://parl.gc.adventist.org