

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT RISK?

As humans, we often fear the unknown and seek to protect or isolate ourselves from potential harm or loss. The Bible clearly demonstrates that the riskiest behavior is to isolate ourselves from God and distrust His commands. May we be a people who imitates the examples set before us of faithfulness in the midst of risk (Hebrews 11:32-40).

**Fast and Pray** - Jesus followed the Spirit's leading into the desert to be personally tempted and tried by Satan. Instead of fleeing, Jesus fasted and prayed, using Scripture to rebuke Satan's deception (Matthew 4:1-11).

**Put on the Full Armor of God** - Paul recognized that our battles and enemies are not primarily with humans or situations, but rather are best spiritually understood. He exhorts Christians to remember that we do not wrestle with flesh and blood, but with Satan and his demons. Accordingly we need Jesus' reminder that our weapons are not of this world (Ephesians 6:10-20, 2 Corinthians 10:2-6).

**Flee** - At times God calls us to flee risky situations. Jesus preached so clearly in His hometown of Nazareth that they sought to throw Him off a cliff in order to kill him, yet Jesus passed through them and went away (Luke 4:16-30, John 10:39). Paul and the disciples of Jesus likewise had situations in which he was called to, prepared for, and initiated escape (2 Corinthians 11:32-33, Acts 5:17-42, Acts 9:23-25). When the risk is towards a situation of temptation, Christians are called to flee as a way of escape (1 Timothy 6:11, 2 Timothy 2:22, 1 Corinthians 6:18; 10:12-14)

**Stand Firm** - Jesus stood firm even when officials were present and ready to arrest Him, trusting in God's perfect plan and timing (John 7:32-52). Paul and Silas had the perfect, God-given opportunity in Philippi to escape prison safely, but God called them to remain (Acts 16:25-40).

**Resist** - At times the Christian is called to resist, whether it be a government or the devil who is seeking to inspire disobedience against God (Acts 4:1-31, James 4:7)

**Speak** - Christians are called to speak boldly and courageously even in the midst of dangerous and threatening circumstances (Acts 4:1-31; 18:9-11). We are warned by the example of Peter of the danger of denying Jesus in risky situations by our sinful silence or speech (Matthew 26:69-75).

**Be Silent** - Sometimes the Christian call is to remain calmly silent in the midst of verbal and physical threats (Matthew 27:11-14, John 19:1-11).

**Embrace Risk** - Both Jesus and Paul demonstrated a willingness to enter into risk for the sake of Gospel love, fully aware of the suffering and death they encountered in their future (Luke 9:51-56, Matthew 26:47-56, Acts 21:10-36). Christians are reminded that risk is part of the cost of following Jesus faithfully (Luke 9:57-10:12).

## What Does the Bible Say about Persecution?

We must not minimize or redefine persecution, understanding that persecution involves not merely verbal or social opposition, but opposition to the Gospel message that results in significant financial or physical harm or loss.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [11] “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.” (Matthew 5:10-11 ESV)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ [44] But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, [45] so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. [46] For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? [47] And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? [48] You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:43-48 ESV)

“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. [19] If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. [20] Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.” (John 15:18-20 ESV)

“To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, [12] and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; [13] when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.” (1 Corinthians 4:11-13 ESV)

“But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. [8] We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; [9] persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; [10] always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. [11] For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.” (2 Corinthians 4:7-11 ESV)

“You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, [11] my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. [12] Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, [13] while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. [14] But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it [15] and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. [16] All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:10-17 ESV)