

Introduction—Albania

Wesleyan missionaries in Albania are involved in planting a church in an underdeveloped area on the edge of the city of Durrës, Albania's second-largest city. Before 1991, no one lived in this area, but since the fall of Communism about 60,000 people have moved there from all over Albania hoping to find work for their families. The missions team is active in building relationships with their neighbors, taking advantage of opportunities to share their faith in Christ, and establishing small groups to read and discuss the Bible. Compassionate ministries play a key role in the Wesleyan work in Albania, as the team assists in the oversight of a local health clinic, a day care center for children of widowed and abandoned mothers, and an academic assistance program for primary students, as well as completing occasional projects to serve the local public school in this underdeveloped area.

INSIDE THIS LESSON

Fact Sheet	7
Story	8
Memory Verse	9
Lesson	10
Game	11
Prayer Time	12
Activity Page	13

Currency—Lek
100 lek = 1 dollar



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Did you know Mother Teresa's
parents were Albanian.

Popular Beverages
Dhallë—yogurt
Raki—drink made
from grapes



ALBANIA

Shqipëria



Typical hat
worn by men

Qel eshe

Can you find these typical foods of Albania
baklava many-layered pastry
Suflaqe roast lamb served in pita bread
with French fries
byrek pastry filled with cheese



Albanian Crafts
Knitting,
weaving,
copper work



Chamois—mountain
goat native to Albania



National Flower—Red Poppy



Musical instruments
Clarinet
Accordion

1967—
Government
declares itself
as the first
official atheist
nation



Religion -
Islam
Orthodox
Catholic

Apostle Paul proclaimed
the gospel all the way to
Illyricum. Modern day
Albania is located in the
region once known as
Illyricum (Romans 15:19)

National Bird—Eagle



Goat-eat Meat-e

Children's Story

Eleni - Albania

When Grace, a missionary kid, interviewed her Albanian friend Eleni for a school assignment, one of her questions was, *What is the best thing that ever happened to you?* Eleni smiled and answered, "When your family came to Albania!"

When Grace's family moved to Albania, Eleni met a new friend in Grace, and then through a kids club she attended at Grace's home, she met a Savior in Jesus Christ. Her family is Muslim, but Eleni has accepted Jesus as her Savior, and is growing in her faith. She prays and reads her Bible, continues to attend kid's club, and has also begun going to a weekly worship meeting in Grace's family's home.

Eleni's family lives on the edge of Durres, which is Albania's main seaport and second-largest city. The area in which they live used to be a swamp, and until twenty years ago no one lived there. In the last twenty years, about 60,000 people have moved to this area on the edge of the city. People have moved from smaller cities and villages throughout Albania, hoping to find work and a better way of life for their families in this very poor country.

At one of the worship meetings that Grace's family hosts, the group read Paul's instructions in Ephesians 6 about putting on the armor of God, and talked about how important each piece is. As the group talked, Eleni may have visualized Albania's national hero, Gjergj Kastrioti, better known as Skanderbeg. In the 1600's the Ottoman Turks invaded Albania, but, under Skanderbeg's leadership the Albanians stood firm against their foes for twenty years even though they were outnumbered. Soon after Skanderbeg died, the Ottomans defeated the Albanians and ruled the land for more than 400 years. During this time, most Albanians turned from faith in Christ and became Muslims. That is why Eleni's family is Muslim today.

A large statue of Skanderbeg stands in the center of Albania's capital city of Tirana. The monument shows Skanderbeg dressed in his helmet and armor, sitting on his horse. It is an image that all Albanians are familiar with. Skanderbeg was a brave and strong warrior, but he was also wise enough to know that a warrior must go into battle well-prepared and dressed to face his enemy.

Eleni is learning this, too. She has given her life to Jesus and put on the helmet of salvation. She is learning and applying more and more of God's truth as she listens to the lessons at kid's club and at the worship meeting. She is doing her best to live in a righteous way, and has peace in her new relationship with Christ. And she daily takes up her "sword" as she reads from God's Word.

Eleni understands that we have an enemy in Satan, who tries to make us stumble in our faith, but she is doing things that will help her become stronger and better able to battle our foe and live for Christ.

Memory Verse

Ephesians 6:11

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

March to a Military chant

Start by counting one, two, three, four, one, two, three four, etc. until all the children are marching at the same pace.

