India is the fourth-worst country in the world for religious violence

Ananya Bhattacharya, April 14, 2017 Quartz India

https://qz.com/

India historically touts itself as a secular state, one where all religions are recognized and can peacefully co-exist. Well, at least in theory, it is. Unfortunately, the reality is much different.

An April 11 Pew Research Center analysis of 198 countries ranked India as fourth worst in the world for religious intolerance. In the country of 1.3 billion, the incidence of hostility related to religion trailed only Syria, Nigeria and Iraq, all places where sectarian violence is widespread.

India is not alone in seeing more religious unrest. Globally, Pew says, government restrictions on religion and social hostilities involving religion increased in 2015 for the first time in three years. Pew analyzed cases that involved hate crimes, mob violence, communal violence, religion-related terror, the use of force to prevent religious practice, the harassment of women for not conforming to religious dress codes, and violence over conversion or proselytizing.

The Hindu vs. Muslim history

Tensions between religious groups—especially Hindus and Muslims—has long divided India, but the rifts have intensified. “[In 2015] Muslims in India at times experienced attacks by Hindus because of alleged cow slaughter, while Hindus were also sometimes the targets of hostilities by Muslims as well,” Katayoun Kishi, the study’s lead author, told Quartz. “In addition, there were multiple incidents of rioting and mob violence involving the two groups.”

Lynchings of beef-eating Muslims have compromised India’s status as a secular state. But a re-burgeoning Hindutva nationalist agenda has not made even the majority Hindu immunity to discrimination, in India or elsewhere. Around the world, Hindus were harassed in 18 countries, fewer places than some other groups. “But the vast majority of the world’s Hindus—95%—live in India, where harassment of Hindus by both government and social groups was reported in 2015,” the study’s authors note.

Daily, the lowest-caste Hindus, Church leaders, who had come to pay their last respects. At least 5 Christians were injured in the skirmishes, Bro. Rahul and 2 others who were critically injured and bleeding heavily, needed to be hospitalized while many others were wounded on their heads and upper bodies.

Report

PERSECUTION RELIEF
AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL INITIATIVE TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT TO THE PERSECUTED CHURCH IN INDIA

For Private Circulation, within the Church
A Message to those Who Kill Us (Fr. Boules George)

Palm Sunday 2017, two bombs exploded in Egypt, one inside St. George's Church in Tanta, and one just outside St. Mark’s in Alexandria wherein Pope Tawadros II was praying. At the Eve of Monday Pascha service, Fr. Boules George gave a most powerful and compelling sermon. Because we English speakers are deprived of 80% of the beautiful things that come out of the Church (this is not a statistical fact but it is a feeling). I tried to translate as much of this clip as I could into week understanding. It gave me SO much comfort and SO much strength, and I felt it would be wrong not to pass it on. Tamer Mina did what I could not—he created a subtitled video of the clip which originally inspired me. Please watch even a bit of it to get a feel for Fr. Boules. My written translation is a shadow of the force of his words and the Holy Spirit that fills them. I am confident that Coptic priests across the globe gave similar messages. We must ALL pray for them today that God opens their eyes and open hearts to His love. Because if they knew Him, they could NEVER do this.

A VERY sincere thank you to Tamer Mina (Cairo, Egypt) for bringing to church those who are rejoicing with God. www.copticdadandmom.com/fr-boules-george

26 April to 13 May 2017
Volume 1 Issue 12

A Message to those Who Kill Us (Fr. Boules George)

Fr. Boules George, St. Mark, Cleopatra (Cairo, Egypt)

A VERy sincere thank you to Tamer Mina for creating a video with subtitles! Watch + read at once! Or just read the transcript below.

What will we say to them?

THANK YOU

The first thing we will say is "Thank you very, very much," and you won't believe us when we say it.

You know why we thank you? I'll tell you. You won't get it, but please believe us.

You gave us to die the same death as Christ—and this is the biggest honor we could have. Christ was crucified—and this is our faith. He died and was slaughtered—and this is our faith. You gave us, and you gave us to die.

We thank you because you shortened for us the journey. When someone is headed home to a particular city, he keeps looking at the time. "When will I get home? Are we there yet?"

Can you imagine if in an instant he finds himself on a rocket ship straight to his destination? You shortened the journey! Thank you for shortening the journey.

We thank you because you gave to us to fulfill what Christ said to us: "Behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves" (Luke 10:3).

We were lambs; our only weapons: our faith and the church we pray in. I carry no weapon in my hand. We are so grateful that you helped us fulfill this saying of Christ.

Thank you for helping us achieve our goal. You're helping us, and you don't even know it. I know you don't understand, but I'm trying to explain it to you. There are people we visited at home to encourage them to come to church—three, four, five times. Still they won't come. What you're doing helps us to encourage them to come. But people who never come. Believe me—it's bringing to church the people who never come!

