

The Story of Jesus

Part 14: Why I don't call myself a Christian anymore

Mark 6:7-13 - [watch online](#)

Summary:

Jesus never told anyone to “become a Christian.” But he does invite everyone to follow him. What’s the difference and why does it even matter?

Main Points:

[02:22] Christians BELIEVE certain things. Jesus Followers DO certain things.

[03:14] Jesus doesn't invite us to simply believe something. He invites us to be and do something.

[06:21] Jesus Followers do what Jesus did and say what Jesus said.

[08:39] Jesus Followers are prepared and empowered by Jesus.

[12:14] Jesus Followers are content to rely on Jesus and enjoy seeing him come through.

[15:18] Jesus Followers know that winning people is more important than winning arguments.

[16:07] When Jesus Followers live out the mission of Jesus... lives are changed.

[17:49] Jesus Followers become like Jesus in order to be utilized by Jesus.

[21:00] Jesus doesn't invite us to be a Christian. He invites us to follow him.

[25:43] Following Jesus allows us to become who we were created to be and to do what we were created to do.

Invitation:

To follow Jesus...

- [22:17] Accept his invitation
- [22:48] Get to know him
- [23:23] Ask him to lead you
- [23:55] Act

Discussion Questions:

1. Would you say you agree or disagree with Jon’s distinction between the term “Christian” and the term “Jesus Follower?” Why is that?
2. In your faith journey what has been the relationship between believing and doing?
3. Read James 2:14-20 What stands out and/or challenges you in that passage? What do you think the distinctions are between trying to earn God’s favor with good deeds and partnering with Jesus to bring the Kingdom of God to earth now?
4. What are some steps you can take this week to partner with Jesus?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

Transcript:

IN: Jesus never told anyone to “be a Christian.” But he invites all of us to follow him. What’s the difference? More than you might think. And that difference has the potential to not only transform your faith but your life as well.

So let’s talk about it together.

WE: If you've been around CCC for a while you might have noticed we don't say the word Xian very much. We use JF instead.

- Not b/c embarrassed or trying to be cool... just being silly?

Words are important; they affect how we see the world and ourselves.

And the word Xian has come to mean many different things to many different people... w/ a lot of baggage

- Examples: Historical / Current American

Now whatever baggage the word has, whether positive or negative, Xian (for most), at it's core, has come to mean someone who holds to certain beliefs.

- Trinity God created humanity in his likeness... he loves us and wants us to know him
- Jesus died and rose again to bring eternal life and will return again as he promised to restore all of creation once and for all.

And yes we hold to that... Those are the most important truths of the universe... and in that sense we are Xian

So why do we rarely use the word Xian? B/c in our minds... **Xians BELIEVE certain things. JFs DO certain things.**

JFs do BELIEVE but their belief also compels them to DO

And honestly that is a HUGE distinction.

We can believe something is true and never do anything w/ it.

- And as Jesus' little brother James said... belief w/out action is pointless.
- Can say exercise will make me leaner/stronger but unless I actually do it... nothing happens

Jesus didn't come to earth, teach the truths of God, live out and model the love of God, bring the KoG to earth, die and rise again... just so we can believe some stuff and never actually be changed or change anything around us.

Jesus doesn't invite us to simply believe something. He invites us to be and do something.

- To be God's ambassadors to a world that desperately needs to know they matter and are loved and accepted.
- To participate in his world shaking revolution to restore the humanity and worth of each person created in his image

It is soooo much better than the stereotypical American Xian version of having to believe certain things.

But how do we do that?

How does someone discover the life Jesus is offering everyone and actually live as a JF and not just claim the title of Xian?

Jesus actually tells us... We see it in an account of him sending out his first followers on a special mission...

GOD: Recap- teaching... miracles... not all warm fuzzies and kitten whispers.... Religious leaders plotting w/ civic leaders to kill... rejected by hometown.

Had called 12 specific men to be his main followers... **Mark 3:14-15**

- So far, they have done a lot of accompanying but not a lot of doing...
- And Jesus now says, "Ok boys. It's time to get to work." **Mark 6:7-13**

Now before you get all freaked out and think that to follow Jesus we need to do this exact thing... (how even work in our culture w/ no villages and spread out towns?)

These are specific instructions for a specific mission... or possibly a series of missions ("began sending them out").

But this scene is important b/c we see principles for everyone who decides to follow Jesus and not just believe in Jesus.

