

The Bible: A Scriptural Manual and Mandate for Noncooperation

Biblical Examples of Oppressed People Refusing to Cooperate with Abusive Power

Tactics mapped to Gene Sharp's Methods of Nonviolent Action via the Commons Library: Tactics, Noncooperation (commonslibrary.org/tactics-noncooperation)

Also mapped to the expanded civil resistance framework from Michael A. Beer, "Civil Resistance Tactics in the 21st Century" (ICNC, 2021). Beer's framework classifies tactics along two axes: (1) what resisters DO, which is Saying (acts of expression), Not Doing (acts of omission), or Doing/Creating (acts of commission); and (2) HOW the tactic works, which is either Confrontational/Coercive or Constructive/Persuasive. Beer also incorporates Ebert's three stages of escalation: Stage 1 is publicizing and convincing, Stage 2 is legal actions that raise costs, and Stage 3 is illegal/direct actions that redirect power. Beyerle's anti-corruption categories (Disruption, Engagement, Empowerment) are noted where relevant.

I. SOCIAL NONCOOPERATION

1. The Hebrew Midwives Defy Pharaoh's Genocide Order

Exodus 1:15-21

THE OPPRESSED: Shiphrah and Puah, two named working women (likely Black/African women, as they lived in Egypt and served Hebrew families under African rule), acting as healthcare providers to an enslaved ethnic minority.

THE OPPRESSOR: Pharaoh and the Egyptian state.

WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANTED AND WHY: Pharaoh ordered the midwives to kill all Hebrew boys at birth. This was state sponsored genocide designed to control the population of an enslaved labor force that Pharaoh feared was growing too large and too powerful. It was demographic warfare: the government using reproductive control as a tool of domination.

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: Shiphrah and Puah simply refused to do it. When confronted by Pharaoh, they used strategic deception, telling him "Hebrew women are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive" (Exodus 1:19). They leveraged Pharaoh's ignorance and his assumptions about their subservience. They chose loyalty to their community and to God over compliance with state terror.

TACTIC (Sharp #): Disguised disobedience (#136), carrying out their refusal under the cover of a plausible excuse. Also elements of Deliberate inefficiency by enforcement agents (#147), because as agents of the state's healthcare apparatus, they deliberately failed to carry out their assigned function.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): NOT DOING (act of omission), Confrontational/Coercive. This is noncooperation disguised as incompetence. Ebert Stage 2: legal noncooperation that raises the costs for the oppressor without openly breaking the law. The mechanism is discrete manipulation (Bond): controlling the flow of information to the ruler by managing what he could and could not verify. Also fits Beyerle's category of Empowerment, because the midwives' quiet defiance preserved the demographic base that made future resistance possible.

HOW THEY WON: The Hebrew people continued to multiply and grow strong. God blessed the midwives with families of their own (Exodus 1:20-21). Their quiet refusal preserved an entire generation, including Moses, who would become the liberator. They built power by protecting the material conditions for survival: literal life itself. Two working women, with no army and no political office, undermined the most powerful empire on earth.

2. Moses' Mother and Sister Hide a Child from the State

Exodus 2:1-10 (Jochebed is named in Exodus 6:20 and Numbers 26:59; Miriam is named in Exodus 15:20)

THE OPPRESSED: Jochebed (Moses' mother) and Miriam (his sister), enslaved Black/African Hebrew women under Egyptian occupation.

THE OPPRESSOR: Pharaoh's extermination order requiring all Hebrew baby boys be thrown into the Nile.

WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANTED AND WHY: Pharaoh escalated from the midwife order to a public mandate: every Egyptian citizen was conscripted into the genocide. Throw the boys in the river. This was total social mobilization for ethnic cleansing.

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: Jochebed hid Moses for three months in direct noncompliance with the law (Exodus 2:2). When she could no longer hide him, she put him in a waterproofed basket on the Nile, technically "putting him in the river" as ordered but subverting the intent entirely. Miriam stationed herself nearby to watch and then strategically inserted herself when Pharaoh's daughter found the baby, offering to find a "Hebrew nurse" (Exodus 2:7), who turned out to be Moses' own mother. They got the oppressor's household to fund the raising of the child they tried to kill.

TACTIC (Sharp #): Hiding, escape, and false identities (#140), because Jochebed hid the child and then placed him where he would be adopted under a new identity. Also Disguised disobedience (#136), technically complying with the letter of the law while completely subverting its purpose.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): NOT DOING (noncooperation with state mandate) combined with DOING/CREATING (creative intervention: constructing an alternative path to survival within the oppressor's own infrastructure). Ebert Stage 3: civil usurpation, because they seized control of the child's fate from the state. The mechanism is discrete manipulation (Bond): physically controlling the environment (where the basket was placed, who "found" the baby, who was hired to nurse him). This is also everyday resistance against structural dominance, one of the categories Beer highlights from scholars like James Scott, where oppressed people use the small spaces of autonomy available to them to resist in ways the powerful cannot easily detect or punish.

HOW THEY WON: Moses survived and was raised with access to Egyptian education, resources, and power, all while his mother nursed him and taught him his identity. This created the material conditions for liberation: a leader who understood both the oppressor's system and his people's story. Pharaoh's own daughter became an unwitting pillar of the resistance. The women turned the empire's resources against itself.

3. Obadiah Hides 100 Prophets from the Queen's Purge

1 Kings 18:1-4 (with context from 1 Kings 16:29-33 and 19:1-2)

THE OPPRESSED: The prophets of the Lord, targeted for elimination under a state campaign to wipe out all religious dissent.

THE OPPRESSOR: Queen Jezebel, who was systematically "killing off the Lord's prophets" (1 Kings 18:4) as part of a broader campaign to establish Baal worship as the only acceptable religion in Israel. King Ahab was complicit through his marriage alliance with Jezebel and his promotion of Baal worship (1 Kings 16:31-33).

WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANTED AND WHY: Jezebel wanted total ideological control. She was eliminating every religious voice that might challenge the state's chosen narrative. This was a political purge disguised as religious policy, targeting people whose moral authority threatened the regime's legitimacy.

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: Obadiah, who served as the palace administrator (the text describes him as "over the household," essentially the chief of staff to King Ahab), hid one hundred prophets in two caves, fifty in each, and supplied them with bread and water (1 Kings 18:3-4). He did this "while Jezebel was killing off the Lord's prophets." He did not resign. He did not go

public. He used his position, his access, and government resources to hide the very people his government was trying to kill.

TACTIC (Sharp #): Hiding, escape, and false identities (#140), sheltering targeted people from state violence. Also Selective refusal of assistance by government aides (#142), because Obadiah held a senior government position and used it to undermine the regime's purge from inside. There are strong elements of Deliberate inefficiency and selective noncooperation by enforcement agents (#147) as well.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): NOT DOING (political noncooperation by government personnel) combined with DOING/CREATING (creative intervention: building sanctuary infrastructure using government resources). Ebert Stage 3: civil usurpation, because a government official redirected state resources to protect the very people the state was targeting. Bond's mechanism is discrete manipulation: controlling physical spaces (the caves), supply chains (bread and water), and information (who knew where the prophets were hidden). Beer's monograph highlights this type of action under "civil defense" tactics, specifically Boserup and Mack's category of "defensive resistance" where people aid and protect those in danger. This is also Beyerle's Engagement category: pulling institutional insiders toward the resistance.

HOW THEY WON: The prophets survived. The prophetic tradition in Israel continued because one government insider chose to use his access for protection rather than complicity. Obadiah's inside resistance preserved the moral infrastructure that eventually confronted and delegitimized the Ahab/Jezebel regime. The text goes out of its way to note that "Obadiah was a devout believer in the Lord" (1 Kings 18:3) while serving in the palace of one of the most wicked kings in Israel's history. He stayed inside the system specifically to protect people from the system.

4. Jehosheba Hides Baby Joash from the Queen's Massacre

2 Kings 11:1-3 (also 2 Chronicles 22:10-12)

THE OPPRESSED: The royal children of Judah, specifically the infant Joash, targeted for extermination.

THE OPPRESSOR: Queen Athaliah, the mother of the deceased King Ahaziah. When Athaliah learned her son was dead, she "proceeded to destroy the whole royal family" (2 Kings 11:1) in order to seize the throne for herself.

WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANTED AND WHY: Athaliah wanted to consolidate power by killing every potential rival, including her own grandchildren. This was not a foreign invasion; this was a ruler turning on her own family, her own people, to hold onto power. She murdered children so no one could challenge her claim.

