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Jesus and the Cure for Worldliness (John 12:24-26)

Pastor Gene Giguere, October 25, 2026

Reading

"Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. **21** So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." **22** Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. **23** And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. **24** Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. **25** Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. **26** If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him."

Introduction

1) Well Church, we're back to the Text of **John 12**. I'm exceedingly enamored with this passage because it challenges me on so many levels.

   It challenges me not only to embrace the death of all that is sinful in me, but it also encourages me to grab on to the life I now have in Jesus. It also reminds me about my mission as a Jesus-follower: and that is, to not abide alone, but to reproduce my faith in Jesus in others.

2) The Apostle Paul used the wanderings of the ancient Israelites as a case study for New Testament believers. In **1 Corinthians 10**, he wrote:

   "For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud,

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- ✞ This is a reference to the supernatural guidance (**Exodus 13:21**) and protection (**Exodus 14:19–20**) the 'pillar of cloud' provided for them in their Exodus from Egypt.[1]

and all passed through the sea,

- ✞ This entire generation passed through the waters of the Red Sea and were eye-witnesses to YHWH's miraculous deliverance from those who were vigorously pursuing their lives (**Exodus 14:21–28**).

[2] and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,

- ✞ This is a verse that is absolutely cherished by every cult leader who's ever trodden God's round earth! They point to this verse and tell their congregation how important it is for them to be 'baptized into' their leader.

  But Moses is *not* the model for the New Testament Church leader! Moses was a one-off, a man who spoke with God face-to-face. I don't do that, and neither does any other leader in the Church today.

  God speaks to us *through His Word*, the written Word, and *through His Son*, the Living Word, and through His Spirit. The Book of Hebrews begins like this:

  > "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, **2** but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. **3** He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high …" (**Hebrews 1:1-3**).

  But the ancient Jews had this unique and magnificent leader Moses, whom God spoke with face-to-face.

[1] These brief intercalations are largely drawn from Lowery, David K., "1 Corinthians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. by J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), II, 525–26.

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And "all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea." As they navigated through the Exodus from slavery and into the desert – as they passed through the sea and followed the cloud – they were identified with this unique leader God appointed over them.

3 and all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.

The "spiritual food" Paul's talking about is the 'What is It' that fell from heaven, the Manna with which they baked *ba-manna* bread [see how I did that?] (**Exodus 16:4**, **15**).

The "spiritual drink," of course, was the water that was provided miraculously from a rock in the desert (this occurred twice, **Exodus 17:1–7** and **Numbers 20:1–13**).

Paul wants us to know that, even back then, Christ was the source of that supernatural provision. It was this incident in particular which is usually understood to be the beginning of Israel's 'wilderness wanderings.' And so, Paul's conclusion is that Jesus was with them all throughout those wanderings.

3) Now, it's been lost on no one that these five magnificent blessings prefigure the two divine ordinances which are presented to believers today: baptism (**1 Cor. 10:1–2**) and the Lord's Supper (**1 Cor. 10:3–4**). Consider them again:

- Being "under the cloud," and
- Passing "through the sea," and
- Being "baptized into" their leader, and
- Eating "the same spiritual food," and
- Drinking "the same spiritual drink."

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Well,

- Believers today are "under the cloud" of God's supernatural protection (cf. **1 Peter 1:5**) and guidance (cf. **Luke 1:79**) – we have His precious Spirit living within us.

- We have "passed "through the sea" from slavery into freedom (cf. **Hebrews 2:14–15**; **Galatians 1:4**) by following our Leader, Jesus (**Ephesians 1:22**), who is, in a sense, a New Moses, but far better (for "Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses," in **Hebrews 3:3**).

- And so, like the Israelites, we have been "baptized into" the One who led us out of slavery (**1 Corinthians 12:13**), God Himself: "Go therefore," Jesus said, "and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit …" (**Matthew 28:19**).

- And we too eat "the same spiritual food" (cf. **John 6:31–34**) and drink "the same spiritual drink" (cf. **John 4:10–14**) as we present ourselves monthly before His Table for the impartation of grace and strength for the journey ahead.

  Paul wrote: "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." **25** In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (**1 Corinthians 11:23-26**).

4) So, I know exactly what you're thinking: 'With all of these blessings, the Israelites must have been bound for success – and we are too!'

   But that, of course, is wrong. As Paul explains continuing in **1 Corinthians 10**:

   "Nevertheless, with most of them God was <u>not pleased</u>, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

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> **6** Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. **7** Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." **8** We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. **9** We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, **10** nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. **11** Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. **12** Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (**1 Corinthians 10:6-12**).

Dr. David Lowery writes:

> "The presence of supernatural privileges in the lives of Old Testament Israelites did not produce automatic success. On the contrary, in spite of their special advantages, 'most of them' (in fact, all but two members of one generation, Joshua and Caleb) experienced God's discipline, were disqualified, and died in 'the desert' (**Numbers 14:29**)."

And so, Paul took this very seriously and applied the lesson to his own life.

> In **1 Corinthians 9:27**, he wrote: "I discipline my body and keep it under control [literally, '*I pummel my body and make it a slave*'] lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified."
>
> He did this knowing that perhaps the greatest leader who ever walked this earth, save our Lord, Moses, was himself disqualified!
>
> > **Numbers 20:12**: "And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.'"
>
> Moses disobeyed the Lord by *striking* the Rock in anger at "the waters of Meribah, where the people of Israel quarreled with the Lord" instead of *speaking* to it (**Numbers 20:1–13**). In doing so, he misrepresented the grace of God (remember, Paul tells us that "the Rock WAS CHRIST" in **1 Corinthians 10:3b**).

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And the Rock was only struck ONCE, not TWICE.

Paul did not want to be "disqualified" from the prize.

"Disqualified" (or "disqualified for the prize" in some translations) translates a single Greek word, ἀδόκιμος, which means to be 'unapproved' or deemed 'worthless.'[2]

Paul didn't want to be put out of the race the Lord had set him in because of some moral failure.

His desire was to be able to say at the end of it, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. **8** Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing" – which he did in his final written words (**2 Timothy 4:7-8**).

Being disqualified is not talking about the loss of salvation, but the loss of reward.

God told Jeremiah in **Jeremiah 6:27-30**:

"I have made you a tester of metals among my people,
that you may know and test their ways.

28 They are all stubbornly rebellious,
going about with slanders;
they are bronze and iron;
all of them act corruptly.

29 The bellows blow fiercely;
the lead is consumed by the fire;
in vain the refining goes on,
for the wicked are not removed.

30 Rejected silver they are called,
for the Lord has rejected them."

[2] Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 21.

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While *unbelievers* are rejected from the gift of exuberant and forever life in Jesus, *believers* can be rejected from receiving the rewards God desires for them to have. And so, Paul says in another place,

> *"According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it"* (**1 Cor. 3:10a**).

✞ Paul is speaking to the Corinthians.

He'd come to them with the Good News about Jesus Christ and they'd believed. They'd been saved by faith alone in Christ alone. That was the foundation of their New Life and it's the foundation of ours: the cross of Jesus Christ.

But from the moment we're saved, we begin building upon that foundation. We build upon it with our works. Some of our works are pleasing to God; others are not. Some materials we choose to build with are sturdy and lasting; others are not. Some materials are extremely valuable; others are not.

And so, the Apostle continues:

> "Let each one take care how he builds upon it. **11** For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
>
> And then he tells us that 'if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, or precious stones' he will receive a reward.
>
> But if he builds with 'wood, hay, straw' he will suffer loss (**1 Corinthians 3:10b-12, 14b, 15b**).

And then the Apostle moves to THE DAY – the Day of Evaluation where each one of us will stand before Jesus to be appraised.

> As he wrote in **2 Corinthians 5:9-10**: "Whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. **10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil."

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And so, back to our passage in **1 Corinthians 3**, he continues …

> "Each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done" (**1 Corinthians 3:13**).
>
> Again, being disqualified is not talking about the loss of salvation, but the loss of reward.

To build upon the foundation of my salvation with worldly, worthless things, is to waste my life. The writer of Hebrews gives us a wonderful analogy:

> "Land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. **8** But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned" (**Hebrews 6:7-8**).
>
> When the 'heavenly rain' which falls upon the lives of all Christians bears a harvest of good fruit, God blesses it!
> But when that rain produces nothing useful in the life of the believer – things like thorns and thistles – that production "is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned" (**Hebrews 6:8**).

Indeed! Paul said the nature of our works will be "revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. **14** If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. **15** If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though <u>he himself will be saved</u>, but only as through fire" (**1 Corinthians 3:13-15**).

> This 'heavenly rain' metaphor reminds us of God's original curse at Adam's fall in **Genesis 3:17–20**.

17 And to Adam he said,
"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife
and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you,
'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you;
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
18 <u>thorns and thistles</u> it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.

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19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."
20 The man called his wife's name Eve,[3]
because she was the mother of all living."

Notice it:

"Cursed is the ground because of you …
thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you …"
(**Genesis 3:17b-18a**).

"Thorns and thistles" are a part of *the curse* – they should not be the product of the 'heavenly rain' which falls upon the life of a follower of Jesus!

"Land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. **8** But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned" (**Hebrews 6:7-8**).

Worldliness

1) In **Luke 24:30**, sitting with the disciples from Emmaus on the evening of the day of the Resurrection, Jesus "took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight."

[3] Or *Zoe*! The first woman's name in the original Hebrew Bible is *Eve* (or *Havah*). But in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament [the LXX or the *Septuagint*], her name appears as *Zoe*. In Genesis 3:20, Adam names his wife *Havah* (*Eve*), which means, "life" or "living." But when the Hebrew text was translated into Greek around the 3rd century BC, the translators used the Greek word Zoe (meaning "life") to convey the meaning of *Havah* in that specific verse. While *Zoe* is the Greek equivalent used in early Christian and Jewish texts to translate the concept of Eve's name, *Eve* remains the proper name identified in the Hebrew Bible and most modern English translations. What's interesting about this is that the LXX was very likely the version of the Bible Jesus was most familiar with. Evidence suggests our Lord primarily used a translation rather than the original Hebrew text – and the *Septuagint* was the most common version used by Jews in the diaspora and by early Christians. For Genesis 3:20, the LXX has: "Καὶ ἐκάλεσεν Ἀδὰμ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς γυναικὸς αὐτοῦ Ζωή, ὅτι μήτηρ πάντων τῶν ζώντων." *The Lexham English Septuagint* translates it: "Adam called the name of the woman Zoe, because she was mother of all the living" (Brannan, Rick, Ken M. Penner, Michael Aubrey, Israel Loken, Isaiah Hoogendyk, *The Lexham English Septuagint*, Second Edition, Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020).

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> Once they recognized Him, He vanished from their sight because once they could finally see Him, they had what they needed to walk with Him *without* seeing Him.

In the past, we've studied the 'mystery of the bread that opens blind eyes.'

> We saw that there was nothing special or magical, or even unique, about the bread which Jesus broke and gave to them. *What opened their eyes was not the bread itself, but the hands which gave it to them – they were Jesus' own nail-scarred hands*. This was a call to true discipleship!

In showing them His nail-scarred hands, Jesus was calling them to follow Him in death that they too might truly live.

He does the very same thing for everyone who has put his or her faith in Him. The Apostle Paul testified about his own co-crucifixion with Jesus:

> "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (**Galatians 2:20**).

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, famously wrote in his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die." And Bonhoeffer did just that. Eight years after that book was published, He was executed by hanging on April 9, 1945, at Flossenbürg Nazi concentration camp, in the remote Fichtel Mountains of Bavaria, adjacent to the town of Flossenbürg and near the German border with Czechoslovakia.

The full quote from *The Cost of Discipleship* is this:

> "The cross is laid on every Christian. The first Christ-suffering which every man must experience is the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old man which is the result of his encounter with Christ. As we embark upon discipleship, we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death—we give over our lives to death. Thus, it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."

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So, for salvation we come to the cross and finally understand Jesus' death: *that it was for us*.

But for discipleship, we pick up our own cross – our own instrument of death – and we follow Jesus with it.

2) The desire for self-preservation is at the heart of why we go through life failing to recognize that the Stranger on the road is Jesus Himself.

That's why many, many Christians spend their entire lives, and even die, standing on the Egypt side of the Red Sea looking longingly towards what might have been if only they'd had the trust in God to step between the walls of water.

They don't want to die. They're not willing to chance the waters closing in over their heads.

The bread that Jesus broke for these disciples didn't look back to His death, it looked forward *to theirs*.

Picking up one's cross is the very definition of what it means to be a true disciple – as Jesus defines discipleship anyway.

Everywhere we find it in the New Testament, discipleship is about putting off the impulse of self-preservation and entering into co-crucifixion – that is, *death* – and co-burial, so that we might at last walk in co-resurrection, or the newness of life in Christ Jesus.

That's the story that Jesus declared in all four Gospels and that the Apostles refined and clarified over and over again in the epistles.

Jesus has a life for His children – a life He wants us to experience. It's an abundant life, and exuberant life, Paul called it the *newness* of life. This life is *resurrection* life, but many believers miss the point that before we can experience resurrection, we must first experience death.

And so, over and over again, Jesus paradoxically calls us to death so that we might truly live.

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Many believers try to keep one foot in each world – this world, with all of its fleeting pleasures, and the Christian world, the realm where we walk with Jesus on roads of the Spirit.

3) The New Testament describes believers who refuse to lay down their lives as "carnal" or, to steal a phrase from **Ephesians 2:2**, those who are still "following the course of this world" (in contrast to those who are seeking God's Kingdom).

We might define worldliness as being devoted to the things of the world, things far removed from spiritual concerns.

The Bible calls those who do so "carnal" Christians. W*orldly* believers are characterized by spiritual indifference, instability, and lack of discipline. A worldly believer may think himself moral and upright, but because of his love of worldly pleasures (**2 Timothy 3:5**), he is actually in rebellion against the plan of God for His life.

James 4:4 put it this way: "[W]hoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

The Word of God is clear, I <u>cannot</u> love the world and love God.

"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (**1 John 2:15**).

But the spiritual man or woman is exactly the opposite of this!

*S*piritually-minded people focus on eternal things instead of the things of this world: in **Colossians 3:2-4**, they "set" their "minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. **3** For [they] have died, and [their] life is hidden with Christ in God. **4** When Christ who is [their] life appears, then [they] also will appear with him in glory."

And so they "put to death … what is earthly in" in them (**Colossians 3:5a**).

And they "put on … as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, **13** bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, [they forgive] each other; [even] as the Lord has forgiven" them (**Colossians 3:12-13**).

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They seek <u>first</u> the Kingdom of God (**Matthew 6:33**).

Their lives are characterized by the ever-increasing fruits of the Holy Spirit – love and peace and joy and self-control and kindness (**Galatians 5:22-23**).

Now this is really important – especially with respect to experiencing the abundant life that Jesus offers us, but which so often alludes us.

Listen carefully to **Romans 8:6**: "To set the mind on the flesh is death [that is, to live in experiential death], but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace [that is, to live in the experience of exuberant life and genuine peace]" (brackets mine).

The Word of God is clear in its warning: "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world" (**1 John 2:15-16**).

The Cure for Worldliness

1) And so, this is our Text. Jesus said,

> "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. **24** Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. **25** Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (**John 12:23b-25**).

I need you to hear this, Church, because we are moving on. We might think the cure for worldliness is changing our behavior, but it's not. Jesus' cure for worldliness is *dying*.

It's only then that the 'world' loses its grip on us.

It's only then that the light comes on and we finally understand what Jesus meant when He said, "What is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God" (**Luke 16:15**).

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It's only then that we realize that the world which we were so fond of, actually *hates* the Jesus whom we love!

> "If the world hates you," Jesus said, "keep in mind that it hated me first" (**John 15:18**).

Only those who've died to this world can know the will of God for their lives.

The Apostle Paul warns believers: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is–his good, pleasing and perfect will" (**Romans 12:2**).

So, Paul urged believers to commit themselves wholly "to eternal matters" and to detach themselves "from the institutions, values, and substance of this world which [is] passing away."[4]

In **1 Corinthians 7:31**, Paul wrote that "those who deal with the world" should be "as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away."[5]

Besides this, those who have died and are walking in the newness of life see others differently.

We see them through the eyes of the cross: they're either our brother/sister, or they're our mission field.

2 Corinthians 5:16a: "From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh" – or, as the CSV has it, "from a worldly perspective."

So, Paul warns, "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ" (**Colossians 2:8**).

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[4] Lowery, David, *1 Corinthians* in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), II:519–520.

[5] The phrase, "as though they did not make full use of it" is difficult to convey from the Greek, therefore, it's rendered a number of different ways in our English translations. But it carries the sense of not being "engrossed in them [that is, the things of this present world]" (NIV), or not being "attached" to them (NLT) or of not being "dependent on them" (Berean Study Bible), or not making "full use" of it (NASB, CSB), or even "abusing" or "misusing" it (NKJV, KJV). The ESV though really captures the sense of it best: "Those who deal with the world [should be] as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away."

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"The world has been crucified to me, and I to the world," he says in **Galatians 6:14b**.

So, what does the Bible call a Christian man or woman who wants to maintain a friendship with the world? According to James, they're spiritual adulterers! They're married to Christ, but they're *cheating!*

Now, I've taken the time to develop these things because I think they appropriately summarize our passage. They constitute the very essence of what it means to *follow Jesus* – in the first century and in 2026.

Believers who try to keep one foot in the world and the other in the realm of the Spirit *never find a firm footing in either*.

They're double-minded, always longing for that 'something' that they know is missing.

They never approach the exuberant 'newness' of life that Jesus offers – not just life after we die, but *living* while we're on this side of eternity – because they refuse to give their old life up for Jesus.

The truth is, as the Gospels show us in Technicolor, Jesus will accept nothing less than *all* from His disciples. He is uncompromising in this, and He said so in no vague terms.

4) The essence of Jesus' teaching on discipleship is well summarized in **Luke 17:33**: "Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it."

Many Christians come to the end of their life never having experienced a single moment of this *living* Jesus offers to those who have believed in Him.

- "I've come that they might have life and have it abundantly," Jesus said (**John 10:10b**).

  But He also said, *"Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it."*

- "Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life," Jesus said (**John 8:12b**).

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But He also said, *"Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it."*

- "Because I live, you also will live," Jesus said (**John 14:19**).

  But He also said, *"Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it."*

5) And, remarkably, this particular teaching of Jesus appears in His own words *in all four of the Gospels*.

   I'm not sure if we appreciate just how remarkable that is!

   Each of the Gospel writers had their own *theme*, their own *purpose* for writing, and their own *target audience*.

   And so, they would pick and choose those events and teaching from the life of Jesus which served that theme, purpose and audience.

   - Matthew, for example, was not "written to chronicle the events of Jesus' life, but rather to present undeniable evidence … that Jesus Christ is the promised Savior, the Messiah, Son of God, King of kings and Lord of lords."[6]

     So, only Matthew records …

     Peter walking on the water (**14:28-33**); and

     Judas' suicide and the purchase of the Field of Blood (**27:3-10**); and

     The dream of Pilate's wife (**27:19**); and

     Pilate washing his hands (**27:24-25**); and

     The opening of the tombs at Jesus' crucifixion (**27:52-53**), etc.

   - Mark, on the other hand, says nothing about Jesus' birth, childhood, or life prior to His baptism by John.

[6] Fairchild, Mary, *Introduction to the Gospel of Matthew: Matthew reveals Jesus as Israel's Promised Messiah*, 2018.

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It's not that the Virgin Birth isn't true or important, it's just that it didn't serve Mark's theme.

✞ Luke, on the other hand is unique because he seeks to tell Jesus' story in an "orderly account" (**Luke 1:3**).

That's his purpose.

So, he alone record's the lineage of Jesus' mother, Mary, and establishes that Jesus and John the Baptist are cousins, and that Elizabeth bore John miraculously as well (as she would have been well past child bearing age when she bore him, **Luke 1:7**).

✞ And as for John, Sam O'Neil, argues that "the Gospel of John is so unique that *90 percent of the material it contains regarding Jesus' life cannot be found in the other Gospels*."[7]

Because of this, it's pretty rare to find an event or teaching in the life of Jesus that is recorded in all four Gospels – I mean, the raising of Lazarus appears in only *one Gospel*, John's!

But guess what. All four Gospels record Jesus' teaching on the cost of discipleship – and the warning that 'Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it" (**Matthew 10:39**, **Mark 8:35**, **Luke 17:33**, **John 12:25**).

That must be important to Jesus.

And perhaps Jesus' clearest statement on this is **Luke 14:27**, *"Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."*

It's to this death that Jesus was calling the two disciples He met on the road to Emmaus to: *their own*.

[7] O'Neal, Sam, *Explaining the Differences Between John and the Synoptic Gospels: 3 Explanations for the Unique Structure and Style of John's Gospel*, 2019.

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Conclusion

And so, I guess the question all serious Christians have to ask themselves is: 'am I crucified with Christ – or is Adam still alive and well in me?' I can tell you this on the authority of Scripture:

- If I'm playing around with sin, I am still very much alive and well.
- If I'm looking at pornography, I am still very much alive and well.
- If I'm setting my mind primarily on things of this earth rather than on things above, I am still very much alive and well.
- If I refuse to "put to death" what is "earthly" in me – sexual immorality, impurity, covetousness – then Adam is still very much alive in me.

  Paul is saying to us: 'In these you *once* walked … but *now you must put them all away*.'

- If anger or wrath or malice live in my heart, or if gossip, slander or obscene talk live in my mouth, then I am still very much alive and well.
- If I have a problem with speaking the truth in all circumstances, then I have not learned what it means to follow Jesus, cross in hand.
- If I'm holding back forgiveness from anyone, then I know much about Adam, but little about Jesus.

Church, may the Lord help us to embrace Jesus' words, that our own death-to-self might bring forth a harvest of life!

That we might not only enjoy the 'newness of life' which is our birthright in the New Birth, but that we might take many with us we go home to meet the Lord.

Amen?

Let's pray.

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