

Preparing for Persecution



Instructor's Guide

Church Renewal Resource
Evangelism Ministries USA/Canada Region
Church of the Nazarene

Acknowledgments

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Evangelism Ministries

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Preparation Checklist

The following information will help you prepare to instruct this module.

- Review the material and make notes of specific areas for special emphasis.
- Check to ensure the following materials are available:
 - PowerPoint presentations
 - Participant booklet (copy as needed)
- Gather the following materials:
 - Pens and/or pencils
 - Other material you want to use
- Check the classroom for:
 - Projector
 - Sufficient number of tables and chairs for the participants
- Arrange the room so that each church team sits around an individual table and you have ample room to move among the teams.

Preparing for Persecution

Module at a Glance

The table below identifies each module section, the time allotted for each section, and a brief description of the section's objective. When you are familiar with this module, you may want to teach from this page rather than the detailed information.

SECTION	TIME	PAGE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
I. Introduction	5 mins.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce Module, purpose and objective.
II. Lecture	30 mins.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitator shares ways to prepare Christians for persecution they will face.
III. Small Group Activity	20 mins.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitator leads discussion on how a Christian can rejoice in the middle of persecution.
IV. Action Planning	15 mins.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participants begin preparing their homework assignments.
V. Module Wrap-Up	5 mins.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Close the module with your final comments regarding the topic.
Total Module Time: 75 mins.			

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I. Module Introduction

(5 minutes)

Notes

Let the participants know the material is theirs to keep and encourage them to take notes.

- Purpose
- Objectives
- “Fill-in-the-blanks” for the lecture
- Application exercises

The purpose of this module is to:

Prepare God’s people for the persecution they will face as followers of Christ.

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The objectives for this module are:

- *To encourage Christ-followers to be prepared for persecution*
- *To learn to rejoice in spite of social disapproval*

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II. Lecture

(30 Minutes)

Notes

I. Introduction

- A. Persecution is harassment or punishment **AIMED** at forcing people to change their beliefs and behavior.
- B. Opposition and persecution are not the same.
 - 1. Opposition may come because of social discourtesy, ignorance, or speaking unkindly.
 - 2. Finger pointing “you” statements and **PRESSURING** non-Christians will earn a negative reaction, too.
 - 3. Persecution comes when we **EMBRACE** the Lord and His principles while acting kindly.
- C. Jesus told us to expect persecution from government and religious leaders, family, and friends (Luke 21:12-19).

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II. Why do Christians suffer persecution?

- A. If they persecuted Jesus, they will persecute us (John 15:20).
- B. Because the world **HATES** us (John 15:19).
- C. Because we are not of the world (John 15:19).
- D. Because the world **LIVES** in sin (John 15:22).
- E. Because the world does not know Jesus (John 15:21).
 - 1. A Christian **PRIORITIZES** Christ.
 - 2. Christians will be hated without reason, but not without cause.
 - 3. The life of Jesus causes people to hate because holy living **REVEALS** sin and causes guilt.

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II. Lecture (cont.)

- F. The posse effect **CAUSES** conflict. “They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas...” (Acts 13:50).

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III. How do we deal with persecution?

A. Old Testament patterns of dealing with persecution

1. David **EXPECTED** God to protect him from persecutors (Psalm 119:84, 86).
2. Jeremiah **PRAYED** for God to punish his persecutors (Jeremiah 17:18).
3. Jeremiah **ASKED** God to keep him from shame while being persecuted (Jeremiah 17:18).
4. Human **RESOLVE** is required; “Many are the foes who persecute me, but I have not turned from your statutes” (Psalm 119:157).
5. Prayer is needed, “You understand, O Lord; remember me and care for me. Avenge me on my persecutors” (Jeremiah 15:15).

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B. Paul on persecution

1. Stephen **INCITED** the religious leaders by asking, “Was there ever a prophet your forefathers did not persecute?” (Acts 7:52). Paul participated in killing Stephen.
2. Great persecution **BROKE OUT** against the church and all except the apostles were scattered (Acts 8:1-3).
3. God takes persecution personally. “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? I am Jesus whom you are persecuting” (Acts 9:4-5).

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II. Lecture (cont.)

