

### **Icebreaker**

Do you have a pretty good life? Do you generally enjoy life as a Christian? If not, why? What part of your life is most enjoyable relative to your faith?

**Opening Prayer** – Please read the prayer or open the session with your own.

Great God, loving Father, gracious and holy Creator of the universe, we come before you as simple people who experience persecution, often for no tangible reason or explanation. We act righteous, but perhaps we're being self-righteous. Forgive us, remove our pride, separate us from our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Please be a part of our discussion now. Amen.

### **Open It**

1. Have you ever witnessed significant suffering firsthand? Give us one observation you made of suffering for the faith.
2. Who or what part of the world suffers most today? Describe the situation.
3. Do these people suffer for their faith? If so, what is their faith? How is it practiced?
4. Do you believe God wants us to suffer for our faith? If so, why or why not?

### **Explore It**

1. From where does your knowledge or attitude about suffering for the faith come: A) people, B) the Bible, C) the news, or D) somewhere else? Explain
2. Do you think we're living in the end times, and what does the idea have to do with suffering?  
A) nothing B) something C) everything, Explain
3. Are you ashamed that you don't personally suffer more for your faith in Jesus Christ? Does this lack of suffering for the faith indicate anything to you? If so, what?
4. Trials often lead to a better understanding of perseverance. Are there other reasons for suffering for the faith, in your opinion? What might they be? Explain

2 Thes. 1:3-12 NKJV, Paul warns people not to give up; God's time has not yet come.

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, [4] so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, [5] which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; [6] since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, [7] and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, [8] in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. [9] These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, [10] when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed. [11] Therefore we also always pray for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, [12] that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Get It

1. What kinds of suffering or acts of persecution v4 or confusion was the Thessalonians church going through at this time? Acts 17:1-9; I Thes 4:4-7 & I Thes 4:13-18
2. Do you see similar acts of persecution, confusion, and misunderstanding occurring today? Where, to who? Please describe.
3. When God calls us to a life of obedience, it can often be a difficult road, yet God's grace is a free gift; we can do nothing to earn it. Doing nothing to receive God's grace seems easy; however, in v5, it says that we suffer so "that you (we) may be counted worthy of the kingdom." Isn't this a bit of a contradiction? What do you think? Rom 5:8, Rom 11:5, Eph 2:5, Eph 2:8
4. In 2 Thes 1:12, it says, "in order for the name of our Lord Jesus to be glorified." What does it mean that the name of Jesus is glorified? Is that something we do, or is it all God? Phil 2:9-11

### Apply It

In this lesson, we wrestle with suffering in the name of Jesus Christ. Is your witness overt enough so that it leads to suffering for the sake of Christ? I don't think I have suffered much for the sake of Christ. Maybe there is something else we can learn from this. It seems the insight we should gain from this section of scripture is that Paul pumped up those that were steadfast in the faith and willing to go through trials and difficulties as long as Christ was glorified. Can you/we find someone in our acquaintance that suffers for Christ, and can you encourage them in the coming week?

Do you plan to modify any behavior this next week due to what you have learned? If not, why not? If you didn't learn anything, why was that?

### The Master's Touch

Once, in a hotel in Switzerland, a mother was staying with her little girl for a few weeks. The little girl was learning to play the piano. Mom didn't want her to get out of practice while away from home. So, every afternoon the little girl settled herself down at the giant piano in the large hotel lobby and began to play---if it could be called that. Unfortunately, it was a daily half-hour torture for the piano's keys. The other guests in the hotel were too polite to complain about the idea. Still, whenever the hour of musical cruelty approached, the hotel lobby would grow mysteriously empty and quiet as the other guests fled to the peace of their rooms.

One afternoon, several weeks after the little girl's arrival, the usual concert had begun, but to the great surprise of the guests, what floated up to them was some of the most beautiful music they had ever heard. They were amazed, unable to conceive how this monotonous thumping on the piano was unexpectedly transformed into beautiful music. Slowly they wound their way back to the lobby. There they saw the answer to their questions. Seated at the piano, as usual, was the little girl, but standing behind her was the great pianist, Joseph Hofmann. Reaching over top of her, he would improvise on the tune that the little girl herself had played lightly just before him. The concert continued for some time, and then the lobby rang with spontaneous applause.

In great humility, Joseph Hofmann bowed and said, "It is this little lady you must thank for any pleasure you have derived from this music." The little girl stood beaming with pride. It was her music that sounded so beautiful when the touch of the master was added. It was just what was needed to transform her thumping into the most beautiful music!

### Closing Prayer – ask for praise reports or items needing Prayer

Grab the next person's hand and allow each person who wishes to do so to say a short prayer.