



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Session 9: Be Prepared

Suggested Week of Use: April 27, 2025

Core Passage: 1 Peter 4:12-19

News Story Summary

On April 10, Josh Sullivan was leading a prayer meeting in a church in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. Josh and his family have been missionaries since 2018, moving to Africa from Tennessee after sensing God's call. During the meeting, four armed men stormed the church and confronted Josh. Dragging him out of the church, they forced him into his own vehicle. The car was found a short while later, but Josh had been kidnapped. In response, Josh's mother, Tonya Rinker, said, "As a mother, you never think about something like this happening to your child, but faith carries you through the uncertainty." Sullivan's wife, Megan, released a statement on April 12 thanking people for "the outpouring of love and prayers."

On April 16, Josh was rescued after a "high-intensity shootout" in which three of his captors were killed. Police said Josh was found "in excellent condition" inside the same car where the kidnappers had just died. Police said the crime was likely financially motivated.

For more about this story, search "Tennessee pastor kidnapped in Africa."

Engage

To supplement the Engage activities, ask: *When you hear the word "persecution," what comes to mind?* Discuss responses. Share the information about the kidnapping of missionary Josh Sullivan earlier this month. Highlight the statements from Sullivan's mother and his wife. Encourage adults to talk about the role faith and prayer play in responding to persecution. Point out that the suffering and persecution that believers face in America is very different from persecution of believers around the world—as well as different from what the Christians in Peter's time faced. Say: *But if we follow Christ, we will face persecution for our faith in some form. Today's session reminds us that God has given us the tools to suffer "the right way," a way that glorifies Him and points people toward Him.*

Challenge

To supplement the Challenge activities, write the text for 1 Peter 4:16 on the board and lead the group to read the verse aloud. Remind adults about the story of Josh Sullivan, the kidnapped missionary in Africa. Say: *Thankfully, Josh's story had a happy ending.* Allow participants to share their thoughts and reactions to the story about Josh Sullivan. Ask: *How can believers, even in situations like what Josh experienced, continue to trust God and glorify Him? How do contemporary believers need to adjust their thinking to adopt that mentality?* Close in prayer, challenging adults to ask God to help them suffer in a way that brings Him the most glory.