



Life Group Discussion Guide
Blessed are the Persecuted
February 19, 2017

Open in prayer

- Questions: How many of you have ever faced persecution for being a follower of Jesus?
- Why should we expect persecution as believers?
- Why is it a blessing to stand up for or be persecuted for Jesus?

Discuss the following verses:

2 Timothy 3:12 - "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

1 Peter 5:9 - "Stand firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings."

Luke 9:23 - "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."

John 16:33 - "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Matthew 24:9 - "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me."

- How is the opposition we face as Christians in America different than other Christians around the world?
- What are things we can do to stand with persecuted Christians around the world?
- How can we face opposition at home?
- What should our response be to those persecuting Christians?

Persecuted followers of Jesus in Early Church

- James - beheaded
- Peter - crucified upside down
- Philip - crucified
- Matthew - killed by sword
- Andrew - crucified, left hanging on the cross for three days
- Thomas - speared to death
- James the less - stoned to death



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- Jude - crucified
 - Bartholomew - beaten to death with clubs
 - Simon the Zealot - crucified
 - John - exiled to the island of Patmos, died a prisoner
 - Paul - beheaded by Nero in Rome
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- The current estimate in North Korea is that there are probably 70,000 Christians in prison for suffering for their faith.
 - About every 10 minutes two Christians die for their faith around the world.
 - 2.2 billion people in 79 countries live under significant restrictions of their religious freedom.
 - 225 million Christians live in countries where it is a crime to be a Christian and to assemble for worship. (Book: Lion's Den by Nina Shea)
 - "80% of all religious freedom violations in the world today are directed against Christians." International Society for Human Rights (3 years ago)
 - In January, Open Doors published their annual report on the most dangerous countries for Christians.
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- North Korea
 - Somalia
 - Afghanistan
 - Pakistan
 - Sudan
 - Syria
 - Iraq
 - Iran
 - Yemen
 - Eritrea

We rejoice when facing persecution because:

1. Persecuted believers will receive eternal rewards.

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 5:12 NIV)

2. Persecution will deepen my faith in Jesus.



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“These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire— may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.” (1 Peter 1:7 NIV)

3. Persecution provides a chance to respond like Jesus.

“But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44 NIV)

4. Persecution causes us to identify with Jesus.

“However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.” (1 Peter 4:16 NIV)

- How can you be more courageous with your faith?