



## Sermon Discussion Guide for Cumberland Fellowship Church Sermon Series: Biblical Pattern Church History – April 23, 2023

*This guide is a supplement to the weekly sermon. We encourage families and groups to use it. When we hear God's Word, we need to do more than listen. The bible says, "Be doers of the word, not hearers only" (James 1:22). Step 1: GATHER with your family or group. Step 2: REVIEW and DISCUSS the key points and scriptures from the sermon. Step 3: PRAY for the prayer requests shared by your family or group.*

### DISCUSSION STARTER

Did you enjoy learning History in school? Why or why not? Why is it important to be familiar with church history? In a 1948 speech to the British House of Commons, Winston Churchill said, "Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." Do you agree?

### DIGGING DEEPER 1

**Read John 17:18.** The church began 50 days after Jesus' resurrection when Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit to equip his followers happened in the upper room. This is when the "Church" or in the Greek "Ekklesia" was born. What does the word Ekklesia mean? How does understanding the definition of this word help us understand the purpose of the church? As Christians we are the "called out assembly". Called out of what? Called out of the world? What are we being called out of? We're called to separate ourselves from looking like the world. How can we look different from the world, but not separate from the world? How are you doing at that and how do you think CF is doing at that?

### DIGGING DEEPER 2

**Read Acts 8:1-4, 26; 9:1-2; 11:19.** What fueled the growth of the church? How could seeing people being brutally killed empower people to believe? Passion is a powerful motivator. The initial wave of Christianity were Jews accepting Christ. What caused the spread of Christianity for Jerusalem and the Jews to the Gentiles and other parts of the world? God's people persecuted God's people because they wanted to protect their power and influence. It became about power instead of purpose! Do you think that mentality (protecting what we have instead of expanding to others) is still in the church today? How?

### DIGGING DEEPER 3

**Read Matthew 5:10-12; John 15:19-20; Romans 8:35-39.** Persecution of the early church is what spread the Gospel. How did and how does God still today utilize evil to bring about his purpose to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth? In the early church and even today in many parts of the world, if you dared to believe in Jesus, you knew you were putting your life and your family's life of the line. How did this mentality fuel the early church? Paul planting churches in Rome catapulted two things, what were they? Not only did it catapult Christianity, but it catapulted the church into persecution. Christianity was seen as a dangerous revolutionary threat to the polytheistic beliefs of the Greek culture Rome had adopted. Christianity was seen as a scapegoat to the early emperors of Rome. They used Christians as a source to blame for problems that occurred in the kingdom to take the attention off themselves. How is this being played out today in our time and culture? What should it compel us to do?

### DOING THE WORD

Starting in the first century with up to the 4<sup>th</sup> century from 33 AD to 312 AD, Christians were extremely persecuted and killed for their faith. During the first three centuries, the gospel of Jesus Christ withstood fierce opposition, particularly from Roman emperors, and Christians lived in the shadows. They didn't allow the persecution and the fear of death stop them though. Paul said, "To live is Christ, to die is gain." How will you choose to live? Pray for boldness and the courage to stand as persecution rises in our country. For further study on the persecution of the early church look up the following Roman emperors: Nero, Vespasian, Domitian, Trajan, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, Severus, Maximinus Thrax, Decius, Valerian, and Diocletian.