

FAMILY PAGE: BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED

FAMILY QUESTION: WHAT COURAGEOUS CHOICES CAN YOUR GROWN-UPS BE MAKING RIGHT NOW?

In the eighth beatitude, Jesus foreshadowed the problems his followers would face if they lived out this upside-down kingdom where the powerless are blessed. Sometimes when we make courageous choices, we will endure criticism, scrutiny, mockery, and sometimes even retaliation from people who do not desire change. One of the best ways for grown-ups to support children is to bear the heaviest burden of social change. We want our children to know that their community shares the weight of the world's problems. Ask your children for their opinions and advice: what courageous choices should your grown-ups be making right now? What about teachers? Doctors? Business owners? When we ask for their perspectives and creativity, we allow children to drive our mission, but we also partner with them to bear the responsibility for the work.

BRIEF REFLECTION

A huge crowd of people followed Jesus. He saw their hurts and pains and cared for them in many ways. He led them to a mountain and told them about God's kingdom. You can think of a "kingdom" as the way the world works or is set up. In God's kingdom, there is abundance: more than enough honor, food, money, love, power, and resources for everyone to thrive.

Jesus says, "*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" People who followed Jesus didn't have much voice or power. But when they worked together for a fairer way to live, their voice and power got stronger. And when they gathered in large groups to work toward a better, healthier life for everyone, the people in power felt afraid and threatened. Once, when Jesus was teaching about God's kingdom, he saw a woman who had been ill for a long time! He had mercy and healed her. But a religious leader was upset with Jesus because he believed Jesus had broken one of the sabbath laws by healing her. Jesus responded by saying God wants all people to be set free and to be whole! That is the purpose of those laws. Other religious leaders came to Jesus and told him to leave immediately! Roman rulers wanted to kill Jesus because they did not want change in their government or their power. They liked making all the decisions, getting richer and more powerful, and did not care what happened to everyone else.

When people challenged those systems, they faced a fight. Sometimes Jesus' followers were put in jail, made to leave their country, or shamed by their communities. This is persecution. It's when people are treated badly and unfairly, especially because of their race, identity, or beliefs. Jesus told them when you work to bring God's kingdom on earth, you can expect there to be people who react harshly. Even though this is really hard to face and experience, Jesus tells his followers persecution is a normal part of living out God's love. You are actually blessed as a result of people persecuting you.

PRAYER

Dear Jesus, With you before us, beside us, and within us, we can face anything. Please give us courage and strength to keep following you, even when others don't understand or harm us. We pray for all your children, including those who persecute people for following your way. Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

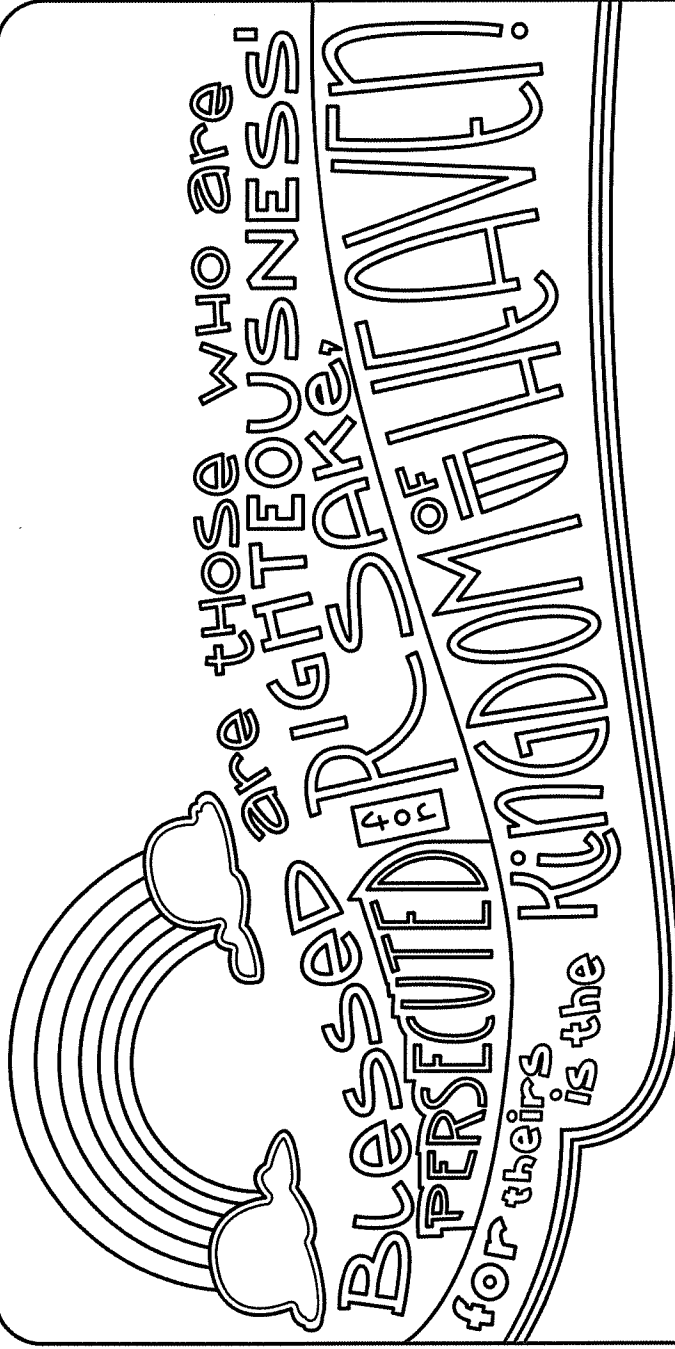
Why does fear sometimes make people treat others unkindly or unfairly?