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: Jehosheba (also called Jehoshabeath in 2 Chronicles), who was King Ahaziah's sister, stole the baby Joash from among the royal princes who were about to be murdered. She hid him and his nurse in a bedroom, then kept him hidden in the Temple of the Lord for six years while Athaliah ruled (2 Kings 11:2-3). 2 Chronicles 22:11 adds that Jehosheba was the wife of the priest Jehoiada, which explains her access to the Temple as a hiding place.

TACTIC (Sharp #): Hiding, escape, and false identities (#140). Also Sanctuary (#68), because the Temple literally functioned as sanctuary, a protected space where the child could be hidden from state violence.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): DOING/CREATING (creative intervention: constructing a physical sanctuary). Constructive/Persuasive: this is an act of commission that models alternative behavior (protecting life rather than competing for power through violence). Ebert Stage 3: civil usurpation, because Jehosheba used the Temple, a state religious institution, as a base of operations against the state. Boserup and Mack's "defensive resistance" category applies directly. The mechanism is discrete manipulation (Bond): controlling the physical space where the child was hidden and managing information about his survival for six years.

HOW THEY WON: After six years, Jehoiada the priest organized a coordinated action with the temple guards and military commanders to reveal Joash as the rightful king (2 Kings 11:4-12). Athaliah was overthrown. Joash was crowned at age seven and went on to reign for forty years. One woman's decision to hide one child preserved the entire Davidic royal line and ended a murderous regime. The material conditions changed completely: from a ruler who massacred her own family to a restored line that renewed the covenant with God (2 Kings 11:17).

5. Daniel's Friends Refuse to Worship the State

Daniel 3:1-30 (Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego)

THE OPPRESSED: Three young Jewish men, political captives and members of a colonized ethnic minority, forcibly relocated to Babylon and conscripted into government service.

THE OPPRESSOR: King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian empire.

WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANTED AND WHY: Nebuchadnezzar built a golden statue sixty cubits tall (roughly 90 feet) and ordered everyone, all officials, all peoples, all nations, to bow down and worship it when the music played (Daniel 3:4-5). This was compulsory state religion. The purpose was ideological conformity and the erasure of alternative loyalties, especially to the God of the colonized Jewish people. Refusal meant death by furnace.

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego simply stood while everyone else bowed. Public, visible, unmistakable noncooperation. When brought before the king, they did not negotiate or ask for an accommodation. They said: "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up" (Daniel 3:17-18). That "but even if he does not" is one of the most radical statements of principled noncooperation in all of scripture.

TACTIC (Sharp #): Refusal of public support (#121) combined with Popular nonobedience (#135), refusing to participate in a state mandated public loyalty ritual. Also Social disobedience (#63), refusal to comply with compulsory social and religious customs.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): NOT DOING (act of omission), Confrontational/Coercive. This is classic noncooperation: a refusal to engage in expected behavior. But their verbal statement to the king also functions as SAYING (act of expression), specifically Protest: communicative action to criticize or coerce. Ebert Stage 3: civil disobedience, because they openly broke a law they recognized as illegitimate and accepted the consequences. The mechanism is a demonstrative appeal (Bond): an authoritative appeal invoking a higher authority from which legitimacy is drawn ("our God"). Their willingness to die in the furnace rather than comply is what Beer's framework calls "public coercion," because the regime is forced to either back down or reveal its own brutality, which is the classic backfire dynamic that Brian Martin documents.

HOW THEY WON: They survived the furnace (the narrative says a fourth figure appeared with them in the fire, Daniel 3:25). Nebuchadnezzar himself publicly acknowledged their God as legitimate and issued a decree protecting Jewish religious practice throughout the empire (Daniel 3:28-29). Their noncooperation did not just save them; it changed the policy environment for their entire diaspora community. They shifted the material conditions from forced assimilation to legal religious protection.

6. Daniel Refuses to Stop Praying

Daniel 6:1-28

THE OPPRESSED: Daniel, an elderly Jewish man, a member of a conquered and exiled people, serving in the government of his captors.

THE OPPRESSOR: A coalition of Persian officials who manipulated King Darius into signing a law making it illegal to pray to anyone but the king for 30 days (Daniel 6:7-9). This was a targeted political trap designed to destroy Daniel specifically.

WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANTED AND WHY: The officials could not find any corruption in Daniel (the text is explicit: "they could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent," Daniel 6:4). So they engineered a law that would criminalize his faith. This is the ancient equivalent of crafting legislation to target a specific community: making their normal, peaceful existence illegal.

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: Daniel kept praying, three times a day, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, exactly as he had always done (Daniel 6:10). He did not hide it. He did not modify it. He did not do it quieter. He maintained his practice openly, defiantly, and consistently.

TACTIC (Sharp #): Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws (#141), because Daniel recognized the law as illegitimate since it was designed to suppress religious freedom, and he openly violated it. Also Total personal noncooperation (#66), refusing any adjustment of his behavior to accommodate the unjust law.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): NOT DOING (act of omission), Confrontational/Coercive. Noncooperation in its purest form: refusal to comply with a targeted law. But because Daniel prayed with his windows open, this also functions as SAYING (act of expression), specifically Protest: a visible, public act of defiance that communicates refusal. Ebert Stage 3: civil disobedience that redirects power by demonstrating that the law cannot compel obedience. The mechanism is a demonstrative appeal (Bond): an authoritative appeal to a higher law. This is also what Rigby (in Beer's analysis of resistance under occupation) calls "symbolic resistance": I remain what I was and communicate continued allegiance to my values.

HOW THEY WON: Daniel survived the lions' den. Darius, who had been manipulated, reversed course entirely. The officials who engineered the trap were thrown into the den themselves (Daniel 6:24). Darius then issued a decree throughout his empire that everyone must reverence Daniel's God (Daniel 6:25-27). One man's refusal to comply with a targeted law resulted in empire wide policy change and the destruction of the conspiracy that created the law.

7. Vashti Refuses the King's Summons

Esther 1:10-22

THE OPPRESSED: Queen Vashti, a woman in a patriarchal imperial court, married to the most powerful man in the Persian Empire.

THE OPPRESSOR: King Ahasuerus (Xerxes), who, while drunk at a weeklong banquet, ordered Vashti to appear before his guests wearing her royal crown (Esther 1:10-11). Many scholars believe the implication was to display her body to his intoxicated male guests.

WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANTED AND WHY: The king wanted to use Vashti as a spectacle, a trophy, an object of display to demonstrate his power and wealth. He wanted compliance because the entire banquet was about showing off what he owned.

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: Vashti said no. The text is simple: "Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command" (Esther 1:12). She refused to be displayed, refused to be objectified, refused a direct order from the most powerful man in the empire. She valued her dignity over her position.

TACTIC (Sharp #): Total personal noncooperation (#66), completely refusing to participate in the demanded social performance. Also Social disobedience (#63), violating the social expectation that a wife and queen must comply with her husband's and king's commands.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): NOT DOING (act of omission), Confrontational/Coercive. Social noncooperation. But the regime's panicked response reveals that this also functioned as SAYING: her refusal communicated a message so powerful that the establishment feared it would inspire a movement. Ebert Stage 2: legal noncooperation that raised costs (the king lost face publicly). Beer highlights tactical innovation from women as a major driver of new civil resistance tactics, noting that women's nonviolent organizing has "regenerative and reinforcing effects" for broader struggles. Vashti is the ancient template: one woman's refusal creates conditions that reshape an entire political landscape. The mechanism is public coercion (Bond): imposing social and political costs on the oppressor by exposing his demand as unreasonable.

HOW THEY WON: Vashti lost her crown, so in the short term this looks like a loss. But the establishment's reaction reveals how powerful her refusal was. The king's advisors panicked, saying that Vashti's behavior "will become known to all women, and so they will despise their husbands" (Esther 1:17). They had to pass an empire wide law commanding all wives to honor their husbands (Esther 1:20), because one woman's refusal threatened to start a movement. Vashti's "no" was so dangerous they had to legislate against it. And her removal created the opening for Esther, who would save the entire Jewish people. Sometimes noncooperation costs you your position but opens the door for transformative change.

8. Mordecai Refuses to Bow to Haman

Esther 3:1-6

THE OPPRESSED: Mordecai, a Jewish man sitting at the king's gate (a position indicating he was a minor court official), a member of an ethnic minority in the Persian Empire.

THE OPPRESSOR: Haman the Agagite, whom the king had elevated above all other nobles and commanded that everyone at the royal gate kneel and pay honor to (Esther 3:1-2).

WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANTED AND WHY: Haman wanted public deference from everyone. The king had ordered it. All the other royal officials at the gate "knelt down and paid honor to Haman" (Esther 3:2). This was a loyalty display, a command to publicly acknowledge Haman's elevated status.

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: "But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor" (Esther 3:2). Day after day, the other officials asked Mordecai why he was disobeying the king's command. He told them he was a Jew (Esther 3:4). The text does not give his full reasoning, but his identification of his Jewishness as the reason suggests he understood the bow as a form of worship or submission that conflicted with his covenant identity. He refused daily, publicly, without exception.

TACTIC (Sharp #): Refusal of public support (#121) and Popular nonobedience (#135), refusing to participate in a mandated public honor ritual. Very similar to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refusing to bow to the statue; the same pattern of one person (or small group) standing while everyone else submits.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): NOT DOING (act of omission), Confrontational/Coercive. Political noncooperation: refusal to perform a mandated loyalty display. Also SAYING through the body: standing while others kneel is a communicative act. Ebert Stage 3: civil disobedience of a direct royal command. The mechanism is public coercion (Bond): imposing social costs on Haman by publicly withholding the deference he craved, which is what ultimately destabilized him psychologically and led to his overreach. Beyerle's Disruption category: Mordecai's daily refusal constrained Haman's authority and ultimately exposed his character.

HOW THEY WON: In the short term, Mordecai's refusal triggered Haman's rage and led directly to the genocide decree against all Jews (Esther 3:5-6). So, like Vashti, this looks like a catastrophic loss at first. But Mordecai's refusal set in motion the entire chain of events that would expose Haman and save the Jewish people. His public, daily, visible refusal also established him as a figure of moral authority among his community, which is why he was able to organize the communal fast (Esther 4:16) and why, after Haman's fall, "Mordecai was prominent in the palace; his reputation spread throughout the provinces, and he became more and more powerful" (Esther 9:4). His noncooperation built the credibility that made his leadership possible.

9. Esther's Unauthorized Approach to the King

Esther 4:10 through 5:8

THE OPPRESSED: Esther, a Jewish woman hiding her ethnic identity in the Persian court, facing the genocide of her entire people through Haman's plot.

THE OPPRESSOR: The imperial system itself. A law decreed that anyone who approached the king without being summoned would be executed (Esther 4:11), and the larger genocide order (the decree to kill all Jews, Esther 3:13) had been sealed with the king's ring.

WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANTED AND WHY: Haman wanted all Jews exterminated because Mordecai refused to bow to him. He manipulated the king into signing an irrevocable decree authorizing empire wide genocide. The system wanted Jewish people silent, invisible, and compliant until their destruction.

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: Mordecai organized the Jewish community to fast together for three days (collective spiritual action, Esther 4:16). He told Esther: "If you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14). Esther then broke the law by approaching the king unsummoned, saying, "If I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16). She used strategic relationship building (two banquets, Esther 5:4-8 and 7:1-6) to create the conditions for exposing Haman.

TACTIC (Sharp #): Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws (#141), because Esther knowingly violated the law against unsummoned approach to the king. Also Refusal to dissolve existing institutions (#132), because the Jewish community refused to accept their annihilation; they maintained their communal identity and collective action (the fast) in direct defiance of the decree.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): DOING/CREATING (act of commission), Confrontational: Disruptive intervention through direct action that confronts the power structure. The three day communal fast is NOT DOING (act of omission), Constructive/Persuasive: refraining as spiritual preparation that built collective unity. Ebert Stage 3: civil disobedience (Esther broke the law against unsummoned approach) and civil usurpation (she used the banquets to create an alternative space where truth could be told to power). The mechanism is a combination of demonstrative appeal (the fast, Esther's "if I perish, I perish") and discrete manipulation (the strategic use of banquets to control the setting where Haman was exposed). Beyerle's Engagement category: Esther pulled institutional insiders (the king himself) toward justice. Beer notes that successful campaigns often require "sustained, multitudinous participation" alongside individual courage; Mordecai organized exactly that.

HOW THEY WON: Esther exposed Haman at a private dinner (Esther 7:1-6). He was executed on the very gallows he built for Mordecai (Esther 7:10). The genocide decree could not be revoked (Persian law), but a counter decree was

issued allowing Jews to defend themselves (Esther 8:11). Mordecai was elevated to a position of power (Esther 8:2, 15). The Jewish community organized, defended themselves, and established the festival of Purim to commemorate their survival (Esther 9:20-22). Material conditions changed: from scheduled extermination to self defense rights, political representation, and institutional memory of resistance.

II. ECONOMIC NONCOOPERATION

10. The Exodus: The Largest Labor Strike in Scripture

Exodus 5 through 14

THE OPPRESSED: The entire Hebrew people, an enslaved ethnic group, Black/African by geography and lineage, forced into unpaid labor building Pharaoh's cities and infrastructure.

THE OPPRESSOR: Pharaoh and the Egyptian empire, running a state economy built on slave labor.

WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANTED AND WHY: Pharaoh wanted the Hebrews to keep making bricks. When Moses first asked for their release, Pharaoh increased their workload, removing the straw supply while demanding the same brick quota (Exodus 5:6-19). This is the ancient version of wage theft and labor exploitation escalation: punish workers for organizing so the rest fall in line. Pharaoh wanted production. He wanted compliance. He wanted the Hebrews to understand that resistance would only make things worse.

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: Moses demanded total release, not better conditions, not shorter hours, but complete liberation. "Let my people go" (Exodus 5:1). The plagues functioned as escalating economic and ecological disruption to the Egyptian system (water, livestock, crops were all destroyed). Finally, the Hebrews walked out en masse. They left. They took their labor, their families, their livestock, and the wealth they demanded from their Egyptian neighbors (Exodus 12:35-36). Liberation theologians call this the claiming of back wages. You worked us for generations; we are taking what we are owed on the way out.

TACTIC (Sharp #): General strike (#117), with the entire enslaved labor force withdrawing simultaneously. Protest emigration / hijrat (#70), leaving the territory entirely. Revenue refusal (#90), because by taking Egyptian wealth with them, they reclaimed stolen wages and drained resources from the empire. Refusal of impressed labor (#101), the most basic level, a refusal to continue performing forced labor.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): NOT DOING (act of omission), Confrontational/Coercive: economic noncooperation at the most total scale

(general strike plus emigration). Also DOING/CREATING (act of commission), Constructive/Persuasive: creative intervention, because they did not just leave; they built an entirely new nation with alternative laws, economics, and governance (the Sinai covenant, gleaning laws, Jubilee). Ebert Stage 3: the ultimate act of civil disobedience and civil usurpation combined. The mechanism of change (Sharp/Lakey) is coercion leading to disintegration: the Egyptian system could not function without the labor it depended on. Beer emphasizes that the most effective civil resistance combines NOT DOING (withdrawing cooperation) with DOING/CREATING (building alternatives). The Exodus is the biblical archetype of both. Gandhi's "constructive program" concept maps directly onto what the Hebrews built after they walked out. Beyerle's Empowerment category: the departure shifted power relations permanently through the power of numbers.

HOW THEY WON: Egypt's economy was devastated by the plagues. The firstborn crisis broke the political will to maintain the system. The Hebrews left with material wealth, established an independent community with their own laws (the Sinai covenant), created economic redistribution systems (gleaning laws in Leviticus 19:9-10 and 23:22; the Jubilee in Leviticus 25:8-55 that redistributed land every 50 years so wealth could never permanently concentrate), and built institutions for self governance. They went from enslaved labor force to self determining nation. The Exodus is the foundational liberation narrative in human history, and it is, at its core, a labor strike.

11. Naboth Refuses to Sell His Vineyard

1 Kings 21:1-29

THE OPPRESSED: Naboth, an ordinary landowner, a commoner with inherited family land.

THE OPPRESSOR: King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, the royal couple who wanted Naboth's ancestral vineyard to convert into a vegetable garden.

WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANTED AND WHY: Ahab wanted the land adjacent to his palace. He offered to buy it or trade for it (1 Kings 21:2). This seems reasonable on the surface, but the land was not just real estate. It was Naboth's ancestral inheritance, tied to his family, tribe, and covenant relationship with God. The laws of Israel (Leviticus 25:23-28) protected family land from permanent sale specifically to prevent the concentration of land in the hands of the wealthy and powerful. Ahab wanted Naboth to give up his economic foundation and his covenantal rights.

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: Naboth said: "The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my ancestors" (1 Kings 21:3). He refused to sell. He did not counter offer. He did not negotiate. He cited a higher law than the king's desire: the covenantal economic system that protected ordinary families

from land grabs by the powerful. This was economic noncooperation with the ruling class's effort to consolidate wealth.

