

The Way of Jesus: Radical Christian Discipleship

"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me, For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his soul? Luke 9:23

*** From apostolic times many Christians have taken the Lord Jesus Christ as their example and strived to live out the Gospel in a radical way. They wanted to live like Jesus, and his closest disciples. They denied themselves possessions, marriage, and self-will, and tried to live in a communion of love, sharing all things, seeking only the will of God, trying to “preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”**

*** "And all who believed were together and all things in common; and they sold their possessions and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.**

Acts 2:44-46

*** By the fourth century, this Way was called monasticism, where large communities formed in the deserts and wilderness, having all in common, as disciples of spiritually mature elders, replicating the life of Jesus and the apostles. Then for a very few, and only after a person had profoundly matured spiritually, having brought himself completely under control in mind and body, he was able to go deeper into the desert, living in solitude in the most profound contemplation of God, persevering in prayer and fasting.**

***This Way of Christian life, the way of Christian perfection, is for those who hear the call of God in their lives, and know that they must follow Him.**

Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." Matthew 19:21

***The Christians who follow this radical Way are called monks (which means 'alone', sometimes women monastics are called nuns). Women were the first to respond: the communities of widows and virgins, mentioned in the New Testament. Then the men followed.**

Cite reference: 1 Tim 5 1-24

***Monastics are those who renounce the world and the things of the world, the “lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life” (1 John 2:15) for the sake of the Kingdom of God. The monk lives the life of the Kingdom of God, here and now.**

***Jesus said to them, 'The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection of the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die any more because**

they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. Luke 20:34-36

*** The monk is the one who has realized the vanity of this world, and the pursuit of riches, gratification, and power. He has answered the question.** "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." James 4:4.

*** The only fulfillment in life is to follow Christ.**

"Do not love the world or the things of in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. 1 John 2:15-17

***The monk renounces the pursuit of wealth and possessions for the sake of Christ, emulating His poverty.**

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Matt 6:24-34

*And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said to him, "you lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." At that saying his countenance fell, and he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions. Mark 10:21, 24

***The monk renounces marriage, not as something evil, but for the sake of the Kingdom of God.**

"Not all men can receive this precept, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made so by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it." Matthew 19:12

"To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than be aflame with passion 1Cor 7:7

"Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek marriage. But if you marry, you do not sin, and if a girl marries she does not sin. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. 1Cor 7.27

"I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the lord; but the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman or girl is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please her husband. I say this for your benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord. 1Cor 7:32-35

"It is these that have not defiled themselves with women, for they are chaste; it is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes; these have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are spotless. Rev 14:1-5

***The Lord Jesus Christ, His Mother Mary, John the Baptist, John the Evangelist and beloved disciple, Paul the Apostle, James the Lord's brother, and multitudes of others denied themselves marriage, and remained in virginity all their lives, as an offering to God.** "All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it is given" (Mt 19:11)

***The monk denies himself his own will, in order to do the will of God, in emulation of the obedience of Jesus.**

"I can do nothing on my own authority; as I hear, I judge; and my judgement is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me. John 5:30

"For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me; and this is the will of him who sent me; that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. Jn 6:38

*** The monk gives himself over to obedience, to learn to be obedient to the will of God, not counting the cost.**

"Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and it's corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Eph 4:22

"Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Phil 2:4-13

Likewise you that are younger be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you. Cast all your anxieties on Him, for He cares about you. Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, establish, and strengthen you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 5:5-9

"Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men they will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you" Heb 13:17

***The monastic Way is the way of spiritual discipleship. As Christians we are all disciples of Christ.**

"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master; it is enough for a disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. Mt 10:24

*** Spiritual fatherhood in Christ**

"I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me. 1Cor 4:14f

***Confession of sins**

The first gift Christ gave to His apostles after His resurrection:

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "peace be with you." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." John 20:19-23

"Is any among you suffering? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over them, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray to one another, that you may be healed" James 5:16

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. 1Jn 1:9

***Unity of mind and heart**

"Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!

Ps103:1

" For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. 1 Cor 6:20

What shall I render to the Lord for all His bounty to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the Name of the Lord. Ps 116:13