

Following Jesus: Biblical Reflections on Discipleship, by N.T. Wright

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Description... can we get a picture?

One of the leading scholars on Jesus, Wright gives 12 meditations on what it means to follow Jesus today as he reflects on the themes found in the Scriptures. This is a great book for your own personal study and would be a great book to read along with others. Thoughtfully challenging and inspiring.

Reflection

FOLLOWING JESUS Reflection Paper- S. Argue

**The longer you look at Jesus, the more you will want to serve him in his world.
That is, of course, if it's the real Jesus you're looking at.**

- N.T. Wright

As I consider Jesus, three thoughts are currently shaping me. First, as I look to the Gospels, I am convinced that Jesus' primary call to all was simply this: "Follow me." While I want in no way to diminish Jesus' Great Commission, I believe obedience to this command will remain distorted if I do not take seriously Jesus' call to follow.

Second, this call to follow is founded on the character of God where God, by his grace, seeks to reveal himself to people allowing them to encounter him in a very real way. Hence, the call of Jesus to "follow me" remains consistent with values of the Father who has, is, and will continue to break into our world— pursuing people, calling them to respond, not to a theory, or a set of beliefs, or even a movement, but calling them to respond to his person.

Third, "follow me" therefore, places the emphasis on the "me" (himself) leaving room for only one appropriate response— to follow, simply because God has made himself follow-able. The whole of Scripture, not only the Gospels, point to Jesus and call me pursue a clear picture of this one to whom the Scriptures point so that I might know him more. Wright's thoughts in this book raise the ante and inspire me toward a broader, deeper, even more central view of Jesus for my life and ministry.

The following statements challenge me to know Jesus more and follow closer...

Chapter 1- Hebrews

The first testament points to a further reality which they do not themselves contain... and this reality of Jesus is not an "odd, isolated incident, a one-off invasion into the world. It was the climax of his long plan."

Father, forgive me for treating the unfolding of your plan in the "old" testament as the museum of Christianity rather than the foundation of everything that points to Jesus and

the cross. Teach me to understand the details so that I might appreciate the cross all the more.

Chapter 2- Colossians

All things were made in Christ, through Christ, and for Christ (1.15-20). All things- including the 'powers'! The world is not ultimately divided into bits that are irreducibly good and bits that are irreducibly bad. Everything- the invisible things as well as the visible- was made by the creator, through the agency of his eternal Son, whom we know as the man Jesus. God intended his world to be ordered, not random; to be structured, not chaotic. He intended what came to be called the powers, the forces, to be part of the way his world worked. That is where we must start.

Jesus, remind me to start with you when I look at the world. To often I start at the point of judging the "fairness" of something and then asking you to make sense of it. May I start with you, trusting you, seeking you and your ways first. As I struggle to see or understand your will, may I never doubt your character or your purposes.

Chapter 3- Matthew

If the Son of Man is the King of the world, we who worship him are to follow him, and are therefore sent into the world with the great commission. We are to make disciples, learners, followers; we are to baptize them, and teach them to observe all that Jesus commanded. There is no corner of the created universe over which Jesus does not claim rightful sovereignty. We are to be his agents, his ambassadors, in bringing the word of this kingdom to all his subjects. The Coronation Anthem contains a line of music for every creature, and the harmony will not be complete until they all join in.

Jesus, you are sovereign over all and yet you call, even invite me to join in the proclamation of your sovereignty to the entire world. May my delight never be only in the proclamation, but may it be in embracing your heart, desiring to see others join in the "Coronation Anthem." May I see those who don't know you, not merely as converts but pray for them to become brothers and sisters, joint heirs in the kingdom you call us to advance, by your Spirit.

Chapter 4- John

The cross is the seventh sign: that is where the glory of God is supremely revealed. John is inviting us to see the mount of Calvary as the mount of transfiguration: the Word became flesh, and died among us; we beheld his glory, glory as of the one who lays down his life for his friends.

Jesus, may your cross inspire me to pick up mine. May your glory be revealed in my suffering as much as in my victories and may I gain the wisdom to praise you in both. Redefine my view of success. May I be about the glory of God, not the glory of Steve.

Chapter 5- Mark

Jesus... [took] on the projected evil of the world and [drew] it on to himself.

