

PREPARATION FOR PERSECUTION

GOALS:

- 1. Each participant to understand and appreciate:**
 - 1.1 The Biblical perspective of persecution**
 - 1.2. The sources of persecution encountered by believers.**
- 2. Identify areas of persecution in the Health Field of your own country.**
- 3. Apply Biblical principles in your own response to persecution**



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SCRIPTURE: **1 PETER 2:21-23**

1. DEFINITION

PERSECUTION The process of oppressing, harassing or treating cruelly especially because of race, religion etc.
To annoy or bother persistently.
Any period characterized by systematic oppression, infliction of torture, death, or the like, on account of religious belief.

Root words of “persecution”

“per”- thoroughly

“sequi”- follow

2. BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON PERSECUTION:

2.1 2 Tim.3:1-14

We need to make constant choice - Matt. 12:30

Persecution is unavoidable for the godly Christian 2 Tim.3:12 - *“in fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”*

What do we do with that verse?

The Bible says that persecution is certain. Not unlikely, not even likely, but it is certain. Is there hope? Yes. Persecution has always existed and yet Christianity goes on.

2.2. APPLICATION:

Think Back on your own Christian life - What “persecution”(if any) have you endured so far?

2.3. WORD STUDY OF “PERSECUTION”

The Greek word is “DIOKO” which occurs 31 times in the New Testament.

It is commonly translated:

“To pursue”(in a hostile manner) Acts 26:11; Rev. 12:13

“To make to run, flee or put to fight” Matt.23:34; Matt.10:23

“To run after, swiftly in order to catch it” Phil, 3:12

“To harass, trouble, molest, persecute” Matt. 5:10-12; 44:10;23;

Luke 21:12; John 5:16; John 15:20; Acts 7:52; 9:4; 12:4,7; 26:14;

Rom.12:14; I Cor.4:12; 15:9; 2 Cor. 4:9; 2 Tim. 3:12;

Gal. 1:13,23; 4:29; 5:11; Phil 3:6

“To be maltreated, suffer persecution on account of something” Gal 6:12;

Matt. 13:21; Mark 4:17; 2 Cor. 12:10

Victory over persecution promised in John 16:33

In the preceding verses we see clear reasons for persecution, types or methods and then our reaction to it.

2.4. REASONS FOR PERSECUTION:

2.4.1. Persecution is because of Jesus Christ. John 15:20; Acts 9:4,5 Acts 26:11

2.4.2. Persecution is because of living godly lives. 2 Tim.3:12; Matt.5:10; 1 Pet.2:21-23; 3:14-16; 4:12-19; 5:10

3 SOURCES OF PERSECUTION: (for believers)






Persecution comes from people who reject faith in Jesus Christ. It can come from individuals or from a system. Usually from those who are not totally ignorant of the Gospel. The first century Christians were persecuted by the Roman Emperors who wanted to be worshipped as gods.

The three most significant sources:

1. Anti-religious,
2. Mono-religious
3. Secular systems.

3.1 SECULAR GOVERNMENTS: The word “secular” means “without God” Looking at the world “Scientifically” rather than Scripturally. An Atheistic and Secular Humanistic world view in the health field results in subtle or open oppression of believers.





3.1.1 Characteristics of this type of government:

-  Will pursue the advance of technology, ignoring the religious and moral dimensions of human existence.
-  Will seek to promote people who are self-centred, in pursuit of excellence in the social/medical field and therefore reject those who are known to be religious and spiritual.
-  Will not allow any religious organization to conduct Bible studies or prayer meetings in any institution under its control.
-  Considers all spiritual activities as irrelevant and therefore doesn't believe in Divine guidance or demonic oppression.
-  Will rely on theories that fit in with their views, even if they cannot be proved objectively. At times the theories are in conflict with some of the laws of nature, eg. the evolution theory. Leaves no room for Biblical explanations.

3.2 ANTI-RELIGIOUS GOVERNMENT eg. Communism.

Communism is materialistic and anti-Christian. Although Communist leaders sometimes verbally assert that they are not opposed to religion, the opposite is clear from their doctrine and action. Liberation theology is used where the church has large influence. In such a case, they define salvation as: “saved from oppressive system”, and Christ is depicted as a revolutionary.

3.2.1. Characteristics of this type of government:

-  Individual Christians are singled out for economic pressure. This could mean the loss of their job and profession.
-  If not, then demotion is the least that will happen
-  Fellowship is forbidden. Movements of the Christians are watched and meetings not allowed.
-  Travel is restricted, also news about other believers.