Notes

4. Paul received persecution and **REASSURED** others by asking, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution...? (Romans 8:35).
5. “When we are persecuted, we **ENDURE** it;” (1 Corinthians 4:12).
6. “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned” (2 Corinthians 4:9).

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IV. After persecution, what?

- A. How do we **FACE** persecution? (Luke 21:12-19)
 1. As an opportunity to witness;
 - a. “That is the reason I don’t witness” we may protest.
 - b. Persecution **PROVIDES** an opening for witnessing.
 - c. Instead of defending ourselves, we **SPEAK** boldly about Christ.
 - d. When we **EXPRESS** joy rather than fear and despair, we reflect Jesus.
 2. Not with worry (14);
 3. Without **PREPARED** defenses (14);
 4. Knowing some of us will die (16);
 5. Right words and wise conduct do not insure our safety.
 - a. Hostility always **OUTWEIGHS** reason.
 - b. **ACCEPT** the reality of hatred (17).

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II. Lecture (cont.)

- c. **KNOW** God is still in charge (18).
 - d. Life is never as **INSECURE** as when we take hold of it.
 - e. Never is life **SAFER** than when we lay ourselves in God's hands.
 - f. God promises the persecuted they will be saved "by standing firm."
6. Persecution **MAKES** us stronger. "That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in... persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).
7. Paul **GIVES** more instructions, "Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse" (Romans 12:14-15).
- a. Rejoicing and mourning are empathetic responses **COMMANDED** for those being persecuted.
 - b. We are to **ENTER** empathetically into the lives of those who are persecuted.
- B. Jesus saw persecution as a "kingdom of heaven" sign (Luke 21:12-19).
- 1. In the parable of the seed, Jesus **WARNED** that persecution could stunt productivity (Matthew 13:21).
 - 2. Jesus **PROMISES** productivity amid persecution (Mark 10:29-30).
 - 3. Persecution **PROMPTS** praying for enemies. That is what children of God do (Matthew 5:44-45).

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II. Lecture (cont.)

4. Christians were **SCATTERED** because of persecution (Acts 8:1-8).
 - a. Persecution **PROMOTED** the Gospel.
 - b. The option of **REMAINING** silent about Jesus seemed not to be a consideration.
5. Scattered Christians preached the Word.
6. Acts 8:1 made Acts 1:8 possible.

V. Conclusion

- A. Christians in North America **FIND** a different and subtle kind of persecution.
- B. Witnessing Christians **EXPERIENCE** social disapproval.
 1. We **SEE** the sly grin, the cold stare, the rebellious set of jaw, the frigid indifference.
 2. We **HEAR** the sarcasm, the cutting tongue and mocking.
- C. Christians can be **SILENCED** by just such behavior.
- D. Another alternative is to evangelize and by faith **EMBRACE** Jesus' words, "Blessed are the persecuted" and "Rejoice and be glad" (Matthew 5:10-12).

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VI. Small Group Activity

(20 minutes)

The small group exercise portion of the module provides an opportunity for the teams to discuss the information presented. Consider Jesus' words:

“Blessed are the persecuted.” and “Rejoice and be glad.”

(Matthew 5:10-12)

- How does that work? How can that be?
- How are persecution and eternal life connected?
- What is the importance of knowing the prophets were also persecuted?

Remain available during the exercise time to answer questions. Announce to the group when five minutes remain. Again announce to the group when two minutes remain.

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VII. Action Planning

(15 minutes)

This section gives the participants an opportunity to discuss their plans for using this information.

The homework assignment for this module includes answering the following questions:

1. Share times when you experienced persecution. What happened?
2. How did you deal with the discomfort and embarrassment?
3. How do you imagine we can help other Christians deal with persecution?

Let's take about 15 minutes to discuss how you plan to use this information as a church. In your material you have an Action Planning/Reporting page.

Move among the groups to answer specific questions. Listen for discussions that are not focused on the assignment and guide them in completing the questions. Let the groups know when there are five minutes remaining and ask them to begin to conclude their discussions.

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VIII. Module Wrap-Up

This section provides an opportunity to close the module.

- Ask participants to share their thoughts about the module.
- Answer any questions and provide encouragement.