

# Alert & Prepared



A friend and I were talking in my office about the danger of coming across a bear in the wild. On more than one trip to the Sierras, he's come across a bear on the trail. As you can imagine, it was quite a surprise. He and his hiking companions were going along their merry way when all of a sudden, around the corner was a bear. Thankfully, no one was hurt. It sure helped that they had some basic understanding of what to do if they encountered a predator like a bear.

On a much more tame trail here in the San Fernando Valley, my wife Robin and I unexpectedly came across a turkey vulture. It was huge. The wing span was at least 5 feet across. Really, this isn't a fish story. The picture is a picture of a vulture. I know, it doesn't look very big in the tree, but trust me.

Not only did we not see the vulture until we came right up on it as it flew in front of us up into a nearby tree, but I never would have expected vultures were even in the valley.

The conversation I had with my friend about bears and our vulture sighting happened within a day of each other. It made me think about how we need to be aware of our surroundings and to guard against predators, particularly in our spiritual lives.

There is one who lies in wait to steal and destroy the lives of followers of Jesus. Although I don't believe the devil is around every corner, he does look for opportune moments when we are caught off guard to attack us.

The key to victory over his attacks is to have One on your side who is "bigger & badder" (1 John 4:4). Staying close to Jesus is the best defense; without Him, there is no defense.

Here are a few foundational things to keep Jesus by your side so that He can help guard your heart, and to prepare and stay alert against the bears and vulture of your soul.

- Regularly express your adoration and gratitude to the Lord in community worship
- Regularly learn from the Holy Spirit through reading the Word of God and prayer
- Regularly be connected to small group community
- Regularly follow Jesus' example and lay down your life in service
- Regularly share Jesus' love and grace with people who are still searching

Staying alert and prepared by keeping Jesus close

Pastor Scott