

## When the going gets tough. . .

### **Ready:**

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of Me. Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

-Matthew 5:10-12

### **Set**

How many of us today are aware of somebody who just doesn't like us? We all have people in our lives who try to put us down. As athletes, we encounter others who seek to break our confidence. Even more so, as Christians, we face individuals who do not understand our faith or our love for Christ and who, therefore, fear what they do not know.

Every day around the world, Christians are forced to meet in secret to study God's Word. Others are imprisoned for their faith. We in the U.S. are blessed to live in a free nation in which we can worship freely. Still, persecution can be found in our daily lives. Teammates may snicker when you pray before games. Friends may scoff when you tell them of a foreign child you're sponsoring through a Christian organization. Friendships that have lasted for years may be shattered when one friend becomes uncomfortable with your faith.

It would be very simple for us to avoid people who persecute or question our faith or to treat them as they treat us. However, we must keep God's Word in mind and remember what He can do in the lives of our persecutors and what He wants us to do for them, as well. Saul was one of the most tireless persecutors of the early Christians. As Stephen was stoned to death, the "witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. . .and Saul was there giving approval to his death" (Acts 7:58, Acts 8:1). We must remember that in Acts 9 Saul was converted by God's love and became Paul, a tireless worker for the sake of Christ. Imagine what God can do in the lives of your enemies!

We are not called to stand idly by while being persecuted. Inversely, we are not called to seek revenge. Instead, we are commanded to show the love of Christ through our actions. In Luke 6:29 Jesus tells us, "If someone strikes you on the cheek, turn to him the other also." It is not easy to love those who do not love us, but if we live our lives according to how Jesus instructs us, we will find it easier to navigate through life's difficulties. When the going gets tough, the tough show God's love.

### **Go**

1. Do you try to show God's love to others on a daily basis?
2. What can you do to better love your enemies?

### **Workout**

Matthew 5:10-12

Luke 6:27-31

Acts 7:54- 8:1

Acts 9

Romans 12:17-21

**Bible Reference:**

Romans 12



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