People who were living in sin and away from God, after the bombing of St. Peter's Chapel in the Cathedral, they were saying, “You never know when your number’s up. Better take more care (in our spiritual lives).” All these visitations we do—you're so much more effective. You're filling up our churches! You're filling our churches!

Let's speak plainly here... Usually attendance at the Eve of Monday Pascha is very little. People are usually so tired after a long Palm Sunday Liturgy and the General Funeral, and they don't come to the Eve of Monday services. When I came in tonight, there were people on chairs outside the sanctuary, there were people in the balcony seating. The church is completely full. There isn't even one empty nook. Thank you. We are so grateful that you're helping fill up our churches.

When you do this, you irritate the soul of the person who was lazy before.

You make his conscience and the love of God within him prods him to come to church.

Can you see why we thank you? We're not being deceptive. A priest holding a microphone can't lie to you! I say to you: THANK YOU. Thank you for all you have done for us without even noticing.

WE LOVE

The second part of the message we want to send to you is that we love you. And this, unfortunately, you won't understand at all. Maybe you won't believe us when we say we're grateful. But this—you won't even understand. Why won't you understand it? Because this is a teaching of our Christ. I want to explain to you about our Christ. I want to tell you about how wonderful He is.

See what Christ said: If you love those who love you, you have no profit or reward with me. Even thugs and thieves love those who love them. Any gang loves its members. Even the drug dealers all like each other and take care of each other. Right? But I want to tell you that "If you love those who love you, what reward have you... But I say to you, love your enemies"(Matthew 5:46, 44).

We Christians don't have enemies. We don't have enemies; others make enmity with us. The Christian doesn't make enemies because we are commanded to love everyone.

And so, we love because this is the teaching of our God—that I love you—no matter what you do to me.

I love you very much. And I want to say one last thing to you: we're praying for you. Because the One who told us to love you told us to "think of those who hate you... and PRAY for those who spitefully use you" (Matthew 5:44). So my instructions from my loving God make it my duty to pray for you.

In one of the dioceses, there is a bishop. In that diocese, there is a man who gets on the microphone every week to say terrible things about Christians—unheard of things. So the servants (of the diocese) are hearing this man and are so upset. We didn't do anything to this man. He's just taken a vow to curse us. Every Friday he comes out and curses the Christians.

So the bishop is sitting with his servants, and he asks them, “Are you upset by what this man says?” And they say, “Of course! We are so upset! What's he doing to us!” The bishop gets quiet and his face darkens with sorrow. The servants say to him, “You have a right to be upset from what he says, Your Grace. You have a right.” “I'm not upset with him,” the bishop says, “I'm upset with you! You are servants—you? How many of you pray for him every day? Because if you tasted of the love of God, if he knew who our Lord is, he could never hate again because God is love. How many of you are praying for him? Aren't you servants! Aren't you Christians! So you are a servant teaching in the Sunday School here, and you've broken the commandment of Christ to pray for this person?”

So what do you think? How about we make a commitment to pray for them? Pray that they know the God of love? Pray that they experience the love of God? Because if they knew that God is love and experienced His love, they could not do these things—never, never, never.

They are a wretched lot. And because they are wretched, we must pray for them. But when someone loves God, he won't know except love.

We need to pray for them so they can sleep at night. A person who has all this inside them, how can he sleep comfortably?

Can you imagine? We are being slaughtered, and the King of Peace gives us peace to sleep. And the one who slaughters, all night he can't sleep.

You know where this happens in the Bible? With Daniel and the king. Daniel is put in the lion's den and he stays up all night praising God and praying for the king. And the king is up all night, tossing and turning, unable to sleep.

Pray for them. Take it as a command. Take it as a duty. Take it as the application of Christ’s instructions.

We must ALL pray for them today that God opens their eyes and open hearts to His love. Because if they knew Him, they could NEVER do this.

I don't want to take too long. God comforts.God gives understanding. God give us JOY because Christ's promise is true. He said, "I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy NO ONE will take from you" (John 16:22).

I'm embarrassed to say at the beginning of Holy Week that the Church, though she is in pain, rejoices because today—I don't know what the final count is. They said 40-something, and, of course, many people in the hospitals will catch up to them. All of these are crowns. They are rejoicing with God. And they will attend the Resurrection up there. And they are praying for us. The rest is on us.

O, you lucky, lucky, lucky one! And until it is our turn.

To our God be the glory now and forever. Amen.
Beaten unconscious for not denying Christ

VoTC Correspondent

Mandwa is situated in Nepanagar tehsil and located in Burhanpur district of Madhya Pradesh state. Bro. Prakash was born in a Hindu household, but he stayed with serious alcohol abuse, for years until he met Jesus. Jesus truly set him free and gave him a purpose for living. Bro. Prakash experienced complete deliverance through the work of God's Holy Spirit in his heart.

Bro. Prakash converted to Christianity, was baptized, and a regular Church member at IET Church in Nepa Nagar. On 13th April, the local mob of villagers and the Sarpanch, ganged up together, threatened and misbehaved him, trying to force him to drink alcohol. When he was adamant that he was delivered from its curse, they then brutally beat him until he was unconscious.

