



LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

2 DECEMBER

FLOURISHING: PERSECUTED

This study guide should be used the week following the sermon it supplements.

MAIN TEXT: *Matthew 5:10-12 and 43-48*

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

COMING UP

Morning Prayer: 4th, 11th, 18th Dec, 7.30am

Christmas Family Service: 9th Dec

Carol Service: 16th Dec

Christmas Service: 23rd Dec

New Year Celebration: 30th Dec

***B.L.E.S.S. means:** Begin with Prayer, Listen with care Eat together, Serve with love, Share Jesus Stories. For more info see westminsterchapel.org.uk/bless.

GETTING STARTED

We want to develop and strengthen a healthy culture of encouragement at Chapel, so each week we'll start our LG's by sharing something we want to thank God for: an encouraging thing He's doing in our lives, or in the lives of others. What ways have you been able to B.L.E.S.S.* those around you in recent weeks?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. How does Jesus define persecution here?
2. In what ways can we become squeezed into the world's mould (it's anti-beatitudes) and less likely to attract persecution?
3. Why should we expect persecution, if we live out the beatitudes in the power of the Holy Spirit? See also 2 Timothy 3:12 and John 3:19-21.
4. Has the (beatitude) light of God in you, ever resulted in persecution, however small?
5. What rewards does Jesus describe to enable us to flourish, to thrive, not just survive, even when we are persecuted (and to reduce our fear of persecution)? *Hint:* (1) joyful assurance, verse 12, "so they persecuted the prophets" - persecution is proving your faith true; (2) greater intimacy, verse 11, "on account of me", see also Philippians 3:10; (3) triumphant hope, verse 10, "theirs is the kingdom of heaven".
6. How can persecution be an opportunity to get the world's attention? What counter-cultural things should we do when we are persecuted?
7. How can Jesus' example, courageously overcoming persecution, empower us to stand firm in our faith rather than fearfully compromise?
8. When have you been tempted to stay silent/compromise? How might you behave differently now, even if that means being criticised, insulted or excluded?

NEXT STEPS AND PRAYER

One of the ways we can put this into practice is by facing the possible negative repercussions of inviting people we know to the upcoming Christmas events at Chapel.

Every year a significant number of people come to these events, suggesting it might actually be easier to invite people than we think. Every year people are powerfully impacted, and some come to faith, or come back to faith and are added to the church. Who will you invite? How will you invite them? How can you pray for and encourage one another in this?