

"FOLLOW ME"

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In our generation we are prone to rationalize many of our bad habits or eviltendencies by saying that the unique pressure of our chaotic times lead us to seek some measure of escape from the cruel realities of life. Whether these unspiritual diversions manifest themselves in gross materialism, withdrawal from society in various ways, or utter disregard for the moral and social standards of our society, we should be reminded of the life Jesus led that we may persevere in the midst of all our challenging difficulties.

Truly no human being ever experienced a greater test than Jesus. "The sufferings of Jesus were not confined to the crucifixion. In reality, Jesus of Nazareth spent upward of twenty-five years on the cross of a real and intense mortal existence." (2018:4) And yet, even though, "mortal life had dealt its hardest, cruelest, and bitterest blows; this man met these ministrations of despair with faith, courage, and the unswerving determination to do his Father's will. Jesus met life in all its terrible reality and mastered it--even in death. He did not use religion as a release from life. The religion of Jesus does not seek to escape this life in order to enjoy the waiting bliss of another existence. The religion of Jesus provides the joy and peace of another and spiritual existence to enhance and ennoble the life which men now live in the flesh.

If religion is an opiate to the people, it is not the religion of Jesus. On the cross he refused to drink the deadening drug, and his spirit, poured out upon all flesh, is a mighty world influence which leads man upward and urges him onward. The spiritual forward urge is the most powerful driving force present in this world; the truth-learning believer is the one progressive and aggressive soul on earth." (2063:2-3)

In following Jesus we are following the forward urge. "Jesus lived a life which is a revelation of man submitted to the Father's will, not an example for any man literally to follow." (2016:6) To follow Jesus means to submit our will to the Father's will. And when man goes into partnership with God not only are all things possible, but man becomes better able to cope with the seemingly unbearable pressures of existence on such an imperfect world as Urantia.

"Many things which happen in the course of a human life are hard to understand, difficult to reconcile with the idea that this is a universe in which truth prevails and in which righteousness triumphs. It so often appears that slander, lies, dishonesty, and unrighteousness--sin--prevail. Does faith, after all, triumph over evil, sin, and iniquity? It does. And the life and death of Jesus are the eternal proof that the truth of goodness and the faith of the spirit-led creature will always be vindicated." (2062:L & 2063:1)

The Urantia Book tells us we should look to Jesus' life to discover the Father's divine character and loving personality. We, as followers of Jesus have an obligation to uplift rather than to admon-

ish our brethren. We must constantly strive to be positive in our relations with our fellow man. And yet, this is not an easy task. We might so often ask how Jesus would act in many of the perplexing situations unique to our day and age.

"We should better understand Jesus' teachings by his life. He lived a perfected life on Urantia and his unique teachings can only be understood when that life is visualized in its immediate background. It is his life, and not his lessons to the twelve or his sermons to the multitudes, that will assist most in revealing the Father's divine character and loving personality." (1582:1)

"To "follow Jesus" means to personally share his religious faith and to enter into the spirit of the Master's life of unselfish service for man. One of the most important things in human living is to find out what Jesus believed, to discover his ideals, and to strive for the achievement of his exalted life purpose. Of all human knowledge, that which is of greatest value is to know the religious life of Jesus and how he lived it. (2090:4)

What is the new meaning of the words "follow me" as they are applied to our group as disciples and apostles of this restated religion of Jesus? If Jesus were physically present in our midst as he was two thousand years ago what would be his attitude toward our way of life as it is lived in the latter half of the Twentieth Century? We can be sure that Jesus would abide by the laws of his country were he alive today. We can know from studying the Urantia Book that he would not become involved in politics and moral issues pertaining only to the present time. We can assume that in dealing with us he would be a sympathetic friend but that he would encourage us to think out and act upon our problems under our own initiative for this is the way he always dealt with his twelve apostles.

