

Preparing for Persecution Participant's Guide

The purpose of this module is to:

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

Objectives :

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

I. Introduction

- A. Persecution is harassment or punishment _____ 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 _____ non-Christians will earn a negative reaction, too.
 3. Persecution comes when we _____ 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).

II. Why do Christians suffer persecution?

- A. If they persecuted Jesus, they will persecute us (John 15:20).
- B. Because the world _____ us (John 15:19).
- C. Because we are not of the world (John 15:19).
- D. Because the world _____ in sin (John 15:22).
- E. Because the world does not know Jesus (John 15:21).
1. A Christian _____ Christ.
 2. Christians will be hated without reason, but not without cause.
 3. The life of Jesus causes people to hate because holy living _____ sin and causes guilt.
- F. The posse effect _____ conflict. "They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas..." (Acts 13:50).

III. How do we deal with persecution?

- A. Old Testament patterns of dealing with persecution
1. David _____ God to protect him from persecutors (Psalm 119:84, 86).

2. Jeremiah _____ for God to punish his persecutors (Jeremiah 17:18).
3. Jeremiah _____ God to keep him from shame while being persecuted (Jeremiah 17:18).
4. Human _____ 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).

B. Paul on persecution

1. Stephen _____ 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 _____ 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).
4. Paul received persecution and _____ 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 _____ 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).

IV. After persecution, what?

A. How do we _____ 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 _____ an opening for witnessing.
 - c. Instead of defending ourselves, we _____ boldly about Christ.
 - d. When we _____ joy rather than fear and despair, we reflect Jesus.
2. Not with worry (14);
3. Without _____ defenses (14);
4. Knowing some of us will die (16);
5. Right words and wise conduct do not insure our safety.
 - a. Hostility always _____ reason.
 - b. _____ the reality of hatred (17).

- c. _____ God is still in charge (18).
 - d. Life is never as _____ as when we take hold of it.
 - e. Never is life _____ than when we lay ourselves in God's hands.
 - f. God promises the persecuted they will be saved "by standing firm."
6. Persecution _____ 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 _____ more instructions, "Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse" (Romans 12:14-15).
- a. Rejoicing and mourning are empathetic responses _____ for those being persecuted.
 - b. We are to _____ 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 _____ that persecution could stunt productivity (Matthew 13:21).
 - 2. Jesus _____ productivity amid persecution (Mark 10:29-30).
 - 3. Persecution _____ praying for enemies. That is what children of God do (Matthew 5:44-45).
 - 4. Christians were _____ because of persecution (Acts 8:1-8).
 - a. Persecution _____ the Gospel.
 - b. The option of _____ silent about Jesus seemed not to be a consideration.
5. Scattered Christians preached the Word. Acts 8:1 made Acts 1:8 possible.

V. Conclusion

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

Small Group Activity

“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?

Action Planning

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?