



## Why Doesn't Everyone Like Me? | Matthew 5:10-12

### Sermon Discussion Leader's Guide

**Purpose of Discussion:** To come away with a clearer understanding of what Christian persecution is and how we can respond to it as believers in Christ.

**Sermon Refresher:** Jesus says that when we follow him, we will experience persecution (could range from imprisonment or death to ill-treatment in our jobs or loss of friendship). Because Jesus promises to be with us and that our reward will be great in heaven, we can respond with love and desire God's glory rather than our own comfort.

**Icebreaker:** Name a time in your life when you thought to yourself, "This is *not* what I signed up for." The example can be funny or serious.

**Transition:** We've all had those moments when we've thought, "This is not what I signed up for." At one time or another, many of us may have thought this way about the Christian life. And persecution can be one of those experiences within our faith that can take us by surprise if we're not prepared for it. In Matthew 5:10-12, Jesus shows us that persecution is to be expected and something to be rejoiced in as we follow him.

#### Discussion:

1. Though American Christians aren't persecuted with the same intensity as our brothers and sisters around the world, it is important to recognize that persecution exists today in our own culture. Describe a time in which you experienced persecution for your faith or saw this happen to someone else.
2. Read the following statements: "In Iran, arrests and violence are commonplace for anyone engaged in Christian ministry or evangelism. In Pakistan, Christians are targets for murder, bombings, abduction of women, rape, forced marriages and eviction from home and country." And yet, Christianity continues to grow

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rapidly in these parts of the world. How does knowing these things inform your faith both in thought and in deed?

3. Read 2 Timothy 3:12. What is your reaction to the reality that in spite of our best attempts toward kindness and bridge-building in our communities, we may still experience persecution for our beliefs and our obedience to God when it comes to certain issues?
4. Read 1 Peter 1:6-7. Peter is writing to believers in Rome who are facing persecution. Share if you've ever experienced the genuineness of faith being tested through some sort of persecution and how you grew through that. Or if nothing comes to mind, how does this passage prepare and encourage us for any of those future times?
5. In asking ourselves how we can respond to persecution, Keith showed a picture of ISIS leaders preparing to behead Egyptian believers and told stories of a radical Christian response in the other direction: one of love and forgiveness. How does this inspire us to love those who persecute us and what does this look like practically?

## **Sharing and Prayer:**

1. Pray for the persecuted church.
  - Pray for Asia Bibi (the woman Keith referenced at the beginning of his sermon)
  - Someone use a phone or computer and pull up the following website: [www.icommittoprayer.com](http://www.icommittoprayer.com) (a website connected to [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com) that specifically focuses on praying for the persecuted church) and spend time praying for an individual.
2. Pray for each other.
  - If anyone mentioned a situation where they are experiencing persecution, spend time praying for that person.
  - Spend time praying that God would enable us to respond with love and hope. And that God would be glorified.