TACTIC (Sharp #): Refusal to sell property (#82), a direct refusal to let or sell his property to the crown. Also Nonobedience in absence of direct supervision (#134), because Naboth held to covenantal economic law even when the king offered a seemingly fair transaction.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): NOT DOING (act of omission), Confrontational/Coercive: economic noncooperation, refusing to engage in an economic transaction demanded by the powerful. Ebert Stage 2: legal noncooperation (Naboth's refusal was entirely legal under Israelite law; it was Jezebel who had to break the law to overcome it). The mechanism is discrete manipulation (Bond): Naboth controlled the resource (land) and refused to release it. Beer's framework includes resistance to the rise of corporate/elite power as a major driver of tactical innovation; Naboth's story is the ancient template. Beyerle's Disruption: Naboth's refusal constrained the crown's ability to consolidate wealth.

HOW THEY WON: In the short term, Naboth lost. Jezebel had him murdered through a corrupt judicial process using false witnesses and a rigged trial (1 Kings 21:8-14). But the story does not end there. The prophet Elijah confronted Ahab directly, pronouncing divine judgment: "In the place where dogs licked up Naboth's blood, dogs will lick up your blood" (1 Kings 21:19). Both Ahab and Jezebel died violently, exactly as prophesied (1 Kings 22:37-38; 2 Kings 9:30-37). The narrative became one of the Bible's most powerful warnings against the abuse of royal power for personal economic gain. Naboth's refusal, and his murder, delegitimized the Ahab dynasty. His story has been cited for three thousand years as a case study in why concentrated economic power is dangerous and why ordinary people have the right to resist it.

12. Ruth and Naomi Work the Gleaning System

Ruth 1 through 4

THE OPPRESSED: Naomi, an Israelite widow with no sons (economically destitute in a patriarchal system). Ruth, a Moabite woman (foreign, ethnic minority, despised by many Israelites), also a widow, who chose solidarity with her mother in law.

THE OPPRESSOR: Not a single villain, but a system: patriarchal land ownership, ethnic exclusion, and the vulnerability of women without male "protectors" in the ancient economy.

WHAT THE SYSTEM WANTED AND WHY: The default expectation was that these women would simply perish or survive on the margins. Naomi told Ruth to go back to Moab because she had nothing to offer (Ruth 1:11-13). The system wanted Ruth to accept her outsider status and Naomi to accept her destitution.

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: Ruth refused to abandon Naomi, choosing solidarity across ethnic lines: "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16). She went to work in the fields using the gleaning laws, a biblical economic redistribution policy (Leviticus 19:9-10, 23:22) that required landowners to leave the edges of their fields unharvested so the poor, the foreigner, the widow, and the orphan could eat. Ruth strategically chose to glean in the field of Boaz, a wealthy relative of Naomi's dead husband (Ruth 2:1-3). She and Naomi then navigated the kinsman redeemer system, an ancient mechanism for restoring land and family security, to secure their economic future (Ruth 3 through 4).

TACTIC (Sharp #): This is less about noncooperation with a villain and more about refusing to accept the material conditions the system assigned them, a form of Social disobedience (#63) against the expectation that a foreign widow should accept poverty. Ruth also engaged in something like Refusal to dissolve existing institutions (#132), insisting on the validity of Israelite economic safety net laws even as a foreigner who technically had little claim to them.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): DOING/CREATING (act of commission), Constructive/Persuasive: creative intervention. Ruth and Naomi constructed an alternative path through existing systems rather than confronting an adversary directly. This maps to Gandhi's "constructive program": building self reliance and utilizing alternative economic institutions (the gleaning laws, the kinsman redeemer system) to meet needs that the dominant system refused to meet. Ebert Stage 2: legal innovative activities, because everything Ruth and Naomi did was within existing law; they simply used the law's provisions in ways the system did not expect a foreign widow to use. Beyerle's Empowerment: they shifted their own power position through strategic use of existing mechanisms. Beer's framework would classify this as everyday resistance against structural and institutional dominance, drawing on James Scott's concept of "weapons of the weak."

HOW THEY WON: Boaz married Ruth. Naomi's family land was redeemed (Ruth 4:9-10). Ruth, a foreign woman from a despised ethnic group, became the great grandmother of King David (Ruth 4:17), and therefore an ancestor of Jesus (Matthew 1:5). Two destitute women with no political power used existing economic justice laws, strategic relationship building, and mutual solidarity to completely transform their material conditions. Their story became permanently inscribed in the genealogy of the Messiah.

III. POLITICAL NONCOOPERATION

13. Jesus Cleanses the Temple (Direct Action Against Economic Exploitation)

Matthew 21:12-17, Mark 11:15-19, Luke 19:45-48, John 2:13-22

THE OPPRESSED: Poor Jewish pilgrims, required by religious law to offer sacrifices at the Temple, but subjected to a corrupt system of monopoly pricing and currency exchange that extracted wealth from them.

THE OPPRESSOR: The Temple establishment, the chief priests and money changers who had turned the Temple's Court of the Gentiles into a marketplace. This was a joint religious, political, and economic institution. The Temple was effectively the national bank, the center of government, and the seat of religious authority all in one.

WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANTED AND WHY: The money changers charged exploitative exchange rates (pilgrims had to convert Roman coins into Temple currency to buy approved sacrificial animals). The merchants sold pre approved doves and lambs at inflated prices. The establishment took a cut of everything. They had turned worship into a toll booth. Jesus specifically said they had made God's house into a "den of robbers" (Matthew 21:13, quoting Jeremiah 7:11). Note: the word is "robbers," not "thieves." Thieves steal secretly. Robbers exploit openly, with institutional backing.

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: Jesus made a whip of cords (this detail is in John 2:15 specifically), drove out the animals, overturned the money tables, scattered the coins, and physically blocked people from carrying merchandise through the Temple courts (Mark 11:16). He shut down the operation. This was not a polite request. It was direct economic disruption of an exploitative business operating under religious cover.

TACTIC (Sharp #): This maps to Economic shutdown (#119), because Jesus physically shut down the commercial operation of the Temple marketplace. Also Merchants' "general strike" (#85) in reverse, since he forced the merchants to stop by disrupting their infrastructure. Elements of Refusal of industrial assistance (#84), blocking the supply chain so no merchandise moved through the courts.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): DOING/CREATING (act of commission), Confrontational/Coercive: disruptive intervention. This is direct action that confronts another party to stop, disrupt, or change their behavior. Specifically, this is economic disruptive intervention and physical disruptive intervention combined (Beer's subcategories). Ebert Stage 3: civil disobedience and civil usurpation, because Jesus both broke established norms and seized control of the space. The mechanism is discrete manipulation (Bond): physically controlling the environment by overturning tables, blocking commerce, and opening the space to those who had been excluded. Beer's framework highlights "points of intervention" from Reinsborough and Canning: the Temple action hit the point of consumption (where the exploitative transactions happened), the point of production (where approved animals were sold), and the point of decision (the religious authorities who sanctioned the system). This is also what Beer's

monograph identifies as the backfire dynamic (Brian Martin): the establishment's violent response to Jesus' nonviolent disruption further delegitimized them.

HOW THEY WON: The Temple action is widely understood as the event that sealed the establishment's determination to kill Jesus (Mark 11:18), meaning it was so effective as a power demonstration that they could not tolerate it. In the immediate term, Jesus reclaimed the space for worship and teaching. The blind and the lame came to him in the Temple and were healed. Children sang praises (Matthew 21:14-15). The people the system had excluded were centered. The chief priests and scribes were "indignant" because Jesus had demonstrated, publicly and physically, that their authority could be disrupted and their economic exploitation could be stopped. He built power by demonstrating that the institution's control was not absolute.

14. Jesus Refuses to Cooperate with His Trial

Matthew 26:57-68, 27:11-14; Mark 14:53-65, 15:1-5; Luke 22:66-71, 23:1-12; John 18:19-24, 19:8-11

THE OPPRESSED: Jesus, an itinerant rabbi from a colonized people, arrested through a corrupt collaboration between religious elites and the Roman occupation.

THE OPPRESSOR: The Sanhedrin (Jewish ruling council operating as collaborators with Rome) and Pontius Pilate (Roman colonial governor). Also Herod Antipas, the Rome appointed ruler of Galilee.

WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANTED AND WHY: The Sanhedrin wanted a confession or statement they could use against him. They needed Jesus to say something that would justify execution under either Jewish or Roman law. Pilate wanted Jesus to defend himself so Pilate could either release him as harmless or convict him as a rebel, either way maintaining Roman order. Herod wanted Jesus to perform for him like entertainment (Luke 23:8). The entire system needed Jesus to participate in its legitimacy, to treat the trial as real, fair, and worth engaging with.

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: Jesus was strategically selective in his responses. Before the Sanhedrin, he was mostly silent, then gave an answer so provocative (claiming divine authority, Mark 14:62) that it exposed their predetermined verdict. Before Pilate, he answered certain questions and refused others. The text says Pilate "was greatly amazed" at his silence (Mark 15:5, Matthew 27:14). Before Herod, Jesus said absolutely nothing (Luke 23:9). He refused to perform, refused to entertain, refused to validate. His silence was not passivity; it was a deliberate refusal to legitimize corrupt proceedings.

TACTIC (Sharp #): Reluctant and slow compliance (#133) before the Sanhedrin; Total personal noncooperation (#66) before Herod; Nonobedience in absence of direct supervision (#134), because Jesus refused to cooperate even when doing

so might have saved his life. Also elements of Refusal of public support (#121), refusing to provide the public statements that would have legitimized the proceedings.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): NOT DOING (act of omission), Confrontational/Coercive: political noncooperation with judicial and governmental proceedings. Before Herod, this is total noncooperation. Before Pilate, it is selective noncooperation. Before the Sanhedrin, it is a combination of NOT DOING (silence) and SAYING (the provocative claim of divine authority that exposed the predetermined verdict). Ebert Stage 3: civil disobedience, because Jesus refused to cooperate with proceedings that had legal authority but no moral legitimacy. The mechanism is demonstrative appeal (Bond): an altruistic appeal invoking a common identity and a higher moral framework. Beer references Brian Martin's backfire research extensively; Jesus' trial is the archetype. The regime's violent response to nonviolent noncooperation delegitimized the regime, not the resister. Beer's framework calls this the mechanism of change known as disintegration: when the public aligns its support with a new movement and support for the old order collapses.

HOW THEY WON: Jesus' noncooperation exposed the illegitimacy of every authority that tried him. Pilate publicly declared "I find no fault in this man" (Luke 23:4; also John 18:38, 19:4, 19:6), multiple times, and then executed him anyway, revealing that Roman "justice" was a performance. The Sanhedrin's rigged trial with paid false witnesses was exposed in the narrative for what it was. The crucifixion, intended as the ultimate state deterrent, became the central symbol of a movement that outlasted and eventually conquered the Roman Empire. Jesus' refusal to play the game delegitimized the game itself. The cross was meant to say "this is what happens when you challenge us." Instead, it came to mean "this is what they do when they're afraid of you."

15. The Magi Refuse to Report to Herod

Matthew 2:1-12

THE OPPRESSED: The Magi (wise men from the East), foreign visitors who unknowingly walked into a political trap.

THE OPPRESSOR: King Herod, the Roman appointed ruler of Judea, who learned from the Magi that a child had been born "king of the Jews" (Matthew 2:2). The text says Herod "was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him" (Matthew 2:3).

WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANTED AND WHY: Herod called the Magi to a secret meeting and asked them to report back after they found the child, claiming he also wanted to worship him (Matthew 2:7-8). What he actually wanted was surveillance intelligence so he could assassinate a rival. He used the appearance of cooperation and piety to recruit the Magi as unwitting informants for a targeted killing.

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: After finding Jesus and presenting their gifts, the Magi “were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod” and “returned to their country by another route” (Matthew 2:12). They refused to report. They refused to provide the intelligence that would have enabled the assassination. They chose a different road.

TACTIC (Sharp #): Refusal of assistance to enforcement agents (#129), because they refused to provide the information Herod needed to carry out his planned violence. Also elements of Hiding, escape, and false identities (#140), since they evaded Herod’s surveillance by taking an alternate route. Blocking of lines of command and information (#143) also applies, because they cut off the flow of intelligence to the ruler.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): NOT DOING (act of omission), Confrontational/Coercive: political noncooperation, specifically citizens’ noncooperation with government. They refused to serve as informants. Ebert Stage 2: legal noncooperation (there was no law compelling them to report; they simply refused a request from power). The mechanism is discrete manipulation (Bond): controlling the flow of information by choosing a different route and denying Herod the surveillance data he needed. Beer’s monograph discusses digital surveillance and sousveillance as key 21st century battlegrounds; the Magi story is the ancient version. When authorities recruit civilians as surveillance assets and the civilians refuse, the entire enforcement apparatus fails.

HOW THEY WON: Jesus survived. Herod, enraged by the Magi’s noncooperation, ordered the massacre of all boys two years old and under in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16). The massacre itself revealed Herod’s true nature to history. But because the Magi refused to report, Joseph and Mary had time to flee (see next entry). The Magi’s refusal to cooperate with state surveillance is directly relevant to any moment when authorities ask ordinary people to inform, report, or provide intelligence on targeted communities.

16. Joseph and Mary Flee to Egypt

Matthew 2:13-23

THE OPPRESSED: Joseph, Mary, and the infant Jesus, a poor family from a colonized people, targeted for assassination by the state.

THE OPPRESSOR: King Herod, who ordered the Bethlehem massacre after the Magi failed to report back.

WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANTED AND WHY: Herod wanted Jesus dead. He ordered the killing of every boy two years old and under in Bethlehem and its vicinity (Matthew 2:16). This was collective punishment. Because the state could not identify the specific child it wanted to kill, it killed all the children. This is the logic of empire: when targeted surveillance fails, use mass violence.

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: An angel warned Joseph in a dream: "Get up, take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him" (Matthew 2:13). Joseph got up "during the night" and fled with his family to Egypt (Matthew 2:14). They became refugees. They crossed a border to survive state violence. They stayed in Egypt until Herod died (Matthew 2:15), then returned but deliberately avoided Judea because Herod's son Archelaus was ruling there (Matthew 2:22), settling instead in Nazareth in Galilee.

TACTIC (Sharp #): Hiding, escape, and false identities (#140) and Protest emigration / hijrat (#70), fleeing the territory to escape state violence. Also Noncooperation with conscription and deportation (#139), in the broadest sense, because the family refused to stay within the jurisdiction that was trying to kill them.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): NOT DOING (act of omission): withdrawal from the social system. Specifically, this maps to Sharp's "flight of workers" (#67) and "collective disappearance" (#69) categories that Beer retains. Ebert Stage 2/3: the family used both legal means (fleeing to a territory outside Herod's jurisdiction) and, upon return, deliberate avoidance of hostile jurisdiction (settling in Galilee rather than Judea to avoid Archelaus). The mechanism is discrete manipulation (Bond): physically removing themselves from the environment the oppressor controlled. Boserup and Mack (in Beer's analysis) classify this as "denial" tactics: depriving the opponent of what is sought through coercion. Herod wanted the child dead; the family denied him the target.

HOW THEY WON: Jesus survived. The family eventually returned and settled in a region under different (and less immediately dangerous) political jurisdiction. Matthew frames this entire sequence as prophetic fulfillment, quoting Hosea 11:1: "Out of Egypt I called my son." The irony is deliberate: Egypt, the land of slavery in the Exodus narrative, becomes the land of refuge. The point for today is inescapable. When the state targets families for destruction, fleeing across borders to survive is biblical. The Holy Family were refugees.

17. The Apostles Refuse to Stop Preaching

Acts 4:1-31, 5:17-42

THE OPPRESSED: Peter, John, and the early apostles, working class Galilean Jews, fishermen and laborers, now leading a rapidly growing movement in the imperial capital.

THE OPPRESSOR: The Sanhedrin and the Temple authorities, the religious and political establishment collaborating with Rome to maintain order.

WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANTED AND WHY: After Peter healed a disabled man and preached to a crowd, the authorities arrested Peter and John and ordered them to

stop teaching in Jesus' name. They wanted silence. They wanted the movement contained. The concern was not theological; it was political: "What are we going to do with these men? Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have done an outstanding miracle, and we cannot deny it. But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name" (Acts 4:16-17).

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: Peter and John said: "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20). They went right back to preaching. Arrested again, brought before the Sanhedrin again, they said: "We must obey God rather than human beings!" (Acts 5:29). They did not ask permission. They did not negotiate. They asserted a higher authority than the state.

