



DiscipleLand

Missionary Biography Questions

Level 6, Quarter A—Bruce Olson

Integrate these questions and activities into your **DiscipleLand** Missionary Biography time. Expand your children's understanding of each story segment.

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6A—Missionary Biography

Bruce Olson

Teacher Intro—BRUCE OLSON (1942—present)

Bruce Olson bought a one-way ticket to South America when he was only nineteen. People thought he was crazy—or foolish—but God was calling him, and he had to go. Bruce Olson, known as Bruchko, lived among the Motilone Indians for over forty years. Loneliness, disease, torture, and death were close companions. Yet joy overflowed as Bruchko walked alongside thousands of Motilones who became his brothers and sisters.

The once murderous Motilone tribes have tied their lives into Jesus Christ. They follow the God who has walked their trails and revealed Himself through the banana stalk—His Word. They sing of new life in Jesus and carry their songs to other tribes as they spread the Gospel message.

Lesson 1—En Route to South America

Read the story from page 12 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

Big Idea: The Lord is always with us.

Discussion Questions:

Show kids where South America is on a map or globe. **How was Bruce traveling to South America?**

Why was he going with so little resources? What does this show about Bruce's trust in God?

What call was Bruce answering? How would you feel, traveling to a new country with no money and no ability to speak the language there?

How did Bruce become a Christian? What did he do next? Why did he do it?

How did Bruce's family respond to the Good News? Why don't you think they believed?

Not only did his family not believe, the actually opposed Bruce's new faith. Why did Bruce choose God over his family?

Bruce knew God was always with him. How willing are you to put God before your family and friends? Where would you go to serve Him?

Lesson 2—The Motilones

The story so far...**Bruce Olson boarded a plane alone for South America. He had no money, no plans, and could not speak any South American languages. But Bruce had God, and knew that God had called him to go.**

Read the story from page 18 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

Big Idea: God calls people to specific tasks.

Discussion Questions:

Show kids where Colombia is on a map or globe. **How was Bruce "welcomed" to South America? It seemed like nothing else could have gone wrong. Why did Bruce continue to trust God?**

Did God honor Bruce's trust? How?

Did God give Bruce a specific calling right away? How long did Bruce live in South America before something happened? What could God's purpose have been in waiting so long?

To whom was God sending Bruce? How do you think Bruce felt, being called to such a dangerous people?

If you felt God had called you to live among a dangerous jungle tribe, how would you feel?

Lesson 3—Sickness

The story so far...**God was preparing Bruce Olson for work among the Motilone people of Colombia. God had provided for all Bruce's needs.**

Read the story from page 24 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

Big Idea: God's plan is higher than human wisdom.

Discussion Questions:

In Bruce's first encounter with the Motilone people, he was shot with an arrow! How could this possibly be part of God's plan?

What's the worst sickness you've ever experienced? Encourage responses. Bruce was horribly sick for an entire month. What do you think he prayed for during this time?

Had God abandoned Bruce? How do we know?

What did Bruce hear God tell him to do? When did God want him to do it? What does Bruce's obedience tell you about him?

God's plan must have seemed strange and unfathomable to Bruce. What crucial piece of information was Bruce missing at first? How can we trust God to know all the facts as we follow Him?

Lesson 4—Pact Brother

The story so far...**Bruce made contact with the Motilone tribesmen, and they shot him with an arrow! Bruce becomes very ill—sick for a month in the Motilone village. One night Bruce hears God telling him to leave.**

Read the story from page 30 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

Big Idea: God rewards perseverance.

Discussion Questions:

How was Bruce affected by his first encounter with the Motilones? Why does he go back?

Why do you think the Motilones invited Bruce back? What might have impressed them about Bruce?

How long did Bruce fail to communicate with the people? How did Bruce feel? Did he give up?

How did God reward Bruce's perseverance? Why are personal relationships so important?

In what ways do you need to persevere to serve God?

Lesson 5—God's Banana Stalk

The story so far...**Bruce had live among the Motilones for a year. Finally, he was beginning to learn their language and develop relationships.**

Read the story from page 36 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

Big Idea: God prepares people to hear about Him.

Discussion Questions:

Who was the tribesman yelling for? Why? Why had God let the Motilone people know He existed?

Who could this "false prophet" in the legend be?

The Motilones had another very unusual legend. What did this legend give the Motilone people? Why did it make them ready to hear about God?

How did the banana stalks resemble a Bible?

What did Bruce do the moment he understood the legend? In what other ways do you imagine God prepares people to learn about Him?

Lesson 6—Becoming an Ant

The story so far...**Bruce was in the village one day and heard a legend about a yellow-haired man who carried banana stalks that revealed God. Bruce thought he might be that man and the Bible was the banana stalk.**

Read the story from page 42 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

Big Idea: The Holy Spirit gives us words to speak.

Discussion Questions:

Bruce finally knew enough of the Motilones' language, and they were finally ready to hear about Jesus. How did Bruce prepare himself to speak to the people? On Whom did he rely?

