

Three foundational questions that determines the direction of lives of young people: Who will we follow? What will we do? Who will we do it with?

Will we follow Jesus? Parents and others have poured into youngsters - filling their tanks. But when we are on our own, we have to fill our own tanks. Does church mean anything? If no investments from us, then we remain empty. Some kind of action has to take place to fill up our tanks. We have learned and know what we should do, but we run spiritually on empty.

As we look to a new year, let's ask how we fill up our spiritual tanks? What will be different? It begins in His Word. Take the time to read God's Word over and over till it becomes who we are. Then we can discern the truth in any challenge or heartache. God's Word will sustain and guide and direct our lives.

2 Timothy 4:1-4 *I solemnly exhort you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not tolerate sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires, and they will turn their ears away from the truth and will turn aside to myths.*

A.W. Tozer wrote about the problems he saw in the Christianity of his day... To counteract the "phrases and mottos that on the surface look great but are not rooted in Scripture or that mostly bolster one's self-image," he suggested that Christians demand scriptural proof from every teacher for their teachings. Tozer's words are still relevant today. **I Thessalonians 5:21** *But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good.*

Do we become convicted by our emotions? A lot of what we hear is others saying what they think about scripture instead of looking to scripture ourselves. We drift to what our ears want to hear. Have you heard others say, "I just don't think that's what Jesus would do." Do we as the church present the image of Christ to the world around us? Sin and evil desires permeate our flesh, hearts and emotions so that our renewal is so significant. Scripture teaches that I can only discern the will of God once our minds are transformed and renewed in Christ. **Romans 12:2** *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Do we conform more to what we feel or experience than to what God's Word says? We are to go into all the world and preach the gospel in God's Word. But we must know what is in God's Word. We must know that God's Word has the solution to problems that we face - the first place to go and the final word. Do we allow God's Word to be watered down? Our only choice is to believe in God's Word or not. Do we call out others but ignore our own heart? When was the last time God's Word convicted so that a choice was needed to either honor God or ourselves? To honor God, means that we need to choose to read God's Word for ourselves! Conviction comes from reading God's Word. Conviction begins with us before we can take it to others. The greatest value of God's Word is transformation - becoming more and more like Jesus every day.

To become the church of Jesus Christ, we must commit to reading His Word. **Hebrews 4:12** *For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* When was the

last time we allowed God's Word to pierce our hearts? When pierced, it's uncomfortable and causes grief or pain. Let's allow discomfort so that we become more like Jesus and less of the world. We find hope when we trust God with His Word.

Do we use God's Word to justify our prejudiced thoughts and opinions instead of letting the truth pierce us? It is not to be used as a weapon on others. Read the Book for ourselves. It should convict our hearts every time we open it. We can listen to sound advice and seek Godly counsel but unless we are in the Word how will we know if the counsel is Godly?

Examples:

- Love. This word is used to justify all sorts of immoral and unrighteous behavior because some say God is love and He wouldn't refuse or reject based on love... **I Corinthians 13:6** *Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness but rejoices with the truth.* God's love can't affirm or celebrate anything that contradicts His holiness. If we do, then we are left with a gospel that is made in our own image.
- Hell. We try to make excuses for things that are hard to understand or that makes us uncomfortable, like hell. But we only need to look at Noah and how God destroyed creation saving a few with a real flood. Look at Moses and the angel of death that killed the first born without blood on the doorposts. Look at Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed for evil.

God is consistent with His character. Each time God gave a chance to repent and to turn to holiness. Jesus' vision for the world is not that everyone belongs, and anything goes. He was clear that many will not only be excluded but will be separated from Him for eternity.

To enter His Kingdom, we must be born again.

- **John 3:3** *Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*
- **John 3:5** *Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."*
- **Matthew 7:21** *Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.*
- **Matthew 7:13-14** *Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.*
- **John 14:6** *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."*

The greatest thing that could happen in each of us this year is for us to become more serious about this book, The Bible, putting our faith in it and in all it contains, and let it challenge us to live how it says. No path leads to true happiness and everlasting life except the "Jesus alone" path which is narrow but more satisfying than we could imagine. Let's read the Word, pray the Word, memorize the Word and believe the promise of **Psalm 16:11** *You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.* **Psalm 119:11** *Your Word have I hidden in my heart that I might not sin against You.*