TACTIC (Sharp #): Literature and speeches advocating resistance (#122), because the preaching itself was the tactic; every sermon was an act of noncooperation. Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws (#141), treating the gag order as illegitimate and openly violating it. Refusal of public support (#121), refusing to endorse the establishment's authority to define acceptable speech.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): SAYING (act of expression), Confrontational/Coercive: Protest through speech and public teaching. Also NOT DOING (act of omission): political noncooperation with a direct government order. Ebert Stage 3: civil disobedience, openly and repeatedly. The mechanism is a demonstrative appeal (Bond): an authoritative appeal ("We must obey God rather than human beings") combined with public coercion (the movement's rapid growth imposed social and political costs on the establishment). Beer emphasizes that some tactics become "defining methods" (Schock) around which entire campaigns are organized; for the early church, public preaching in defiance of the gag order was exactly that. Beer also notes six key factors for effective movements (Ackerman and Merriman): the apostles demonstrated unity, nonviolent discipline, participation growth, and management of repression (leaving the Sanhedrin rejoicing after being beaten). Beyerle's Empowerment: the preaching activated and organized the broader community.

HOW THEY WON: The movement grew from 120 people to thousands within weeks (Acts 2:41, 4:4). The establishment was paralyzed. Gamaliel, one of their own members, argued that if the movement was from God, they could not stop it, and if it was not, it would die on its own (Acts 5:34-39). The apostles were beaten and released, and "left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name" (Acts 5:41). The beating became a badge of legitimacy. The movement built power through rapid growth, communal economic sharing (Acts 2:44-45), and the creation of parallel institutions: deacons to serve the community (Acts 6:1-7), house churches as alternative gathering spaces.

18. The Early Church Creates an Alternative Economy

Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-37

THE OPPRESSED: The early Christian community, mostly poor, many formerly marginalized: women, formerly enslaved people, ethnic minorities from across the empire.

THE OPPRESSOR: Both the Roman imperial economy (built on slavery, extraction, and patronage) and the Temple economy (which Jesus had already confronted).

WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANTED AND WHY: The Roman economy needed people to participate in its systems of patronage, taxation, and consumption. The Temple economy needed tithing and participation in the sacrificial marketplace. Both systems extracted wealth upward and maintained social hierarchies.

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: The early church created a communal economy. "All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need" (Acts 2:44-45). "No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had" (Acts 4:32). "There were no needy persons among them" (Acts 4:34). This was not charity. It was a structural economic alternative. They ate together daily, shared resources, and ensured no one among them lacked anything.

TACTIC (Sharp #): Withdrawal from social institutions (#64), creating parallel social and economic structures. Policy of austerity (#73), living simply and redirecting resources to community need. Refusal of a government's money (#91), in the broadest sense, opting out of the wealth accumulation logic of the imperial economy. Also elements of Noncooperation with social events, customs, and institutions (#60-64), replacing imperial social structures with their own.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): DOING/CREATING (act of commission), Constructive/Persuasive: creative intervention. This is the single clearest example of what Gandhi called "constructive program" and what Beer's framework classifies as creative intervention that "models or constructs alternative behaviors and institutions." The early church built alternative markets, alternative social institutions, and alternative distribution systems, all categories Beer identifies as creative interventions. Ebert Stage 2/3: legal innovative activities (founding mutual aid societies, shared meals, communal property) that also functioned as civil usurpation (creating a parallel economic system that competed with the imperial economy for loyalty). Bond's mechanism: constructive program, which "constructs alternative behaviors, practices, or institutions to better or more equitably fulfill societal needs and attract defections and loyalty from the opponent and its allies." Beer's monograph also highlights Vinthagen's nine components of "nonviolent culture," several of which the early church embodied: socialization, socio material reproduction, movement rituals and ceremonies, free

zones, and the politicization of daily life. Beyerle's Empowerment at scale: shifting power relations through the power of numbers, with the community growing daily precisely because participation offered material improvement.

HOW THEY WON: Acts reports that the community grew daily and that "they enjoyed the favor of all the people" (Acts 2:47). By meeting everyone's material needs through collective action, they removed the empire's economic leverage over their members. You cannot threaten someone with poverty if their community already feeds and houses them. This economic model became the engine of explosive growth. The early church spread fastest among enslaved people, women, and the poor precisely because it offered concrete material improvement, not just spiritual promise. Within three centuries, this movement of noncooperation with imperial economics became the dominant force in the empire.

19. Paul and Silas Demand Their Rights After Illegal Imprisonment

Acts 16:16-40

THE OPPRESSED: Paul and Silas, Jewish Christian missionaries, Roman citizens by legal status but treated as disposable outsiders by local authorities.

THE OPPRESSOR: The magistrates of Philippi, who had Paul and Silas stripped, beaten, and imprisoned without trial after they disrupted a slave owner's profits. Paul had cast out a spirit from an enslaved girl who was being exploited as a fortune teller, costing her owners their revenue stream (Acts 16:16-19).

WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANTED AND WHY: The slave owners were furious about lost profits. They dragged Paul and Silas before the magistrates and framed the issue as a matter of public order: "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice" (Acts 16:20-21). The magistrates wanted a quick resolution: beat them, jail them, move on. The next morning, they sent word to "release those men" quietly (Acts 16:35), expecting them to slink away.

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: Paul refused to leave quietly. He said: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out" (Acts 16:37). Paul demanded that the magistrates publicly acknowledge their wrongdoing. He used his legal status not to avoid suffering (he had already been beaten) but to force accountability and create a precedent that would protect the community he left behind in Philippi.

TACTIC (Sharp #): Refusal to dissolve existing institutions (#132), insisting on the enforcement of existing legal protections. Nonobedience in absence of direct supervision (#134), because even when told he was free to go, he refused to cooperate with the cover up. Also Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance (#120),

withdrawing cooperation from the magistrates' attempt to resolve the matter quietly.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): SAYING (act of expression), Confrontational/Coercive: Protest through a public demand for accountability. Also NOT DOING (act of omission): refusing to leave when told to leave quietly. Ebert Stage 2: legal noncooperation that raises costs (Paul forced the magistrates to personally apologize, which was politically costly). The mechanism is public coercion (Bond): imposing reputational and legal costs on the magistrates by revealing their violation of Roman law. Beer's monograph discusses "points of intervention" from Reinsborough and Canning; Paul intervened at the point of decision, targeting the decision makers who had the power to set precedent. This also maps to Beyerle's Disruption category: constraining the adversary's ability to quietly sweep injustice away.

HOW THEY WON: The magistrates were alarmed when they learned they had illegally beaten Roman citizens (Acts 16:38). They came personally, apologized publicly, and escorted Paul and Silas out respectfully (Acts 16:39). This was not about Paul's ego; it was strategic. By forcing a public acknowledgment, Paul ensured that the new church in Philippi would be protected. The magistrates would think twice before harassing the community Paul left behind. Paul used his privilege (citizenship) to create a shield for those who did not have it.

IV. WOMEN AS PRIMARY NONCOOPERATORS

20. Rahab Hides the Spies and Defects from Jericho

Joshua 2:1-24, 6:22-25

THE OPPRESSED: Rahab, a Canaanite sex worker, a woman at the absolute bottom of her own society's hierarchy, living in the wall of a city about to be destroyed.

THE OPPRESSOR: The King of Jericho, who ordered Rahab to turn over the Israelite spies she was hiding (Joshua 2:3).

WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANTED AND WHY: The king wanted the spies captured to protect Jericho's military position. He expected Rahab, as a subject and as a woman of low social status, to comply immediately.

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: Rahab hid the spies on her roof under stalks of flax (Joshua 2:6), lied to the king's soldiers about their whereabouts ("Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from. At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, they left," Joshua 2:4-5), and sent the soldiers on a wild goose chase toward the Jordan River. She then negotiated directly with the spies for the safety of her entire family (Joshua 2:12-14). Her reasoning was explicit: "I know that the Lord has given you this land... for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below"

(Joshua 2:9, 11). She made a calculated decision that the current power structure was illegitimate and was going to fall, and she positioned herself and her family on the side of liberation.

TACTIC (Sharp #): Hiding, escape, and false identities (#140), hiding the spies and misdirecting the authorities. Refusal of assistance to enforcement agents (#129), refusing to aid the king's soldiers. Elements of Selective refusal of assistance by government aides (#142), because as someone who lived in the city wall (a structural position that made her a de facto part of the city's defensive infrastructure), she refused to cooperate with the city's defense.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): NOT DOING (act of omission): political noncooperation, citizens' noncooperation with government enforcement. Also DOING/CREATING (act of commission): actively hiding the spies and misdirecting the soldiers is a disruptive intervention. Ebert Stage 3: civil disobedience (she violated a direct royal order) and civil usurpation (she negotiated her own terms with the incoming power). The mechanism is discrete manipulation (Bond): controlling information (lying about the spies' location), physical space (hiding them on the roof), and the flow of enforcement (sending soldiers to the wrong location). Boserup and Mack (in Beer's framework): "defensive resistance," aiding and protecting those in danger. Beer highlights that tactical innovation from women is a major driver of civil resistance development; Rahab's action is a textbook example of a woman exploiting gendered assumptions (the king assumed a sex worker would comply) to wage effective resistance.

