

2 TIMOTHY

EXPECT WHAT?



TEACH IT COFFEEHOUSE SESSION 8

1. Materials

For this session each student will need—

- his or her own Bible and pen
- optional: journal page for Session 8 (Using the student journal page is optional in the coffeehouse setting because table space may be limited.)

You'll also need—

- pencils with erasers
- optional: a few spare Bibles for students who forget theirs

2. SESSION INTRO

GOALS OF SESSION 8

As students experience this session, they will—

- discover life wasn't easy for Paul and Timothy as they followed Jesus in their day.
- discover life won't be easy as we follow Jesus in our day.
- be challenged not only to anticipate persecution for following Jesus, but to experience the benefits of suffering and persecution.

PRAYER

Pray together that the hearts of your students will be soft to what God wants to show them and to teach them in his Word.

OPEN

Whose Slogan Is It Anyway?

In the style of the TV show *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* (a comedy show in which performers make up sketches and skits on the spot), ask students to make up a few recruiting slogans or ad campaigns that probably wouldn't work. Here are some examples:

Fast Food: *Want to gain weight and clog your arteries? Eat here.*

Diet Soda: *Will melt a penny overnight. Think what it can do for your stomach.*

Snack Cakes: *Your favorite source of sugar and lard.*

Ask students to share with the group their favorite creations. To make a game out of it, allow students to vote for the best slogans (two votes per person and no one can vote for his or her own). Award one million “points that don't matter” (a catchphrase from *Whose Line Is It Anyway?*), or give a prize to the student who gets the most votes, such as a Twinkie or a coffee (that you buy).

Transition into the study by saying something such as—

There are some things that are attractive about the Christian life—things you'd put in a recruiting slogan, such as eternal life, close friendship with Jesus, God's provision and blessing, and so on. Those things will attract others. But there's one thing you probably *wouldn't* put in an advertising

slogan—and it's that no one said the Christian life would always be easy. Swimming against the current never is easy, and it's what you do most of the time when living the Christian life.

3. Digging In

Heads-Up

Paul gave Timothy a heads-up on the fact that living for Jesus in a secular world wouldn't be easy.

Tell the group—

- 1. Read 2 Timothy 3:1-13 using your Bibles and underline every mention of suffering or persecution.**
- 2. If you're hesitant about marking in your Bibles, you can write lightly so the markings can be erased. It's okay if you're still not comfortable with it. Just make sure to remember any info about suffering or persecution.**

When most students have finished reading and marking, ask what they learned about suffering.

SUFFERING

- There will be terrible times in the last days (v. 1).*
- People will be abusive, unforgiving, slanderous, brutal, treacherous, rash, and more (v. 2-4).*
- People with depraved minds will oppose the truth (v. 8).*
- Paul was persecuted and suffered; he endured all kinds of difficulties (v. 11).*
- Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ will be persecuted (v. 12).*
- Evil men and impostors (fake Christians) will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived (v. 13).*

After you've touched on the facts of the passage, ask the following questions.

Based on what we've seen, if Paul had written a promotional brochure for Christianity, what might he have said?

Expect persecution. It's bound to come.

What are some ways Christians are persecuted today?

You might discuss other countries where it's not unusual for believers to be tortured or killed for professing Christianity. Be sure to touch on the day-to-day pressures Christians face in the United States as well.

Why do you think persecution is so inevitable?

Remind the group of the picture of unbelievers painted in verses 2-5. According to Paul, unless such people are saved, their behavior will only get worse as time goes on. The next exercise will shed even more light on why persecution is inevitable.

4. Digging Deeper

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra

Your group members may have noticed Paul's mention of what happened to him in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra (2 Timothy 3:11). Divide the group into three subgroups, and assign one of these cities to each. (If you're using the optional journal page, refer them to the chart on the journal page.) They should work as a group to read the passage that deals with their city and complete the part of the chart that applies. They'll be looking for the kind of suffering Paul endured, its impact on his ministry, and how he was ultimately preserved and protected. Remind them of Paul's statement in 2 Timothy 3:11: "Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them."

City	Scripture	Ministry Impact	Suffering Endured	How Paul Was Preserved
Antioch	Acts 13:14, 42-50	The whole city gathered to hear the Word of the Lord; the Gentiles were glad; many believed; the Word of the Lord spread.	Unbelieving Jews were jealous of the crowds and verbally abused Paul and Barnabas.	Paul and Barnabas were expelled from the region.
Iconium	Acts 14:1-7	A great number of Jews and Gentiles believed.	Unbelieving Jews stirred up the crowd and poisoned their minds against Paul; a plot was hatched to mistreat and stone Paul and Barnabas.	Paul and Barnabas found out about the plot and were able to flee.
Lystra	Acts 14:8-20	A man lame from birth was healed.	Paul was stoned, dragged outside the city, and left for dead.	Paul was protected; he got up and walked away from a stoning that should have killed him and went back into the city.

