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Dear heavenly Father, we worship You this morning with our tithe and offerings. We pray for the courage to put You first in our lives. In the name of Jesus, amen.

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JULY 3, 2021

## When the Waldenses put God First

The Waldenses lost everything when they put God first. Even then, they didn't give up. What can we learn from the Waldenses today that will help us put God first in our own lives?

In the 12th century, the Roman Catholic Church had prohibited the Bible from being read and understood by regular people. Persecution was certain for anyone who challenged the authority of the church and especially the Pope. The Papacy had become the apocalyptic beast depicted in the Bible.

During this dark period of human history, Peter Waldo renounced his wealth and dedicated himself to helping others. A movement started in France as lay preachers voluntarily renounced earthly wealth and lived in strict adherence to the Bible. A key emphasis of the Waldenses was to make the Bible accessible in the common language.

In 1179, Waldo and one of his friends went to Rome, where Pope Alexander the Third and the Roman Curia welcomed them. They had to explain their faith before a panel of three clergymen. The results of the meeting were inconclusive, but the Third Lateran Council in the same year condemned Waldo's ideas.

Waldo and his followers developed a system

whereby they would go from town to town and meet secretly with small groups of Waldensians. There they would confess sins and hold worship services. A travelling Waldensian preacher was known as a barba. The group would shelter the barba and help make arrangements for him to move on to the next town in secret.

They lost their positions in society and eventually had to flee to the hills and caves. They continued to put God first by explaining scripture to anyone they could find. Eventually they understood their movement to be a light in darkness. They were precursors to the Protestant Reformation and represented a remnant of people who absolutely refused to put their own comfort above the Kingdom of God.

We are called to be the remnant today—men, women and children who continue to be faithful to the Word of God by always putting the Kingdom of God first.

*The Waldensians put God first, even when it cost them everything. Their courage inspires us today. Jesus gave up everything to redeem us and His love compels us to put His kingdom first in our own lives. As the deacons collect the tithe and offerings, we are challenged to put God first.*