

# STUDY GUIDE

## BE: Week 9 11.30.14

### [set up]

Ask your LifeGroup members to share a story about a time when they were applauded by those outside the faith because of being a Christ-follower.

Ask your LifeGroup members to share a story about a time when they were ridiculed, mocked, rejected, slandered, or ostracized by those outside the faith because of being a Christ-follower.

Read Matthew 5:3-12. Discuss why it's tempting for us in the Western world to think that living out the first 7 Beatitudes will result in peace, prosperity, and popularity. Then discuss why Jesus indicates that living out the first 7 Beatitudes will result in persecution.

As the LifeGroup leader, share an example of a time when you played it safe and did not go public or did not give a verbal witness about Jesus. Talk about your own struggles with being complacent, lukewarm, and worldly. After sharing, pray for yourself and your time together as a LifeGroup that all of you would experience a transformation because of your time together.

### [digging deeper]

Re-read Matthew 5:10-11. Discuss examples of when Christian friends claimed to have been persecuted for righteousness' sake but had really experienced self-inflicted wounds or suffered for self-righteousness' sake.

What does suffering persecution "for righteousness' sake" and "on account of Christ" actually look like?

Temporarily turn your LifeGroup into 4 groups. Assign one group Matthew 10:16-25. Assign the 2nd group Matthew 10:26-39. Assign the 3rd group I Peter 4:12-19. Ask the groups to take 5 minutes to read and examine their assigned passage. Ask a person in each group to write down a list of 1) the kind of persecution Christ-followers can expect and 2) the proper attitude and response believers should have as a result of persecution. Come back together as a LifeGroup and share your discoveries.

Re-read Matthew 5:12. Discuss how suffering persecution results in reward and in rejoicing. (See Hebrews 12:1-2 for insights.)

Read Romans 1:16. Ask your LifeGroup, "How are you most tempted to be ashamed of the gospel?"

- A) I want to blend in
- B) I want to be liked by everyone
- C) I rarely stand up against injustice and oppression
- D) I too often make affluence and personal peace most important
- E) I am too lukewarm and worldly
- F) I prefer to be a "stay-in-the-closet" Christian
- G) Other...

Note that the truth of Matthew 5:10 is followed by the challenge of Matthew 5:16. Discuss some practical ways that you can let your light shine more and more at home, at school, in your neighborhood, and at work.



## [living it out]

Read Hebrews 13:3. As a LifeGroup leader, before your meeting, go to the Voice of the Martyrs website [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com) or to the Open Doors website [www.opendoorsusa.org](http://www.opendoorsusa.org) and find one story about someone in our world who is currently suffering persecution. Print out the story and share the basics with your group. Ask, “How does this story impact you?” Ask someone in the group to pray for our persecuted brother or sister.

Read the following quote aloud: “This world is not your home. If you or I ever hope to free our lives from worldly desires, worldly thinking, worldly pleasures, worldly dreams, worldly ideals, worldly values, worldly ambitions, worldly acclaim, then we must focus our lives on another world... We must fix our eyes on ‘a better country – a heavenly one’ [Hebrews 11:16]. If your life or my life is going to count on earth, we must start by concentrating on heaven. For then, and only then, will you and I be free to take radical risk, knowing that what awaits us is radical reward” (David Platt, *Radical*, p. 179). As a group, brainstorm some specific daily habits that can help you concentrate less and less on the comforts of this life and more and more on the reward of heaven.

Lead your LifeGroup in silent prayer. 1) Lead them to praise Jesus for not playing it safe so they could be saved. 2) Lead them to ask for forgiveness for those times they have played it safe. 3) Lead them to ask the Lord to show them something He wants them to do for Him.

As you close, ask members of your LifeGroup to share what the risky/radical/revolutionary/sacrificial thing was that He asked them to do. Write down what the members of your group say and let them know you will be making this a matter of prayer for them.