After a few minutes ask each subgroup to give a report on their city, highlighting these things:

What ministry impact did you see?

We see a big impact—a healing, many Jews and Gentiles believed, and large crowds gathered.

What suffering did Paul endure?

- He endured verbal abuse.
- He endured physical abuse.
- He endured a conspiracy drummed up against him.

How was Paul preserved?

He was protected uniquely in every situation.

Then ask—

Based on what we’ve just seen, do you see any connection between persecution and the impact of Paul’s ministry? What about your own Christian influence or ministry?

There seems to be a direct connection between ministry impact and persecution. Paul was three-for-three in these cities with regard to impact and persecution. Every place he experienced ministry impact, he also experienced stiff persecution.

How do we see these three situations in our culture today?

Antioch, verbal abuse: *We can see this on campuses or in the workplace.*

Iconium, lies and distortions: *We can see this in the media where Christians are often portrayed as narrow-minded, bigoted, unthinking and Christian views are often distorted and caricatured.*

Lystra, persuasive campaigns and abuse: *American culture doesn’t see much physical abuse against the Christian faith, but there are overt efforts to “win the crowd over” against Christian causes and beliefs.*

To what extent does Christianity bring persecution upon itself in today’s American culture?

- The way we articulate or defend the faith may come across as arrogant.
- We tend not to show respect for other faiths or differing beliefs.

5. Cross-Checking

The Puzzle of Persecution

Point out the fact that because suffering and persecution are inevitable (remember 2 Timothy 3:12), it might be smart to get a handle on how to deal with it.

Ask your group members to read John 16:33 and 1 Peter 4:12-16, and record answers to the following questions on a napkin.

What's the source of suffering or persecution?

Any promises you can claim?

Scripture	The Source of Suffering or Persecution	Any Promises You Can Claim?
John 16:33	<i>the world</i>	<i>Have peace and take heart; Jesus has overcome the world.</i>
1 Peter 4:12-16	<i>insults from the world</i>	<i>-We will be overjoyed when Jesus' glory is revealed. -We are blessed because God's Spirit rests on us.</i>

6. Taking It Inward

Personal Puzzle

Ask students to look over their answers and circle the passage they found either the most helpful or the scariest. Then ask any volunteers to share what they circled. Make sure you touch on each of the passages in this discussion.

Then prompt the dialogue with the following questions.

What kind of suffering do you think these verses are referring to?

Draw out the fact these passages seem to be referring to a suffering that comes from trying to live a godly life in an ungodly world—suffering from temptation, sin, or persecution. Stress that persecution doesn't always mean being thrown into jail for your beliefs; it can simply be oppressive treatment. This helps answer the question asked earlier: Why is persecution inevitable?

Ask a few volunteers to describe a recent time when they suffered or faced persecution because of their beliefs. Then pose these questions:

Agree or disagree: If you're not experiencing persecution for your faith, then you must not be seeking to live a godly life.

Since Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:12, "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted," you'd have to ask yourself: Am I really striving to live godly—or am I blending in with the crowd?

Does this make anybody want to quit trying to live a godly life?

Use this question to draw students toward the promises they uncovered in their Puzzle of Persecution. Stress that this persecution comes because we love Christ more than we love the world.

What's one thing you could do as soon as you walk out of this building that you know would bring persecution because of your faith?

Responses might include making a stand for creation in a biology class, making a stand for sexual purity in a sociology class, challenging a coworker who is behaving in an unethical manner, challenging a supervisor who is behaving in an unethical manner.

Did you see anything in 2 Timothy 3 that could encourage you when you're suffering?

Highlight the fact Paul himself was facing persecution when he wrote this letter. Also, suffering and persecution are guaranteed, but God promises to rescue and restore.

7. Wrapping It Up

Praying the Promises

Ask students to share with the group any suffering or persecution they're anticipating this week (such as persecution from friends, coworkers, family, or even routine temptations).

After a few minutes of sharing, follow the Holy Spirit's lead in how you want to wrap up. Maybe you want to gather around and pray for one particular student or have students divide into small groups and pray for each other.

First read Psalm 34:17-22, and make the promises in this passage the launchpad for your prayers.

The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all; he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken. Evil will slay the wicked; the foes of the righteous will be condemned. The LORD redeems his servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him. (Psalm 34:17-22)