

## 2 TIMOTHY

EXPECT *WHAT?*



## TEACH IT MIDDLE SCHOOL 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)
- a box of snack cakes, a six-pack of soft drinks, a bag of fast food, or your group's favorite junk food (have enough for each group of four to six students to have its own product)

### 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?*

Bring in a box of snack cakes, a six-pack of soft drinks, a bag of fast food, or any other junk food that is popular with your students. Have the students break into small groups so each group has one product. Each group should come up with a slogan for their product, but with a twist: It needs to be a slogan that would make you *not* want to buy the product. There is space on the journal pages to write the slogans, but they'll need to pitch their favorite slogan as a group. 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.*

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 group that gets the most votes.

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 (a world not controlled by or concerned with spiritual matters) wouldn't be easy.

Tell the group—

**1. Read 2 Timothy 3:1-13 using your Scripture sheets and mark with 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 an ad or slogan 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 unavoidable?**

*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 unavoidable.*

### 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	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.

While the groups are reading and discussing, draw the preceding chart on the whiteboard. Then ask each subgroup to give a report on their city. Fill in the chart on the board with the answers they give you, and have students record the info on the journal pages. Then ask—

**Based on what we've just seen, do you see any connection or link between persecution and the impact of Paul's 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.*

**What about your own Christian influence or ministry? Are you having any impact or experiencing persecution because of impact?**

*Persecution could include such things as being labeled a bigot or prude or teachers not respecting your 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 do this next exercise as a personal retreat with God. Instruct them to—

- 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 and record as much information as possible in the chart. Just a reminder: you'll be reading the very words of God; keep your hearts soft.**

The possible observations are printed below 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 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>

## 6. Taking It Inward

### *Personal Puzzle*

Call the group back together, and 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 any volunteers to share what they circled. Make sure you touch on each of the passages in this discussion.

Then 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?*

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?**

*Because 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?*

### **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 discussion, 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.

Before praying, 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)**