

Change Points!

Week Five – Persecution

Memory Verse: Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You're not in the driver's seat; I am. (Jesus – Mt. 16:24, The Message Translation)

Video introduction by Pastor Steve

Recap of week three "Change Points!" message:

- Persecution is hiding in plain sight.
- The church was born in persecution. (Acts 5:12-42; 6:8-8:1; 8:2-3; 12:1-19; 16:16-40; 17:1-9; 19:23-41; 21:21-36; 23:12-22)
- We proudly tell God's other churches about your endurance and faithfulness in all the persecutions and hardships you are suffering. (2 Thess. 1:4)
- In persecution believers learn to stay on the path of following Jesus.
- Our belief can cause persecution. Our behavior should not.
- And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way. (1 Peter 3:15)

Next Step:

- o Remember and pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ (Websites: Open Doors USA, Voice of the Martyrs)
- o Does my behavior invite persecution?

Questions to explore:

1. Think about conversations you've had with people about religious matters. What made the difference between the conversation ending well or the conversation ending poorly?
2. What was one of the most helpful conversations someone had with you about spiritual matters? What made it helpful to you?
3. Has there ever been a time when you felt put down, left out or attacked because of your Christian beliefs? What was it like, how did it end, and what did learn from that experience?
4. One of the questions about Christians being persecuted is the question of justice – Will God judge those persecuting believers? Read Revelation 6:9-11. How do these verses answer that question? What do you still wonder about?

Challenge question:

- "Our belief can cause persecution. Our behavior should not." Talk about what that looks like in our culture today – specific biblical beliefs that cause persecution, as well as behavior by Christians that is neither gentle nor respectful that invites persecution. (See 1 Peter 3:15)
- How can the intersection of faith and politics make conversations more challenging?