

STOP
BEING
SUCH A



CHRISTIAN

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this series was never to exclude, but instead understand how to include. Because Christianity has had a centuries old branding problem, the church has looked less and less inviting to those on the outside. But it was never to be that way.

Jesus called us to a new life; a new expression of relationship; a new way to live. Rather than being known for what we are against, we were called to be known for what, and who, we are for. Jesus gave us a label, disciple, that demanded much of those who choose to take it on:

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

John 13:35

No ambiguity. No loopholes. All truth **and** all grace—all the time. To be a disciple means to set aside ourselves and seek what is best for others. And we had Jesus’s example to go by.

WEEKLY READING

We need to keep asking the question, “What does love require of me?” If that question makes us uncomfortable, it isn’t the question that is at fault, but our own behavior and attitudes. Following Jesus has never been about gaining political power (he was an outcast and rebel of both Jewish culture and the Roman empire). It was never about setting oneself above others (Jesus is God, yet he squatted in the dirt to serve us). Jesus came to restore what was lost.

WEEKLY READING (Continued)

Without Jesus, we are lost. Whether it is by choice or ignorance, being separated from God is the problem for which we are in desperate need of a solution. When we follow Jesus, we are no longer lost, but found. And we become seekers of the lost. But the temptation of those who are found (or never left) is to judge those who need to be found:

“Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

“The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him.

Luke 15: 25-26

The attitude of the older brother is representative of those who accept the label and brand of Christian, without ever seeking to be a disciple of Jesus. When the Lost Son comes home, the Father is overjoyed, just as God is in Heaven, but the Older Son is angry because he has missed the point. Rather than performance, which is how the Older Son judges the Lost Son, we should be focused on proximity to the father. Asking, “What does love require of me?” moves us into a frame of mind that leads, not to judgment, but to celebration. When that which was lost is found, God celebrates and we should too! Disciples celebrate when the lost are found!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read **Luke 15:11-32**. How difficult was it for the Lost Son to turn around and head back home? When, in your own life, have you hit “the end” and needed to turn around.

2. Was there a point in your life when you made the decision to “get up” and come back to God, or to pursue God for the first time? Were you afraid to come home or scared to approach God? Why?
3. Talk about a time you were able to celebrate with someone else who was lost and then was found. What led up to the point of their return home?
4. How can we, as disciples, draw those who are lost back home? What are some things we can celebrate with each other that represent coming home?

MOVING FORWARD

Can you imagine what would happen if our churches and gatherings were filled with people ready to celebrate rather than ridicule or judge? How many people, seeking the Father, have decided not to turn toward him for fear of his children.

We will be known, not by what we believe or what we call ourselves, but by how we love. If we love like Jesus: sacrificially, with truth and grace, and in humility, then that love is something everyone will want to celebrate.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

“But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

Luke 15:22-24