

## Jesus, on Discipleship

*Understand the World*

John 15:18-27

January 18, 2026

HDBC

**A few years ago a major supplier** of football helmets for the National Football League, issues the following warning label on all their helmets and on their website's homepage: WARNING .... NO HELMET SYSTEM CAN PREVENT CONCUSSIONS OR ELIMINATE THE RISK OF SERIOUS HEAD OR NECK INJURIES WHILE PLAYING FOOTBALL.

**The label** continues with some information about symptoms for concussions and concludes by adding to the original warning: TO AVOID THESE RISKS [OF PLAYING FOOTBALL], DO NOT ENGAGE IN THE SPORT OF FOOTBALL.

**You can't access** any content until you check a box next to the words "Please indicate that you have read and understand [this warning label]."

**In a similar way** Jesus warned his disciples that some really painful things could happen if they continued to follow Him. In fact, He took it a step further, He indicated these things **were sure to happen**.

**He shared this** only hours before **His own enemies arrested, ridiculed, abused, scourged and then nailed him to a cross**. His words, shared in the upper room would take on a terrifying reality within a few hours as they watched what was done to Him. **His warning about what would happen to them, suddenly took on an urgency that terrified them. And so, for the most part, they ran, in fear.**

**But then**, remembering His words & being empowered by the Holy Spirit they picked themselves up & marched into battle. Most would be killed. But they courageously followed Christ, regardless of the warning.

**The record** of this warning is found in John 15. Here Jesus explained how they were to manage three key relationships after He was no longer with them; **with Jesus, with other believers and with the world.**

**They were to abide in Christ.** (John 15:1-11)

They were to love other believers. (John 15:12-17)

**They must understand the world around them.** (John 15:18-27)

He spoke of the hostility that the world would have toward Christians. In doing so **He answered four important questions** that will help us not only survive but win! **Read the Text: John 15:18-27**

## **1. Who are we up against?**

Jesus makes it clear that our enemy in this battle is **the world**. This enemy is after our souls, our families, our character and our eternal life

The word used by Jesus is **cosmos**. **Can mean** the physical universe. Here it refers to **the fallen world system, operating according to the values of Satan** rather than God. It also refers to those people who live by these values and willingly serve it rather than God.

**Jesus came** to redeem the world. However the world, by and large, rejects Him. There are some, a minority who have responded to His offer of grace and forgiveness choosing to follow Him. Others have chosen to remain loyal to the world. Therefore, there is hostility. **Christ-followers are not hostile to the world, but the world and its system is very much hostile toward Christians.**

**Note the** little word **if**. The grammar indicates that this word implies a condition that is assumed to be true. **Like a person saying, if the sun comes up tomorrow I will be on the golf course.** You can expect that person to be on the golf course because the sun will come up. It is true.

**We are immersed** in the world's system. **Like a fish in water, we cannot escape contact with it.** But unlike a fish in water, our environment is

hostile to us, not supportive of us. This does not mean that every person, every company, every organization is out to get us. They are not. However, we need to understand that we are living in a culture that is not naturally supportive of our faith, our values or our morality.

**Governments. Schools. Businesses. Entertainment. Organizations.**

All will have a natural inclination to be hostile toward Christians. **Don't let that bother you.** Expect it. *We need to have the attitude of Richard Winter, of the 101<sup>st</sup> airborne, as is quoted in Band of Brothers. When told that it looked like they were surrounded, he responded:*

***We're paratroopers, Lieutenant. We're supposed to be surrounded.***

***Or like that of Chesty Puller, the most decorated Marine in American history. One time said, We've been looking for the enemy for some time now. We've finally found him. We're surrounded. That simplifies things.***

**So**, who are we up against? The world, influenced by Satan.

## **2. What will they do to us?** Two things

### **1) They will hate us.** (18, 19)

He is not saying everyone will hate us. **They**, is a reference to the world's system & Satan who is behind it. Not everyone, but some who are heavily influenced by the evil one.

**The climate and attitude** of the society around you may change with the seasons & generations. Also geographic location will have an impact on how the world around you feels about your faith. But do not be deceived, the world hates you. Even in America where we have religious freedom we must be reminded that in spite of that, the fundamental attitude of the world toward believers is hatred.

**Many non-believers**, non-church members would take offense at this. They think we are being alarmists and inflammatory. They even

deny it. Most don't realize the influence that Satan & the fallen condition of creation have upon them. They are simply acting in the way that seems most natural to them. **Let's cut them some slack!**

## **2) They will persecute us (20)**

*To drive away, press, harass, molest. To chase like a wild beast!*

**This is the natural outcome** of hatred. When one hates another his hatred results in violent actions. This persecution has come in drastic and direct ways in many parts of our world. Oppressive regimes have brutalized, imprisoned, harassed and killed Christian. In more democratic types of countries like America the persecution is more subtle.

