

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Helping the Persecuted

Last Letter - Week 3

ICEBREAKER: What's your strongest sense?

OVERVIEW: Helping the persecuted used to mean sending money overseas. But today, persecution against Christians is a reality in the United States of America. And it's very possible that persecution can happen to someone in our church. In this discussion we will go deeper in preparing ourselves to be fully supportive when a fellow church member is facing persecution.

1. What insight, principle, or observation from this weekend's message did you find to be the most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling? Explain. (Or what was your key takeaway from Sunday's message?)
2. Read 1 Peter 4:12-19?
 - a. Verse 12 tells us that we shouldn't be surprised when someone is persecuted. Why? How can this idea equip you to help the persecuted?
 - b. Verse 12 also says that persecution is a test. How so? Do you think that helping the persecuted can help them pass the test? Explain.
 - c. Verse 13 instructs us to rejoice when we are persecuted. Why? How can you use this verse to encourage the persecuted?
 - d. What does verse 14 mean when it says that those who are persecuted are blessed? How can you help the persecuted see their suffering as a blessing?
 - e. How can you use verse 19 to give wise counsel to someone who is being persecuted?

3. In the sermon it was stated that persecution in the United States is becoming a reality that our church may soon have to face. What are some ways that persecution could possibly touch the lives of people in our church family?
4. Recall the story of Aaron and Melissa Klein. The state of Oregon told them, "Either disobey your God by baking a cake for a gay wedding, or pay a fine of \$135,000." Why is the state wrong in this case? How could you have supported the Kleins if they were in our church?
5. What are some of the wrong ways to respond when a church member is persecuted?
6. Persecution is getting more and more severe, both in the United States and around the world. One way that we can be more supportive of persecuted Christians is by becoming vocal and active advocates for religious liberty. After all, persecution almost always occurs where a government suppresses Christianity, or where it does not adequately protect Christians from being persecuted by their neighbors. What do you need to do to get in the fight for religious liberty?
7. Do you think you should do more to support persecuted Christians in the United States and abroad? Explain.
8. Take some time as a group to pray for persecuted Christians around the world today, and ask God to prepare us to be a supportive church, especially when someone in our own church is the victim.

The Last Word: Jesus said that when you help a persecuted Christian, you are helping Him. And He promises great blessings and rewards for doing so.