

Are You Really in Love With Jesus—Or Have You Bought Into This Deception?

What kind of Christians are we? That's a question we must answer as pressures mount in the world around us and as we feel them in our homes and daily lives. What, really, did we sign on for?

As I reached my 18th year, the Jesus movement came into full flower. Hundreds of thousands of young people—hippies, nerds; it didn't matter—came streaming to Jesus. It became culturally cool to be Christian. Everywhere we went, we carried our Bibles. We attended Bible studies in meeting rooms at our high schools and in dorm rooms at college. We followed the latest Christian bands when contemporary Christian music was just being born. We evangelized in city parks and schools, shared our faith in classrooms, on campuses and at work. No one opposed us. We used to say that you could stand on a street corner, shout Jesus, and a dozen kids would get saved.

We transitioned into adulthood in a time when the nation was prosperous. Yes, the war in Vietnam raged on, and even though a lot of us found ourselves drafted, the war was winding down and seemed a long way off. Passion for Jesus came easily. Society approved. Our peers smiled on us and were in it with us. Our parents, who had prayed for revival for their children, were thrilled.

Here, however, lies a problem that some, perhaps many of us, fell into: as the movement simply swept us along, we were in love with the idea of being in love with Jesus. We jumped easily into the stream and felt a belonging, but somewhere in the midst of it, a large percentage of us missed really being in love with Jesus Himself.

Consequently, as life impacted us, many of us fell away or turned lukewarm. You never know where you really are and what you really love until testing comes. You begin to find out where you really stand when you face the prospect of losing your job because you spoke openly about your faith or stood for integrity for Jesus's sake. You find out whether you're in love with the real Jesus, or merely the idea of being in love, when you own a bake shop, and a gay couple brings a lawsuit against you because you didn't feel your Christian conscience would allow you to bake a wedding cake for a gay wedding.

You find out whether you're really in love with Jesus when the pressures begin to mount, and you find you have some serious problems to solve in your marriage, or when your child in whom you've invested your life decides to abandon the foundation you gave him or her. At that point, you find out whether it was just the idea or the real thing you've been in love with.

Will we really love Jesus when it no longer feels good to love Jesus?

Ultimately it comes back to Matthew 16:24-25:

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.'"

Heed the words of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:31:"I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily." He willingly embraced the sufferings that came his way so that he could "to know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if somehow I might make it to the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. 3:10-11).

Is that the Jesus we're in love with? Can we love Him for who He really is? He'll do wonderful things. That will never stop, but can we get past the things He does or the things we want

Him to do, in order to truly know His heart? If we can, then I know we will see true revival in our day.

In 1972, I chose a girl as my wife who is a babe—but I didn't just marry a babe; I married a woman. The young girl I first met is an image that fades away with time, but she is a person—and who she is inside is so much better than the image.

The real Jesus—Jesus the real person—is infinitely better than all the other things we find to love about Him. {eo}

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