More than 380 million believers face serious persecution. That's 1 in 7 believers worldwide. Oct 23 – Sept 24: 4476 believers killed for their faith (3100 in Nigeria alone). 7679 churches closed or destroyed.

**Most dangerous countries** for Christians: N. Korea, Somalia, Yemen, Libya, Sudan.

**Trends:** Most extreme persecution has shifted to sub-Saharan African. Rise of militant Islam is increasing the persecution.

**In this country** we have enjoyed an amazing freedom from persecution. Even those who dislike Christianity recognize that it was the accepted norm in America and we have been somewhat insulated from attack. But that is rapidly changing. Let's be prepared! That's the point of this text!

Asian Access (or A2), a Christian missions agency in South Asia, listed a series of questions that some church planters have been asking new believers who are considering baptism. (Due to safety concerns, Asian Access does not mention the country's name.) The

country is predominantly Hindu, but over the past few decades Christianity has grown in popularity—especially among poor and tribal peoples. The following seven questions serve as a reality check for what new followers of Jesus *might* experience if they decide to "go public" with their decision to follow Christ:

Are you willing to leave home and lose the blessing of your father?

Are you willing to lose your job?

Are you willing to go to the village and those who persecute you, forgive them, and share the love of Christ with them?

Are you willing to give an offering to the Lord?

Are you willing to be beaten rather than deny your faith?

Are you willing to go to prison?

Are you willing to die for Jesus?

### 3. Why will they do it? 4 reasons

#### 1) We are not of this world. (19)

We are different. Does not refer to outward appearance. That is not the key thing that makes us different from the world.

**The things that are important to us.** Kingdom things.

**How we treat others.** (people made in image of God)

**What we believe about God, our purpose and eternal life.**

**How we handle adversity.** Sovereignty of God.

**Reaction to our own sinfulness.** Confession and repentance.

#### 2) They see Jesus in us (20)

The world hated and persecuted Jesus. We are followers of Jesus. What they did to the leader they will do to the followers. That just makes sense. They see Jesus in us and will come after us with the same hatred and attacks that they did with Jesus.

***It is better to be hated for what you are, than to be loved for what you are not.*** Andre Gide

**It is Christ in us** that the world hates and persecutes.

**3) They do not know God (21)**

Echoes of John 1:5,10.

*And the light shines in the darkness; and the darkness **did not comprehend it.**(5) He was in the world and the world was made through Him, and the world **did not know him.** (10)*

**Though God has revealed** Himself through His son, the world at large does not know him. They may have a belief that there is a higher power, but that belief is vague and ambiguous. They do not know the person!

**4) They are fulfilling prophecy (25)**

Short reminder that God has it all under control. All being fulfilled exactly as planned. Not one part of God's sovereign will is going to go unfulfilled. Even the hatred and persecution of the world cannot alter God's plan.

**4. How do we respond? 3 things**

**1) Remember the words of Jesus (20)**

Don't be surprised. The attitude and action of the world toward us should not surprise us because it did not surprise Him.

The seven questions serve as a sobering reminder for all Christians from every continent of what it might cost us to follow Jesus. These questions also help Western Christians identify with the threats faced by our brothers and sisters from other countries as they seek to follow Christ.

**2) Rely on the Holy Spirit (26)**

Over and over during these last few hours with his followers Jesus stressed the truth that the Holy Spirit would come and indwell us. He

would live in us. Paul amplified this when he wrote that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. He lives in us and will empower us.

### **3) Share the Gospel (27)**

*Testify* is our word martyr. Even in our death we testify of His power and love and grace. And of His ability to change lives. But the word also means just what we think it means, to share. What is it that we share? We share the gospel for it and it alone has the power to transform lives.

**Outward, aggressive hostility** toward Christianity is nothing new. It's the same old stuff that Jesus spoke of 2,000 years ago. When the world finds out that you belong to Christ it will impact the way it treats you.

#### **Takeaways:**

Two are statements of truth. Three are challenges to consider.

**1. Smooth sailing is not always a sign that we are living Godly lives.**

**2. Trouble is not always a sign that we are outside of God's will.**

**3. Let's respond to hostility with love**

Just because the world is hostile toward us does not mean we are hostile toward others in the world. People in the world are not the enemy. They are people in need of the gospel.

**4. Let's refuse to live in fear**

There is a difference between caution and fear. We can have the courage of Daniel as he faced the lions' den. We can have the courage of James and Peter as they were arrested. We can have the courage of Paul as he faced the executioner.

**5. Let's endure suffering gracefully**

If and when persecuted for Christ, let us endure gracefully.