

The Feminist That Loves Jesus

My first allegiance isn't to feminism. My first allegiance is to Jesus and His kingdom.

Following Jesus changes my feminism, not the other way around.

I choose to be a feminist in the way that Jesus would be a feminist.

The ways of the kingdom of God stand in direct contrast to the ways of the world and our culture. (Sadly, our churches can resemble our culture instead of Jesus. And I'm not talking about things like electric guitars, but rather the church's fascination with militaristic, entertainment, power-hungry, materialistic and patriarchal culture and so on.)

When I decided to become a disciple of Jesus, it meant that I wanted to live into my right-now life the way that I believed Jesus would do it. That has led me to many changes in my politics and activism and opinions, how I live out my faith, my mothering, my engagement with the church and community, and all points between.

Because I follow Jesus, I want to see God's redemptive movement for women arc toward justice. And God's kingdom tastes like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control. My life should still bear the fruit of the Spirit out.

I don't get a free pass on discipleship because I'm a woman or a feminist or for any other reason. I still have to work out my salvation with fear and trembling. When I chose to follow Jesus, it meant I chose to apprentice myself to His way of life and living in the world.

If we want to live counterculturally as disciples, we have to live our lives and seek mercy and do justice counterculturally

as well. It's tempting to want to employ the same tactics and arguments or methods that have been used on us or others, but that is a temptation we must resist. I don't believe that silencing and shaming and other tactics of the world will really bring about God's redemptive movement for women. We are to be gentle as doves and cunning as serpents.

God is light—there is no darkness to Him—so when we participate in the life of Christ now, we are marked as the *bringers* of light. The apostle John wrote, “Anyone who claims to be intimate with God ought to live the same kind of life Jesus lived.”

And a follower of Jesus is marked by joy. A follower of Jesus forgives 70 times 7. A follower of Jesus seeks to serve others. A follower of Jesus turns the other cheek. (I could go on.) There are hundreds of ways that Jesus subverts our world's systems and that can be hard to embrace: We want a seat at the table and a share of the power. Maybe it's because we don't really trust that the living water and broken bread will be enough for us. Maybe it's because we don't trust God's faithfulness. Maybe it's because we're afraid or angry or hurt or broken. Maybe it's because we are still learning how to turn our swords into ploughshares.

To the world, it's foolish to choose peace instead of war. It's foolish to forgive. It's foolish to be kind. It's foolish to hope. It's foolish to offer grace and conversation. It's foolish to care for your weaker brothers or sisters, let alone change your own behavior to accommodate them. It's foolish to live without legalism and clear boundaries that apply to everyone.

Foolish things will confound the “wise” of our world.

And when a feminist chooses to eschew the tactics of the world that are often used against women—silencing, shaming, name-calling, belittling, ganging up on and so on—we are being

foolish in the ways of a disciple. We are living prophetically into the kingdom of God. How would Jesus be a feminist? How would Jesus do justice and seek mercy and walk humbly on behalf of His global daughters?

We can prophesy a better world with our very words and actions.

The Spirit transforms our hearts and minds and then our lives—regardless of our past, regardless of our context, regardless of our privilege or lack thereof. If we are disciples, we are participating in the life of Jesus now. And the way in which we engage in our lives matters. (The way in which we engage our enemies matters even more, perhaps.)

This is how we will be known: by our love.

I want my work and witness as a Jesus feminist to be marked by who I build up, not who I tear down. I want us to be known as the ones who speak life, not death; the ones who empower and affirm and speak truth.

I want us to be the ones who boldly deconstruct and then, with grace and intention and inclusion, reconstruct upon the Cornerstone.

I turn more and more toward the aging beloved disciple's words these days when I'm working for justice for women:

"If we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and His love becomes complete in us—perfect love! ... When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God and God lives in us.

"This way, love has the run of the house, becomes at home and mature in us. ... There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life—fear of death, fear of judgment—is one not yet fully formed in love. We, though, are going to love—love and be

loved.

“First we were loved, now we love. He loved us first. If anyone boasts, ‘I love God,’ and goes right on hating his brother or sister, thinking nothing of it, he is a liar. If he won’t love the person he can see, how can he love the God he can’t see? The command we have from Christ is blunt: Loving God includes loving people. You’ve got to love both” (excerpts from 1 John 4, MSG).

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