- ☹ Bibbles become scarce, all printing presses are controlled by the government.
- ☹ Children are indoctrinated against Christian teaching, or used to spy on parents.
- ☹ Even a well-qualified Christian Medical or Dental doctor may have to do most menial jobs just to survive.

3.3 **MONO-RELIGIOUS GOVERNMENT:** eg. Islam, Hinduism.

Unfortunately, a large part of the church has seen Communism as the prime source of persecution (both now and in the future), thus leaving the way open for the Islamic Religion to spread. Statistics show that together with Communist, one of the largest and most oppressive system is the Muslim Religion. They declare that Allah is the true god and there is none other.

Unlike democratic countries which allow freedom of religion, Muslim countries are not just simple governments, but are systems within a religion. This means that the leaders of their country are not just bound to function according to their constitution, but their constitution is rooted in the dictates of the Koran. Everybody living in the country has to comply with its rules.

3.3.1. **Characteristics of this type of government:**

- ☹ Faith will be encouraged, but only that of faith in Allah. This means that all other faiths will be rejected, especially that of Christianity.
- ☹ Bibles will be scarce. Possessing one could mean imprisonment.
- ☹ “Holy war” of Jihad, could be declared against those who do not ‘believe’. This could mean death sentences for Christians caught denying the Islamic faith and practices.
- ☹ Failure to recognize the holy month, the Ramadan, is interpreted as being an enemy of Allah.
- ☹ Fellowship with other believers is forbidden or restricted. If this is done secretly, the risk is high and could result in lifetime imprisonment.

3.4 THE REAL ENEMY AND SOURCE OF PERSECUTION

The above-mentioned systems are the visible sources, but the real enemy is Satan. He uses the outward forms as instruments to suppress the growth and advance of the church/Kingdom of God. (At least he tries to!)

3.4.1. Approaches used by Satan to foster persecution:

- ↘ Racial hatred.
- ↘ Rulers force people to go back to “fore-father’s gods” in the name of “nationalism”.
- ↘ Syncretisms: mixing Bible truth with other religions
- ↘ Seeking to unite all religions under the Ecumenical Movement eg. the World Council of Churches
- ↘ Militant religious groups eg. Islam.

3.4.2. The main weapons of Satan:

- ➡ Deception and fear Matt. 10:28
- ➡ Cruelty and murder John 8:44; 10:10



4. CURRENT AREAS OF PERSECUTION IN HEALTH FIELD:

4.1 Pressure to compromise on ethical issues eg. Abortion.

4.2 Pressure to conform to atheistic world view. eg. Praying with patients considered old-fashioned or unacceptable, or non-professional. Speaking about Christ is “pushing your views.”

Result: Christians live a dichotomy

- “professionals” on duty
- “Christians” in free time

Therefore no impact for God’s Kingdom in the work-place.

4.3 Alternative medicine, including “spiritual” treatments rooted in the occult, eg. some advise staff to give occult “spiritual” care as a priority to Maoris in

New Zealand. Christians unwilling to participate in this are regarded as “narrow-minded” or “closed” to new things.

- 4.4 **Moral pressures** to fight for “rights” - go on strike.
- 4.5 **Pressure to conform** to immoral life-style
- 4.6 **Christians who act in a Christ-like way in godless situations become very unpopular** - eg. an honest Christian in a corrupt hospital; hard-working Christian refusing to render sub-standard work;
- 4.7 **Name some more**



4. **HOW TO RESPOND TO PERSECUTION** ¹

5.1 **General attitudes**

5.1.1. FEAR NOT. We do not need to fear, because God cares for us, especially in the day of trial and persecution.

Persecution is a mark of TRUE DISCIPLESHIP. A Christian is never a victim of circumstances.

Persecution is DIRECTED AT JESUS and not at the Christian. Saul persecuted the church, yet Jesus said, *“Why do you persecute Me?”* Acts 9:4

5.1.2. REJOICE despite persecution. *“Rejoice in so far as you share Christ’s sufferings If one suffers as a Christians, let him not be ashamed, but under that name let him glorify God”* 1 Peter 4:13,16

5.1.3. PRAY FOR BOLDNESS in times of persecution. When the disciples were persecuted, they prayed for boldness to speak His word: Acts 4:24-30. It was a noteworthy prayer. It contained no disappointment, nor did it ask that persecution be removed. The disciples prayed for power, which they received, because they were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke with boldness.

