

Now What? - WEEK 4

LESSON OUTLINE // *Stand Strong*

BIG IDEA

Following Jesus isn't always easy,
but it's always worth it

BIBLE

Philippians 3:10

ABOUT THIS WEEK

The Bible tells us we'll face hardship for our faith—but it also tells us we can rejoice in it. In this message, we'll unpack what persecution looks like for students today (mockery, rejection, pressure to blend in), and how we can stand firm with courage, knowing Jesus suffered too. We'll also pray for believers around the world who are risking everything to follow Christ.

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

HOOK – More than I Expected...

- Have you ever thought something would be easy... until it wasn't?
 - Maybe you signed up for a sport thinking you had a guaranteed spot, only to discover the competition was way tougher than you expected.
 - Or maybe you offered to help with a school project, but it turned into hours of work you weren't prepared for.

Illustration – "Unexpected Tryouts"

- Imagine trying out for a team, totally confident... until you see someone twice your size who's also trying out. Suddenly, what seemed easy now feels intimidating.
- That's kind of how following Jesus can feel. You're in—you believe. But then, *real life happens*:
 - Your friends don't understand your faith.
 - People laugh at you for not partying or messing around like everyone else.
 - You feel alone because even though you may be surrounded by other people who call themselves Christian, very few of them may actually look like one.
- From the beginning, Christians have experienced pressure, pushback, and persecution. And while the way we experience it may be different than it was 2,000 years ago, the core challenge is still the same:
 - "Will I stand strong when it gets tough?"

SO WHAT? *Why does it matter to God and to us?*

- **It's normal to feel tension when living out your faith.**
 - If you've ever felt uncomfortable being bold for Jesus, you're not weak—you're human.
 - That tension is part of what it means to live differently.
 - Optional Illustration: Resistance Band
 - Hold up a **resistance band** (or describe it if you're teaching without props).
 - Say something like: "You've probably seen one of these before—it's a resistance band. Athletes and trainers use it to build strength. But here's the deal: it only works if there's tension.
 - If I just hold it slack, nothing's happening. But the moment I pull on it—when I feel that resistance—that's when my muscles start getting stronger. The tension isn't a sign that something's wrong—it's actually a sign that growth is happening.
 - Living out your faith is the same. When you feel that pushback, that awkward moment, that pull to hide what you believe—that's the tension. And just like in training, it means

something important is happening. You're growing stronger. Your faith is being stretched and built.

- So next time you feel that tension, don't assume you're doing something wrong. It might be the exact moment your faith is getting stronger."
- **Paul reminds us that following Jesus includes both joy and hardship.**
 - In Philippians 3:10, Paul writes, "I want to know Christ... and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings."
 - That doesn't mean we go looking for pain—it means we recognize that faith costs something.
- **Persecution looks different for everyone.**
 - It might be obvious—mocking, being left out, being told you're wrong.
 - Or it might be quiet—getting ghosted, being left off group texts, or feeling like no one around you gets it.
- **Jesus gets it.**
 - John 16:33 reminds us of Jesus' words: "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." Jesus faced rejection, betrayal, and suffering—but He didn't give up. He stood strong so we could, too.
- **You're not standing alone.**
 - You have a community of believers, and more importantly, you have the Holy Spirit living inside of you—the same Spirit that gave Jesus strength. You're sharing in His story when you choose Him, even when it's hard.
- **Suffering for Jesus brings us closer to Him.**
 - Every time you face discomfort because of your faith, it's an opportunity to identify more deeply with Jesus. And that is a powerful place to live from.

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

- **What could it look like for you to persevere this week?**
 1. **Be Honest About Where You're Tempted to Hide Your Faith.**
 - Where do you feel pressure to stay quiet?
 - At school?
 - On your team?
 - Around certain friends
 - Jesus isn't disappointed in you—He wants to *meet you* there and give you courage.
 2. **Take One Step of Boldness This Week.**
 - This doesn't have to be big, but it has to be intentional. Try one of these:
 - Pray before a meal in public. Maybe you even ask your waiter at a restaurant if there's any way you can pray for them.
 - Invite someone to church or youth group.
 - Speak up kindly when your faith is challenged.
 - Share something encouraging about Jesus on social media
 - God isn't asking you to be perfect—just faithful in the moment.
 3. **Pray for Christians Around the World.**
 - There are believers your age who are risking everything to follow Jesus. No youth group games, no lights—just *faith*. Let their courage inspire you.
- Following Jesus isn't always easy, but it's always worth it. And you never stand alone.

PRAYER:

- Prayer for God to strengthen us with perseverance, even when it feels difficult or scary.
-