

Coach House Church BEACONS

AGAINST THE FLOW

9TH JULY 2020

Most of us try to fit in. We like to feel that we have things in common with other people and that we're part of a group. Society tells us that we need people to like us and we need to fit in. But peer pressure can make us do awful things; it can make us lie or cheat or do a whole number of bad things.

The bible talks about us following the crowd. Jesus said in Matthew "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

Jesus is saying, to follow Him we need to pick what others aren't. We need to choose to go the harder way rather than the easier way. The easier way might seem pleasant while we're walking it but it doesn't lead anywhere good. He was saying this at a time when it was really hard to follow Him. He was surrounded by people that looked holy on the outside but were really looking for their own gain. It was hard for people to say that all of society was wrong and that Jesus was the only way to heaven. They were persecuted and even killed for saying these things.

Nowadays, to follow Jesus, we need to go against what most people want. We don't have to bear physical persecution but it's hard to follow Jesus, especially in a culture where faith is so foreign to so many. Most people look at faith with derision as if it's just something that's old fashioned and they've matured or evolved past it. Most people in this country at this time have decided that God isn't real. Most people have decided that the purpose of their lives is to enjoy themselves as best they can. They try to do this in many different ways and most of them lead people away from God.

James 4:4 says You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with this world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again, that if your aim is to enjoy this world, you can't be a friend of God.

If we want to just fit in and have fun, we will never be following the gospel because the world doesn't want what God wants. It's still a slave to sin and stuck in its old ways. The world is not looking for God. The world looks only for pleasure in this life but that just leads to dissatisfaction in the long run because it's not what we were made for. We were made to worship God and follow His plan for our lives. This won't always be easy or comfortable, but it will be right and will lead us to the best destination.

There are 3 things that will help us stand up to the crowd and be who we're meant to be. We need to know what we think, why we think it and who we're following.

We need to know what we think. This means knowing what God has to say on all aspects of our lives. We need to be clear on where the boundaries are between right and wrong and follow where God leads. This means reading our bibles and praying so that we know God's heart inside out. Then we can't be fooled by being told that what we want is something else because we will know exactly what we want. We will know where we are meant to be going and how to act in most situations. We will sometimes need to look for more guidance or seek help from those around us, but the more we know what God has said about right and wrong and how to live, the more we will be able to do it. You can't live out an example that you haven't seen.

We also need to know why we think it. We need to not agree with others just because that's what they think. We need to be ready to say why we believe what we believe.

1 Peter 3 says "but in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,"

We need to know why we believe what we believe to defend ourselves when we are challenged. We need to know the evidence for our faith in our heads, but we also need the Holy Spirit in our hearts to help us with what to say. The verse says that when we defend ourselves it should be with gentleness and respect and this is so true but so difficult to do in reality. So we need the help of the Holy Spirit to do this, both so we won't be swayed and so that others are convinced of the truth.

Thirdly, we need to know who we're following. If we don't have a living relationship with God, we will easily fall away because we will see attractiveness around us and it'll be a distraction. If we know God intimately and spend our time with Him getting to know Him, then we will be less likely to be distracted by the crowd. We will be with our father and maker and it will matter less what everyone else is doing.

Know what you think, know why you think it and know that it's ok to be different to others and have a different opinion because you know who you're following.

The crazy thing is that we do so much to try to please others, but that will never work. People can see when you're pretending and if we are constantly lying and pretending to be someone else, we will never really win their affection. Their praise isn't what we should be living for but as soon as we let go of the need to be liked, we'll be more genuine people and others will really see who we are and will want to be around us because of that.

However, we should expect at some point for others to disagree with how we live.

John 15 says "If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

At some point, if we are living out our faith day by day others will disagree with us. Steve Went gave a great example in his last beacon "Intervention". There are many reasons why they might not like what we have to say or think on certain subjects. We are not heading in the same direction as they are. Our lives should look a bit different.

We are meant to be more like Jesus every day. Jesus never fit in with the crowd. He stood out and was different. We need to stand up for what is right regardless of what other people think of us along the way.

The great news is, that although we don't fit in with the world, we have a family that we will always be a part of. God has adopted us as beloved children and has made us His own and we will always have that. We will always be a part of something bigger and we will always fit in where we really belong, the family of God.

We are heading down the narrow road, the tough road, the bumpy and rocky road. But this road leads us to true everlasting life with the people that we really fit in with. Our church family. God's family.

It may be that your earthly family has rejected you or hurt you. It may be that you have been rejected by people you hoped would be your friends. It may be that you feel alone. But you are never alone because you are God's. At the end of this life we have an eternity with Him to look forward to along with our Christian brothers and sisters. Now this may sound entirely unappealing if you have been hurt by Christians, but we will be so changed that we won't bear any grudges or have a problem with anyone.

If you do feel alone, I would really recommend that you find a church family to be a part of near you. If this isn't possible, or you're not sure where to look then please get in touch with us and we'll see what we can do, even if all we can do is let you know you're not alone.

Don't follow the crowd. It won't bring you life. Follow God and His plan as that is what's best.



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