

TOUGH AS NAILS

In The Beginning

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Scripture: Mark 15:15; Matthew 27:28–30; Matthew 27:39–40, 42; Luke 9:23; Matthew 10:28–31; Matthew 8:26–27

Idea: Uncertainty is unavoidable. Fearful is optional.

Introduction

Paris terror attacks this past November that killed 130 people sent shockwaves through the Western world. The subsequent attacks on American soil . . .

1. Not because there was another terror attack. But because terror of that sort was something that happened *over there*. Paris felt like *over here*. For Europeans and Americans.
2. The subsequent attacks on American soil underscored that *over there* isn't over there anymore.
3. So there is a new and understandable level of fear and anxiety for all Americans.
4. Many more Muslims have been murdered because they were perceived to be the wrong brand.
5. 2014 was the worst year in modern history for Christian persecution, until last year. 2015 was the "worst year in modern history for Christian persecution."
6. More than 7,100 Christians were killed for faith-related reasons, and 2,400 churches were destroyed or damaged (watchdog group Open Doors).

"The level of exclusion, discrimination, and violence against Christians in some countries has risen to a level akin to ethnic cleansing." —Open Doors President, David Curry

7. To complicate matters, Christians in our country feel like the cultural, legislative, and academic tone has become increasingly anti-Christian as well.
8. Some feel our religious liberty is being threatened. Free speech.
9. I understand the anger and frustration. I understand the fear in culture in general as it relates to terrorism.
10. Today, I want to talk to a subset of Americans and Europeans: followers of Jesus.

How should we respond? If you are not a Jesus follower, this may cause you to consider it.

11. After all, for the past several years, Christians in our nation have felt attacked and devalued, not only by extremists "over there" but also by people right here.