It is a fact that although Jesus drank deeply of the cup of human existence it was not possible for him to experience the gamut of human relationships. For example, Jesus never fell in love and he never married. He was never drafted and sent to fight in a war he perhaps did not understand or believe in. He did not live in a polluted environment where existence was threatened by the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat. He did not grow up hearing of the threat of nuclear holocaust, overpopulation, crime and so on. He did not live in a society where his senses were constantly bombarded by advertising, the news media, the entertainment industry etc.

As we speculate upon what Jesus would do if he were in our place, we must not fail to remember, "Jesus had little to say about the social vices of his day; seldom did he make reference to moral delinquency. He was a positive teacher of true virtue. He studiously avoided the negative method of imparting instruction; he refused to advertise evil. He was not even a moral reformer. He well knew, and so taught his apostles, that the sensual urges of mankind are not suppressed by either religious rebuke or legal prohibitions. His few denunciations were largely directed against pride, cruelty, oppression, and hypocrisy." (1582:3) I believe that we, as the new teachers of this restatement of Jesus, should follow his example as we increasingly bear the re-

sponsibility of dealing with his children on this earth.

Furthermore, "Jesus did not attack the teachings of the Hebrew prophets or the Greek moralists. The Master recognized the many good things which these great teachers stood for, but he had come down to earth to teach something additional, 'the voluntary conformity of man's will to God's will.'" Jesus did not want simply to produce a religious man, a mortal wholly occupied with religious feelings and actuated only by spiritual impulses. Could you have had but one look at him, you would have known that Jesus was a real man of great experience in the things of this world. The teachings of Jesus in this respect have been grossly perverted and much misrepresented all down through the centuries of the Christian era; you have also held perverted ideas about the Master's meekness and humility. What he aimed at in his life appears to have been a superb self-respect. He only advised man to humble himself that he might become truly exalted; what he really aimed at was true humility toward God. He placed great value upon sincerity-- a pure heart. Fidelity was a cardinal virtue in his estimate of character, while courage was the very heart of his teachings. "Fear not" was his watchword, and patient endurance his ideal of strength of character. The teachings of Jesus constitute a religion of valor, courage, and heroism. And this is just why he chose as his personal representatives twelve commonplace men, the majority of whom were rugged, virile, and manly fishermen." (1582:2)

In wholeheartedly striving to "follow Jesus" we are in fact following what the book terms the "natural, dependable way of divine acting" for Jesus was the epitome of the sane individual. "The more healthful attitude of spiritual meditation is to be found in reflective worship and in the prayer of thanksgiving. The direct communion with one's Thought Adjuster, such as occurred in the later years of Jesus' life in the flesh, should not be confused with these so-called mystical experiences. The factors which contribute to the initiation of mystic communion are indicative of the danger of such psychic states. The mystic status is favored by such things as physical fatigue, fasting, psychic dissociation, profound aesthetic experiences, vivid sex impulses, fear, anxiety, rage, and wild dancing. Much of the material arising as a result of such preliminary preparation has its origin in the subconscious mind.

However favorable may have been the conditions for mystic phenomena, it should be clearly understood that Jesus of Nazareth never resorted to such methods for communion with the Paradise Father. Jesus had no subconscious delusions or superconscious illusions." (1100:2-3)

In conclusion, I would like to refer to a paper by Marian Rowley entitled, "The Lives We Live". Her title is from that well known passage in Paper 140 (1569:5) in which Jesus in the Ordination of the twelve says, "And it will not be so much by the words you speak as by the lives you live that men will know you have been with me and have learned of the realities of the kingdom."

Marian Rowley says, "In other words, to use a nice switch, don't do as I say--do as I do. And how many of us could honestly say that without flinching? For, of course, this is the most difficult thing in the world to do. We know in our minds what we ought to do, what is the

right thing to do--but so often we fail to put into practice the things we know we should do." Yes, it is a difficult thing to follow Jesus, but we can make a new and concerted effort to try harder. And we can keep on trying for truly, "It is not so much what we are as what we are becoming." And the Urantia Book tells us that as we grow spiritually it actually becomes easier each day to do the right thing.

Quotes from Urantia Book

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