This phrase has challenged me the most as of late. It's pressing me in the way that I am dealing with the evil of others. In many ways, I find it easier to make a diagnosis

of other's situations thus keeping a safe, cold, clinical distance from them. It's safe here. I can prescribe what needs to be done (probably quite accurately) and never have to get dirty... never have to feel. What might it mean for me to draw sinful behavior and pain onto myself in the name of Jesus? Might this be a very real picture of cross bearing that I'm beginning to see? I shudder and am in awe of this thought. I resist it with all my flesh. Yet, I am beginning to see that maybe the path of "Christian correctness" only goes so far, and dead ends unless I am willing to take the path of true healing which will be dirty, painful, and more treacherous. It feels like the narrow way, the unbeaten path, yet the way of Jesus.

Chapter 6- Revelation

Easter isn't just about you and me and our present spiritual experience, or our hope beyond the grave. Easter is at the beginning of God's new world. ... Easter speaks of a world reborn.

Help me follow you through serving a world you seek to renew rather than standing on the sidelines waiting for you to destroy. Give me a fresh view of redemption and remind me of my participation in it. Give me a vision of what might be. Not because I want to be an eternal optimist, but because I long to see what God has revealed through the risen, victorious Christ. May I long for a renewed, reconciled, reborn world that starts with my neighbor and with an eye always on the globe.

Chapter 7-The God who raises the dead

The most frequent command in the Scriptures turns out to be "Don't be afraid." ... The irony of this surprising command is that, though it's what we all really want to hear, we have as much difficulty, if not more, in obeying this command as any other ... Let's make not mistake about it: until you learn to live without fear you won't find it easy to follow Jesus.

I know why I shouldn't be afraid, but there are times I fear for my life, my reputation, my performance, my productivity, my image. Perfect love drives out fear. Perfect love only comes from God, therefore, God's love must lead the way, perfecting me... resurrecting me. When I fear, I choose to embrace fear over God's perfect love. God teach me to trust your mysterious love rather than hold onto familiar, abusive fear. Give me faith to trust that you are the one who takes what is dead, and resurrects it to new life.

Chapter 8- The mind renewed

.... When people come to embrace the love of God in Jesus, or rather to be embraced by that love they must begin to see that they are regularly and habitually bowing down in the house of Rimmon at several points in their everyday life.

Renew my mind, Lord Jesus. I am convicted of the fact that in my "Christian routine" I can get lazy in examining my life. Too many mixed motives. Too many gods. I am amazed how often I can do something in the name of Jesus but in my heart there are continual ulterior motives. Have mercy on me, Lord Jesus. I trust your promise that you are renewing me and making me more like yourself. May I not resist this so much.

May I not grow callous or comfortable with my idolatry. Expose my "false gods" and move me toward pure followership.

Chapter 9- Temptation

If you don't follow Jesus in the precise moment, you are going to miss out. Often the sharpest temptation comes at the critical moment, when God is waiting to bring you round a corner to some unexpected blessing or gift.

Spirit, make it easier for me to talk about temptation with a few others. Give me wisdom to anticipate, and give me the strength to desire you before any and all things. May I become increasingly dissatisfied with the things that draw me away from God. Even the good things. May I not get caught up in what the popular North American Church values. May I not perpetuate or cultivate an environment of temptation that centers around performance, popularity, individuality, numbers, endorsements, or task. May I recognize that temptation can only be stopped and not perpetuated in communion with you and in community. This is my desire and prayer.

Chapter 10- Hell

... if it is possible... for human beings to choose to live more and more out of tune with their divine intention, to reflect the image of God less and less, there is nothing to stop them finally ceasing to bear that image, and so to be, as it were, beings who were once human but are not now.

Jesus, lead me by your divine will. May I know it, love it, follow it. May I be aware that every choice I make has a direct effect on my sanctification and your glory.

Chapter 11- Heaven and Power

The power of God...is therefore revealed in human weakness, supremely in the weakness of Jesus. The Christian message rests on this ridiculous paradox that true power is found in apparent failure...

I am tempted by power. Lead me to serve, lead me to die. Allow me to experience your power through my weakness. May I not merely seek you through my spiritual gifts and temperaments, but may I seek you in my weakness and blind spots. Might I then get a glimpse of heaven and your power that is much clearer and much more accurate?

Chapter 12- New World

The resurrection of Jesus is Christianity. And this means that it becomes the starting point for all Christian thinking and living, challenging all other possible starting points. This is where Jesus followers must orient themselves clearly if they are to follow him truly. ...It gives us reason to build for the kingdom... It gives us reason to choose holiness... it gives us reason to worship and follow the risen Jesus.

Amen. Come Lord Jesus. Break through on every level.