HOW THEY WON: When Jericho fell, Rahab and her entire family were saved (Joshua 6:22-25). She was integrated into the Israelite community. She married Salmon and became the mother of Boaz (from Ruth's story above), placing her in the direct genealogy of David and Jesus (Matthew 1:5). A Canaanite sex worker who defied her king ended up in the lineage of the Messiah. Matthew's gospel names her specifically in the genealogy of Jesus: a radical statement that God's liberation story runs through the most marginalized people who choose courage.

21. Deborah and Jael End a Military Occupation

Judges 4 through 5

THE OPPRESSED: The Israelites, living under 20 years of brutal military occupation by the Canaanite king Jabin, whose general Sisera had 900 iron chariots (Judges 4:3), the ancient equivalent of tanks.

THE OPPRESSOR: King Jabin and General Sisera, running a military occupation enforced by overwhelming technological superiority.

WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANTED AND WHY: Jabin "cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years" (Judges 4:3). Sisera's military machine needed the Israelites pacified, producing tribute, and compliant with occupation.

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: Deborah was already functioning as a judge (a political and spiritual leader), an alternative authority structure operating under occupation (Judges 4:4-5). She organized the military resistance, summoning Barak and directing strategy. She told Barak that God would deliver Sisera, but that "the honor will not be yours, for the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman" (Judges 4:9). The battle was won, and Sisera fled on foot to the tent of Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite, an allied clan (Judges 4:17). Jael invited him in, gave him milk, covered him with a blanket (Judges 4:18-19), and when he fell asleep, she drove a tent peg through his skull (Judges 4:21).

TACTIC (Sharp #): Deborah's leadership represents Refusal to dissolve existing institutions (#132), maintaining an alternative governance structure under occupation. Jael's act, while violent and therefore outside Sharp's nonviolent framework, functions as the ultimate Refusal of assistance to enforcement agents (#129). She was expected, by alliance and hospitality custom, to protect Sisera. She chose her people instead.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): Deborah's role maps to DOING/CREATING (act of commission), Constructive/Persuasive: creative intervention through the creation of alternative governance. This is parallel government, one of Beer's key examples of creative intervention: "taking over existing institutions" or building new ones to fulfill societal needs. Ebert Stage 2 and 3: legal innovative activities (maintaining a judicial system under occupation) that also functioned as civil usurpation (exercising authority the occupation did not recognize). Rigby's categories (in Beer's framework) include "constructive resistance": creating alternative institutions that embody the values of a free society. Deborah embodied all five of Rigby's categories simultaneously: symbolic resistance (maintaining Israelite identity), polemical resistance (advocating for the struggle), offensive resistance (organizing military action), defensive resistance (protecting the community), and constructive resistance (alternative governance). Beer also notes that women "tend to organize in horizontal networks, which prove to be more efficient and resilient," which describes Deborah's network of tribal leaders.

HOW THEY WON: The occupation ended. The Song of Deborah (Judges 5) is one of the oldest texts in the Bible and explicitly celebrates women's agency in liberation: "Most blessed of women be Jael" (Judges 5:24). "Village life in Israel had ceased, it had ceased, until I, Deborah, arose, a mother in Israel" (Judges 5:7, NASB). The material conditions changed from 20 years of military occupation to 40 years of peace (Judges 5:31). Two women, a judge and a tent dweller, toppled a military empire.

22. Michal Helps David Escape Through the Window

1 Samuel 19:11-17

THE OPPRESSED: David, who had been anointed by the prophet Samuel but was now a target of King Saul's murderous jealousy.

THE OPPRESSOR: King Saul, who sent soldiers to David's house with orders to kill him in the morning (1 Samuel 19:11).

WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANTED AND WHY: Saul saw David as a political rival and wanted him dead. He had already tried to pin David to the wall with a spear (1 Samuel 19:10). Now he sent assassins to David's own home.

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: Michal, Saul's own daughter and David's wife, warned David: "If you don't run for your life tonight, tomorrow you'll be killed" (1 Samuel 19:11). She lowered him through a window so he could escape. Then she put an idol in the bed with goats' hair at the head and covered it with a garment to create the illusion David was sleeping and sick (1 Samuel 19:13). When Saul's soldiers came, she told them "He is ill" (1 Samuel 19:14). When Saul sent them back to bring David in his bed, they discovered the decoy. When Saul confronted Michal, she lied again, claiming David had threatened to kill her if she did not help him escape (1 Samuel 19:17).

TACTIC (Sharp #): Hiding, escape, and false identities (#140), because Michal facilitated David's escape and created a decoy to buy time. Disguised disobedience (#136), pretending compliance while actively undermining the order. Refusal of assistance to enforcement agents (#129), refusing to cooperate with the assassination despite being the king's daughter.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): NOT DOING (act of omission): refusal to cooperate with enforcement agents, combined with DOING/CREATING (act of commission): constructing a physical decoy and facilitating escape. Ebert Stage 3: civil disobedience of a direct royal command. The mechanism is discrete manipulation (Bond): controlling the physical environment (the decoy in the bed), controlling information (lying to the soldiers, then lying to Saul), and controlling time (creating enough delay for David to escape). Beer highlights that women have historically "capitalized on sociological features that gave them an edge," including the fact that women's presence often lowers the suspicion of enforcers. Michal used her position as wife and daughter to access both the target and the enforcers, weaponizing the domestic sphere as a site of resistance. Boserup and Mack: "defensive resistance," protecting someone in danger.

HOW THEY WON: David survived and went on to become king. What makes Michal's act remarkable is who she was: the daughter of the man trying to commit the murder. She chose loyalty to what was right over loyalty to her father and king. Her act of noncooperation broke the chain of command within the royal household itself. The king's own family became a site of resistance.

V. JESUS' TEACHING ON NONCOOPERATION AS POWER STRATEGY

23. "Turn the Other Cheek" as Tactical Noncooperation

Matthew 5:38-42

This passage is chronically misread as passivity. It is not. Each of Jesus' three examples is a specific tactical instruction for noncooperation with systems of domination.

"IF ANYONE SLAPS YOU ON THE RIGHT CHEEK, TURN THE OTHER ALSO" (Matthew 5:39). A slap on the right cheek (by a right handed person) is a backhand: the way a master struck a slave, a Roman struck a Jew, a man struck a woman. It was a gesture of domination, not combat. Turning the left cheek forces the aggressor to either use a fist (which treats you as an equal in a fight) or to backhand awkwardly with the left hand (which was culturally taboo). It is a refusal to accept the terms of the humiliation while remaining nonviolent. TACTIC: Social disobedience (#63), refusing to accept one's assigned position in the social hierarchy.

"IF ANYONE WANTS TO SUE YOU AND TAKE YOUR SHIRT, HAND OVER YOUR COAT AS WELL" (Matthew 5:40). In a debt court, the poor person's shirt (inner garment) could be taken as collateral. Jesus says give them your outer garment too, which would leave you standing naked in court. Public nakedness in Jewish culture brought shame on the viewer, not the naked person (see Genesis 9:20-27, the Noah story). This exposes the cruelty of the system: look what your economic system does to people; it strips them naked. TACTIC: Social disobedience (#63) combined with Protest strike (#97), an act that exposes the system's injustice.

"IF ANYONE FORCES YOU TO GO ONE MILE, GO TWO" (Matthew 5:41). Roman soldiers could legally compel a Jewish civilian to carry their equipment for one mile, but only one mile. This was regulated by Roman military law to prevent abuses that would stir rebellion. Going further than one mile actually put the soldier in violation of military law and made him subject to punishment. The oppressed person, by voluntarily exceeding the compulsion, seizes the initiative, creates confusion, and puts the oppressor at risk within his own system. TACTIC: Working to rule in reverse (#111), using the oppressor's own regulations against them.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): All three examples combine SAYING (acts of expression that communicate defiance) with DOING/CREATING (acts of commission: disruptive and creative intervention through the body). The cheek is social disruptive intervention. The cloak is psychological disruptive intervention (Beer's subcategory): creating a spectacle that shames the system. The second mile is political/judicial disruptive intervention: using the oppressor's own legal

framework against them. Ebert would classify all three as Stage 1 (presenting alternatives: showing a different way to respond to domination) that simultaneously functions as Stage 3 (civil disobedience: refusing to accept the social hierarchy as given). Bond's mechanism is demonstrative appeal: an altruistic appeal invoking common identity and dignity. But there is also public coercion: each act forces the oppressor into a dilemma where every response delegitimizes the oppressor. Beer references "dilemma actions" from the work of King and Codur on women's tactical innovation: actions that put the opponent in a position where every possible response benefits the movement. Jesus' three teachings are the foundational dilemma actions in the tradition.