Bro. Prakash was rushed to hospital in a critical condition and admitted to the ICU. By the grace of God and countless prayers lifted up by our ‘prayer warriors’ Bro. Prakash and countless prayers to the ICU. By the grace of God its curse, they then brutally beat him until he was unconscious.

Bro. Prakash was rushed to hospital in a critical condition and admitted to the ICU. By the grace of God and countless prayers lifted up by our ‘prayer warriors’ Bro. Prakash and countless prayers to the ICU. By the grace of God and countless prayers lifted up by our ‘prayer warriors’ Bro. Prakash and countless prayers lifted up by our ‘prayer warriors’ Bro. Prakash and countless prayers lifted up by our ‘prayer warriors’ Bro. Prakash and countless prayers lifted up by our ‘prayer warriors’ Bro. Prakash and countless prayers lifted up by our ‘prayer warriors’ Bro. Prakash.

Although the local police of Nepanagar reached the spot, no action was taken against the villagers.

The police allowed the Sarpanch and the villagers get away scot free. Justice has repeatedly been denied to those who are persecuted and detained in police stations on their liberty curtailed in other manners. Christians in the locality were also warned that their names will be removed for ration cards if they did not renounce their Christian faith. Few days prior to this incident the villagers were warned that Christians would be beaten up on Friday 7th April 2017 during Good Friday Worship service, The Pastor submitted a memorandum at Nepanagar Police station regarding this threat, but no action was taken by the police authorities. Church please pray.

Catholic bishop, five others acquitted in conversion case

April 21, 2017 by: mattersindia.com

Retired Bishop Mathew Vaniazkakkil of Sarna

Bhopal: The Madhya Pradesh High Court has given clean chit to a Catholic bishop and five others in a nine-year-old religious conversion case. There is “no sufficient evidence to frame the charges against the petitioners,” says the order by the probe team headed by Justice S K Gangele.

The April 11 order was released to the media on April 20.

The court based at Jabalpur acquitted Bishop Mathew Vaniazkakkil of Sarna, two priests, a nun and two others who work in the central Indian diocese.

The six were accused of converting a Hindu woman to Christianity and then marrying her off to a Christian man in an illegal ceremony. The case was filed after one Christopher Pavy, Catholic, complained to the police and sought action against the Church people.

Madhya Pradesh is among the Indian states where stringent laws exist check religious conversions. Such conversions, without proper approval of the government agency, are a punishable offence.

Although the police’s preliminary probe could not find evidence to support the allegation, they registered the case allegedly under political pressure.

Father Jolly Father Jolly Kannukodan, one of the accused priests, said despite many hurdles they managed to defend their innocent at every level. “We were sure that the truth will triumph one day,” the priest told Matters India.

The other accused were vicar general George Mangalapally, Sacred Heart Sister Pauly, principal of Christ Jyoti Secondary School, Thomas Varghese, a teacher, and Monica Moses, who allegedly converted to Christianity after marriage.

As the trial progressed in the trial court, the prosecution failed to prove the alleged conversion charge. But still the prosecution tried to “prosecute us for another alleged offence of conspiracy and disturbing communal harmony,” Father Kannukodan said.

The accused then moved the Madhya Pradesh High Court seeking direction to quash the charges against them. Finally, the appellate court allowed their petition and discharged them from all the charges, the priest said.

The High Court said further in its order, “The trial court and revisional court did not consider the evidence produced by the prosecution properly. Consequently, the petition is allowed.

The charges framed against the petitioners are hereby quashed. The criminal prosecution of the petitioners for commission of offence 120-B and 295-A is also hereby quashed.”

The prelate and others were on bail after they were all booked under the non-bailable Sections of the anti-conversion law.

“We are grateful to the Almighty and the court for upholding the truth,” Father Kannukodan said with a deep sigh.

The bishop had taken voluntary retirement on health reasons in August 2014. At the time of filing the case the bishop told the media that it was “totally fabricated” as part of “a motivated campaign to discredit the Church for helping the disadvantaged sections in society.”

Rajesh Chand, the prelate’s lawyer, told Matters India on April 21 that the bishop and others have the legal right to institute a defamation suit against the complainant for implicating them in a totally false case.

