

### **STAY OUT OF TROUBLE FROM UNFRIENDLY AUTHORITIES**

Jesus warned us that the world would persecute us. Even so, we let Jesus decide when and how persecution will happen to us. Let us not get each other in trouble needlessly. Now, we must obey Jesus' commandments, but Jesus does not require many of the Christian practices that get us arrested, condemned and imprisoned.

Jesus commanded, "When you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. ... But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." Matthew 6:5-6

Which of the following words of advice would help keep us and others out of unnecessary trouble?

- When we gather for worship, we do not meet in a church building. Instead, we gather in small groups at many places. Jesus remains present with us.
- When we sing and praise God, we do not keep, carry or employ hymnals or prayer-books. Rather, we memorise our songs, and we allow spontaneous prayers. Jesus accepts your praise and prayers.
- When we go out to market or to public places, we do not wear Christian clothes, crosses or symbols. But we wear clothes that our community accepts as modest and respectful. Jesus looks not at our outward self, but on our inner self.
- When we celebrate, we do not sing loudly, shout nor play musical instruments loudly. Rather, we learn to celebrate softly and respectfully. The angels of heaven celebrate with us.
- We do not carry a big Bible that our enemies can see. We keep our Bibles out of sight. We memorize passages of the Bible that we recite and explain to others in their home. The Word of God remains alive and powerful, whether spoken or written.
- We do not compile membership lists, nor record names of gospel workers, nor write down locations of gatherings. Jesus knows who we are, and no one can remove us from his hands.
- We do not change our name when we get baptized, and we do not adopt a biblical name or a Christian name. Instead, we keep and respect the name that our parents gave us. Jesus knows who we are, and he has promised us a new name that no one else knows.
- We do not baptise new believers, until we or they have had an opportunity to explain the Good News to their family. We do not baptise young folk, unless their parents have given permission. Jesus baptises in his Holy Spirit all who are his own.
- We do not baptise in places where enemies will see us, nor do we baptise in a way that draws attention to us. After all, the Bible does not require us to baptise in public. But we employ methods and language similar to our local cultural rituals. Jesus and his apostle baptised in ways that their Jewish culture and language baptised.
- We do not call ourselves Christians, nor do we tell our denomination, unless we are arrested and authorities demand that we tell them. Instead, when others ask, we admit that we love Jesus and obey his commandments. Jesus rewards those who confess his name before others.
- We do not depend on finances from foreigners, and we do not distribute or display Christian literature, furniture or artwork from outside our own society or culture.