

We are called to Jesus, not a confession of faith

(Based on Chapter 2 of *Costly Grace*)

The Big Idea

The call of Jesus is to Christ himself, not to a confession of faith or an intellectual agreement. Those may help us understand our commitment to Jesus, but the call is to a personal and pervasive interaction with Christ himself.

Biblical Foundation

As he walked along, he saw a tax collector, Levi son of Alphaeus, sitting in his office. Jesus said to him, "Follow me." Levi got up and followed him. Mark 2:14 (TEV)

If you keep my commands, you'll remain intimately at home in my love. That's what I've done—kept my Father's commands and made myself at home in his love. John 15:10 (MSG)

Following Jesus

Discuss whether Jesus is an add-on to our lives or whether he is the reason for our lives. Why must we give up sentimental thoughts of Christian goodness and service and live from the vision Jesus provides of the Christian life? How might a focus on being good undermine our relationship with Jesus?

In Mark we're told Levi immediately followed Jesus. Bonhoeffer argues that this isn't because of a prior relationship, but because Levi recognized who Jesus was, the Incarnate Son of God, the Word become flesh (John 1:14). Levi doesn't leave everything to follow a doctrine, or a concept, or an ideal. He follows Jesus in order to have a relationship with him.

Jesus calls us to a level of intimacy that can only be sustained by his constant presence in our lives. He says, "Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. ... Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly" (Matthew 11:29-30 MSG). If we say we trust in God but do not follow Jesus, we've created a religion that omits Christ as the living Son. Why is that an important distinction?

Jesus commands a choice

We can obey or disobey the command, but he can't ignore it. Jesus says he will not tolerate lukewarm, wishy-washy disciples (Revelation 3:16). Why do you think so many of us think only monks, missionaries, and ministers are called to be more saintly while the rest of us must settle comfortably into a part-time discipleship?

Jesus requires that we take real and specific steps of faith. He calls us to comprehensively and absolutely walk away from the way we do life now so we can follow him down an exclusive path through the narrow gate that leads to the kingdom of heaven. Is there a specific step Jesus is telling you to take right now in your relationship with him?