

On the Same Page

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.” (Matthew 16:24 NAS95)



Forever-Family Fellowship

We will teach and practice truth-and-love relationships with brothers-sisters in Christ that must survive/thrive in the present because we believe that these relationships will last forever

All-Week-Long Worship

As the local body of believers gathers each Sunday for worship, **we will inspire a worship experience for all age groups that will travel with you all week long.** What we do on Sunday will assist you in your singing, in your praying, in your devotion, and in your witness.

Conversely, it is as you worship all-week-long that you will be prepared to enter into gathered worship on Sunday.

Day-to-Day Discipleship

As followers of Christ, we are disciples every single day. Respect for and commitment to Scripture is essential. **We will show you how to interact with and respond to God's Word, both as individuals, and in groups.**

Moment-by-Moment Mission

God, the Architect of the world and of our lives arranges appointments and interruptions. Each of us is called to represent His Son for the glory of His Name. **We will cultivate a mind-set for moment-by-moment mission, whether close to home, or far away.**

In His Steps

Charles Sheldon, a Congregational minister, wrote a book with that title in 1897. It is a fictional story that tells of a prosperous and prominent congregation that was moved by a poor beggar who died in their midst, and by the Holy Spirit, to confront what it means to truly follow Jesus in this day and age. Those who were moved agreed to live their lives at each moment asking, “What would Jesus Do?” in my shoes in this situation. These people did not pretend to become Jesus, or that their choices were infallible. As best they could determine, they would follow Jesus.

The effect was remarkable. On the one hand, their community came to see and feel the impact in powerful ways. On the other hand, many of these people suffered for their choices, whether in terms of family relationships or in business decisions.

I have been challenged and moved by the reading of this book, and also wonder about its effect over the years since 1897. The first question is why this embrace of literal discipleship has faded over the years. This was not so much a discipleship of teaching, but of action. Social action? Yes, but also moral action. It altered the purpose of life of those who embrace the question, “What would Jesus do?” It caused them to serve and sacrifice in ways that bring back likenesses of the first century church and instances of revival over the centuries.

The other question is why this book has not been more warmly embraced by conservative congregations over the years. The minister (not the author, but the one in the story) is the minister of a prominent church, and probably one that was for that time somewhat liberal. Yet this book is evangelical in that it speaks of the conversion of souls and lives of consecration.

In circles like ours (Bible-believing Baptist), we have had a rather strong disregard for liberal churches who have stepped away from the need for individual salvation and have instead embraced “the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.” How then, could this group in this fictional story be so moved by the Spirit when we have not been moved in the same way? It seems that we come to the conclusion that it did not really happen, nor would it. If God is going to move, it must start with us, since we are the true blue followers of Jesus, whether or not we ask “what would Jesus do in our shoes and in our situation?”

Jesus says in John 3 “the wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” We should know this since, after all, we are the Biblical ones, that the Spirit is not controlled or corralled by any specific group, and He can move and stir and provoke in any corner of the world. Habakkuk in the Old Testament complains to God that God is too holy to use pagans to reform the people of God, yet God does exactly that. So, it is not the Bible that causes our downward gaze on the tale of this book. Rather, it is a spirit of competition. Just so you know, a spirit of competition is not one of the Spirit’s gifts.

I value very highly the family and church background that I and others have received. It taught us to pay close attention to God’s Word, which is a good thing, an essential thing for Christian discipleship. But that background has its weak spots as well, perhaps in the area of teaching over practice, and, more likely, in thinking that the Spirit of God belongs more to us than to others. A better question would be, do I belong to the Spirit? What would Jesus answer if He were in my shoes with regard to this question?

God's Love Compels Us by D. A. Carson, Kathleen Nielson, David Platt, John Piper, J. Mack Stiles, Andy Davis, Michael Oh, and...

The good news is not belief. Faith is the proper result of the good news. The good news is not an exhortation to turn over a new leaf. Certainly repentance is required because of the good news, but we announce what God has done in Christ Jesus.

Notes:

No **Sunday school classes for adults and youth meet this week at 10 a.m.**, but we plan to resume next Sunday next Sunday, January 12

Lunch and Memorial Service for Shelley Rogers, Sunday, Jan 5, noon and 1 p.m.

American House Service, Sunday, January 5, 3 p.m.

Next Sunday, January 12, we will begin our Winter sermon series, an exposition of Paul’s letter to Titus, in morning worship services.

Annual Meeting, Sunday, January 26

Weekly Worship @ 11:00 a.m.

This Sunday, January 5, we will observe the Lord’s Table in our morning worship gathering, and will continue our devotion called **Gospel Conversations**. We come to John 9 and “The Man Born Blind,” and will think about just three aspects of this story.

Last Sunday, December 29, we thought back and looked ahead, and then paused at one of the most helpful chapters in the Bible, Romans 12, in a message I call **“A Manual for Christian Living.”** We will narrow our focus to verses 11-12, and especially to the subject of prayer. [Listen to the message here](#)

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