However, the Church leaders said they did want any further legal battle. “We don’t want to revenge.” Father Kannukodan said.
The SC’s interpretation should for allegedly take place at St. Vincent’s Church Cuttack-Bhubaneshwar, and will Msgr. John Barwa, Archbishop of ceremony will be presided over by 29 year old deacon who will take Carmelite priest. It Is Johnson Digal, waged the most ferocious massacre Kandhamal district in the Indian state pogroms of 2008 his house was burned and he Johnson Digal is 29 years old and comes from a “Insults to religion offered unwittingly penal provision to deliberate and malicious acts rather than casual observable facts that are not driven by malicious intent. “Insults to religion offered unwittingly or carelessly or without any deliberate or malicious intention to outrage the religious feelings of that class do not come within the section,” a bench of Justices Dipak Misra, A M Khanwilkar and M MShantanagoudar said. The bench passed the order on a plea by cricketer M S Dhoni challenging criminal proceedings against him by “deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings or any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs”. Despite a 1957 judgment of the SC that Section 295A could not be slapped on a person for unintentionally hurting religious sentiments, the rampant misuse of the penal provision persuaded the bench to clarify yet again the width and ambit of the legal position. “It is clear as crystal that Section 295A does not stipulate everything to be penalized and any and every act would tantamount to insult or attempt to insult the religion or the religious beliefs of class of citizens. It penalizes only those acts of insults or those varieties of attempts to insult the religion or religious belief of a class of citizens which are perpetrated with the deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings towards that class of citizens,” the bench said. “The Constitution bench has further clarified that the said provision only punishes the aggravated form of insult to religion when it is perpetrated with the deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of that class. Emphasis has been laid on the calculated tendency of the said aggravated form of insult and also to disrupt the public order to invite the penalty,” the court said while referring to the 1957 Constitution bench verdict of the apex court. A sequel of Bollywood actors have had to face criminal proceedings under the section and in 2016, stand-up comedian Kiku Sharda was arrested for allegedly mocking Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh on his show. In September 2014, Salman Khan was accused of insulting Muslim sentiments when a model walked the ramp with an Arabic word inscribed on her T-shirt at a fashion show organized by his NGO, Being Human. A police complaint was filed against him. A case was also registered against actor Aamir Khan in Delhi for hurting religious sentiments for dressing as Lord Shiva and pulling a rickshaw on which two burqa-clad women were sitting. An FIR was filed in Rajasthan’s Ajmer city against Akshay Kumar and film director Umesh Shukla for hurting the religious sentiments of Hindus for portraying the actor as Lord Krishna in film ‘Oh My God’. In 2012, a case was filed against Shah Rukh Khan and his wife over a song, “Buddha on the dance floor”, in the film ‘Student Of The Year’. He was the co-producer of the film.

First Carmelite priest of Kandhamal: I will help the Hindus understand the Catholic faith

Johnson Digal is 29 years old and comes from a village of 20 families, mostly Hindus. During the pogroms of 2008 his house was burned and he lived in a refugee camp. “Since I started to visit my neighbors, they have started to change their attitude and no longer have a negative view of Christianity.”

Santosh Digal, Asianews. It April 08, 2017 Bhubaneswar (AsiaNews) - The Kandhamal district in the Indian state of Orissa, where in 2008 Hindu extremists waged the most ferocious massacre against Christians, will have its first Carmelite priest. It is Johnson Digal, 29 year old deacon who will take the vows on 22 April. The ordination ceremony will be presided over by Msgr. John Barwa, Archbishop of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar, and will take place at St. Vincent’s Church in Bhubaneswar. For Asianews he states that its mission “as a seminarian and as a priest brief is to help the residents of his village, mostly Hindus, to develop a perception, behavior and a healthy and friendly understanding of the Catholic faith.” The deacon is part of the Order of Friars of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel (commonly called Carmelites). He is originally from the village of Lujuramunda and belongs to the parish of Shrinkrah, in Kandhamal district. In 2008 this was the epicenter of the pogroms unleashed by Hindu extremists, claimed the lives of 100 Christians and 65 thousand others forced to flee their homes. He said that during the violence even his house was burned down and he and his family have been living as displaced persons in a government refugee camp. The village where he was born is made up of 20 families (around 400 people), in which the majority professes the Hindu religion. Some are Protestant and only two including the Digal family - Catholic. The Carmelite reports that “most of the local residents and even some of my relatives do not understand much of Catholicism and the priesthood values. I hope to change all through my interactions and my filial relationships with them. “During my studies at the seminary - more - I have often visited the houses of the village and explained to the people the different aspects of the Catholic faith and the values of celibacy as a minister of the Church. And so over the years I have noticed that they are changing gradually their negative attitude towards the Catholic Church. There are positive signs.”

Johnson was born in 1987 and attended elementary school in the village; later he studied in high school Assembly of God Mission School in Bhubaneswar and followed a pre-university course at the Biju Patnaik College. In 2007 he entered the Order of Carmelites and received a two-year training at LisieuxBhavan Kannur, in Kerala. Then he studied philosophy at the seminary of the Sacred Heart College. In 2013 holding several things, including the cover of a business magazine in Rome. After ordination he will train the young seminarians of the Diocese of Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh, where recently has established the new government led by the Hindu nationalist BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party). In memory of the violence that he himself lived, now his goal is to build friendly relations between the various religious communities and “make sure that the Hindus to develop positive attitudes towards the Catholic Church, that take care of all sectors of society regardless of creed, class or caste, through social, educational and pastoral activities." “All have suffered because of violence - he concludes -. Now people have overcome the trauma. In Kandhamal district gradually emerging reconciliation between people of different faiths, although there is still much to do in this path of peace”. 
Global religious persecution spiked from 2014 to 2015, the Pew Research Center reported in a new report released this week.

