



5 DAY DEVOTIONAL

Day 1: Called Out of Darkness

Reading: 1 Peter 2:9-12

You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people. God has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light not for comfort, but for purpose. Being set apart means looking different to a world that opposes Christ. Your peculiarity is not a burden but a badge of honor. When the world questions your choices, celebrates what they condemn, or loves what they hate, remember you represent another kingdom. Today, reflect on areas where you've compromised to fit in. Ask God to give you courage to embrace your identity as His ambassador. Your distinctiveness is your testimony. Live today as one who belongs to heaven, not earth.

Day 2: Abiding Through Opposition

Reading: John 15:18-25

Jesus didn't sugarcoat the reality: the world will hate you because it hated Him first. This hatred isn't about you personally; it's about whose name you bear. Abiding in Christ means remaining connected to Him even when that connection costs you friendships, opportunities, or comfort. The vine doesn't promise ease; it promises life. When you face rejection for your faith, remember you're entering the eternal conflict Jesus warned about. This opposition confirms you're aligned with Him. Don't seek persecution, but don't be surprised when it finds you. Today, examine your life: does your faith attract any friction? If not, are you truly abiding, or just associated?

Day 3: The Spirit's Empowerment

Reading: Matthew 10:16-20; Acts 2:1-4

Before Pentecost, the disciples were fearful and scattered. After the Spirit came, they became unstoppable witnesses. The same Spirit who transformed cowards into martyrs lives in you. When persecution comes, you won't stand in your own strength but in His power. The Spirit gives you words when you're questioned, courage when you're threatened, and joy when you're suffering. Relying on the Spirit isn't passive; it's actively surrendering control and trusting His guidance. The disciples couldn't stand firm until they were filled. Neither can you. Today, invite the Holy Spirit to search your heart.

Confess areas where you've relied on yourself. Ask Him to fill you afresh for whatever witness He calls you to bear.

Day 4: Standing Firm on Truth

Reading: Ephesians 6:10-18

Your battle isn't against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces of darkness. God has given you armor for defense and one offensive weapon: the sword of truth, His Word. Yet many Christians dull this sword, softening truth to avoid offense or conflict. When you compromise doctrine for acceptance, you disarm yourself before the real enemy. Standing firm means refusing to back down when culture contradicts Scripture. It means speaking truth even when your voice shakes. The sword isn't meant to attack people but to cut through deception. Today, identify one area where you've been silent about truth. Ask God for boldness to speak His Word without apology. Remember, the battle is His, but you must stand.

Day 5: No Turning Back

Reading: Hebrews 12:1-3; Philippians 1:27-30

"I have decided to follow Jesus; no turning back." These aren't just lyrics but a declaration of total commitment. Following a crucified Savior means expecting a cross. Yet we fix our eyes on Jesus, who endured the cross for the joy set before Him. Your suffering isn't meaningless; it spreads the gospel, builds faith, and refines your holiness. Persecution is paradoxically a gift, proving your discipleship and preparing you for glory. Today, consider what following Jesus might cost you: reputation, relationships, comfort, or even life itself. Are you willing? Don't pray for persecution, but prepare your heart for it. Remember those dying for Christ worldwide. Let their faithfulness inspire yours. The cross is before you; the world is behind you. Will you turn back?

As you complete this devotional, remember: people don't die for lies. The global church's willingness to suffer proves the reality of Christ. May their courage strengthen your resolve to stand firm, abide deeply, and follow faithfully—no matter the cost.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The Cost of Discipleship (John 15:18-25)

1. How would you respond if faced with the choice between denying Christ and losing your life or the lives of your loved ones?
2. In what ways have you experienced subtle forms of persecution or social pressure for your faith, and how did you respond?
3. Why do you think American Christians are largely insulated from the kind of persecution faced by believers in other parts of the world, and what responsibility does that bring?
4. What is the difference between being persecuted for righteousness and simply being offensive or combative in how we share our faith?
5. How does the reality that 380 million Christians face daily persecution worldwide challenge your perspective on what it means to follow Jesus?
6. Are there areas in your life where you have compromised biblical truth to maintain respectability or avoid conflict with the world?
7. How can suffering and persecution actually be a grace from God rather than just a hardship to endure?
8. What does it mean to be a peculiar people set apart for God in a culture that values tolerance and conformity above all else?
9. How can the Holy Spirit empower us to stand firm in truth when facing opposition, and what does relying on the Spirit practically look like?
10. If persecution came to your community tomorrow, would your faith be strong enough to withstand it, or have you been abiding in name only?



SMALL GROUP GUIDE

The Cost of Discipleship (John 15:18-25)

Key Takeaways:

1. Persecution is normal, not abnormal, for Christians. Jesus promised it would come.
2. American Christianity has been insulated from persecution by God's grace, but that may be changing.
3. Real persecution is happening daily to millions of believers worldwide while we worry about comfort and preferences.
4. Persecution serves Kingdom purposes: it confirms discipleship, spreads the gospel, builds faith, and sets believers apart from the world.
5. Our response must be to rely on the Holy Spirit, stand firm on the truth, and remember that Jesus warned us.
6. We cannot love both the world and God. Trying to have both leads to compromised faith.

Discussion Questions:

1. What stood out most to you from the sermon? What made you uncomfortable? Why?
2. How would you define persecution? What's the difference between persecution and simply experiencing consequences for being unkind or unwise?
3. Pastor Josh stated that 380 million Christians face daily persecution worldwide. How does this reality challenge your perspective on what it means to follow Christ?
4. Read John 15:18-21. Why does the world hate Jesus? Why does it hate His followers? How does understanding this change how we view opposition?
5. "If you are living boldly for Christ and standing on truth, you will be a magnet for persecution." Is this true in your life? Why or why not?
6. Pastor Josh asked: "Are you Christian in name or are you abiding in the vine?" How would you honestly answer this question? What's the evidence in your life?
7. "Christians who think they can live openly, faithfully, fruitfully for Jesus, yet enjoy all the favor of the world are deceiving themselves." Do you agree or disagree? Where might you be trying to have both?
8. Have you ever compromised biblical truth to maintain respectability or avoid conflict? Share if you're comfortable. What was at stake?
9. "We're notorious about forgetting what we should remember and remembering what we should forget." What sins or failures do you need to forget (leave at the cross)? What truths about persecution do you need to remember?

10. The story of the Indian family who died rather than deny Christ was powerful. What does their example teach us? Could you imagine having that kind of faith?

Further Study:

1. Voice of the Martyrs (persecution.com) - Stories and prayer guides for persecuted Christians
2. Open Doors USA (opendoorsusa.org) - World Watch List of countries where persecution is worst
3. Book recommendation: Tortured for Christ by Richard Wurmbrand
4. Book recommendation: The Cost of Discipleship by Dietrich Bonhoeffer