

Series: When God Get's Personal with my Flaws

## **A Fresh Start: Where Do I Go From Here?**

Dr. Les Hughes

August 16, 2009 (#4 of Series)

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:10

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

### **Group Session**

#### **Opening Question**

Have you ever been ridiculed for being a Christian or taking a stand based on your beliefs? Tell about that time.

#### **Discussing the Scripture & Life**

1. Les said that one of the reasons people persecute us is that our righteousness may convict them as they compare their lives to ours. What ways can we minimize the resentment someone may feel toward us?
2. The bottom line of the sermon is this: "The changes God makes in my life can be permanent, but they aren't automatic, and they will have consequences." When we signed on to being a disciple, did we realize that there would be negative consequences to following Christ? Other than being ridiculed, what other negatives have you experienced in the Christian life?
3. Read the following passage from Matthew 13:44-45. Do you see any application here to persecution? (Being part of the kingdom is worth trading everything else for.)  
  
<sup>44</sup>"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.  
<sup>45</sup>"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. <sup>46</sup>When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.
4. Suffering in the following forms of persecution are happening all around the world, but seldom in our country. Pause and thank God for our freedom, but chose a country in which you are familiar with persecution and pray for believers there.

Pray for those who are:    Ostracized by family  
   Imprisoned  
   Suffer physical abuse  
   Murdered (pray for families)

Also pray for believers who have willingly chosen to live in these countries, whether as official or unofficial missionaries, to make an impact for the kingdom.

5. Below are some suggestions on responding to persecution. Which do you think would be most helpful to you?

- \* Don't be surprised.
- \* Find a way to rejoice.
- \* Keep suffering in perspective.
- \* Show compassion to others.

6. Read these verses. Which of these help you keep suffering or persecution in perspective?

*Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.*

*1 Peter 4:12*

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.*

*Romans 12:14*

*But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.*

*1 Peter 4:13*

*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*

*Romans 8:18*

*I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains.*

*Philemon 10*

*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*

*Matt. 5:7*

*"Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, for the Lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being snared."*

*Prov. 3:25–26*

### **Closing Challenge**

Here are some suggestions for taking the next step and making these truths personal. Choose one of these to focus on in the following week.

Stay informed

Speak up

Earn respect with your life

Don't attack other followers of Christ

Become a Christian revolutionary.

Reserve a daily time with God for self-examination

Yield myself to be used by God to bring this good news to others.

Ask God for spiritual vision to see behind the visible.

Memorize Matthew 5:10