

TOUGH AS NAILS

PART 1: In the Beginning

INTRODUCTION

Life is full of danger and uncertainty. We see news reports almost daily about violence and terrorism. And sometimes it feels like faith is under seige. 2015 was the worst year in modern history for Christian persecution. More than 7,100 Christians were killed for faith-related reasons; 2,400 churches were damaged or destroyed. Surrounded by uncertainty, it's difficult not to be afraid. But Jesus offers us another option.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you have a phobia? If so, what is it?
2. How do you usually respond to uncertainty? Do you try to control your circumstances? Do you feel overwhelmed and shut down? How effective has your approach been throughout your life?
3. Do you ever feel like Christianity is under attack in our nation? If so, how does that stretch your faith in God?
4. Read Matthew 10:28–31. What are some reasons it can be difficult for us to live as though God values us so much that he's numbered the hairs on our heads?
5. Read Luke 9:23. Think of a person or group that views or treats you unfairly because of your faith. What would it look like for you to “deny yourself, talk up your cross, and follow Jesus” in the way you respond to that person or group?
6. Talk about something—culturally, politically, professionally, or relationally—that makes you afraid. What is one thing you can do this week to replace fear with faith in your heavenly Father? What can this group do to support you?

MOVING FORWARD

Uncertainty is for certain. It's unavoidable. It's beyond your control. But living in fear is optional. Remember that Jesus—your Saviour—was born into, lived through, and walked into the jaws of uncertainty. A world too often defined by violence, arrested and crucified him . . . and then God raised him from the dead. *That* is the cornerstone of our faith. That's why living in fear is optional.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Matthew 10:29–31