Title: Resilient in Persecution

Text: “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.” Romans 12:14

Target: The journey with Jesus is not for the faint of heart, because there will be people along the way that will seek to break it.

GETTING STARTED:

Question #1: Have you ever personally experienced persecution for your faith? In America these forms of persecution may range from ridicule, to hate, being socially ostracized, or even subtle resume screening for potential employment. Internationally, persecution could include imprisonment, other forms of physical punishment, or even death. Share any experiences you may have had in being persecuted for your faith in Christ.

GOING DEEPER:

I. Existence of Persecution: “those who persecute you” Romans 12:14a
   A. References to Persecution: (2 Timothy 3:12, 1 Peter 4:12-16)
   B. Reasons for Persecution:
      1. Spiritual Battle: There is a real enemy named Satan.
      2. Biblical Worldview: A belief in absolute truth defined by the Bible and the principles within.
      3. Non-Conformity: Choosing to call sin, sin.
      4. Exclusivity of Jesus: Claiming Jesus is the only way.
   C. Recognizing the Who in Persecution:
      1. From within the Church: 3 John 1:9-10
      2. From outside the Church: 2 Timothy 4:14

Question #2: Read 1 Peter 4:12-16 together as a group. Why are we called to rejoice and be glad in these circumstances? How is God glorified in these difficult situations?

II. Expectation through Persecution: “bless” (2x) Romans 12:14b
   A. Re-Clarification of Persecution:
      1. Defining your neighbor: Matthew 5:43
      2. Golden Rule Explained: Matthew 7:12
         a) Leviticus 19:18: Omission of “as yourself”
   B. Responding to Persecution:
1. Pray for them: (Luke 6:27)
2. Turn the Other Cheek: (Matthew 5:39)
3. Give your Cloak: (Matthew 5:40)
4. Go the extra Mile: (Matthew 5:41)

Question #3: Read Matthew 5:39-48 together as a group. What observations do you have from this text? (List 4-5 as a group.) What is Jesus calling us to do in the midst of persecution and retaliation?

III. Example in Persecution: “and do not curse them” Romans 12:14c

A. Reflection towards Persecution:
   1. Stephen: Acts 7:60

B. Retribution of Persecution:
   1. Saul to Paul: Acts 8-9
   2. To the Nations: Acts 1:8

Question #4: Have 3 people look up each of these verses and read them aloud: Acts 7:60 (Stephen’s account), Luke 23:34 (Jesus’ account), and Acts 16:24-25 (Paul & Silas’ account). What can we learn from each of these accounts of persecution? How can we prepare ourselves to respond in a similar way when our own unique challenges come our way?

Take Away: Choosing to Bless instead of Curse can only be done when being reminded that God did the same towards us! Romans 5:8: “While we were still sinners (enemies), Christ died for us.”

FINISH BY PRAYING AS A GROUP.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Voice of the Martyrs - pray for the global church using their Global Prayer Guide