

An Unrecognized Challenge

I like what I like, unapologetically. Liver and onions, chicken livers and gizzards, brussel sprouts, frog legs and riding motorcycles are all on my “like” menu. Most of us simply like what we like, and much of the time that is totally okay. But sometimes it’s not!

One of life’s major steps to maturity is the ability to tell ourselves, “No,” when the occasion warrants or when the action contemplated is, by God’s definition, simply wrong. In his book, *The Road Less Travelled*, Dr. M. Scott Peck brilliantly noted the importance of delaying gratification, e.g., “self-control” in Galatians 5:22, 23.

That said, we do err greatly when we live life by our own personal preferences, regardless of spiritual considerations. Not such a big revelation: feeling good feels good! Food on the tongue, a nice back rub or even a spiritual high all simply feel good! But “feeling good” is a poor substitution for “doing good.” Feeling spiritual is a poor substitute for following in the footsteps of Jesus (1 Peter 2:21). Most Christians recognize the Bible quote to follow, “in His steps,” but few remember that within the verse itself are the words, “since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps....”

“In His steps” means pleasing the Father, doing things God’s way, denying self and taking up our cross. “In His steps” means know what God wants and striving to live the life described in the New Testament, not felt in our emotions. Far too many live a sort of *bumper sticker theology* of doing what *feels* good, *feels* right or *feels* spiritual, rather than actually following scripture in daily decisions. “Attend the church of your choice” was a popular bumper sticker in the 1970s. Really? Do humans actually get to define and *choose* what they “feel like” God may have said?

Did Jesus die on the cross to ratify personal preferences, or to ratify His last will and Testament? I’m all for individual freedom, but the point at hand here is pleasing God, not self (2 Corinthians 5:9-11).

We can test the veracity of our spiritual choices by examining our own minds: Did I “find a church I like?” Or did I search the scriptures to learn what God says? The last I checked, Acts 17:11 still says, “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily *to see* whether these things were so.” Do I do that which makes my emotions *feel* spiritual, or do I make daily, personal and spiritual choices that match the word of God?

If we are not gravely careful, if we are not deeply seeking God’s truths through scripture, then we will most likely fall prey to the *unrecognized path of pleasing of self rather than our heavenly Father*. If we are not deeply committed to what God is telling us in His own word (which we *can* understand, Ephesians 3:4), then we will unwittingly please self, thinking we are pleasing Him.

If we subconsciously allow our emotions to be our guide, rather than His word, we will invariably choose that which pleases self rather than that which pleases God, even while convincing our minds that we are following Him, *because it just feels right!*

Let's be people who follow the steps of the Apostles (1 Corinthians 11:1). Let's be people of the book (1 Timothy 3:16, 17). Let's be people of God on His terms, not ours (Proverbs 14:12).

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