

Discussion Guide

February 4, 2024

Sermon Synopsis

Jesus invites all to come and follow Him, and even assures all who do that He will not cast them out. This is wonderful news for everyone, but it is not without conflict. The greatest conflict with Jesus' invitation to follow is the conflict that takes place internally in our own hearts, minds, and souls. With the offer of sins forgiven, righteousness imputed, eternal life assured, and countless blessings in Christ we would think it impossible to forfeit our opportunity to follow Jesus. But we discover in our message today that many things can hinder us from truly following Jesus. We invite you to listen today, to examine your own heart, and to make sure that these conflicts are not hindering you from following Jesus.

Group Question #1

Open up your discussion by thinking through the counter-cultural nature of authentic Christianity. Regardless of what anybody thinks about the hit TV Show, "The Chosen", I find that the opening graphics of the show give a visceral and realistic representation of one of Christianity's great realities. The graphic shows a school of gray fish all swimming in the same direction. Interspersed among these gray fish are green fish swimming alone in the opposite direction. Such a simple thing, but, filled with truth. The man or woman, genuinely converted by the Gospel concerning Jesus, often find themselves swimming "against the tide" as it were compared to those around them. This saved person has new affections, new priorities, a new way of "doing life" that is foreign to their lost friends, neighbors, and relatives. Of course, these lost acquaintances take notice of this. Often, the result is tension for the Christian. Sometimes, even, persecution in one form or another and to varying degrees. It can be, and often is if we are honest, difficult to stay the course when everything around us calls out for us to just "go with the flow". But, take heart, Christian! The things and ways of this world are passing away. The new has come! Christ is worth it all! Read, as a group, Philippians 3:7-9.

Group Question #2

Consider what you've just read. Paul fit the scholarly Jewish culture like a hand in a glove. Accordingly, he could, logically, expect great things as he toed the Judaistic line. Big things were ahead for him. But, as is so prone to occur in life, things got flipped upon their head. The Damascus road was for Saul what the tax booth was for Matthew. He encounters the risen Christ, is soundly converted, and nothing would be the same from that point forward for Saul who had now been renamed Paul. He says, in verse 7, "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ." Now, consider what Paul is saying. He is weighing the value of what he has or had in contrast to what was to be gained by him in the person of Jesus. Jesus, in the final analysis, for Paul, infinitely surpassed in value everything of worth that he thought he had ("WHATEVER gain I had..."). American culture brings with it a system for assigning value to ideas and things and we are conditioned, from birth, to pursue those things. Achieving and attaining them are supposed to metrics of individual success. As a group, read Colossians 1:15-20 and discuss what is gained when a person is unified with Christ and compare this to those things we are conditioned to pursue by our culture.

Group Question #3

In Colossians 1, Paul presents a comprehensive view of Jesus, emphasizing His divinity and significance. Being born again means gaining a relationship with Christ, the eternal, unchanging, and infinitely valuable God. Paul's reflection in Philippians 3:8 illustrates how all earthly things are insignificant compared to knowing Christ. This comparison challenges us to examine our own priorities and our understanding of Christ. Despite claiming Christ as Lord, many are distracted by worldly pursuits, revealing a lack of true knowledge and love for Him. To truly change, like Paul, we must seek a deeper relationship with Christ. This raises important questions: How can we intimately know Christ? Where do we discover His true nature? And practically, how do we prioritize Christ above everything the world offers in our hearts and minds?

Luke 9:57-62

One Liner of the Week

“There should be nothing in our lives that we are unwilling to surrender to the Lord.”

Food for the Soul

M: Matthew 8:1-13

T: Matthew 8:14-27

W: Matthew 8:27-9:8

T: Matthew 9:9-17

F: Matthew 9:18-38

S: Matthew 10:1-15

S: Matthew 10:16-42