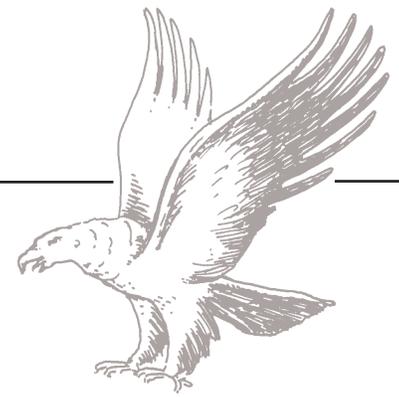


Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



October 12, 2014

Wanna Follow Jesus?

For too many people, following Jesus is little more than a gym membership—nice to brag about, but having little or no impact on their daily lives. Jesus knew that would be a problem.

“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Lk. 9:23).



“Following Jesus” in modern culture has become a tired cliché. People are attracted to the Son of God for a variety of reasons, but in all too many cases their loyalty is shallow and superficial. They are quick to jump on the bandwagon, but have no idea what they have signed up for. Like groupies flocking after their fave celebrity, they have the tee-shirt and can spout all the right slogans, but struggle to really live it. Following Jesus is great!—if it doesn’t require too much.

Churches contribute to this problem by packaging their service to the Lord with rock bands, coffee and donuts, and fitness classes. These gimmicks generate a lot of buzz, but don’t strengthen people in their discipleship.

There’s a lot more to following Jesus than wearing His name and belonging to a group. If we want to take this seriously, we need to pay attention to what Jesus said about the journey.

Notice in our text that Jesus listed three conditions to discipleship: one must *deny self*, then *take up one’s cross daily*, and finally *follow Me*. The problem is that many people want to skip the first two requirements and go straight to number three.

That short-cut renders one’s service all but worthless. If we’re going to do this Jesus thing right, we cannot do the third without doing the first two. *There is no following Jesus without self-denial and cross-bearing!*

Let’s examine the two prerequisites that often get overlooked.

Deny self. We learn at a young age to indulge, not deny, ourselves—and some of us become quite good at it. But when we commit to following Jesus, all that changes. I can no longer chase after what *I* want, what gives *me* pleasure, what satisfies *my* longings. I have to see my life as belonging to Him. All my talents, energies, dreams, ambitions, feelings, and decisions must now be surrendered to *His* will. That will require some tough choices; am I willing to do that? Can I tell myself “no”—and mean it?

Take up my cross daily. The cross was an instrument of death, and to “bear one’s cross” was a metaphor for accepting the sacrifice that came with one’s chosen direction in life. Different people will be faced with different sacrifices, depending on their circumstances in life. But whatever the details, the follower of Christ must *every day* ask himself, “can I keep on doing this?”—and keep on doing it, regardless of the hardship.

In our materialistic culture, these prerequisites are a hard pill for many people to swallow. Even in His own day, Jesus was disappointed by crowds of sunshine disciples who loved His teaching and wanted to immerse themselves in the excitement—but weren’t interested in paying the price to go all the way. “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord’ and do not do what I say?” (Lk. 6:46). Jesus still feels that same frustration today.

When we first encounter the attraction of Christ’s message, it’s natural to feel a sense of excitement. But we must look beyond the initial enthusiasm and recognize the true cost that such a commitment will require. Can we pay it?

– David King