

NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

Introduction

The normal Christian life is a life of discipleship, a life of following. In Jesus' day, to be the disciple of a Rabbi meant the entirety of the disciple's life was given to getting to know his teacher and learning from him. "These individuals often left everything they owned to live with the rabbi. They would serve the rabbi, sit at his feet, watch him intently, and seek, by following him, to go where their longing for life in God's way could be satisfied... The follower in Christ's day was clearly marked as one who had a personal relationship with the local rabbi. And the relationship was the preeminent reality of his or her life."¹

So it is with us. As believers in Jesus, we are called to follow Christ, learn from Him, and obey His instruction that we might become like Him – each of us a walking testimony of God's power to bring to life what was once dead. The normal Christian life is a life committed to Jesus Christ. Not a life committed to a religion that alleviates our conscious, or a set of rules that helps us manage our lives, or a pious equation that results in guaranteed blessing and reward. It is Christ alone. And if it is about Christ, than we are involved and concerned not so much with checking to-dos off a list as much as we are with maintaining a relationship with a Person.

Just as no earthly relationship thrives without attention, so it is in our relationship with Christ. Living lives filled with intimacy, discipline, obedience, joy, evangelism, the power of the Holy Spirit, justice, and sacrifice is not an easy task. But, as we walk in the grace of God and with His Holy Spirit, we grow closer to Christ and are continually transformed to resemble His image. Jesus becomes not just our Teacher, but also our Helper and our Light – and He doesn't ask us to do anything He hasn't already done.

As we realize this, we see that the normal Christian life has very little to do with our own perceptions of what life should be and everything to do with what Jesus said it is: knowing God through Him by becoming like Him that we might live forever with Him (John 17:3, 24). "God so loved the world," John writes, "he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." ...Out of this...came eternal life not just in the sense of resurrection to life after death but in the sense of life so precious even this side of death that to live it is to stand with one foot already in eternity. To participate in the sacrificial life and death of Jesus Christ is to live already in his kingdom. This is the essence of the Christian message, the heart of the Good News."²

To follow Jesus now – to know Him, love Him and esteem His voice more than any other – is to become a citizen of heaven forever. And this is what sets the 'normal Christian life' apart from any other. We believe the Son of God became a Man, died and rose from the dead so that we could do the same and live with God forever. This is our vision and our reward and we aim to live in such a way that ensures we arrive home, safe and victorious. It is an audacious claim. It is literally out of this world. And, without faith, it is truly unbelievable. In short – there is nothing normal about it.

1. Stowell, Joseph. Following Christ: Experiencing Life the Way it was Meant to Be. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996. 74.

2. Buechner, Frederick. The Faces of Jesus: A Life Story. Brewster, Mass: Paraclete Press, 2005. 74.