

“What’s going on?”

+ Join us for BE LOVE over the months of July & August as we seek to go above and beyond in serving, loving, and supporting our partners at Horizons Social Services by collecting laundry detergent. You can bring liquid laundry detergent to church each Sunday throughout July and August and Be Love to our community!

+ Baptism Sunday is July 14th! If you or someone you know is interested in getting baptized, contact Chris Woodard at cwoodard@lifepointqcy.org

+ Our next Women’s Prayer and Praise Night will be July 15th from 6:30-8:00. Childcare and light refreshments will be provided. Can’t wait to see you there!

MATTHEW 5:10 - 12

ICE BREAKER

Question: What season of life did you not fit in?

Question: *“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.”* Did you ever say or hear this? What do you think about it? In your experience is this true?

CENTERING FOCUS

In order to focus our time together, close your eyes and listen to this prayer as someone reads it aloud.

A Prayer of Abandonment

Father, I abandon myself into your hands; do with me what you will. Whatever you may do, I thank you; I am ready for all, I accept all. Let only your will be done in me, and in all your creatures— I wish no more than this, O Lord. Into your hands I commend my soul: I offer it to you with all the love of my heart, for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself, to surrender myself into your hands without reserve and with boundless confidence, for you are my Father. Amen.

– Charles de Foucauld

LAST WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Last week's challenge was to practice using the tool of application with one of the interpretations you made from Acts 1:8.

Question: What was one application you came up with from Acts 1:8? How have you put this application into practice?

THOUGHT PROVOKING QUESTION

Question: What is the worst thing that someone has said about you?

Question: Has there ever been a time where you struggled to do the right thing and didn't do it, but later regretted it? What do we fear in situations like this?

ENGAGING WITH SCRIPTURE

Matthew 5:10-12- *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*

Question: Persecution is defined as hostility and ill-treatment. Jesus talks about being persecuted for righteousness' sake. What do you think this means? (Think back to Matthew 5:6 for help)

Question: In this passage Jesus says we are blessed "on my account". What do you think he means by this? How could you interpret the verse differently if those words were missing? (Look up this passage in the NIV and NLT translations to help understand.)

Question: What does Jesus command us to do in this passage? What reason does he give us to do so?

Question: Why do you think Jesus tells us the prophets before us were persecuted? What is he trying to communicate? (Read Hebrews 11 for reference).

Question: Jesus lived out Matthew 5:10-12 perfectly, as our substitute and example. In what ways was Jesus persecuted and how did he respond?

Read these verses for help:

- Isaiah 53:7
- Matthew 13:53-57
- Matthew 27:27-44
- Luke 22:47-52
- Luke 22:54-62
- Luke 23:6-11
- Luke 23:39-43

1 Peter 3:13-17- *“Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, 15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, 16 having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.”*

Question: What phrase does Peter use that almost exactly quotes what Jesus spoke in Matthew 5:10-12?

Question: What commands does Peter give in light of suffering or being persecuted?

Question: Peter tells us not to fear those who harm us, but instead honor Christ as holy. How does seeing Christ as holy help us not to fear those who persecute us?

Question: We are called to be prepared with a defense for the hope that is in us. What is the hope that is in you? How would you express that hope to someone who doesn't understand or agree with you?

Question: Is your defense gentle and respectful? How might you modify your reason so that it is done in gentleness and respect? What are some ways Christians have not been gentle and respectful in their defenses?

2 Timothy 3:12- *“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”*

Timothy makes a difficult and bold claim. If it's true that all who follow Jesus will be persecuted, then all of us have, currently are, or will experience persecution.

Question: Are you experiencing persecution? If so, would you mind sharing with the group what that has been like for you?

Question: If you are not, are you willing to let the Spirit evaluate your life and reveal to you why you haven't or are not experiencing persecution? It may be that one, God is graciously given you a season of peace and we can thank God for that; or two, maybe there are some ways you might not be actively walking in the footsteps of Jesus.

Question: If you feel like the Spirit has laid a reason on your heart, would you mind sharing with the group? Are there any specific commandments of Jesus that you are avoiding or not engaging in?

According to Open Doors USA, Christians remain one of the most persecuted religious groups in the world. While Christian persecution takes many forms, it is defined as any hostility experienced as a result of identification with Christ. Christian torture remains an issue for believers throughout the world including the risk of imprisonment, loss of home and assets, physical torture, beheadings, rape and even death as a result of their faith.

245 million Christians experience high levels of persecution in the countries on the World Watch List. And worldwide, 1 in 9 Christians experience high levels of persecution.

Every month, on average:

- 345 Christians are killed for faith-related reasons
- 105 Churches and Christian buildings are burned or attacked
- 219 Christians are detained without trial, arrested, sentenced and imprisoned

Question: What is your initial response or emotion when you hear those statistics?

Jesus tells us that when his children are persecuted for knowing and following him, that they are blessed and promised the great reward of being with him in heaven.

PRAY: Take some time as a group and pray for the millions of brothers and sisters who live in persecution daily.

- Pray persecuted believers would know the hope God gives (Ephesians 1:18).
- Pray the Holy Spirit would strengthen them (Ephesians 3:16).
- Pray persecuted believers would know how much God loves them (Ephesians 3:17)
- Pray they would know how to share the gospel (Ephesians 6:19).
- Pray persecuted believers would fearlessly tell others about Jesus (Ephesians 6:20).

NEW CHALLENGE

This past month we focused on the discipline of study. We practiced studying the Bible by using the tools of observation, interpretation, and application.

The challenge this week is that you would make studying your Bible a lifelong practice. This spiritual discipline will look different for everyone, depending on your stage of life, your personality, and your gifting. But, the challenge is that as you read your Bible from here on out you would first seek to observe the text, interpret what it meant for the original hearers first and then for you, and always let the Word lead you to life change through application.