

## WORSHIP

### SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS:

Because of Your Love, Everlasting God, Mighty Warrior, Blessed Assurance

## WELCOME

**Blessed Hope.** Do you feel hopeless at times? Briefly share how you deal with hopelessness.

## WORD

### MATTHEW 5:10

<sup>10</sup>*Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

When the world is in great trouble, we should not lose hope. In fact, when we lose hope, the world will be in even greater trouble. A person may live without food or water for a few days, or without air for few minutes but it is impossible to live without hope.

Hope and faith co-exist. Faith gives a Christian the hope that the best is yet to come. When persecuted because of our faith, we are not to retaliate. Instead, we are to be hopeful in Jesus for our fate. Ever since Christianity existed, there have been those who are persecuted for their faith. Even today, Christians across history have been burned, stoned to death, and massacred, for their faith. But these are not the only ways that Christians are being persecuted.

How else are Christians persecuted (**Luke 6:22-23; John 15:19; Matthew 5:11**)? We are being persecuted when people hate us, separate themselves from us, reproach us, cast out our name as evil, and falsely say all manners of evil against us.

But in the midst of such persecutions here are some principles to remain hopeful.

### HEIRS OF THE KINGDOM WILL BE ATTACKED (MATTHEW 5:10)

We are heirs of the kingdom of God through the righteousness of Christ. We are under attack because His righteousness is not only higher but is also a counter-flow to the standards of the world.

The righteousness of the world is based on performance, but the righteousness of Christ is grounded on faith (**Romans 10:1-6**). All religions teach that salvation is earned by good works, but the Bible says Jesus has fully paid our debt. If we believe this in our heart and confess it with our mouth, then we will be saved (**Romans 10:8-10**). If people will

know that this is what and how we believe in, then we are surely inviting persecution. The world finds it hard to believe that good works does not save. If we are doing good to earn God's favor, then we are doing it wrong. Salvation is by God's grace alone (**Romans 11:6**). If we do not understand this, we will fall into self-righteousness, judging others based on our own standards.

People who will persecute us are not only unbelievers but even professing Christians who are self-righteous, who abuse grace and are carefree, and those who are not walking in the Spirit.

If you are persecuted, remember that it is better to suffer for doing God's will than to suffer for doing evil (**1 Peter 3:17**).

### OPPOSITION IS EXPECTED IN JESUS' NAME (MATTHEW 5:11)

It should not come as a surprise to us if people persecute us. It was Jesus who was first persecuted (**John 15:18-19**). More so, as they persecute us, they are actually persecuting Jesus.

The early Christians rejoiced when they suffer shame in Jesus' name (**Acts 5:40-41**). They were one heart with Him and never stopped preaching (**Acts 5:42; Matthew 10:23**).

People may call us by disgusting names, but when we are walking in the Lord to please Him, it won't matter anymore. If God is for us who can be against us (**Romans 8:31**)?

The truth is, our struggle is not against our persecutors but against the spirit of darkness (**Ephesians 6:12**). So we fight the battle on our knees in prayer, with the Holy Spirit.

## WORD (cont'd)

Focus on God, stand firm and be strong in our faith (**1 Peter 5:9**). Never payback evil with evil (**Romans 12:17–19**) but thank God for the privilege of being called by His name (**1 Peter 4:16**).

### PRAISE AND CELEBRATE (MATTHEW 5:12)

When we are persecuted we rejoice for we are counted as one of the men and women of faith like those in **Hebrews 11**. Being persecuted or insulted for Christ is worthy of honor (**Hebrews 11:36–38**). The blessings of God are not only material things.

If you suffer for doing what is right in the Lord, God will reward you (**1 Peter 3:14–15**). Overcome evil with good (**Romans 12:21**). Jesus commanded us to love our enemies and to do good to those who hate us; pray and bless them instead (**Luke 6:27b–29a**).

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

*(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)*

1. **Persecuted but Blessed.** How are the persecuted blessed according to **Matthew 5:10**?
2. **I Was Persecuted.** What was the most difficult persecution you had ever experienced? How did you overcome it?
3. **Fight, Flight or Faith.** In what specific ways will you respond during times of persecution and/or suffering for doing what is right for the Lord?

## WORKS

### PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

*Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*  
– *Matthew 5:10*

Identify one person who is presently persecuting you. Pray for the person and for an opportunity wherein you can show the love of Christ to this person. Seize the moment to share in words and in actions what makes you not retaliate but instead remain joyful and hopeful in the Lord knowing that the best is yet to come.

Learn to rejoice and celebrate when we are being tested with people opposing us.

### EXPECT A GREAT REWARD (MATTHEW 5:12)

It takes faith to believe in our rewards from the Lord. Our faith will really be tempted until the day of the Lord comes (**1 Peter 1:7**). It is the day we will receive crowns with praise and glory from the Lord: The Imperishable Crown (**1 Corinthians 9:24–25**); The Crown of Rejoicing (**1 Thessalonians 2:19**); The Crown of Righteousness (**2 Timothy 4:8**); The Crown of Glory (**1 Peter 5:4**); and The Crown of Life (**Revelation 2:10**).

Receiving the crowns is halfway of the fullness of joy. The privilege of presenting our crowns at the feet of our Lord is the completeness of our joy in the Lord.

### WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

#### I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

#### II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of Public Servants and a God-centered Philippines
- Repentance and Salvation

#### III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

#### IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

#### V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends