

Radical #3 Radical Following

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Radical means extreme or the core of something. So far in this series, we've talked about **Radical Courage** (which I encourage you to maintain by telling your story on a regular basis to give courage to others and so they can remind you when you drift off) and **Radical Waiting** (we have two options when we wait: be distracted by a phone or step in and wait radically, based on Psalm 131).

Today we will talk about **Radical Following**. Luke 9:27 is our definition of radical: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

1. Deny yourself
2. Take up your cross regularly

Ask this question: ***Is it worth it?*** (There is a TV show called "Worth It" where they talk about items, tacos for example, at different price points and then they decide which one is truly worth it.) We need to ask "Is it really worth it to deny myself and take up my cross"? Is this worth it? To answer this, we need to know what Jesus is offering because there is no reason to do this otherwise.

If you read the NT, you probably could give a comprehensive statement of what is being offered. Even so, we still tend to ask this question.

John 8:1-12: The story of the adulterous woman. It's important to understand the context of this narrative: there is a large gathering and the people wanted to trap Jesus to get rid of him.

John 8

1 but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

2 At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ***3*** The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ***4*** and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ***5*** In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" ***6*** They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

7 But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ***7*** When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." ***8*** Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. 10 Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

11 "No one, sir," she said.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

When we ask what Jesus offers, this narrative gives us the character of the man inviting us to follow him. He is willing to stand and defend us in our brokenness: we are all naked and afraid and in the place of this woman. These words could be to us: "Where are your accusers?"

In verse 12, he says

12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

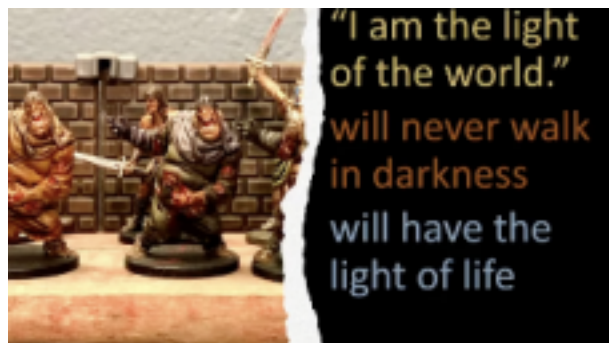
Jesus says he is the light, the one who created the sun, the originator of everyone, and will give you life if you follow him. So Jesus offers us LIGHT and LIVE.

But if you read John, you find that Jesus loves drama. For example, the above passage took place during the Festival of Booths or Tabernacles, a favorite feast of the people



because they get to camp for a week and live in little tent-like structures. Religious people were required to go to this but also, they wanted to go. In fact, this is where we get the Psalms of Ascent! It's basically a community camping trip. The roofs of the shelters should reveal the stars at night to remind them of when they used to be homeless. They are celebrating his provision. There are 30 offering

boxes for different things in the court of the women. Most of the events happen in this court. There are candelabras that are 75 feet tall that light up the courtyards all over Jerusalem. In the evenings, people gathered...**it was probably here that Jesus yelled out "I am the light of the world." This was a dramatic moment paired with the woman caught in adultery.**

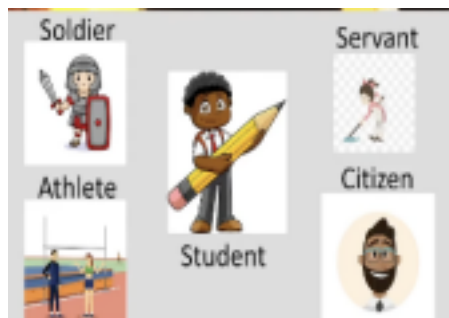


What does Jesus offer?

The first thing Jesus offers is that you get to follow the one who spoke everything and everyone into existence; he is not some random Jewish guy.

Second, he offers you the reality that you will never walk in darkness. Notice the **zombies** in the photo above: zombies have no purpose or meaning; they just chew on things. This is important because when Jesus says you will not walk in darkness, in your entire life, you will not be a zombie. **Zombie life is meaningless!** You see a zombi-likeness to the people around you who don't follow Jesus. Following Jesus means you won't have to move to and fro in darkness. You were once unanimated but **now you are animated!** He offers you animation, the ability to see where you are going.

This brings us to the idea of **FOLLOW ME**. What does this mean? I would tell you that even though I've followed Jesus 47 years, I'm not very good at it. I notice that most of the time, I'm a bad follower. I sinned here, I gave into temptation, I should have done something differently here. If you have been animated (following Jesus), you have some **strengths in this that you need to claim.**



You may have taken personality tests online. Today we will take five contexts and own one of them. Look for the one that describes you the best:



The Soldier
The soldier follows his captain into dangerous situations. Ready to fight against THE ENEMY.

1. First, let's talk about the soldier. The word **follow** in this context often refers to following a captain. Often people who grow in Christian homes are soldiers. They hear direct orders of what to do and they do them immediately: I often hear these.



The Servant
A servant follows his/her master wherever they might go. Ready to do whatever is needed.

2. Servant follow their master, ready to do what they're told. This is often people who become Christians later in life. These people are constantly wanting to move the kingdom forward and will do whatever it takes to do that.



The Student
The student carefully follows the teacher's instruction in order to gain knowledge. Ready to apply that knowledge in everyday life.

3. Students often become Christians through studying. They want to understand the truth: they want to talk about big ideas and how they apply to life.



The Citizen

The Citizen follows the laws of the city. Ready to talk about the ways of the Kingdom

4. Citizens are concerned about grace and mercy. They want the kingdom to reflect rules of grace: The concepts of John 8:1-11 are important to a citizen!



The Athlete

The Athlete follows instruction for improved performance. Ready to practice newly learned disciplines.

5. Athletes want to follow wise counsel; they want to improve and receive wise counsel. They love new disciplines and want to do them well. They want to do these with you so they can also improve.

Which one of these do you lean towards?

Being honest about your “following” strength: Once I was sitting next to two surgeons at a coffee shop. One of them said it was healthy to say “I’m a really good doctor and here’s why you should do what I’m telling you.” This is to increase the trust of the patient. It’s the same with your strengths. You are important pastors in the community of God: you can be confident in your “one” area and invite others to follow you. Honestly connect to one of these so you can inspire confidence in others, which is a sign of the Kingdom of God.

Next, we need to be humble about the things we’re not so good at. Connect with others who can help you. Radical following involves you owning how you follow Jesus. We need you here!

Ordinary vs. Radical following:



Ordinary Following Vs. Radical Following

1. Don't imitate Zombies
2. Be honest about your following strengths
3. Ask for help in the weaker spots.

Radical following is the willingness to resist the zombie life, the former life, the life where you “kind of follow.”

Jesus offers you animation or eternal life that is constant and non-stop. We are all in different places age-wise but in radical discipleship, it’s just the beginning no matter where you are

Questions:

(Peter) How do I know if I’m good at something?- Ask others to reflect what they think! It would be interesting to go to 3 people and ask them what they think you are!

(Danielle)I really like this! I like “eternal animation” vs. zombie life to reframe what

we've always heard, "eternal life."

(Jim): Signs and symptoms are good reminders to look at evidence that Jesus did start something and will keep doing it. As a student and citizen, I think there may be more than one of these that we exhibit but that God wants us to grow in all five as we manage our weaknesses.