The ant story is what missiologists call a "redemptive analogy"—something that helps people understand about God and His salvation. How is the story a redemptive analogy?

What did the people mean when they asked "Where is God's trail?"

What did Bruce mean by his "hammock string" talk? Why did the Motilones understand him?

Who was the first to put his trust in Jesus? How do you imagine this made Bruce feel? How would it make you feel?

Lesson 7—Bobby’s Song

The story so far...**Bruce was finally able to tell the Motilone tribesmen about Jesus. His best friend, “Bobby,” was first to become a Christian.**

Read the story from page 48 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

Big Idea: God is more powerful than any other spirit.

Discussion Questions:

The Motilones believed in evil spirits. Do you believe in them? What does the Bible say about evil spirits (demons, devils)?

What was Bobby’s concern? How did Bruce answer him? How would you have answered Bobby’s question?

How do the villagers try to ward off the evil spirits? Why has that not worked for them in the past?

What does Bobby do? Do you like his song? Why or why not?

What happened the next day? Bobby sang praises to God, but God didn’t just protect him, He protected all the villagers. How did this bring the other villages closer to knowing Jesus?

Lesson 8—Tied Into Jesus

The story so far...**Bruce’s friend Bobby was the first Motilone to know Jesus. One night, when the tribe was afraid of evil spirits, Bobby sang praises to Jesus. God protected the village.**

Read the story from page 54 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

Big Idea: God brings real change into the lives of people who love Him.

Discussion Questions:

How did Bobby tell the other tribespeople about Jesus? Why can singing be a powerful way to spread God’s message?

What did the new Motilone Christians do? Why did they immediately tell others about Jesus?

What evidence did the Motilones show that Jesus had changed their lives? How did it make Bruce Olson feel?

Life never comes with a “happily ever after” ending. What new problem did Bruce and the Motilones face?

When people use religion or God to justify evil actions, what are they showing? What is the best way to respond to these people?

Lesson 9—Over the Horizon

The story so far...**Bruce has patiently and lovingly reached out to the Motilone people, and many of them have become Christians. Now people have come to try and force the Motilones off their land.**

Read the story from page 60 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

Big Idea: Even death can glorify Jesus and God.

Discussion Questions:

Why was Bobby probably killed? What do the Motilones now know about Bobby’s life?

What does Bobby’s adopted son pray? Why does he pray this?

Why are the Motilones so upset at Bobby’s death? What does one tribesman realize?

What does Bruce remember? How did God answer Bobby’s prayer? How was Jesus glorified through Bobby’s death?

Lesson 10—Communist Guerillas

The story so far...**Bruce’s best friend and brother in Christ was killed by illegal settlers. The Motilones mourn, realizing that Bobby died for them just as Jesus died for the whole world.**

Read the story from page 66 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

Big Idea: God is sovereign and He orchestrates everything.

Discussion Questions:

What had happened to Bruce? How long had he been a captive? What threat hung over him?

Bruce had not had an easy life. His family rejected him. The Motilones had attacked him. And now guerillas had captured him. Why did Bruce retain his confidence in God? What had he seen in his life that showed him God was good?

How does Bruce respond to his captors? How was Bruce obeying Jesus by doing this?

Bruce shares about Jesus, but who really changes their lives? How can we do our part to tell others about Jesus?

Lesson 11—The Mirla Bird

The story so far...**Bruce had been captured by Communist guerillas. They threatened him with death, and he responded in love. Finally some of his captors accepted Jesus as their Lord!**

Read the story from page 72 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

Big Idea: God hears the prayers of His people.

Discussion Questions:

Bruce was once again wracked with disease. How did he respond?

How did God care for Bruce during his darkest night? Why was a birdsong so helpful and hopeful? Why was it a miracle?

How did Bruce face his firing squad? Why do some people face the idea of death so calmly? Why did Bruce love those about to kill him?

How did God save Bruce's life? Why?

God heard the prayers of His people. Bruce was released. What do you imagine he did next?

Lesson 12—A New Chieftain

The story so far...**Bruce Olson endured many trials and hardships, including sickness and a firing squad, to serve God in South America.**

Read the story from page 78 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

Big Idea: Spiritual revolution is often followed by social transformation.

Discussion Questions:

While Bruce was captured, what had the Motilones done? Why did they work so hard for Bruce's release?

Why did the captives release Bruce? Who was the real source of Bruce's freedom?

How long did Bruce live with the Motilones? What does this show about Bruce?

What happened to the Motilones was a spiritual revolution. What followed it? What do you think of the transformation of the Motilone people?

The changes were noticed by everyone—even the president of Colombia! To Whom did the Motilone chief give the credit? Why not to Bruce Olson? What does this show about the Motilone people?

Bruce's life was difficult, but it also came with great rewards. What were some of Bruce's rewards? What further rewards might be awaiting Bruce in heaven?

Why is following Jesus worth any price? What price might you be willing to pay to tell others about Him?