HOW THEY WON: These teachings formed the strategic backbone of movements for centuries. The early church's refusal to fight back while visibly suffering created a moral crisis for Rome that contributed to the empire's eventual conversion. These specific tactics have been cited by Gandhi, King, Tutu, Dolores Huerta, and countless liberation movements as the source code for strategic nonviolent resistance.

24. "Render Unto Caesar" as a Political Trap Reversed

Matthew 22:15-22, Mark 12:13-17, Luke 20:20-26

THE OPPRESSED: Jesus, a colonized subject of Rome, publicly teaching in the Temple during the last week of his life.

THE OPPRESSOR: A coalition of Pharisees and Herodians (political allies of Rome) who were sent to trap Jesus with a question designed to destroy him no matter how he answered.

WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANTED AND WHY: They asked: "Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?" (Matthew 22:17). If Jesus said yes, he would lose credibility with the people who hated Roman taxation and occupation. If Jesus said no, he could be arrested for sedition. The trap was perfectly constructed. The question was not about theology; it was a political operation.

WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DID INSTEAD AND WHY: Jesus asked to see the coin used for the tax. He asked: "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?" They answered, "Caesar's." Jesus replied: "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (Matthew 22:20-21). On the surface, this seems to endorse paying the tax. But his audience understood the deeper claim. In Jewish teaching, everything belongs to God. The earth, the land, the people, all of it. So if you give to God what is God's, what exactly is left for Caesar? Nothing. Jesus refused the binary and gave an answer that the authorities could not use against him while simultaneously subverting the entire premise of Caesar's authority. Luke's account notes specifically: "They were unable to trap him in what he had said there in public. And astonished by his answer, they became silent" (Luke 20:26).

TACTIC (Sharp #): This is verbal noncooperation, refusing to engage with the terms of a trap. Elements of Reluctant and slow compliance (#133) and Disguised disobedience (#136), because the surface answer appears compliant while the substance is deeply subversive.

21ST CENTURY FRAMEWORK (Beer/ICNC): SAYING (act of expression), functioning simultaneously as Constructive/Persuasive (appeal: a convincing communication that invokes a common set of assumptions and logic) and Confrontational/Coercive (protest: exposing the illegitimacy of Caesar's claims). This is the dashed line in Beer's Table 1 between protest and appeal: Jesus' answer operated on both sides at once. Ebert Stage 1: publicizing and convincing, because Jesus used the encounter to reframe the issue for his audience. Bond's mechanism is a convincing appeal: invoking a common set of assumptions (everything belongs to God) and shared logic (if God owns everything, Caesar's claims are subordinate). Beer also discusses how civil resistance tactics exist on a spectrum from confrontational to constructive; the "Render Unto Caesar" answer is one of the rare tactics that sits at the exact center of that spectrum, appearing to accommodate while fundamentally subverting.

HOW THEY WON: The trap failed completely. The coalition that was supposed to destroy him publicly walked away silent and embarrassed. More importantly, Jesus modeled something essential for organizers: you do not have to accept the question as framed. When the powerful construct a binary designed to destroy you, you can refuse the binary. You can answer in a way that satisfies their surface inquiry while exposing the deeper injustice underneath.

SYNTHESIS: Patterns for Movement Strategy

Across all of these examples, several patterns emerge that map directly onto contemporary organizing:

1. **POWER ANALYSIS IS FOUNDATIONAL.** Every biblical noncooperator understood where the oppressor's power actually came from and targeted that specific point. The midwives knew Pharaoh could not supervise every birth. Esther knew the king loved her. Paul knew the magistrates feared legal accountability. Jesus knew the Temple economy depended on public compliance. Obadiah knew the palace had spaces the queen could not monitor.
2. **THE OPPRESSOR ALWAYS NEEDS YOUR COOPERATION MORE THAN YOU NEED THEIRS.** Pharaoh needed Hebrew labor. The Sanhedrin needed Jesus to participate in his trial. The Persian court needed Jewish administrators. Herod needed the Magi to report back. Noncooperation works because it exposes this dependency.

3. **WOMEN AND MARGINALIZED PEOPLE ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY THE NONCOOPERATORS.** The midwives, Jochebed, Miriam, Vashti, Esther, Ruth, Rahab, Deborah, Jael, Jehosheba, Michal: women are the primary practitioners of biblical noncooperation, often working from positions of apparent powerlessness. The text celebrates them for it.
4. **INSIDE RESISTANCE IS RESISTANCE.** Obadiah served in Ahab's palace. Daniel served in the Persian government. Esther was in the king's court. Michal was the king's daughter. Several of the most consequential acts of noncooperation in the Bible came from people who stayed inside corrupt systems and used their access strategically. Not everyone is called to walk out. Some are called to stay in and save lives from the inside.
5. **SHORT TERM LOSS CAN BE LONG TERM VICTORY.** Vashti lost her crown. Naboth lost his life. Jesus was executed. But each refusal delegitimized the power that punished it and created conditions for larger transformation. Movements must be willing to absorb cost.
6. **BUILD ALTERNATIVE INSTITUTIONS.** The Exodus built a new nation. The early church built an alternative economy. Deborah maintained alternative governance under occupation. Noncooperation without alternatives creates a vacuum; noncooperation with alternatives creates a movement.
7. **MATERIAL CONDITIONS MUST CHANGE.** Biblical liberation is never just spiritual. It is land (Naboth, Ruth), food (gleaning laws), freedom from forced labor (Exodus), physical safety (Esther, Jehosheba, the Magi), economic sharing (Acts), and accessible worship (Temple cleansing). The spiritual and the material are inseparable.
8. **THE REFUGEE IS SACRED.** Joseph and Mary fled across a border to escape state violence. The Hebrew people walked out of Egypt. Protest emigration, sanctuary, flight: these are not signs of weakness. They are strategic acts of survival that the Bible honors and that God directs.
9. **EFFECTIVE RESISTANCE COMBINES SAYING, NOT DOING, AND DOING/CREATING.** Beer's 21st century framework reveals that the most successful biblical resistance never relied on a single mode of action. The Exodus combined NOT DOING (withdrawing labor) with DOING/CREATING (building a new nation) and SAYING (Moses' prophetic demand to Pharaoh). The Esther story combined NOT DOING (the communal fast), SAYING (Mordecai's public refusal to bow), and DOING/CREATING (Esther's strategic banquets). The early church combined SAYING (preaching in defiance of the gag order), NOT DOING (withdrawing from imperial economic systems), and DOING/CREATING (building alternative communal economies). Biblical movements that used all three modes, deployed across both confrontational and constructive approaches, were the movements

that changed the world. Single tactic resistance could be endured by the oppressor; multi modal resistance could not.

10. EVERY TACTIC CREATES A DILEMMA FOR THE OPPRESSOR. Beer's framework (drawing on the work of King, Codur, and others) identifies "dilemma actions" as tactics that put the opponent in a position where every possible response benefits the movement. Jesus' "turn the other cheek" teachings are the foundational example. If the master backhands you again, he looks foolish; if he punches you, he treats you as an equal. If the court takes your cloak, its cruelty is exposed; if it refuses, you win. If the soldier accepts the second mile, he breaks his own law; if he refuses, you have seized the initiative. The most powerful biblical noncooperation consistently constructed these dilemmas, forcing the oppressor to choose between backing down and revealing the brutality of the system.

Compiled for movement education and faith rooted organizing. Tactics referenced from Gene Sharp's 198 Methods of Nonviolent Action as catalogued by the Commons Library (commonslibrary.org/tactics-noncooperation). 21st century framework connections drawn from Michael A. Beer, "Civil Resistance Tactics in the 21st Century," ICNC Monograph Series (2021), which expands Sharp's classification and incorporates the work of Ebert, Bond, Beyerle, Gandhi, Boserup and Mack, Rigby, Vinthagen, and others. Available at nonviolent-conflict.org.

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