

The Remarkable Man who Fosters Terminally Ill Children and Loves Them like His Own

This lesson can be presented over 1-2 sessions. Instructors should feel free to use whichever discussion questions and activities you think best for your class or group. We advise giving students the sheet with the definitions of the virtues before the discussion questions.

Lesson Goals

Help students...

- see that all human beings have value, especially those who may be “unwanted,” such as dying children in foster care.
- see how a family is not limited to blood relatives, but can be formed through extraordinary acts of love.
- practice empathy by putting themselves in the shoes of children who are in foster care and terminally ill.
- understand the value of fortitude in making the right decisions when faced with challenges, and to view challenges as opportunities to practice fortitude.
- see how our personal challenges can make us more aware of the needs of others.
- become more aware of people in their own lives who may be unwanted or unloved, and to be inspired to help them.
- see how helping others, especially when it is painful for us and requires perseverance, can lead to a fulfilling life.
- realize how our shared humanity and care for each other can serve to unite us/

Highlighted Virtues / Character Traits

Caring: to help others; a caring person lives with empathy in trying to understand another person's situation, compassion in desiring to help others, and then generosity in acting to help

Empathy: trying to understand another person's situation, entering into the feeling or spirit of others and imagining yourself in another person's situation.

Compassion: feeling of sympathy for the distress of others, with the desire to help

Generosity: giving freely of our own possessions, time and/or talent.

Family Dedication / Support: complete dedication for the well-being of other members of our family, physically, emotionally and spiritually, motivated by love

Fortitude: mental and emotional strength in making the right decisions, in the face of difficulty, adversity, danger, or temptation.

Love: to freely give of ourselves for the betterment of another person, without expecting anything in return

Perseverance: trying hard and continuously in spite of obstacles and difficulties

Solidarity: unity from a shared common purpose and / or interest; active loyalty within a group; mutual support within a group; being present with others

Leader Introduction:

November is Adoption Awareness Month and today we're going to learn about Mohamed Bzeek, a man who has dedicated his life to being a foster parent for children who are terminally ill and have been taken from their parents due to abuse or have been abandoned by their parents. After Bzeek and his wife began adopting children, they had their own biological son who died from a severe illness at the age of four. Bzeek's wife then also died and despite all of this he has kept going, becoming a foster parent to over 80 orphans—all with terminal illnesses. Many people have been inspired by Bzeek's work, and a GoFundMe campaign was launched to support his endeavor and the children he serves. Let's watch the film for the campaign and learn more about how Bzeek cares for these special children.

Lesson Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0DhJ9WYSqaU>

Leader Summary:

Bzeek shows us the power of selfless love and perseverance in caring for others. Although not related biologically to his foster children, has approached each child as if they are his own, providing them with comfort, love and joy. Let's dig deeper into Bzeek's story and consider how his work speaks to our lives.

Discussion Question Options: *(discussion prompts / answers are in parentheses)*

Before beginning our discussion, let's read over the virtues and their definitions, found in the online lesson as a separate document.

1. What personal challenges did Bzeek overcome?

(his son died, his wife died, he came down with cancer, his living son is handicapped, he had to face cancer surgery with no one to help him)

Speaking about his challenges with cancer, Bzeek said, "I was 62 years old and petrified... This makes me do more for these kids, because I was in their shoes. Imagine, a little kid born with terminal illness and taken away from their mom and dad... they're traumatized and scared" What virtues is this an example of and why?

(**empathy** in not only acknowledging how the children feel, but understanding firsthand how scary it is to be sick and not have loved ones to support you; **fortitude** in making the right decision to foster sick children despite his own setbacks; **compassion and generosity** in wanting to help the children and acting on it)

2. Mohamad experienced the death of his own child and wife, which further motivated him to help sick and dying children. Have you ever been able to help someone through a challenge that you have also gone through? In sharing our own stories, it can be something as serious as death and cancer, but our stories can also come from typical life experiences such as challenges with a sibling or friend, with our school work or a sport. [\(also a journal writing prompt below\)](#)

Why would you, like Bzeek, want to help someone through their challenges and pain instead of just ignoring it?

(Helping others can bring us a sense of joy and fulfillment. It can also give our own suffering purpose.)

3. Bzeek said, “Those kids need somebody, to bring them into their house, to make them have a family... somebody who takes care of them, loves them, and tells them, ‘I am here for you. We’ll go through this together.’” and “I consider them as my biological kids. I never think about them as foster kids, and it gives me great joy when I see them laughing and see a smile on their face.” Look at the definition of **family dedication** again...How is this an example of **family dedication**, even though they may not be blood relatives?

(Bzeek is dedicated to the children in the same way a biological parent would be, to support and love them regardless of the effort and sacrifice it requires.)

4. From another interview published in IMAGE, Bzeek shared that when the LA department of child services calls him about a child who is going to die, and asks if he can adopt them, Mohamed always says yes with no hesitation. “If I don’t they are sent to hospitals and don’t have a family or house. However, when I take them, they feel a family atmosphere. They feel safe and are loved until the end of their lives...I know it’s heartbreaking. I know it’s a lot of work and I know it’s going to hurt me sometimes. I feel sad. But, in my opinion, we should help each other, you know?”

In this quote, Bzeek admits how hard it is to care for dying children yet he still does it. What virtue is Bzeek living out here?

(**Perseverance** in continuing to help the children despite the obstacles of sadness and the work of caring for a sick child)

What is motivating Bzeek to continue despite the sacrifice and sadness it brings to him?

(a strong sense of **compassion** to help others; a belief that every person has value; despite the sadness Bzeek also experiences joy in helping others).

5. Bzeek shared, “We are human being(s), we should help each other. Doesn’t matter what kind of help—financially, spiritually, medically, any help you can (give), you should help, because we’re human being(s), and we are supposed to help each other. Doesn’t matter what color, what religion, what country.”

Bzeek lists the things that can separate people from each other such as color, religion and nationality but he focuses more on what unites us. What does Bzeek say and live out that unites us? (our common humanity and simply but powerfully caring for each other)

What virtue does this striving for unity reflect? (**solidarity**)

What do you think of Bzeek’s statement? Do you agree that our shared humanity and caring for each other is more important than all the things that make us different from each other?

Journal Writing Options

1. Mohamad experienced the death of his own child and wife, which further motivated him to help sick and dying children. Write about a time you helped someone through a challenge that you have also gone through? It can be something as serious as death

and cancer but can also come from a typical life experience such as a challenging situation with a sibling or friend, or with our school work or a sport.

2. Without Bzeek, over 80 children would have died alone, without comfort or love. There are many groups of struggling people who society forgets about or views as unwanted. Write down examples of people who are struggling that our society often ignores.

Next, write out what you could do to help one of these groups or a specific person in your community who may feel unwanted.

Extended Activities:

1. Brainstorm with your group on ways that they can be generous with terminally ill children. Suggest fundraising to pay for their medical bills or to buy them toys at Christmas, or simply creating cards to cheer them up and express compassion/empathy. You would need to coordinate this through your local hospital or foster care agency.
2. Elderly folks often feel neglected or lonely. Ask your group to devise a plan for going to an assisted living center and do something for the residents such as a performance and / or fun activity. Most centers have a volunteer coordinator who can help your group devise and organize an activity.

References to additional quotes: <https://www.image.ie/self/mohamed-bzeek-156982/amp>

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