

Bless This Home Persecution

Living God's way will come at a cost (Matthew 5:10-12). Scripture is clear that all who desire to live a Godly life in Jesus will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12). When we align our hearts, desires, choices, and actions to Jesus and His kingdom, we stand in direct opposition to the world and culture around us. We begin to spiritually *stink* (2 Corinthians 2:14-16). If we do not spiritually *stink* to the world around us, then we may need to examine how we are living. But when we expect and embrace life as Jesus intends – a life that inevitably leads to persecution – we are promised blessing and eternal, heavenly reward. When persecuted, we are positioned for incredible growth both individually and as a church in depth and breath. When persecuted, we purposefully respond with blessing and kindness, choosing to pray for those who are persecuting us rather than responding in harshness or hatred.

GET THINGS STARTED

What do you think persecution looks like in Abilene, Texas, or the Big Country (or wherever you may live)? Why do you think so many Christians just want to blend in and choose to accommodate the worldly culture and values around them? If we desire to live a Godly life as Jesus intends, how will our lives differ from those around us, especially when it comes to media or technology, alcohol, relationships, priorities, commitments, etc.?

GO DEEPER

1. From 2 Timothy 3:12, why is persecution inevitable for all who desire to live a Godly life in Jesus?
2. What is the blessing that is promised for those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for those who are reviled and have all kinds of evil uttered against them (Matthew 5:10-12)?
3. In 2 Corinthians 2:14-16, how is being the aroma of Christ a fragrance of death to some and a fragrance of life to others? Why do you think Paul intentionally uses the image of aroma or fragrance for Jesus followers? What is the evidence that we carry the aroma of Jesus, that we spiritually *smell*?
4. How (and why) do we *rejoice* when persecuted, as Jesus encourages in Matthew 5:12?
5. How should we respond to those who persecute us, according to 1 Corinthians 4:12 and Matthew 5:44?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. What is your aroma or fragrance? In your heart, do you lean towards blending in or standing out, and why? When was the last time someone questioned aspects of your life based on your beliefs or life choices?
2. How afraid or hesitant are you to expect and embrace the cost of a life centered on Jesus?
3. What is one step you can take to become more of the aroma of Christ in your circles of influence?

PRACTICE IT NOW

As a group, take time in prayer to ask God for the strength and courage to live a Godly life and to expect and embrace persecution. Ask Him to make you spiritually *stink*, to be the aroma of Jesus to those you encounter daily. Ask God to root out of your heart and mind any tendency to compromise or to embrace worldly values and choices that do not align with His heart, character, and kingdom.