

Out Of The Crowd

Digging Deeper

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I think most of us find some comfort in being part of a crowd of people who share our opinions, live the same kind of life we do, and look like us. As social beings, blending in with those around us feels right. There's safety in numbers and if everyone else is more or less like us, we must be OK.

But God calls us to a different kind of life, one where we need to step out of the crowd and encounter Jesus. Meeting and getting to know Jesus instead of just following him around is life changing. We become transformed from creatures of the flesh pursuing our own self interests to spiritual beings fully capable of living and loving like he did.

Some of us don't think we're worthy of that. We've bought the lie that we have to be perfect to encounter Jesus. The truth is, Jesus calls each and every one of us to be his disciple, whatever our personal stature, social standing or occupation might be (Luke 19:1-10). Nothing we are and nothing we've done in the past disqualifies us from coming out of the crowd and encountering him.

But there are some things we need to do to be seen and known by Jesus. We must be willing to take a risk and reach out to him in the toughest moments of our life. We must reject the notion that we can get through life on our own. We must trust that he will heal and comfort us when we are rejected by those who abandon or ostracize us. And we

must step out in faith and cling tightly to him as he leads us out of the dark place we're in and into the light of a new life with him (Luke 8:43-48).

We must also commit to him and his ways for better or worse, no matter the cost. Encountering Jesus transforms us, but it doesn't change the world around us. The challenges of living in a world that doesn't know him and often turns on both him and those who have joined him don't go away (Mark 15:40- 47, Mark 16:1-11). We must remain in the circle of those who do know Jesus, focus on the promises of God, and continue to minister to others, especially those who reject him and us. That's what commitment looks like.

And most of all, we must love all of those around us deeply and unconditionally. When we step out of the crowd and encounter Jesus, our relationship with him becomes intimate and real. We become more like him and begin cultivating intimate relationships with others like those he has with us. We begin demonstrating his love to others by sacrificing for them the way he sacrificed for us. And we introduce them to the best and most loyal friend they'll ever have in Jesus. That not only changes them, it changes the world (John 15:12-17).

This is the time, this is the moment, for all of us to step out of the crowd, come closer to Jesus, and be part of his inner circle. It is a life that is filled with risk and fraught with challenges. It demands commitment in good times and in bad. And it requires that we love and sacrifice for others, including those who may not love us.

But it's the only way to live.

Key Verse: My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you (Job 42:5).

Key Message: This is the time, this is the moment, for all of us to step out of the crowd, come closer to Jesus, and be part of his inner circle.

Question for Understanding:

Most of us go through life with our own expectations of how our life is going to turn out. But God often has other plans. How has encountering Jesus altered the course of your life in ways you never expected?

Thought Provoking Question:

Encountering Jesus often reveals things that we need or things about our life that need changing that we weren't even aware of. What has Jesus revealed to you that you didn't know you needed or needed to change?

Question for Sharing:

When we encounter Jesus, we are loved in ways we never expected to be loved. How is the love of Jesus different from the love you've experienced from others, and how has it changed you?