

24:14 Goal



Movement engagements in every unreached people and place by 2025 (76 months)

Missions in a Dangerous World: Missiological Myths vs. Biblical Patterns

Jesus tells us in Matthew 24 that before He returns, many calamities will come, including all kinds of natural and human disasters. Believers will be handed over to persecution, hated by all *ethnē* because of Jesus and even put to death. Many will turn away from faith in Jesus and betray and hate each other. Due to this increase in wickedness, the love of most believers will grow cold. Not a nice picture, huh?

He then says *and* (Matt. 24:14a) in the *middle* of all of that mess (rather than saying *but* or *in spite of*), two related things will happen. 1) Those who stand firm to the end will be saved, and 2) this good news of the kingdom will be shared publicly in the whole world as a sacrificial testimony to all *ethnē* – and *then* the end will come! In other words, *all* peoples will be given the “Jesus option” before the end comes. And that will happen *in the middle* of all the turmoil, not in spite of it.

Waves of persecution have happened throughout history and are nothing new. Two main responses have occurred: 1) believers get upset and surprised when it happens and advise each other to lie low so maybe they will not be targeted; and 2) some believers become wisely bold, yet pure in motivation. This latter group has made many disciples during these periods, often at great cost.

In the mid-1980s, about half the mission force from all organizations in Indonesia were forced out of the country. Many who remained or had just arrived realized a new urgency and took bold new steps to make disciples in spite of any risks they faced. Today, in several major countries, workers are under severe government scrutiny or getting kicked out. What will be our response? Will we succumb to missiological myths or follow biblical patterns? See what you think of the following.

« Waves of persecution have happened throughout history and are nothing new. »

Myth 1: The safest place in the world is in the center of God’s will. Many interpret this to mean physical safety. If one is faithful, one will not suffer or certainly not die. Another version is “mission can be done in a safe way if we are careful enough.”

Biblical Pattern—We will suffer while in the center of God’s will. Jesus lived completely in the center of God’s will – and He was killed. In fact, He knew He would be killed and He risked His life willingly.

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In 2 Corinthians 1:8-11, Paul describes how he and his team experienced pressure beyond what they felt they could endure. They despaired to the point they felt like their death sentence had been passed. Yet in that terrible situation they learned to depend on God and continued to impact people.

« Will we succumb to missiological myths or follow biblical patterns? »

In 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, Paul lists his many sufferings: multiple floggings, shipwrecks, stonings, imprisonments, bandits, hunger, thirst, nakedness, danger in numerous places and from numerous types of people. Let's be real. Proclaiming Jesus among the unreached can cause real pain, grief, despair, injustice, tragedy, etc. Let's be more real. It will all be worth it when we see reproducing disciples with changed lives in Christ.

Myth 2: If we handle our identity carefully, have a good business platform, avoid "missionary" identity, and use very good electronic security measures, the governments and religious authorities of the world will let us continue to work and we might be effective.

Biblical Pattern—We should be bold witnesses even when watched by the authorities. People already know who we are and are watching us. So we may as well be wisely public. We want to be wise (and not get persecuted for acting foolishly), but we must not allow the powers of this world to push us into adopting a secular persona. No very cautious person has ever been known to catalyze a movement to make disciples.

Jesus said: "When [not *if*] you are brought before ... the authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say." (Luke 12:11-12, NIV)

He calls us to continue to share, even under the threat of death. He invites us also to rejoice when we suffer disgrace for Jesus' sake. 'Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven.' (Matt. 5:12a, NIV) The apostles modeled this boldness and this joy.

The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings!" (Acts 5:27-29, NIV)

The authorities were furious and decided to put them to death. Gamaliel convinced them not to kill them, so they just flogged them (!) and again commanded them not to talk about Jesus.

Did they stop? *Not a bit.* They *never* stopped teaching. They taught day by day. They did it publically in the temple courts and from house to house. And they rejoiced they were counted worthy to suffer disgrace for the name! (Acts 5: 40-42)

Myth 3: We, the outsiders, can escape suffering if we are careful enough, and still effectively help our local partners learn to be prepared for suffering.

Biblical Pattern—We must model willingness to suffer for Jesus. We rightly feel concerned when groups we help start do not multiply. A reason often given is that everyone in the culture is suspicious of others and thus hesitant to make disciples. Could it also be that we have not modeled a willingness to risk arrest and suffering for the sake of the gospel?

« Let's be willing and bold to risk in genuine humility. »

Let's be willing and bold to risk in genuine humility. The Apostle Paul gave us a model and a challenge in this, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." (1 Cor. 11:1). Jesus' example ultimately led to His great sacrifice – and the huge response which followed. 