

Welcome

Live with passion and conviction, be open and flexible, re-think and re-paint the faith to discover what it really means to live your life as Jesus teaches.

Question – how open minded are you? Are you actively seeking to live as Jesus wants?

One – Jump

Everyone believes something. Doctrine isn't God, he's one step ahead of our understanding. A focus solely on doctrine leads to who's right and who's wrong; walls that define who's in and who's out, and keep them there – we need to be careful: Jesus often turns who's in and out on their head. Jesus' way to live is in tune with how the world is: reality. You can believe the right doctrine and not live as Jesus teaches. His way, and the life he offers should be less about talking and more about the experience we're actually having – this won't be without its struggles (the way is narrow) but it will lead to joy: ours and God's.

Question – where do you place more emphasis: what you believe or how you live – for yourself and for others? Do you find yourself ever wanting to define who's in and who's out?

Two – Yoke

The Bible is difficult, it raises more questions than answers. Jewish rabbis interpreted the scriptures – their 'yoke' described how they believed you should apply scripture to life. Jesus had 'authority' to define a new yoke, he gave us the 'keys to the kingdom' to keep redefining the yoke. Traditionally, the bible was read and interpreted together – 'binding and loosing' (what you can and can't do) to live God's way in today's world, can only be done in community. You can't *just* teach the bible, it needs interpreting; everyone's understanding rests on someone's binding and loosing (which was new at the time). Binding and loosing takes conviction and humility. You need to wrestle with the text, you will come away limping (like Jacob) but you will experience the living God.

Question – are you willing to wrestle with the Bible in order to experience the living God?

Three – True

Both joyous and tragic moments point to there being something bigger. God is always present; truth is everywhere; truth is bigger than religion. Affirm truth wherever you find it. Jesus is not just a solution to a problem, he's the blueprint of creation, he leads to ultimate reality. 'Christian' is a bad adjective, being 'christian' doesn't make something good, truth and goodness can be anywhere. We don't need to 'take' God to people but rather point him out.

Question – are you willing to affirm truth wherever you find it?

Four – Tassels

How do you describe church?: raw; desire; longing; come as you are; connection; people who can imagine nothing better. Be real – live it, including in the parking lot. As shalom is more than peace (it's the presence of the goodness of God) so salvation is more than a transaction (in which Jesus pays the price for our sin). Salvation is: walking more and more in harmony with God, the work of the cross in us (ongoing) not just for us (once and for all); restoration not just forgiveness; not about not sinning but about who God made us to be; about now not just heaven; not just about me but all of creation. You can be saved and miserable, not a healthy, whole, life-giving person, with massive areas of your life unaffected. To be healed we have to stare our junk in the face – all if it: dig it up. A relentless pursuit of who God made you to be – don't strive to be 'superwhatever'. Superwhatever needs to be killed. You can be a good Christian and never let Jesus heal your soul. Are you smoking what you're selling?

Question – are you letting Jesus in to affect every area of your life? Who are you trying to please, does this get in the way of being who God has made you to be?

Five – Dust

Being a disciple is about becoming like your rabbi. Follow so close in their footsteps you get covered by the dust of their feet. If the rabbi calls you to follow him, he thinks you've got what it takes to be like him. Jesus believes in us, he has faith in us. He thinks we can be like him.

Question – do you know that Jesus believes in you, do you think you can be like him?

Six – New

Feeling guilty won't make you change. We shouldn't think of ourselves primarily as sinners. We are new creations. We need to live up to this. We need to learn who we are in Christ – this is for everyone, we don't make it true by doing or believing something, it's already true, our choice is whether to live in this reality. Heaven and hell are both full of forgiven people who God loves whom Jesus died for – the difference is how we choose to live, which story we choose to live in, which reality we trust. Jesus talks not about how I get to heaven, but how I live in a way that brings heaven here. He measures our standing in relation not to what we say or believe, but how we live, specifically in relation to the 'hell' around us. It has always been God's intention to bring heaven to earth – he wants to be with his people. Trust that grace pays the bill.

Question – what opportunities do you have to bring heaven to earth, and help people to believe what's actually already true: that they are loved and forgiven?

Seven – Good

God's creation was good, not perfect and hence static. He empowered it with potential, possibility and promise to change and grow. He created people ultimately connected to creation, their choices fractured everything. God's plan has always been about renewal, restoration, reconciliation – in Jesus he's putting it all back together. The early church was a direct contradiction to prevailing Roman society and culture, partnering with God to create a new culture. The resurrection was evidence that Jesus is Lord and that through him the world is restored – it's not about proving with argument that he rose, it is about people experiencing the resurrection community. And now it's our turn to take responsibility for who the church is. The church exists to serve the world: don't blame the dark for being dark, ask why the light's not brighter. Being a Christian should be good news for your neighbours, if it's not good news for everyone it's good news for no-one. We must stop trying to convert people and convince them to join the church, but rather give ourselves away in radical service, expecting nothing in return – we must stop categorising people as in or out, everybody matters, trust them to God. Faith is a journey not a destination. Quiet, humble stealth acts change things – selfless service takes everything, including a refusal to escape this fractured world. But to engage with it means our hearts will be broken, again and again. Our gift to the world is hope – we need to learn to throw better parties, relax, slow down.

Question – Are you embracing the call to be a disciple? Are your neighbours thrilled about your faith? Are you offering hope to those around you?

Epilogue

As we look around, we can get cynical, or we can choose to reclaim our innocence, insist that hope is real, and commit to being people who are learning to do what Jesus teaches and communities who put God's love and Jesus' brilliance on display: a life of faith, creativity, meaning and significance. It is better that way – it's what Jesus had in mind.