5.1.4. DO NOT BE SURPRISED when persecution comes. *“A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute*

you” John 15:20. “Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal ... as though something strange were happening to you” 1 Peter 4:12

5.1.5. Persecution is A PRIVILEGE. *“Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you... on my account Matt. 5:11. “Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy ...” Luke 6:23. As strange as it may be, the reaction to persecution according to the Bible can only be, “Praise the Lord for persecution!”¹*



5.2 In personal life:

- ✧ Deep personal love for Jesus
- ✧ No guilt - no unconfessed sin
- ✧ Know position in Christ
- ✧ Know Word, pray, walk in the power of Holy Spirit
- ✧ Unity with other believers
- ✧ Resist fear
- ✧ Recognize the real enemy + know his schemes.

5.3 In work situation:

5.3.1. Regular prayer with other believers

Prayer Triplets: for strengthening, dealing with enemy forces, evangelism. Ask the Lord for creative ways to witness, places and times to pray etc.

5.3.2. Christlike response

- ✧ non-judgmental Rom14:13
- ✧ firm stand for righteousness
- ✧ no compromise Dan 3:18; Ex 23:2
- ✧ caring and loving towards colleagues 1 Thess 3:12
- ✧ attitude of gratitude 1 Thess 5:18; 1 Cor 10:10

¹ Persecution: It will never happen here; Jan Pit - page 29

↘ respect for authorities Rom 13:1-7

5.3.3. Be a participant, not spectator - for God's Kingdom. Communists are all participants. Matt 12:30

5.3.4. Actively disciple younger believers

5.3.5. Be professionally competent and work well and hard, as unto the Lord. Prov. 22:29; Col.3:23,24

5.3.6. Be informed about New Age Ethical issues, but do not be so taken up with these issues that you neglect the Word of God.

5.3.7. Be Prepared to pay the price. John 12:24,25

5. APPLICATION

6.1 Which areas of persecution can you identify in the health field of your country?

6.2a How are you/other Christians responding to this at present?

6.2b Evaluate your response in the light of the Biblical responses discussed in point 5

6.3 What specific steps will you take to prepare for living in a totally, extremely, or highly restricted country.

6.4 What can you do personally to encourage believers in the Health Field living under severe restrictions at present?

6. **EFFECTIVE HCF MINISTRY IN RESTRICTED COUNTRIES:**

Missionary work will not be done by professional missionaries, but by laymen who will preach the Gospel. If countries close their doors to mission work, then doctors, nurses, teachers and technicians will have to do the work of missionaries.²

65% of the world's unreached people live in countries partly or fully restricted for conventional missionaries. By the year 2000, 83-84% of all non-Christian were in restricted countries - 77-84 countries.

Presently 90% of Mission work is done in countries where there are enough viable churches to evangelize the country. 2,5 billion of the unreached peoples are amongst the Chinese, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, or tribal groups, less than 10% of all Missionaries work amongst them. By the year 2000 more than ½ of the world's population will be living in cities and 60% of them will be Asians.

In the light of this we need to focus on:

7.1 **Sending Cross-Cultural tent-makers into these countries**

7.1.1. **Characteristics of and requirement for this type of ministry:**

- ➡ Low-Key one-on-one evangelism and discipline
- ➡ Willingness to learn and adjust to foreign culture and language.
- ➡ Spiritually, physically and emotionally healthy people/ resilient.
- ➡ Singleness could be an asset.
- ➡ Adaptability, flexibility and patience is needed
- ➡ Willingness to be satisfied with “small” results.

² Idem, p.65

- ➔ *Most important:* a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and the ability to maintain that relationship without much “church” support.
- ➔ Well-qualified professionally so the host country will “want” them.

7.2 Training and encouraging local believers through carefully planned low-key visits.

7.2.1. `Preparation:

- ☐ The most important preparation is prayer and intercession.
- ☐ Be very sure of the Lord’s leading and promises.
- ☐ Keep plans, names, places to be visited “private”, even when sharing about the trip for prayer. Use alternative names for people when speaking about them.
- ☐ Planning and preparation: the absolute minimum to be done by telephone email, and/or letter, if at all.
- ☐ Go in two’s, for support in prayer and spiritual warfare.
- ☐ Depending on the situation and the strictness of customs control, take some literature and/or media with you.

