

KICKOFF!

WEEK 3 — PERSECUTION

OCTOBER 18, 2026

Main Point:

Jesus takes our suffering, persecution, and pain, and uses it for our good.

This Week's Message:

After Stephen was stoned, the Church was persecuted. But God used this persecution for good, as believers scattered in all directions, and continued to tell others about Jesus.

Scripture:

Acts 5:12-42; Acts 6:1-15; Acts 7:1-60; Acts 8:1; Romans 5:3-4

This Month's Memory Verse:

*"I give you a new command. Love one another. You must love one another, just as I have loved you. If you love one another, everyone will know you are my disciples."
John 13:34-35 (NirV)*

Provided Videos: See www.glendalechristian.org/summitvolunteerresources

- Game Video
- Bible Story Video
- Review Quiz Video
- Worship Video: Kids
- Worship Video: Runnin
- Worship Video: Praise You Anywhere

Suggested Order of Service:

1. Game Video – 3 Min
2. Icebreaker Activity – 5 Min
3. Message – 25 Min Total
 - a. Lesson – 15 Min
 - b. Bible Story Video – 2 Min
 - c. Discussion Time – 5 Min
 - d. Review Quiz Video – 3 Min
4. Memory Verse Activity – 10 min
5. As time allows:
 - a. Work on Take-Home Page
 - b. Worship Videos

GAME VIDEO:

Pumpkin Gunk

ICEBREAKER ACTIVITY

Island Getaway

Tell them they have 10 minutes to pack their top 5 items into a bag and go to live on an island for a week. What are they going to bring? Give them a few moments to think, and then have them share their items with 3 different people.

LESSON:

Main Point:

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Scripture:

Acts 5:12-42, Acts 6:1-15, Acts 7:1-60, Acts 8:1; Romans 5:3-4

Introduction

Have you ever picked up a dandelion and blown into it? I bet a few of you have done it...What happens? The white stuff goes everywhere! Now, you might think that you're hurting the poor dandelion when you blow on it, but do you know what is actually happening? You're spreading its seeds! The little white thingies go everywhere, they fall on the ground, they get planted, and guess what starts popping up around them...more dandelions!

At first glance, it looks like you are "breaking" or "hurting" the dandelion, but you're actually helping it live, spread and grow.

Play Bible Story Video Here

Transition

Today we're going to talk about a story that happened a couple thousands of years ago right in the beginning of "The Church." Last week we talked about how the church was this place that was growing like crazy. They were a community that took care of one another, took care of strangers, and introduced this new way of living. Some call it being nice, some could describe it as generous, but to put it simply, it was a group of good people doing really good stuff.

But some other people didn't like that. So they tried to stop them.

However, just like blowing on a dandelion, all they did was spread the seeds.

Healing and Growing

As the early church grew, the followers of Jesus were doing amazing things. They were healing people left and right. It was so incredible, that it started going viral. People heard the news and started bringing sick people out into the streets, laying them on mats, just hoping that one of the leaders, Peter, would walk by them. They thought, maybe even his shadow would help us! How crazy is that? Then the news started spreading to the other towns, and crowds began to flock, and lots of people were being healed. Jesus' kingdom was spreading, and spreading fast...and everyone lived happily ever after...wait...no....

The Jealous Bullies

The religious leaders of the day saw what was happening and wanted to put a stop to it. They were simply jealous. They were losing control and influence within the community, and they didn't like that. So they came up with a great idea! Let's arrest these guys! So they put them in cuffs and threw them in jail. But if these guys were performing miracles, do you think they could be stopped?

Nope. Jesus sent an angel to break them out without even messing up the lock. These guys just went back and started doing the same awesome things they had been doing before. Can you imagine what the leaders thought when they showed up with their breakfast burrito the next morning and saw an empty jail? They were furious!

Stephen Stands Up

So the church was growing and growing. Kind of like an ice cream shop that goes from selling 10 cones a day to 10,000 cones a day. What do you have to do? Get some help!

So they did, and a guy named Stephen entered the picture. This guy was all about Jesus. Stephen performed a lot of miracles to help others. And of course, this made the leaders even more jealous. So if throwing the guys in jail didn't work, what else could you do? How could you turn up the heat?

Where is the last place you want to get called to in the middle of the school day?

That's right, the principals office...well...something like the principals office, but with an even scarier name, the Sanhedrin!

