

Endure Persecution for Christ

Anchor command. “Be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” *2 Timothy 4:5*

Anchor story. Paul and Silas imprisoned in Philippi. *Acts 16. 11-40*

Anchor verse. “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” *Matthew 5:11-12*

Learning goal. Find how believers benefit from enduring persecution.

Growth goal. Welcome persecution for Christ’s sake.

Skill goal. Convince believers that their present pains do not compare with the joy of eternity.

Outcome goal. Believers welcome suffering for Christ, knowing that it brings great reward.

Dear Lord, please give us the same strength, patience and grace that you gave to Paul to deal with unjust persecution.

Basic Study

Learn about suffering from Paul and Silas’s imprisonment in Philippi, Acts 16. 11-40

- Who met Paul and Silas on the way to the place of prayer? *Verse 16*
- What did Paul do that angered the slave girl’s masters? *17-21*
- What did the magistrates and the jailer do to Paul and Silas? *22-24*
- Why did the Jailer start to take his life? *25-27*
- What did the frightened jailer ask Paul and Silas? *30*
- What did Paul and Silas assure the jailer? *31*
- What resulted for the jailer’s family? *32-35*



While Paul and Silas worshipped Jesus, an earth tremor shook their prison.

During the week...

- Pray together for God's strength to expect and respond bravely to persecution.
- Visit and pray with victims of persecution, and assure them with God's promises.

During worship

- Tell the account of Paul and Silas being persecuted in Philippi, *Acts 16. 11-40*
- Ask the same questions as above, and let believers discuss the answers.
- Ask the children to present what they have prepared.
- Memorize together 2 Timothy 3:12. "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

Advanced Study

1. Discern between persecution and suffering in general.

- Four sources of suffering:
 - 1) deserved punishment,
 - 2) undeserved affliction,
 - 3) Satan's cruelty,
 - 4) oppression by those who hate Christ's followers.
- Violent religious persecution is illegal in enlightened nations. Still, it happens. When treated unjustly believers are to ask God to bless their persecutors, *Luke 6:28*.
- Believers who know the law should take peaceful social action against persecution of any faith community.

2. Face persecution as Paul did.

Why did Paul encourage believers to welcome suffering? *Romans 8:16-18*

"If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit will me? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."
1 Corinthians 15:32



The Romans would make prisoners fight with lions. Lions usually would win.

- Find in 2 Corinthians 11: 23-28 the many times and ways Paul suffered for Christ.
- Find in Acts 8:3 what Saul (later, Paul) did to believers before he met Christ.
- Find in Acts 9:1-31 how God turned Saul from hunting believers to serving them.
How did Saul first learn that Jesus was alive and powerful? *1-8*
What was God's purpose for Saul? *15*
What did God say would happen to Saul? *16*
What did Saul start doing in the synagogue after receiving his sight? *17-20*
- Find in 1 Corinthians 4:10-13 what believers should do in reaction to suffering.
- How did Paul escape being killed, after he began to proclaim Jesus? *Acts 9: 22-25*
- Acts 13:49-14:23 shows how Paul suffered while planting churches.
Why did the apostles flee from Iconium? *Acts 14:1-6*
What do disciples have to go through to enter the kingdom of God? *14:22*
- Find in 2 Corinthians 11:23-33 the many different ways that Paul suffered.
- Find in Romans 8:28 why we can have peace in our hearts when people mistreat us.
- Find in Romans 8:33-39 over what things we shall triumph because of Jesus' love.

3. Examine what Jesus taught about suffering for him.

- Find in Matthew 5:10-12 the reward will we receive if we endure persecution.
- Find in John 15:18-19 why the world hates those who follow Christ.
- Find in Mark 8:34-35 what Jesus requires his followers to do.

4. Plan with co-workers additional activities to do during the week.

- If your flock is neglecting some duty such as witnessing for Jesus because they fear persecution, then pray for guidance.
- Agree together on your plans to deal with persecution.

5. Plan with co-workers additional activities for the next worship.

- Teach the truths you have learned about why Jesus' followers have to suffer.
- Explain how at times the Lord graciously gives his people a season of peace, sometimes by saving our persecutors (Acts 9:1-31) or responding to our prayers for government authorities (1 Timothy 2:1-2).
- Let believers give testimonies about how they responded recently to persecution.
- To introduce the Lord's Supper, read or tell the story by memory from Mark 10:32-44, about the 'cup' of death that Jesus said that he and we would have to drink. Explain that the Lord's Supper helps us to consider ourselves dead in respect to sin, by being joined spiritually to Christ in his death and resurrection.
- Form small groups of two and three. Have them pray, confirm plans for dealing with persecution, and encourage one another.
- Those who teach children should read study #94 for children.