

Devotional – Persecution

HTOIM



Heritage

Core I: Christian Heritage

Opening

- Today was a good reminder of major components of Christianity, now let's discuss another: Persecution.
- *Read, or someone read the Teaching verse. FYI: The memory verse is further down*

Luke 6:22

Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.

Devotional

Big picture

Stephen and Persecution

- Q: In the teaching verse, who is the Son of Man? Jesus often called himself that title.
- Q: Does anyone know what it means to be persecuted for your belief in Jesus as your Lord and Savior?
- Q: Does anyone know someone who has been persecuted for being a Christian? (share if you have one)
- Q: Does anyone know who was the first person persecuted for following Jesus?
- The Bible tells us the disciple Stephen is considered the first Christian martyr. (define martyrdom)
- Stephen was stoned to death when people were throwing rocks at him to kill him for his belief in Jesus. The Bible remembers Stephen not just because of why he died, but also because of how he died.
- While being stoned to death, Stephen still prayed for those same people stoning him.
- Stephen's prayer is an amazing act of faith and maturity of understanding Jesus's teaching about loving others, prayer, forgiveness, and selflessness, even under extremely difficult circumstances.
- As he was dying, Stephen loved those who were stoning him, by praying for them.
- Notice, that Stephen prayed for his persecutors just like Jesus did on the cross. Stephen was following Jesus's example even unto death. In fact, all the apostles except one, would be killed because of Jesus.
- Jesus commends us in the teaching verse by saying we are blessed when we are persecuted for our belief in Him as the Son of God. For Jesus was persecuted, too.
- Notice also that Jesus says in the teaching verse, WHEN, not IF you are persecuted. So, when we are persecuted it should not come as a surprise, and especially should not scare us from sharing the Gospel.
- You will be persecuted for your faith if you share the Gospel with others. But do not fear it! Because Jesus is lovingly explaining that persecution brings heavenly reward. We are acting like Jesus.
- Persecution is evidence you are a true believer in Jesus Christ, and you will be rewarded for it.
- Now, let's all make a prayer list of people or things you need to pray for over the next week.

Memory Verse #2

Ask if anybody knows it yet and can say it? Read it together 2X Consider having a memory verse pamphlet for kids take home.

Matthew 22: 37-39

Love the Lord God with all

your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Topical Questions

1. Can you provide an example of a Christian figure in history who was persecuted for the faith?
2. Do know of somewhere in the world where Christians are facing persecution up to death today?
3. Does anyone see how the memory verse describes Stephen's faith and his prayer?

Leaders may want to recommend Trailmen discuss persecution further at home with their parents.

Closing Prayer

Dear Jesus, we thank You for warning us about persecution of Christians, but we thank You also for explaining how much of a blessing persecution is to us who believe in You. Help us to be strong and courageous in our faith. Not to get angry at others for their misunderstanding Christians, but to pray for them like Stephen did. Persecution is a Christian's badge of honor. Help us to understand, and to love You even more during times of afflictions. We love You Lord! And ask this in Your matchless name, Jesus. Amen!

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We welcome suggestions for improvements to this lesson to woodlands.worthy.life@trailife613.org.

View devotional online at <https://www.trailife613.org/woodlands-trail-devotionals/mountain-lion/persecution-heritage-christian-heritage>