Act like a drill sergeant. Tell them to stand tall, face for-

ward, lift their feet high, and look proud to be in the Lord's

army. Then tell them to repeat after you the following lines of the memory verse. Break it up into small phrases as a drill sergeant would. Once they get the rhythm and words, you can have them march in a circle.

Bible Lesson

Armor of God

Central Concept: We have a great enemy, but an even greater God. By putting on the armor of God, we can be strong in our faith and make a difference in our world.

I. Read Ephesians 6:10-17.

II. Discussion:

Paul compares our lives to a battle. Who is the enemy that we face as we try to live for God?

- The devil and the evil spirits that work for him

How does the devil try to keep us from living for God?

- Tempts us to sin
- Tempts us to doubt God when we face troubles
- Tries to confuse us about who God is and how He wants us to live

What is it we are trying to win in this battle against the devil?

- To keep our faith and have eternal life
- To help others come to know Jesus as their Savior
- To please God and bring honor to Him by our lives

III. Dress a volunteer from the class as if in the armor of God, piece by piece, as you re-read verses 14-17 and discuss the pieces listed. (For example, wrap a scarf around the volunteer's waist to represent the belt of righteousness; hand the volunteer a round baking pan to use as a shield; etc.)

Some thoughts:

Belt of truth – The belt is what holds the whole armor together. If what we believe and how we live are not in line with the truth, we will not be ready for the battle.

Breastplate of righteousness – This piece protects a vital organ—the heart. We need to keep our heart protected by being righteous, that is, by doing what we know God wants us to do.

Footwear of readiness from the Gospel of peace – Knowing and accepting the Gospel of Jesus can give us peace to move forward no matter what we may face.

Shield of faith – We need to trust in God no matter what, so that whatever troubles we may face in life we are able to stand strong.

Helmet of salvation – The head, along with the heart, are the two most important places for a soldier to be protected, so a helmet is a crucial piece of equipment. Without the helmet of salvation—without accepting Christ as our Savior and following Him—in the end we will lose our lives in the battle. If you haven't accepted Jesus, you can do so today.

Sword of the Spirit – Knowing God's Word keeps us on the offensive. We know how to live for Him, and what to tell others so they can know Him, too.

The Falling Bridge

Two children face each other, join hands, and raise them in the air **to form a "bridge" under which the other children will walk.**

The two children forming the bridge decide a theme or category for the first round of play such as colors, sports, fruits, animals, etc. They then each choose an item that fits that category, telling each other, but not the rest of the children. **For example, the topic may be Sports. The two "bridge" children** each quietly choose an item that fits that category, for example, football and tennis.

While the music plays or the children sing a verse of a song, the **children walk in a circle that passes under the "bridge."**

When the music stops, or the children reach the end of the verse, the two children forming the bridge drop their hands, trapping one of the other children inside.

One of the children forming the bridge asks the trapped child to quietly choose between the two items chosen in step two, but without telling him/her which child selected which item (football or tennis?).

The trapped child chooses one of the items, (without the other children hearing) and then stands behind the person whose item they chose.

Steps 2-6 are repeated until every child has been caught and now stands behind one of the two children who formed the bridge. At this point, the children have effectively been divided into two teams.

The children now join hands with their teammates, and the two teams face each other, like in a tug-of-war stance. The two children who are in the front of each team join hands so that the two teams form one long chain. A line is drawn, or a stick put down, to mark the space between the two teams.

The teams attempt to pull each other over the line or stick. As children pass over the line to the other side, they then join the team on that side and attempt to pull their old teammates over. Play continues until all children have been pulled to the same side of the line.

Game
Time

Time for Prayer

1. Please pray for the missionaries in Albania as they reach out to their neighbors, that people's hearts would be open to the Gospel and that they would have many opportunities to share their faith.
2. Please pray that the few Albanians that have come to faith in Jesus would see the value of meeting together, to encourage each other and learn from one another.
3. Please pray for the day care center, that God would continue to meet the financial needs of the day care center and that children and mothers would be impacted by the witness of the day care staff, who are all Albanian Christians.
4. Please pray for an end to the corruption that is a part of the political, economic and justice systems in Albania. Pray that God would raise up leaders with integrity and a heart for serving the people.

Activity

C
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y

Make copies and have the students write the names of the parts of a soldier's armor on the lines and color the picture.

