

2 TIMOTHY

EXPECT WHAT?



TEACH IT COLLEGE AGE SESSION 8

1. Materials

For this session each student will need—

- the 2 Timothy Scripture sheets
- the student journal page for Session 8
- his or her own Bible, pen, and notebook

You'll also need—

- a whiteboard and markers
- colored pencils (at least one color per student)
- optional: video shorts that you or students have prepared prior to the session for Digging Deeper: *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra*

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. They can write these down in the space provided on the journal pages. 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?*) to the winner, or give a prize to the student who gets the most votes, such as a free burger at McDonald's.

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 your students—

1. Read 2 Timothy 3:1-13 using your Scripture sheets and mark in colored pencil every mention of suffering or persecution.

2. Let's agree on a symbol to use—a wavy line to represent stormy seas  or a cloud with a lightning bolt  are two possibilities.

When most students have finished reading and marking, ask what they learned about suffering, and record their responses on the whiteboard. Ask them to record this info on the journal pages as well.

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 the facts of the passage are on the board, 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. Use this question to introduce students to organizations that track and report on this persecution, such as Voice of the Martyrs.

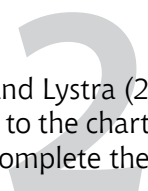
Why do you think persecution is so inevitable?

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. (Refer them to the chart on the journal pages.) 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 | <i>The whole city gathered to hear the Word of the Lord; the Gentiles were glad; many believed; the Word of the Lord spread.</i> | <i>Unbelieving Jews were jealous of the crowds and verbally abused Paul and Barnabas.</i> | <i>Paul and Barnabas were expelled from the region.</i> |
| Iconium | Acts 14:1-7 | <i>A great number of Jews and Gentiles believed.</i> | <i>Unbelieving Jews stirred up the crowd and poisoned their minds against Paul; a plot was hatched to mistreat and stone Paul and Barnabas.</i> | <i>Paul and Barnabas found out about the plot and were able to flee.</i> |
| Lystra | Acts 14:8-20 | <i>A man lame from birth was healed.</i> | <i>Paul was stoned, dragged outside the city, and left for dead.</i> | <i>Paul was protected; he got up and walked away from a stoning that should have killed him and went back into the city.</i> |

While the groups are reading and discussing, draw the chart above on the whiteboard. Then ask each subgroup to give a report on their city. Fill in the chart on the board with the info they give you. 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?

How do we see the persecution Paul experienced, in these three cities, 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 or 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.

In Iconium Paul's opposition stirred up the crowd and "poisoned their minds" against Paul and Barnabas. What's happening in today's culture that might parallel this action?

Writers with an atheistic bend are writing popular books, seeking to debunk the Christian faith (Christopher Hitchens, God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything; Richard Dawkins, The God Delusion); other authors are writing popular books that undermine the authority of the Bible (John Shelby Spong has written several, but his book most directed at the Bible is Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism).

VIDEO SHORTS OPTION

This is for the budding filmmakers in your group. One or two weeks prior to your session, divvy up these three scenes to three different students (one scene per student), and ask them to create a two-to-three-minute video of the action in the scene. Instruct them to be sure they highlight the information asked for in the chart above. They can recruit other students as cast or crew. Encourage creativity using tools such as stop action, illustration, or animation. Show these shorts rather than reading the passages. After viewing each video in your group session, list the information on the whiteboard about each scene.

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 do this next exercise as a personal retreat with God. Explain—

- 1. Find quiet spots where you can get alone with God.**
- 2. Take your Bibles, pens, and journal pages.**
- 3. Read each Scripture passage listed under Cross-Checking on your journal pages and record as much information as possible in the chart. Remember that you'll be reading the very words of God, so keep your hearts soft.**

The possible observations are printed for your reference:

| Scripture | The Source of Suffering or Persecution | How Difficult Is It? | Who Said We Should Expect It? | Any Promises You Can Claim? |
|-------------------|--|---|-------------------------------|---|
| John 15:18-21 | <i>the world</i> | <i>It could be as intense as what Jesus faced.</i> | <i>Jesus</i> | <i>Jesus has chosen us out of the world. The only reason they may hate us is that they hated him first.</i> |
| John 16:33 | <i>the world</i> | <i>It's inevitable—we will have trouble.</i> | <i>Jesus</i> | <i>Have peace and take heart; Jesus has overcome the world.</i> |
| Ephesians 6:10-13 | <i>the Devil and his dark forces</i> | <i>It's described as all the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.</i> | <i>Paul</i> | <i>After we've put on the full armor of God, we'll be able to stand our ground.</i> |
| 1 Peter 4:12-16 | <i>insults from the world</i> | <i>It's painful.</i> | <i>Peter</i> | <i>-We will be overjoyed when Jesus' glory is revealed. -We are blessed because God's Spirit rests on us.</i> |
| 1 Peter 5:8-10 | <i>the Devil</i> | <i>The Devil is prowling like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.</i> | <i>Peter</i> | <i>After a little while God will restore us and make us strong, firm, and steadfast.</i> |

6. Taking It Inward

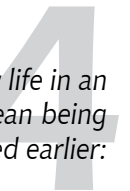
Personal Puzzle

Call the group back together. Ask students to look over their Puzzle of Persecution chart and circle the passage they found either the most helpful or the scariest. Then ask volunteers to share what they circled. Make sure you touch on each of the passages in the preceding list.

Next, prompt the discussion 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?



Where do we see overt persecution of the Christian faith in the world today?

Use this question to introduce students to organizations that track and report on this persecution, such as Voice of the Martyrs.

Take another look on your Scripture sheets at the suffering Paul wrote about in 2 Timothy 3:1-4. How do you see today the traits Paul listed in these verses? Pick one and share how you see it playing out today.

Look again at 2 Timothy 3:5. What's unnerving about this verse?

"Having a form of godliness" sounds like all this behavior could be coming from people who are in or around the church or ministries.

What conclusions might you draw about the "last days" Paul spoke of?

We could be in them now.

Ask a few volunteers to describe a recent time when they suffered or faced persecution because of their beliefs. Then ask—

What does it say about your walk with God if you're not experiencing some type of persecution?

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?

What can you do over the next few days that you know will bring some kind of persecution for 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, or 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)