

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I, I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.”—Robert Frost

Why do we have such an issue with being different? All through our lives we are constantly trying to be like others. When we are young, it's that super hero or sports star that we want to be like. Remember “Like Mike?” And as we grow older we don't quit trying to fit in, we just change who we want to be like. As high school students, we are so self-conscious about fitting in and being like everyone else. God didn't make us out of the same mold, so why would we expect everyone to be the same? We never want people to know us because of a difference we have in our lives, but more because of the similarities we have with a group of people.

When Jesus came into this world, He was different. He acted differently, spoke differently, loved differently, and lived differently. People look at Him and marvel at the fact that He was so different, yet so connected to others. So why do we not want to be considered different in Christ? Choosing Christ and allowing Him to truly make a difference in our lives is like choosing the “road less traveled by.” Yes, it is so easy to follow the crowd and travel down the road taken by many. However, if we choose to take the high road we will be different and make a difference. Anyone can travel downstream in a river, even dead fish can do that, but it takes a strong swimmer to travel upstream.

God has called us to take a stand and to be different from this world. We are to be “in the world, but not of the world.” As seen in the example of Jesus Christ, when we are real with our beliefs and are truly different in the way we live our lives, people notice. We need to dare to be different! Let's take a stand on certain issues in our lives and let others see the difference that Christ can truly make. We should be different from the world, stand out, and stand up for Christ.

A DIFFERENT MESSIAH

Whenever more than one person is present in a group, more than one opinion will be present. As Jesus went about healing and teaching, many opinions existed about who He really was. Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” Some people believed that He was John the Baptist, others believed that He was Elijah, and still others believed He was Jeremiah. Even with all the miracles He had preformed and prophecy He had fulfilled, the ordinary people still did not recognize His true identity as the Messiah. Why did they not realize His divine purpose? Most did not realize that He was the Messiah because He was not what they were expecting. They had an idea in their heads that the Messiah that would save them would be a conquering king, that He would come in and free them from Rome by using force. Jesus was

different. He came as a humble servant, following in His Father's will, and dominating sin and death.

A DIFFERENT MISSION

Peter, the spokesman for the disciples, had just spoke of their belief of Jesus as the Messiah. Now Jesus would shock even His closest followers by explaining to them His mission. In the minds of the disciples, Jesus was to be an unstoppable force, a king that would eventually control the earth. Jesus began to explain to them that He would suffer many things under the abuse of the elders, chief priests, and scribes. He told them that He would suffer, die, and on the third day He would be raised to life. Peter could not believe what He was hearing! This man, who Peter and the others had put complete faith and trust in, was now explaining that He would suffer and die. Peter had just announced that He believed in Jesus as the Messiah, yet in just a few short moments, He was more concerned with man's limitations than Christ's. Even Jesus' closest followers had not yet comprehended that He would not set up an earthly kingdom at this time, but a heavenly one. Once again, Jesus the Messiah had surprised His closest friends with a mission that no other king would embark upon.

A DIFFERENT MANDATE

Not only was Jesus a different kind of Messiah, Who had a different mission, He left for us a different kind of mandate or commandment. Jesus left three key issues that a person must follow in order to come after Him. He said we must first deny ourselves, second take up His cross, and third follow Him. This mandate is a *daily* thing. Every day we must make the conscious choice to come to the end of ourselves and allow God to control our lives. Every day and even each moment we have to choose to take up His cross and identify with Christ. We must choose to obey His words in spite of the sufferings. This mandate is a *deciding* thing. Each of these decisions must be made of our own free will. We must CHOOSE to deny ourselves and take up His cross. We have to decide if we want to live for Christ or ourselves. This mandate is a *difficult* thing. Jesus never said that living the Christian life would be a piece of cake; if so, more people would be doing it. The cross is not something that is always easy to bear and denying ourselves can be hard. We have to remember that Jesus is right by our side helping us along the path. And finally this mandate is a *determining* thing. This decision that we make daily will determine whether God will be pleased with us or ashamed of us. We must choose to follow His mandate and deny ourselves, take up His cross, and follow Him.

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