“Government restrictions on religion and social hostilities involving religion increased in 2015 for the first time in three years,” the annual report said.

The report noted that 67 nations reported incidents of hostility involving religion in 2015, compared to 51 countries in the previous year.

The increase was driven by higher levels of government harassment of religious groups or violence or harassment toward adherents of specific religions by other members of society.

The report found that 21 countries showed marked increases in “social hostilities involving religion,” Pew Research Center said.

Certain regions fared worse than others. Countries in the Middle East and North Africa showed the highest levels of government harassment of religious groups and ‘political intolerance.’

In Europe, there were many reports of violence against Muslims and Jews, continuing a pattern of both anti-Semitism and anti-Islamism.

The report noted that 30 countries had more than 50 “cases of government force against religious groups,” compared to 22 in 2014.

Thirty-two countries were considered “highly hostile” to religious groups in 2015, compared to 27 in 2014, Pew Research Center said.

Some governments have been particularly restrictive of religious freedom, such as China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, and Uzbekistan, the report noted. Others have more recently shown greater hostility, such as Iraq, Eritrea, Vietnam, and Singapore in 2015.

Some of the government restrictions on religion were supposedly in reaction to terrorism. For instance, Muslim women in Cameroon and Niger were barred from wearing full-face veils after militants wore those veils to conceal bombs.

Both Christians and Muslims saw a sizable increase in the number of countries where they experienced harassment in 2015.

Some countries and regions of the world showed especially high hostility towards religious groups. Russia, Egypt, India, Pakistan, and Nigeria all showed both government harassment of and social animus toward certain religious groups. Some of the most common instances of hostility included "mob violence" waged against people the offices of the beliefs or violence conducted in the name of religion, and also “government harassment and use of force against religious groups” Pew explained.

Certain regions fared worse than others. Countries in the Middle East and North Africa featured the highest median levels by far of both “government restrictions on religion” and “social hostilities involving religion,” Pew reported.

However countries in sub-Saharan Africa showed the “largest increase” in government harassment and “the median levels of government restrictions on religion” and “social hostilities involving religion,” Pew reported.

In Europe, there were many reports of violence and other harassment of Muslims and Jews, continuing a pattern of both anti-Semitism and anti-Islamism.

The report noted that 30 countries experienced “social hostilities toward Muslims” in 2015, compared to 28 in 2014.

Some governments have been particularly restrictive of religious freedom, such as China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, and Uzbekistan, the report noted. Others have more recently shown greater hostility, such as Iraq, Eritrea, Vietnam, and Singapore in 2015.

Some of the government restrictions on religion were supposedly in reaction to terrorism. For instance, Muslim women in Cameroon and Niger were barred from wearing full-face veils after militants wore those veils to conceal bombs.

Both Christians and Muslims saw a sizable increase in the number of countries where they experienced harassment in 2015.

Some countries and regions of the world showed especially high hostility towards religious groups. Russia, Egypt, India, Pakistan, and Nigeria all showed both government harassment of and social animus toward certain religious groups. Some of the most common instances of hostility included "mob violence" waged against people the offices of the beliefs or violence conducted in the name of religion, and also “government harassment and use of force against religious groups” Pew explained.

Certain regions fared worse than others. Countries in the Middle East and North Africa featured the highest median levels by far of both “government restrictions on religion” and “social hostilities involving religion,” Pew reported.

However countries in sub-Saharan Africa showed the “largest increase” in government harassment and “the median levels of government restrictions on religion” and “social hostilities involving religion,” Pew reported.

In Europe, there were many reports of violence and other harassment of Muslims and Jews, continuing a pattern of both anti-Semitism and anti-Islamism.

The report noted that 30 countries experienced “social hostilities toward Muslims” in 2015, compared to 28 in 2014.

Some governments have been particularly restrictive of religious freedom, such as China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, and Uzbekistan, the report noted. Others have more recently shown greater hostility, such as Iraq, Eritrea, Vietnam, and Singapore in 2015.

Some of the government restrictions on religion were supposedly in reaction to terrorism. For instance, Muslim women in Cameroon and Niger were barred from wearing full-face veils after militants wore those veils to conceal bombs.

Both Christians and Muslims saw a sizable increase in the number of countries where they experienced harassment in 2015.
Maintaining a Spirit of Optimistic Faith in a Messed-Up World

**Michael Brown**

How do we maintain an attitude of faith and victory in a messed-up, crazy world? How do we walk in confidence and holy optimism when things are collapsing around us?

Every day, we are exposed to all kinds of bad news through the media, from the latest Islamic terrorist attacks to the latest moral madness, from plane crashes to natural disasters. Added to this are the very real hardships that many of us experience in our own lives, from a cancer diagnosis to an unexpected divorce, from a painful church split to a devastating car crash.

