**1. Motivate**

When have you had to prepare for something you knew would be difficult?

* make a speech or presentation
* take final exams

A video introduction to the lesson is available. View it at <https://watch.liberty.edu/media/t/1_xsll495g> If you have no wi-fi where you teach, best to download to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/59nnvdnf>

* facing chemo or radiation
* facing an operation
* months of therapy
* leaving home for the first time
* taking care of a new baby
* sending a child off to school (kindergarten or college)
* confront someone about a problem
* hosting a dinner party for your husband’s boss
* doing taxes

**2. Transition**

Sometimes our difficulty can be mistreatment by others around us.

* Living like Jesus means being treated as He was.

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 Opposition from the World

Listen for why you can be hated.

John 15:18-21 (NIV) "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. 19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. 20 Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. 21 They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.

Why could the disciples expect to be rejected by the world?

* the world hates you
* it hated Jesus first
* you don’t belong to the world, Jesus chose you *out* of the world
* because of Jesus’ name
* they don’t know God the Father … the One who sent Jesus

What words and phrases in these verses emphasize that true followers of Jesus will not live according to the standards of the world?

* you don’t belong to the world
* we have been chosen out of the world
* you are obeying Jesus’ teaching, they are not

If you were one of Jesus’ twelve disciples, how would you have responded to His warning about the world’s hatred?

* puzzled – Jesus has done good things, why do people hate that?
* apprehensive
* discouraged
* forewarned is forearmed
* now understand why the religious leaders hated Jesus

What is it about Jesus that many people find objectionable?

* claims to be the *only* way
* requires/demands obedience
* cannot believe he was dead, then arose from death
* claim he was “only a good teacher”
* was only a martyr
* Jesus’ standards require a life that is dull, boring, restricted

How does the world (in Western culture) today hate the followers of Jesus?

* in our country they put us down in the media and in certain political circles
* entertainment industry makes fun of Christians
* we are called “fundies” and “Bible thumping maniacs”
* intellectuals and humanists disregard scriptural principles
* gay rights openly oppose Christian values
* world accuses some teachings of scripture as “hate speech”

How about foreign cultures … how do they hate the followers of Jesus?

* make laws against Christianity
* totally cut themselves off from family members who accept Christ
* physically attack, even kill Christians
* declare war on other nations who consider themselves Christian
* boycott the business of a new believer
* deny them jobs or advancements in the jobs they do hold
* their government gives them unfavorable treatment in the courts

3.2 The World Rejects Jesus’ Truth

Listen for the response to Jesus’ Truth.

John 15:22-25 (NIV) If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. 23 He who hates me hates my Father as well. 24 If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. 25 But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'

What effect did Jesus’ coming have on those of the world who opposed Him?

* they don’t like feeling guilty of sin
* they hated God to start with, they hate His Son also
* they hated Jesus’ teachings
* they didn’t like it when He did miracles – especially on the Sabbath
* they didn’t like it when Jesus’ parables obviously pointed to them in a negative matter

Why did they no longer have an excuse for their sin?

* Jesus’ miracles proved His authority, proved his claims and teaching
* Jesus had specifically condemned them of their sinful actions and attitudes

Why does the person who hates Jesus also hate God?

* God the Father and God the Son are united
* they are two of the three manifestations of God
* they act in one accord

Note how those who knew the law contributed to the fulfillment of the law, albeit in a negative sense.

* Jesus referred to quotes from the Psalms – they would have known these passages
* Psalm 35:19 (NIV) *Let not those gloat over me who are my enemies without cause; let not those who hate me without reason maliciously wink the eye.*
* Psalm 69:4 (NIV) *Those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head; many are my enemies without cause, those who seek to destroy me. I am forced to restore what I did not steal.*

What are some biblical truths that people just don’t want to hear?

* we are all sinners
* there is none righteous, no not one
* homosexual behavior is sinful
* substance abuse is harmful to the body and to the soul
* marriage is the union of one man and one woman, for life
* God is in charge, He is sovereign – God does as God pleases to do
* He is the Creator of all that is

How is it both encouraging and discouraging to hear the warning Jesus gives here?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Discouraging | Encouraging |
| * I don’t like this kind of trouble * it’s not fair to be hated this way * we don’t deserve this kind of treatment * why do the laws protect or favor the unbeliever? * those people are the one that are in the wrong, not me | * it has nothing to do with me, personally * it is because of who Jesus is (who lives within me) * they hated Jesus too … doesn’t seem too bad to be placed in the same category |

3.3 Help for A Steadfast Faith

Listen for how Jesus is preparing the disciples.

John 16:1-4a (NIV) 1 "All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. 2 They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. 3 They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. 4 I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you.

Why was Jesus warning His disciples of what was to come?

* didn’t want them to be blindsided
* didn’t want them to give up and go astray
* forewarned is forearmed
* He knows the end from the beginning
* reassured of His presence and power
* following Christ will be a life of separation from popular beliefs and attitudes

What reasons might opponents of Jesus give to justify their actions (both then and now)?

* they say Christians proclaim “hate speech”
* accuse fundamentalists of being too narrow minded
* claim the Bible is just a bunch of myths
* claim there are too many hypocrites in the church – they need to be set straight

What specific threats did Jesus identify?

* kicked out of the synagogue – which would be *much* worse than a Baptist being “decasseroled” – we could just go to a different church
* could face physical harm, even death
* opposition will at times mean great loss

Jesus speaks about going “astray”. Other versions use the word “stumble”. What do you think it means to “stumble” in one’s faith or “go astray”?

* become confused, disillusioned
* we might apply the term “backslide”
* certainly discouragement, even depression could occur
* people might declare they are angry with God

What are some ways we can prepare for persecution?

* daily communication with the Lord
* trusting Him in all situations
* be assured that God is with you
* you are indwelt by God’s Holy Spirit – He is omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient
* remember that God is in charge

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

Application

Thank.

* Thank God for the freedom we have to worship Him.
* Thank Him that believers in our country have not experienced persecution like other believers around the world.

Pray.

* Pray for the Christians who are being persecuted around the world.

Partner.

* Partner with your small group to identify a missionary serving in a place of Christian persecution.
* As a group, make plans to support them financially. You can find help with this at imb.org.

Fix the Story

Several words in the Bible story below are incorrect. Some are a close spelling, others are simply the wrong word. All the correct words are listed alphabetically on the right. Cross out the incorrect words and write the correct words above them. Look up the story in 2nd Corinthians 11:23-27 if you need help. There might be some words in the list you don’t need.

Christians

clubs

hurricanes

many

new

night

persecution

prison

shooting

Silas

sleepless

stoning

suffering

the sea

three

whip

wrote

year

Paul rote to the Soldiers in Corinth and told of the bad food he endured as he shared the Gospel message. In his travels he experienced 47 times being shipwrecked, one time floating in coffee for a day and a month. He endured blissful nights, hunger, thirst, cold and exhaustion. He did all this so he could tell a few people about Jesus. Some people tried to kill him by stabbing him. Three times people beat him with baseball bats and once he received 39 lashes with a wet noodle. He spent time in jail with his friend Noah. At the end of his life, he was in a Roman restaurant, chained to a Roman soldier. During those days he wrote poems to the churches. We have those poems as part of the Old Testament today. Blizzards did not stop him, and as Jesus taught, it should not stop us either.

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Art by Racheal Coate