



# A KINGDOM WORTH DYING FOR: What should we do about persecution? Student Guide

KINGDOM

- ? ▪ Has anyone looked down on you because of your faith? What was your response?
- When are the times you find yourself hiding the fact (or purposely omitting the fact) that you're a Christ follower? Why?

## WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT IT:

If someone made a movie out of the Bible, it would either be R-rated, or the writers would have to take out a bunch of stories. A lot of tough stuff happens to believers in the early church, just because they followed Jesus. They're mocked, harassed, kicked out of towns, and in many cases, killed. Those who are killed for following Jesus are called martyrs, and the first martyr was a guy named Stephen. When he preached about the good news of Christ, a bunch of people picked up rocks and stoned him to death.

What do you think Christ-followers should do if they're put in this kind of situation? Should they keep under the radar so they can protect themselves? Or should they stick up for what they believe, knowing that there are a lot of people in the world who want to hurt them? This is a question followers of Christ have been wrestling with for centuries, not just a long time ago, but even today. There are many places in the world where believers fear for their lives and experience physical pain because they follow Jesus openly. But even here in the United States, following Christ can still inflict a social and emotional toll. Following Jesus won't always lead to an easy, carefree life. Often, it will make your life harder. How will you respond when others belittle you because of your faith? How would you respond if your relationship with Jesus put your life in danger? Peter, Jesus' close friend and follower, explains what we should do in the following passage.

**Read:** 1 Peter 4:12–19

### **Answer:**

- How does Peter believe we should respond to suffering? Why?
- How can the safe routine of just going to church on Sundays sometimes get in the way of loving people who need our help?
- How does our desire for safety and convenience get in the way of loving people who need our help?





**\* A SECOND LOOK:**

He managed to escape. Sure, it wasn't some elaborate rescue mission. It was just an invitation to teach in another country. But he could only hide for so long. So he got out of there, and fast. Away from the impending war, away from the threats, and away from the abuse and impending doom so many of his friends endured. Finally, he was out of sight and out of mind. He hoped.

When Dietrich got to the States, he started doing all the right things. He taught in a seminary, he helped other escapees find refuge and start over. Back in Germany, the Nazis had been breathing down his neck. He had to lead a seminary "on the run," and his students were arrested. In the States, he could have more impact in a classroom that wasn't under attack—right? But as time went on, Dietrich couldn't avoid seeing the real needs of the people he loved back in Germany. He couldn't walk away from them. His trusted friends told him that he was in the right place. But he eventually wrote, "I have made a mistake in coming to America. I must live through this difficult period in our national history with the Christian people of Germany. I will have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people." So, Dietrich returned to Germany, choosing service over safety. He worked hard to meet needs, and suffered greatly. He took part in the Nazi resistance, he held the church to God's standards, and when he was arrested, he reached out to his fellow prisoners and even the guards by holding Sunday services and teaching them about Jesus Christ. He did all this before he turned 39, when he was executed by the Nazis.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer didn't get lost in his own world, seeking comfort and security. Instead, he put his own safety on the line for the sake of Jesus' message and mission.

**Answer:**

- What did Bonhoeffer risk in order to show Christ's love to the people of Germany? Do you think he knew what he was risking?
  
- What would have been different if Dietrich hadn't gone back to Germany?
  
- You might not face the life-or-death risk that Bonhoeffer did, but how might you be persecuted because of your faith in Jesus?
  
- Do you think you would have been able to follow God's call into a life-threatening place, like Bonhoeffer did? Why or why not?



**RATE IT:**

Give yourself a 1 to 5 rating. How do you react to uncomfortable situations regarding your faith?

**1**

I usually try to protect myself first, even if that means missing opportunities to serve others.

**3**

If it's convenient, I'll love or help out my neighbor.

**5**

I regularly risk my status, time, and convenience to follow Christ's call and love on my neighbors.



**APPLY IT:**

How connected are you to God's burden for the lost? This week, how can you connect to God's heart for the lost and actively seek out people who don't know Jesus?

**Be specific:**

What are you going to do?

When are you going to do it?

Is there someone who can keep you accountable?



**THINK ABOUT IT:**

“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account,” (Matt. 5:11).

“If you are going to walk with Jesus Christ, you are going to be opposed...In our days, to be a true Christian is really to become a scandal.” – George Whitefield

“Of course [spreading the good news of Jesus is] dangerous, but it's a lot more dangerous for all of us if we don't do it. Even in a conquering army there are casualties. Safety is not the issue when we look at the Great Commission. The purpose of the church cannot be to survive, or even to thrive, but to serve.” – Brother Andrew