How do we live in faith and joy and expectation when we’re surrounded by evil and calamity?

Here are six simple principles to enable you to live as an overcomer.

1. **Keep your head above the details.** It’s part of my calling to sound the alarm and call for repentance, and since I do a daily radio broadcast and write several articles a week, I’m constantly confronted with very bad news. In fact, sometimes I’m bombarded by it, almost around the clock.

   Last week, when the governor and legislators of Indiana were caving in to pressure, I was copied in several email threads that stayed busy through the day, as conservative leaders talked strategy and bemoaned the bad decisions that were being made. These emails continued to pour in as I did my live broadcast, and it was easy to get swallowed up in negativity when I checked my emails during the short program breaks.

   The key is to keep your head above the details, which do not reflect the final or ultimate reality.

   Circumstances change.

   Opinions are fickle.

   Emotions can be up and down.

   But God never changes, and His promises are eternally true.

   Don’t allow yourself to get caught up in the swirl of negative details.

2. **Stay in the Spirit through the Word, prayer and worship.** Faith is not denial.

   Faith is not putting our head in the sand.

   Faith is believing in the absolute truths declared by an infallible God.

   In that sense, faith is taking hold of the ultimate, highest reality.

   In order to do this, we must make choices to get in the Spirit, and we can do this by reciting and reading and meditating on God’s Word, by casting every burden on the Lord in prayer, and by worship and praise.

   It’s no coincidence that the miraculous, liberating earthquake that delivered Paul and Silas came when they were singing hymns and praising God at midnight while chained in a prison cell after receiving a severe flogging (see Acts 16).

   They could have been complaining and focused on their very real problems and pain; instead they were praising and focused on the goodness of their God.

3. **Remember that Jesus has risen from the dead and is Lord.** I don’t mean to be trite, but all I really need to know is that Jesus died for my sins, rose from the dead and ascended to heaven as Lord, and with that firsthand knowledge, I can live in confidence the rest of my life, come what may.

   As we just celebrated the death and resurrection of Jesus this past weekend, we were reminded of how dark things looked for the disciples when their Master was crucified.

   It looked as if things were over, as if their hopes and dreams were shattered, as if they had allowed their faith and expectation to rise—the Messiah is here!—only to be crushed with the cruel disappointment of reality. “Your so-called Messiah was a failure, a man just like the rest of us. You were dead wrong!”

   And then He rose from the dead, shattering the very power of death, ultimately ascending to the right hand of the Father where all authority is heaven and earth is His (Matt. 28:18).

   All the bad news in the world can’t outweigh that reality, and since I know that our Lord will one day return to establish His kingdom on the earth, I know that the final outcome will be beautiful and blessed, and that fuels my daily attitude of faith.

4. **Put yourself in remembrance and testify to the goodness of God.** In the midst of severe trials, it’s easy to forget what God has done in the past.

   Put yourself in remembrance.

   Go back to those old journal entries.

   Dust off those old books filled with amazing accounts that cause your heart to soar.

   Testify to what the Lord has done for you in the past, and listen to testimonies from others.

   Before you know it, faith will be rising afresh in your life.

5. **Don’t be moved from doing and believing what is right.** None of us remember the names of the 10 Israelite spies who said, “We can’t take the land,” but all of us remember the names of Joshua and Caleb.

   We don’t admire those who waver, who lack courage, who are double-minded.

   Instead, we admire those who stand tall in the midst of the storm, who don’t give in to the pressure of the age, who refuse to compromise.

   Determine to be one of those people as opposed to a fair-weather child of God who buckles the moment things go wrong.

   Developing spiritual and moral backbone pays great benefits, enabling you to see the vindication of the Lord, thereby giving you greater strength to overcome in the next trial and test.

6. **Remember that God is always working.** What Joseph’s brothers did to him was absolutely terrible, but God used it for the saving of many lives (see Gen. 50:15-25). In the face of that, Joseph mentions the pruning of his own character.

   The crucifixion of Jesus was the worst crime committed in human history, but God used it for the salvation of the world.

   And it was out of the ashes of the Holocaust and the modern State of Israel was born.

   Remember that our Father is always working, turning all things for the good of those who love Him while also conforming us to the image of His Son (see Rom. 8:28-32).

   He turns stumbling blocks into stepping stones and takes things that were meant for evil and makes them into platforms of good.

   That is the God that we serve, and that is how in Him, we can overcome and be more than conquerors (see John 5:4; Rom. 8:35-39).

   Millions of believers have proven this to be true in their generation. Let’s prove it to be true in our own.

   **Michael Brown** is the author of 25 books, including *Can You Be Gay and Christian?* and host of the nationally syndicated talk radio show *The Line of Fire.* He is also president of FIRE School of Ministry and director of the Coalition of Conscience.

---

**Franklin Graham: It’s Barbaric, Evil and Time for Us to Get up and Do Something**

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

Last year, more than 90,000 Christians were killed because of their faith—that’s one person every six minutes.