7.2.2. Guidelines when inside the country:

- Remember that you are there because God has sent you. Keep His purposes in mind continually.
- Travel with a humble, teachable attitude.
- Seek to win the hearts of the people.
- Stay with a local family and let them introduce you to “their” world.
- Identify with their way of living.

- Be careful without acting as if you are a spy being followed continually, behave “normally”.
- Do not behave as if you know it all or as if you are a very important person who should be obeyed slavishly.
- Do not make it widely known that you are there for the Gospel.
- Respect the system and the rules: Traffic rules (including the speed limit!), prohibitions to take photographs.
- Respect the culture - this creates trust in the relationship with the local people.
- For your own spiritual well-being, praise and worship of the Lord is very important. This can even be done while singing aloud in a train if the people do not understand your language.
- Remember that mistakes on your own part could endanger others, especially those who remain in the country. It could also close the door for you on a long-term basis.

7.2.3. Guidelines about ministering in the country:

- ↘ Give your personal testimony, avoiding religious jargon.
- ↘ Offer to lend a book, but say you definitely want it back. This is safer than giving it.
- ↘ Fast and pray for specific individuals.
- ↘ Personal contacts are frequently better than big meetings, especially for long-term ministry.
- ↘ Do not go to people’s homes uninvited, let them suggest a “safe” place where you can meet and talk.
- ↘ When you do go to their homes, go after sunset, and dressed like them.
- ↘ Do not volunteer any information (HCF, politics.)
- ↘ Do not make promises, rather say “I will try”.
- ↘ Do not talk about other Christians and thus get involved in religious gossip or slander.

- ✧ Many people want to get out of the country. Do not start an emigration ministry!
- ✧ When sharing with people in a train take their address and send them something to read. Mail it from inside the country, addressed by a local person.
- ✧ Assure them of your prayers. This and the visit indicate that they have not been forgotten.

7.2.4. Guidelines for training:

- ☐ The emphasis should be on personal edification and on their responsibilities as Christians.
- ☐ Ask yourself: What would Jesus have taught? What would He have done?
- ☐ Make sure you practice what you teach. Some will not like your Christlike behaviour so be prepared to face challenges and opposition.

I. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

8.1 SECULAR GOVERNMENT

- Q1. As a Medical Professional, how do you intend to refute the claim that spiritual things are irrelevant?
- Q2. If your superior threatens to demote you from your present position, what alternatives will you take?
- Q3. How do you plan to restore the knowledge of God in your own field in a secular society?
- Q4. If the government forbids patients to see you because of your beliefs, what steps would you take to continue your work?
- Q5. In case you are dismissed or refused the opportunity to work in the health field and you don't have enough to support yourself financially, how will you keep your testimony? How do you intend to fulfill the Great Commission?

8.2 ANTI-RELIGIOUS GOVERNMENT

- Q1. What steps would you take if you were already warned not to testify of Christ yet continue to work in the Hospital because they need you?
- Q2. If you were asked by your superior if you have an underground fellowship in the hospital or somewhere else, what will you say?
- Q3. In case not a single copy of the Bible is available, how do you intend to grow spiritually?
- Q4. You were appointed as a hospital director by the government without them knowing that you were a Christian, What steps would you take to keep the position and at the same time help other Christians in the hospital?
- Q5. You were given the chance of living but you must deny your faith. Would you rather pretend and live, much more be able to continue serving God in the future or choose to die for the cause of Christ?

8.3 MONO-RELIGION GOVERNMENT

- Q1. Many are saying that evangelism in a Communist country is easier than in an Islamic country, do you agree or not? State your reasons.
- Q2. You were caught reading the Bible and the punishment is the cutting off of both hands. What would you do? Will your reasons be regarded as valid by the authorities?
- Q3. Under an Islamic rulership everyone is required to celebrate their holy days and their rituals, would you rather comply with the order or not?
- Q4. Will you pursue a person to person confrontation with a Muslim person in defence of your faith even if this would mean losing your life? Why? Support your answer.
- Q5. You are about to operate on the Muslim leader who ordered that all Christians must die. What would you do?

RESOURCE LIST

- “Persecution - it will never happen here” - Jan Pit.
- “More than conquerors” - Open Doors staff
- “God’s New Envoys” - Tetsunao Yamamori
- HCF Lecture notes - G. Fleming
- HCF Lecture notes - Philippines 1989
- The Holy Bible
- Experiences of HCF staff
- Video by Johan Companjen - Open Doors

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