The Sanhedrin was a group of the most important Jewish leaders. They brought Stephen in and started spreading lies about him and accusing him of doing some really bad things. But Stephen was on fire about Jesus. He really wanted to be like Jesus, and if you want to be like someone, what's the first thing you do?

You act like them! So Stephen stood up with boldness, told them the history of God's people, and pointed out how Israel's leaders always rejected what God said through His prophets, and how they had rejected Jesus!

When the leaders heard what Stephen had to say, they absolutely lost it. They plugged their ears and started yelling like toddlers!

Nanananana I can't hear you!

Then they dragged Stephen out of the city and began to throw stones at him. Can you believe that!? Stephen still acted like Jesus. Full of the Holy Spirit, and full of faith in Jesus, he *acted* like Jesus. He looked up to heaven, prayed for the people who were hurting him, and asked Jesus to forgive them. And then, Stephen died.

Scattered Seeds

Stephen wasn't the only one who was persecuted. Everyone say "persecuted."

Persecution means being treated terribly for your beliefs, especially when you haven't done anything wrong. It isn't fair, and it is definitely cruel. Sadly, persecution still happens today.

On the day that Stephen died, persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem. Members of the church were hunted down and thrown in jail. It was dangerous, and outside of the Apostles, the main church leaders, everyone else had to run for their lives.

Unstoppable

Remember that dandelion I talked to you about? You might think when you are blowing dandelions little white thingies all over the place you're ruining it...but what is actually happening?

You're spreading the seeds.

That's what happened to the church. The religious leaders thought they finally beat the church, but they did the exact opposite. They spread the seeds.

All of the sudden, these Christians had run away into towns that hadn't heard the news yet. They began sharing the story of Jesus with people, and building little communities like the one they had left when the persecution began! More and more churches started sprouting up all over the place.

The church spread, and spread, and here we are today – two thousand years later, on the other side of the world – still spreading the news about Jesus!

This story teaches us that the world's way of power, fear, and violence can never stop Jesus. When the church was persecuted, it seemed like the beautiful power of Jesus was snuffed out, but the exact opposite happened. Jesus used that terrible persecution to do something good.

Connect It

Sometimes the things that help us grow are the difficult struggles we face. Maybe you're on a sports team, and you had a really tough loss. You might have a really hard teacher, but then at the end of the year you look at how far your teacher pushed you and think, "Wow, they really helped me." You might have gone through struggles at home. Maybe you've met someone who was going through problems like the ones you were facing. You talked about it, and all of the sudden you thought, "Wow, I was able to be there for a friend because I understood what they were going through."

A Jesus-follower named Paul wrote this...

Romans 5:3-4 *...but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.*

Paul is telling us that when hard things happen, it doesn't mean we are losers, or failures, or not good enough. Paul is telling us that it is often the difficult times we find ourselves in that build us up.

Think about some of the stuff in your life that might not be going so perfectly. I want you to ask, "How can Jesus use this to help me grow?"

Jesus took the persecution of the early church, and used it to spread the faith like dandelion seeds. He's the expert at turning ugly situations into beautiful victories!

SIMPLE PRAYER

Dear God,

It's hard to imagine that you can take our struggles, or pains, our fears, and our failures and make something good out of it, but you have proven that you can and you will. Give us the strength to believe in that, and when we find ourselves in difficult situations, we can see that even then you are working in our lives.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If you could have any superpower to help you escape from trouble, what would it be?
2. Why did the religious leaders throw the apostles in jail?
3. Who was the brave man that stood up to the leaders and acted just like Jesus, even when they threw stones at him?
4. What happened to the believers after they had to run away from Jerusalem?
5. How do you think the believers felt when they had to pack up and scatter to new cities?
6. Why do you think Jesus' love is stronger than the people who try to stop it?
7. Even when things are hard, Jesus can use it for good. What is one way you can be brave and show Jesus' love at school this week?

REVIEW VIDEO

MEMORY VERSE CARD GAME ACTIVITY:

*"I give you a new command. Love one another. You must love one another, just as I have loved you. If you love one another, everyone will know you are my disciples."
John 13:34-35 (NirV)*

Printed cards are provided for the memory verse games. There are 3 stacks of cards - one is easier, one is harder, and one is words that are not in the verse to make it harder for kids as needed. See the Memory Verse Card Games Guide for a variety of games you can choose from to help your students memorize the verse in fun and interactive ways.