Studies continue to show Christ followers are the most persecuted believers in the world, and the attacks are only getting worse. But, how should we respond?

“It’s barbaric, it’s evil, and it’s time for us to get up and do something,” Franklin Graham recently said about persecution. “I believe that we as Christians need to wake up. If we don’t do it now, it’ll be too late.”

To help bring light to the crisis, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association has dedicated its April television special to telling stories of persecution. The program, *Persecution and the Gospel,* includes emotional accounts and gut-wrenching video of what countless Christians are facing.

“This is going on day after day. Week after week,” Graham said. “Christians are under attack.”

Graham notes that persecution isn’t just limited to the Middle East. In fact, the TV special features the story of a man living in Sudan who faces so much danger his identity had to be hidden. A priest in Iraq who was kidnapped and tortured, as well as a pastor in Lebanon whose church was attacked, share their plight.

“Genocide is a polite word for what happened to my people,” the priest says in the 30-minute program airing now. “The message has to arrive: Save my people! We are dying here!”

*Persecution and the Gospel* comes a month ahead of the World Summit in Defense of Persecuted Christians, which BGEA is sponsoring in Washington, D.C., May 10-13. The event will bring together 600 church leaders and advocates from 130 countries—many of them victims of persecution.

In addition to *Persecution and the Gospel,* BGEA will share other stories from *Christians,* their families and their families leading up to the event.

“I want the politicians to see firsthand what’s taking place,” Graham explained. “I want to put a big spotlight on the Christians around the world that are being persecuted, that are being tortured.”
I have often looked to the older women with gray hair in the church as role models to the younger women. In the Bible Paul writes about this in Titus 2 and so many times we call them the "Titus 2 Women." Well, as time goes by I’ve come to realize that now one of those women! God has not turned my hair so gray yet but when it does turn I intend to keep that crown of glory (Proverbs 16:31). Take a look at what I have learned from my study about the importance of older women with gray hair in the church.

Older Women Have Been There, Done That
Titus 2:3 The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; In this letter from Paul to Titus (a young preacher), Paul is disciplining Titus on the proper behavior of the brethren. He encourages Titus to teach the "aged women" to be behavior like this does because he knows, just like I have done in the past, the younger women look to the older ones to see role models for proper behavior. These older women are encouraged to speak the truth (Ephesians 4:15). Rather than being filled with too much wine, the older women should be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18-19). They should be teaching the younger women based upon their experience and wisdom (Colossians 3:16).

Keeping the Home Is Important
Titus 2:4–5 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. Even in today’s day and age, someone has to occur to us that we need to keep the home in order. God made "woman" to "help meet the needs of man" and so we don’t get it wrong. I understand that the woman is not necessarily the keeper of the home in all cases today. Even so, I want to point out God’s original design and why it is important for the older women in the church to encourage the younger women on how to consider “keepers at home” as the primary focus of younger women. This is not my design, I am simply getting back to the Bible on this.

We see in this passage that Paul again mentions “to be sober”. (1). So essentially, Paul is saying that the older women should be teachers on how to do it as God desires. In Paul’s (and Titus’s) time the young women in the church were saved out of paganism. Sometimes, the feelings of love were not prevalent in marriages. The men were used to going elsewhere to satisfy their sexual desires and the women were responsible to take care of the home and the children. Paul

wished Titus to have the older women (those who had Christian values) teach them how to love their husbands and their children the way God wants them to love (Ephesians 5:22-24). He wanted them to be taught about the great mystery of how the earthly marriage is symbolic of the heavenly relationship between Christ and His bride, the Church (Ephesians 5:32-33). Also, on how to be discreet and chaste. Do you know the definitions of those words? I encourage you to look them up for a better understanding of these important character traits of a lady. He also encourages them to be keepers of the home because caring for a home, making it look tidy and keeping it clean are nurturing type of traits that most men do not possess. And look at the "why" in verse 5 above so “If the word of God be not blasphemed” He wanted to make sure that these young Christian women never insulted (blasphemed) God by their testimony. So to make my point crystal clear — it is God’s word that sets these guidelines. Having older Christian women is incredibly important to the structure of a healthy home and marriage. A healthy marriage honors Christ.

Older Women Have the Time To Teach
1 Timothy 4:15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. For the most part, older women in the church have already raised children who have gone on to have their own families. Therefore, these older women have the time to teach and God led Paul to look to the widows (although not all older women are widows yet) to teach the younger women. The above passage that Paul wrote to his disciple Timothy, though this is part of a personal challenge to Timothy as he was ready to go pastor his own church, can we use it as a guide for how important it is for older women to teach younger women about their own life experience. Experience is a great teacher, don’t you agree? Here are some ideas on how older women can help younger women:

• Share personal Bible study habits; • Be transparent, share the things in which you struggle and teach them how you handle those struggles; • Teach how to create and maintain a household budget; • Show how to organize the home; • Offer to care for their children while they run errands; • Purpose to do some laundry for a Mom that has lots and lots of littles; believe me she needs to do it

India is the fourth-worst country

were especially ill-treated in society. (Dalits are often secluded from basic government institutions and services, such as education and health care, too.)