1st: JFs do what Jesus did and say what Jesus said. **V. 7 and 12-13**

As we have seen through Mark's account... Jesus is on a mission to bring God's kingdom to earth; To reverse and destroy the kingdom of sin, darkness, death.

And he wants to give as many people as possible the opportunity to join it...

So he divides his forces into 6 groups of 2 instead of one large group going from place to place.

- To let everyone know the new kingdom is coming... everyone get ready.

He gives his disciples his authority to do the things he was doing... He empowers them w/ his power...

- To literally push back the forces of darkness by casting out demons
- And to show that all of creation will be remade he gives them the authority/ability to heal sick the sick

And they teach the same message he was teaching... Repent. The KoG is near.

- Not just feel bad for particular sins
- Change entire outlook on life, goals and aims, and allegiance from self to Jesus.

But if we look at what the stereotypical American Xian does...

- OFten can bring more pain than healing
- Instead of casting out evil- Judge, condemn, get angry, protect our own preferences, people, agendas
- Instead of teaching Jesus message- Pledge allegiance to a set of beliefs / political system

JF's do what Jesus did and say what Jesus said

Idea... Seems like a lot of responsibility... a little overwhelming... sure...

But it wasn't just out of the blue...

They had lived w/ him, went where he went, listened to what he taught, saw how he interacted w/ people, saw him heal and cast out demons... they had been prepared.

JFs are empowered and prepared by Jesus.

Whether you know it or not he's been preparing you.

- Experiences, personality, interactions w/ him, others, teachings.

It still seems pretty daunting to join the most important effort in this history of the entire cosmos... but he doesn't just say "Go" and leave us on our own...

V. 8-10 I picture the old Hobos from the 1930's... baggy pants... torn hat... belongings in a handkerchief tied to a stick.

But what Jesus is doing is getting these guys to focus on what is important...

- Don't worry about packing the right stuff, having enough
- Don't worry about "what if?"
- Focus on the task at hand and trust me w/ the rest.

Do what I ask you to do and just rely on God to provide the rest.

- Don't worry about what eat, drink, wear... seek 1st the Kingdom and everything else will be given to you.

When we are willing to rely on Jesus to provide for our needs we give him an opportunity to prove that he is reliable.

- We get to see him work on our behalf.
- Which will then allow us to rely on him more... and it will teach us to be content w/ what we have.

He said stay in the 1st house that accepts you... don't go shopping around for better offers... be content w/ what has been provided for you.

But how does the stereotypical American Xian usually go about getting what they need?

- Prays that God will bless them... make them richer
- Complain, worry, argue, try to get political power

But JFs are content to rely on Jesus and enjoy seeing him come through.

But even when we see Jesus come through time and time again it's not always easy... **V. 11**

JFs partner w/ Jesus in his mission to heal the world... but some people aren't ready, some would rather stay sick than change their way of seeing the world and themselves.

And just as Jesus was rejected many times, including by his own hometown, those following him and sharing his message won't always be accepted.

And what does Stereotypical American Xian usually do when someone rejects their beliefs?

- Argues... Whole groups/books/classes dedicated to "Arguing the faith"

- Yes we need to know what believe and why... but not to argue!
- Picket/Boycott
- Belittles/dehumanize
 - Godless pagans/unbelievers/sinners

JF? Moves on.

Knows they don't have to argue for Jesus... defend God...

- The moment we feel we have to defend God is the moment we show we don't really know God.
- If he's really God... he can take care of himself.

JF's job is to give Jesus' invitation... if people say no... that's on them

- The point of the dust from feet: "We did our job.. We gave you the invitation... now the rest is on you."

JF's know the mission of Jesus is too important to waste time on bickering and arguing and trying to win arguments only to lose people and opportunities for relationships.

Some will reject... just as they rejected Jesus... but others will be changed by God and you get to be a part of it!

JF's know that winning people is more important than winning arguments.

And what happened when these guys went out? The KoG broke in... lives were transformed by the power and love of God.

V. 12-13 Side note... oil isn't some magic potion and isn't proof that essential oils work

- Symbolic way to express joy, honor, or the blessing/presence of God

But the point here is... When JF's live out the mission of Jesus... lives are changed.

But if we only settle for the stereotypical American Xian life... learning a lot, hanging out only w/ other Xians, keeping our distance from "the world" except to judge it for not benign "Xian enough"...

- Nothing happens... except the stereotype is reinforced.

When JF's live out the mission of Jesus... might not always be casting out demons (it could happen) might not always be healing the sick (could also happen) but...

