



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Chuck Swindoll observes that many people these days live life on the path of least resistance, choosing a more expedient route to success and fulfillment over the more challenging passes of sheer discipline and steep determination. Sadly, that mentality has seeped into the mind-set of many Christians too.

Yet Jesus calls us to traverse a narrower, more perilous *path to glory* (Hebrews 2:10). In fact, as we will discover in our study of John 15:18–16:4, the Christian journey follows a road paved with sharp stones of persecution—a road less traveled, blazed by Jesus Christ, God's Son. So tighten your bootstraps; it could get a little dicey!



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

By reading John 15:18–16:4 in its entirety, you gain a broad perspective of its overall meaning. In our last study, Jesus taught His followers to love each other with a sacrificial love (John 15:9–17). In John 15:18–16:4, He contrasts God's *agapē* love with another powerful human emotion: *hate*. Read through this passage carefully and thoughtfully and, as you do, write down any initial impressions.

Quotable

Our Lord has designed a plan whereby we must continue to live in this world—but guard ourselves from loving it. That plan, truth be told, involves persecution and resistance.

— Charles R. Swindoll





Observation: Bombarding the Text with Questions

One strategy for digging into the meaning of a passage is to bombard the text with questions. That simply means to find the main idea of the passage and ask questions that shed light on its meaning. The most common questions are *who?* *what?* *when?* *where?* and *why?*

Jesus clearly intended to prepare His disciples not for the *if* of persecution but the *when*. Among the many promises He gave His followers was the promise of persecution. Let's use this basic observation technique to discover what that really means.

Who Will Do the Persecuting? John 15:18–19

Who did Jesus say will persecute His followers?

What reason did Jesus give for why His followers would be targets of persecution?

The word Jesus used for *world* is the Greek word *kosmos*. The word literally means, “world system.” Who was Jesus referring to in this passage?



Later, in John 16:2, Jesus identified in more specific terms the persecutors. What would they do specifically to followers of Jesus?

What Can Be Expected? John 15:18–25

What kind of response should Christ's followers expect from the world system?

Read John 15:18–25. Trace Jesus' use of the word *hate*. Make notes about how many times He used the word in this passage. What reasons did Jesus cite for the world's hatred toward Him and His followers?



Interpretation: The Meaning of Christ's Promise of Persecution

Chuck observed that the Greek word for *persecute* literally means “to hunt down or chase, as a wild beast hunts its prey.” That's a vivid picture of what Christians can expect to face from a world that hates them. In this section of John's gospel, Jesus offered three reasons why His followers will be persecuted for their faith.

1. *Because Christians are not of this world* (John 15:19)

The world demands conformity. It has a certain pattern or mold it expects everyone to fit (Romans 12:2). It loves and accepts those who fit the mold and hates and persecutes anyone who does not.



2. *Because the persecutors don't know the One who sent Jesus* (John 15:21)

Beneath its superficial surface, the world seethes in a turbulent cauldron of unbelief, resulting in resentment toward those who walk in the truth. A Christ-honoring life, lived in the light of God's Word, pierces the darkness and stirs up an infestation of negative emotions.

3. *Because the Word must be fulfilled* (15:25)

The very presence of Christ's followers in the world brings a conviction of sin and guilt to those who have not yet believed. That guilt often translates into a hatred toward believers. The darkness attempts to overcome the light of truth. But light always overcomes the darkness.



Correlation: How Does It Relate?

Correlation is the *Searching the Scriptures* method that helps strengthen your interpretation of a biblical passage by comparing it to other portions of Scripture. In John 15, Jesus made sure His disciples understood the world hated them for everything they believed about Jesus. Remember Jesus' words to Nicodemus?

God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.
(John 3:19–21)

How did Jesus' words to Nicodemus relate to His words to His disciples in John 15:25?

Why do unbelievers hate Christians, according to Jesus?





Application: How Will You Respond?

As we conclude this lesson, let's consider three applications that Chuck offers at the close of his message:

1. *There is a great difference between picking a fight and enduring persecution.*

Sadly, some Christians can be abrasive and possess an unusual penchant for rubbing people the wrong way. Others take more extreme actions and resort to fighting rather than representing the peace and grace of Jesus to those outside the faith.

Write below about a time in your life when you experienced an abrasive response from a fellow believer. How did it make you feel?

Read Romans 12:18. What did Paul suggest as the Christ-honoring approach for relating to an unbelieving world?

2. *There is a great difference between loving the world and living in the world.*

List some ways you and your family could live in the world as representatives of Jesus but resist loving—or buying into—the world's values.



How can you share the light of Christ with someone in your community who clearly does not embrace the truth of Christ?

3. *There is a great difference between running scared and being informed.*

The prophetic clock is synchronized with God's timetable. God has provided His prophetic Word to prepare us for the future, not to frighten us with dire warnings and predictions (Matthew 24). How do Jesus' words about the inevitability of persecution equip *you* to share the light of truth in an increasingly dark world?

What are some ways you can ensure that you and your family experience the peace of Christ despite resistance to your faith and your biblical values?



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I am so thankful that You have not left us to ourselves to fend off the darkness and fight alone against those who would persecute us for our faith in Your Son. Grant me the wisdom and power to lead my family in a way that brings hope and courage in the face of mounting resistance and personal attacks. Set Your angels charge over us as we walk with You and share the light of Your gospel in all the dark places around us. In the powerful name of Jesus, Your Son, amen.



EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

The Promise of Persecution

John 15:18–16:4

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For the 2018 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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