National crime statistics in India also indicated that, compared with other caste affiliations, affluents most often perpetuated rape against Dalit women, according to the US State Department’s human-rights country report. Many of the assailants are not prosecuted. On June 24, 2015, attackers beheaded Dalit engineer V. Gokuraj in Pallipallayam, Tamil Nadu, purportedly because of a romantic relationship with an upper-caste Hindu classmate. The private suspect, local caste leader S. Yuvanar, absconded for months after the incident. (He later surrendered.)

Real life vs. the law
India’s constitution provides for religious freedom, but the country does not always practice it. Overall, the Pew study criticizes India for having “high” levels of government restrictions on religion, defined as interference in religion practice or proselytizing, hostility to minority religions and inaction on complaints of discrimination. “Non-Hindus were particularly impacted by government restrictions in India in 2015,” Kish says, citing a Chhattisgarh high-court ruling that banning non-Hindu religious “proselytizing” practices was not a violation of non-Hindus’ constitutional right to preach and propagate their religion.

Officials of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at both the central and state government levels made statements that India should be exclusively Hindu. Kish added, “Minority communities, including Muslims, Christians and Sikhs, complained of numerous incidents of harassment by Hindu nationalist groups.” The national government may not have issued any official nationwide directives about persecution, but in 2014 and in 2015 have sparked controversy throughout India. In the western state of Gujarat state anti-conversion laws do not allow people to adopt a religion without permission from the district magistrate, also hampering religious freedom (paywall). In 2014, Haryana decided to include the Hindu holy text, the Bhagwad Gita, in its school curriculum. Mass ghaswapis (return to Hinduism) ceremonies have included a Hindu nationalist wing of the governing BJP, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), are viewed as an attempt to dismantle minority religions.
Day 1
Pray that God’s kingdom will invade prison cells, changing, transforming and restoring prisoners to Jesus.

Day 2
Pray that the incarcerated people will be focused on God’s fresh vision for their lives.

Day 3
Pray that the incarcerated people will be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to stop breaking the law.

Day 4
Pray that the incarcerated people will be seek God’s forgiveness and restitution.

Day 5
Pray that prisoners will build new lives based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and trained to be his disciples.

Day 6
Pray that the prisoners will use the surplus time that they have to use it productively in prayer and fellowship.

Day 7
Pray that God will remove all guilt, shame and darkness and fill each prisoners heart with acceptance, restoration and peace of God.

Day 8
Pray that Almighty God, the giver of life and health, will look mercifully on those who suffer with sickness.

Day 9
Pray that the Great Physician, arise and repair every damaged cell, in the body of His saints, in the name of Jesus.

Day 10
Pray that God’s healing promises will bring healing and faith to the sick.

Day 11
Pray that every spirit of death be bound and cast into the consuming fire, in the name of Jesus.

Day 12
Pray that every sin that binds and cripples, that causes sickness be loosed in the name of Jesus.

Day 13
Pray that the power of the blood of Jesus be released against every dead bone in the name of Jesus.

Day 14
Pray that every organ of the body that is dead or malfunctioning, be repaired or replaced in the name of Jesus.

Day 15
Pray that whatever or whoever the backslider is placing his trust in, outside of Jesus, would be removed from his life.

Day 16
Pray that God would forgive our sins so far and restore us to the joy of Your Salvation.

Day 17
Pray that we would be constantly reminded of what it was like to be in fellowship with God.

Day 18
Pray that the church will prepare their hearts to receive the backslider back with joy and excitement.

Day 19
Pray for the eyes of the backslider be open to the truth and remove any delusion the enemy tries to bring.

Day 20
Pray for the lost to be saved according to the will of God.

Day 21
Pray that God would endow us with the Holy Spirit to live a victorious life.

Day 22
Pray that God would heal all, backsliding from His children’s lives, in the name of Jesus.

Day 23
Pray that the lost be saved according to the will of God.

Day 24
Pray that God would heal our faithlessness, whatever may be the reason for backsliding.

Day 25
Pray that God would send the Spirit of conviction so that we may confess all our shortcomings to God.

Day 26
Pray that God would endow us with the Holy Spirit to live a victorious life.

Day 27
Pray for PeoPle in Prisons, hosPitals, PeoPle who have backslidden from following Jesus Christ.

Day 28
Pray that the church will prepare their hearts to receive the backslider back with joy and excitement.

Day 29
Pray that God would forgive our sins so far and restore us to the joy of Your Salvation.

Day 30
Pray that the church will prepare their hearts to receive the backslider back with joy and excitement.

Day 31
Pray for PeoPle in Prisons, hosPitals, PeoPle who have backslidden from following Jesus Christ.