

## APPLICATION

- Ask God to show you the things that are hindering you from sharing your faith with those around you. Pray that you will be steadfast in your faith even when you face persecution and hardship.
- Meditate on James 1:2–4. Write what the Holy Spirit reveals to you about how you are to respond whenever your faith is tested.
- Commit to pray for people you know who are facing persecution. Pray that they will be strong in the power of the Holy Spirit and that they will be surrounded by a community of believers who will continue to spur their faith.

## PRAYER

- Thank God for sending the Holy Spirit who strengthens you as you bear witness for Christ. Pray that you will be bold in testifying about Jesus knowing that the Holy Spirit is with you.
- Ask God for the grace to persevere in the midst of trials and persecution. Pray that you will experience the reality and power of God as you continue to follow Jesus even when it is difficult.
- Pray for the people who have ridiculed, mocked, or persecuted you in the past. Ask God to give you His heart for them and pray for an opportunity to extend kindness and be a witness for Jesus this week.

## Cost of the Cross

## Facing Persecution

WEEK 4

## WARM-UP

- Is there a time in your life when you received advice or a warning that helped you avoid a major setback? Share what happened.
- How do you typically respond when others disagree with or oppose your opinions or actions?
- Have you ever felt like giving up on something important? What made you decide to push through or persevere instead?

**WORD** *<sup>18</sup>If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup>If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. <sup>20</sup>Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours."* **JOHN 15:18–20**

(Read also **JOHN 15:21–16:4**.)

Jesus tells His followers that the persecution they will endure is a result of the world's rejection of the truth He speaks, and in the midst of this, He is calling them to stand firm, keeping His word and continuing to serve Him in the face of hardship. The call to serve Christ is not without cost, but it is a life that produces eternal fruit and fulfills God's purpose in the world. Today, we will look at what Jesus said about the persecution His followers would face.



Honor God. Make Disciples.

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## 1 | We will be persecuted for the sake of Christ.

*"Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours."* **JOHN 15:20**

As His followers, we can expect to face the same treatment Jesus received. Just as He was persecuted by the world, we too can expect persecution. The world can reject our message in the same way that it rejected Christ. Persecution in the name of Christ is part of living out His truth and serves as a reminder that we are sharing in His mission. Share about a time when you experienced persecution because of your faith. How did you persevere?

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## 2 | We have the Holy Spirit with us as we bear witness for Christ.

*<sup>26</sup>"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. <sup>27</sup>And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning."* **JOHN 15:26-27**

This is the hope we can hold on to: We will never be alone in our journey of faith. The Holy Spirit is always with us, helping

us testify to His truth, providing strength, wisdom, and courage to proclaim the gospel. With the Spirit's presence and guidance, we are equipped and empowered to boldly share Christ's message with the world, even in the midst of persecution. How did you experience the power of the Holy Spirit as you testify about Christ?

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## 3 | We were forewarned so that we might persevere in Christ.

*"I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away."* **JOHN 16:1**

By forewarning His disciples, Jesus is telling us that He is not taken by surprise when we experience persecution and trials. This truth will prevent us from being discouraged to the point of falling away from the mission He has called us to. Share a time when it was more bearable for you to go through hardship because you knew ahead of time that it would happen. How did you prepare for it?

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