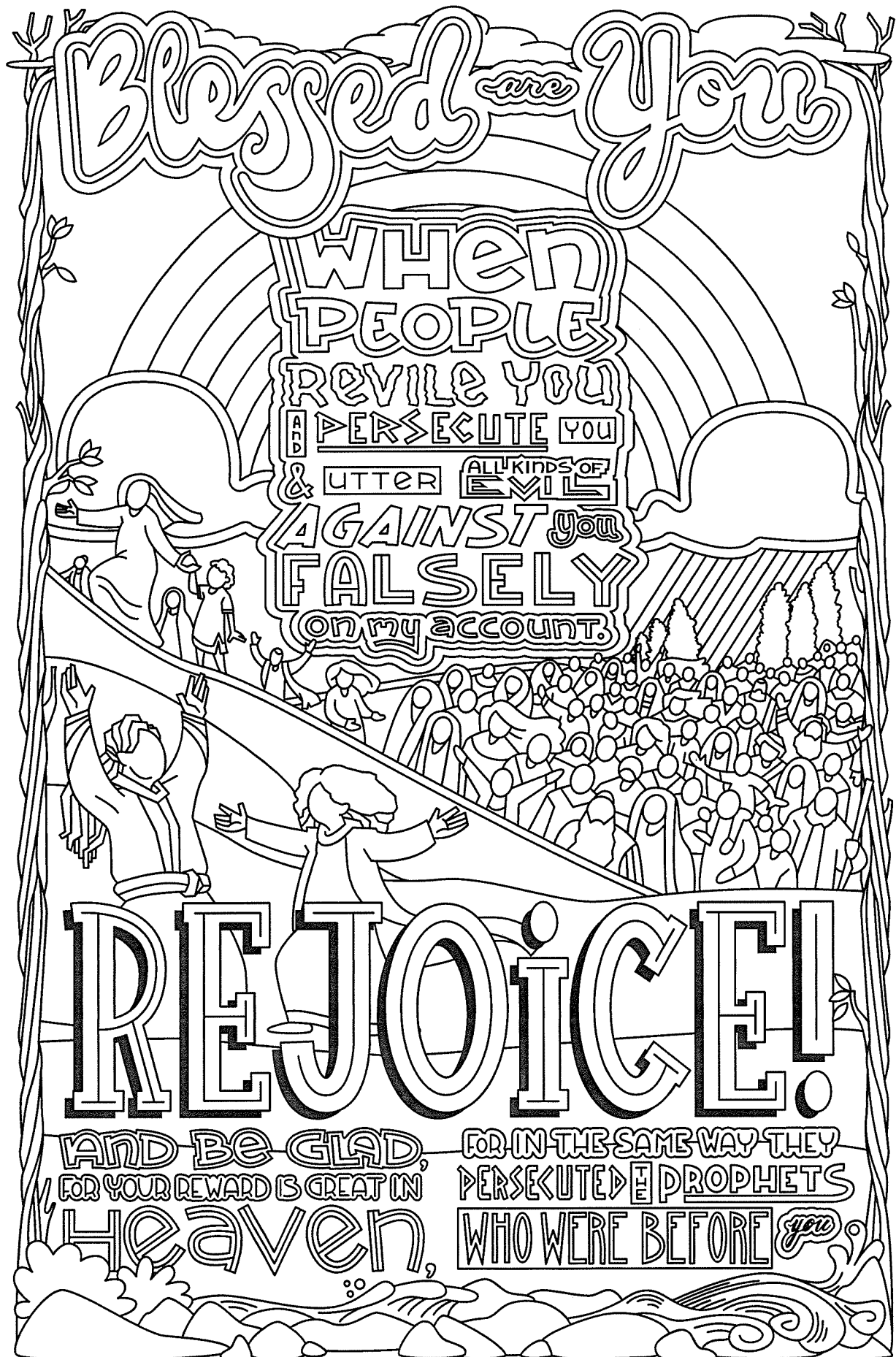
When have you been treated badly or unfairly for doing the right thing or following Jesus' example?
How did you react?

What are some ways people could be persecuted today?

How do you feel about knowing Jesus faced persecution, too?

In the coloring page's blank space, write or draw what this beatitude looks like or means to you, or write or draw a modern-day version of the beatitude.





Blessed are you

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& PERSECUTE YOU
& UTTER ALL KINDS OF
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AGAINST YOU
FALSELY
(on my account)

REJOICED!

AND BE GLAD,
FOR YOUR REWARD IS GREAT IN
HEAVEN,
FOR IN THE SAME WAY THEY
PERSECUTED THE PROPHETS
WHO WERE BEFORE YOU

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How do you like to celebrate?

Who do you join with to create
a world where people can live
freely and without fear?

Who are some of the most joyful
people you know? Why do you
think they are truly joyful?

What does joy in following Jesus
look like?

Who are people of faith you look to
for encouragement when you feel
discouraged or struggle to follow
Jesus' example?

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