- Hearts are healed.
- Loneliness/fear/hopelessness/anger are cast out
- The marginalized, the abused, the rejected discover acceptance, love, true worth

Our lives are too short to waste them by comfortably sitting on the sidelines and ignoring Jesus' invitation to be his partners in his rescue mission for humanity.

So if you call self Xian...my question to you is... Are you simply claiming the title Xian or have you accepted the identity of a JF?

- We can believe all the right things but if we never do what we were born again to do we will not discover, enjoy, and share the life Jesus offers.

Why are you watching/listening? To learn more? To enjoy the music? To be w/ others? But what is your deep why?

- So you believe the right things or so you can become like Jesus in order to do what Jesus did?

JF's become like Jesus in order to be utilized by Jesus.

Maybe this seems daunting, too much of an ask, so you might have some... **Yeah Buts...**

"But Jon I don't know enough yet... I'm not perfect. I don't have everything all together"

The fact that Jesus sent these 12 out when he did show us that Jesus doesn't need perfect people to accomplish his mission...

As we continue in the story of Jesus , and when we look at the other accounts, we see that these guys had a lot of flaws, doubts, were very slow to understand who Jesus was and what he was doing.

Jesus doesn't need perfect people. He is looking for willing partners.

"I mean that sound great and all but I'm not a professional/full time preacher/missionary"

- Disciples didn't have any formal training
- Just spent time w/ Jesus.

Jesus invites all of us to join him... if he just wanted trained professionals he would have called the thousands that were walking around in his day... but that wasn't his vision or purpose...

- Eph 4:11-12

- 1 Peter 2:5 and 9

The priesthood of all believers... pastorhood of all believers.

- You have friends, co-workers, family that I will never be able to talk to you
- That will probably never come to a service or watch an online message
- But Jesus has put you in their life to show them his love... to accept them... to even tell them how they can find peace, joy, hope.

Now maybe you wouldn't call yourself either a Xian or JF.

- Maybe stayed away for good reason... no desire to be like "those xians"

Good news... Jesus doesn't invite us to be a Xian (a word he never used btw) He invites us to follow him.

- To change allegiance from ourself and the typical way the world works and the typical way we think about ourselves and others
- And pledge allegiance to him. As the king of our life. And the source of our life.
- He is inviting you to truly live for something greater and bigger than yourself, than any of us.
- He is inviting you to partner w/ him to bring real healing, love, hope, peace, joy, purpose, meaning to a world in desperate need.

- And he promises to be w/ you and in you. To love through you.
- But to see it happen we have to take the step of trust in action

No one has made a bigger and better impact on the world than Jesus Christ... and he is inviting you to follow him and partner w/ him.

YOU: So whether you're ready to take a step from simply having the title of Xian to accepting the identity of JF or are ready to follow him for the 1st time... You can start today...

To follow Jesus...

Accept his invitation

- If you are watching this... you are invited
- Simply tell him... "I don't want to just believe the right things... I want to follow you. I pledge my allegiance to you my king, Jesus."
- It won't always be easy... but it will be worth it.

Get to know him

- Probably said this in last 3 episodes (how important it is)
- If we want to follow Jesus we have to know Jesus
- Read what he said, did, taught...
 - YouVersion Reading Plans
- Invite him into your daily life, listen for/to him

Ask him to lead you

- Give you his eyes for people
- Give you opportunities to share about and show his love
- Who do you know that needs to know they are loved and accepted by Jesus?
 - Ask him to use you to help specific people experience his love and life in specific ways

Act

- Serve others
- Invite others into your life
- Enjoy them
- Share your story
 - What Jesus has done in your life
 - what you've been learning about him... Don't have to have all answers... you're learning
 - No need to argue or defend
- Invite them to watch/listen/attend if appropriate
 - You could even SHARE these episodes

WE: Jesus didn't come to earth, die and rise again just so we can believe the right things in order to go to heaven someday.

He did those things so we can experience true life now... and forever. So we, his most prized creation, can discover our role in helping restore all of creation in, through, and to him.

What we are invited to is so much more than joining a church, saying some prayers, having the right list of beliefs, and being good.

We are invited to join his revolution against hatred, darkness, and even death... we are invited to play a role that has eternal and cosmic importance.

We simply have to be willing to accept his invitation to FOLLOW him

We have a momentous opportunity not just to believe certain things... but to do amazing things.

Following Jesus allows us to become who we were created to be and to do what we were created to do.