

Introduction

On this anniversary, it's good to reflect on our perspectives / perceptions of Jesus. Many of us may be following Jesus in a way He may not want to be followed. Much of how we follow Him could be a construct of our imaginations, our desires, & not that of Jesus of the Gospel. In reality, our efforts of following Him are filled with detours & distractions.



Luke 9:23 NIV

Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."

These are some of the many perspectives / constructs of Jesus as we journey / grow in Christ.

1. The Different Constructs of Jesus

1.1 The Traditional Jesus

Some of us grew up in church. After spending so many years as Christians, we go to church out of habit/routine. This routine is religious / regimental at best and over time, we might even find Him rather boring.

1.2 The Charismatic Jesus

This phase is more exciting. Here we see a Jesus of Power. At this level of perception, we are filled with enthusiasm; we run to the pulpit, sometimes encountering the Holy Spirit & even get slain. Sometimes it's simply euphoria taking over us!

1.3 The Miracle-Working Jesus

In this phase, we see Jesus as a miracle-worker & we get to a point where we want to try out His miracles in our lives. We pray fervently for others & sometimes we even see things happen!

1.4 The Deliverance Jesus

Yet another phase; we cast out demons, from the air, from ourselves, from others, often not even knowing if any demons actually came out at all!

1.5 The Prosperity Jesus

Here we see Jesus as rich, like many patriarchs mentioned in the bible (eg. Abraham). We just believe that God will bless us with prosperity & become millionaires / rich as a result.

1.6 The Poverty Jesus

In this phase, we may be introduced to the Poverty Jesus. We sell all & give everything to the poor. Let's face it; some of us may not want to follow THIS Jesus.

2. Perceptions of Jesus; A Perennial Problem.

Having different perceptions of Jesus isn't just a modern or historical problem. It's a perennial problem.

2.1 The Legalistic Jesus in the Early Church

Here the church was pretty much into the legalistic Jesus. Rules & regulations abound in church. As long as rules were followed, people felt like good Christians. Pride stepped into church because of this.

Fortunately, Paul warns us about being legalistic & this kind of solves our perception of Him as legalistic.

2.2 The Licentious Jesus in the End-times Church

Licentiousness is defined as excessive behavior or simply the absence of restraint. This happens when believers think that because Jesus has died for our sins, everything is perfectly ok, and we are free to do whatever we want.

2 Thessalonians 2:8-12 NIV

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

We often understand lawlessness to be rebellion, but the Greek word for lawlessness is ***anomia*** meaning breaking the law or the absence of law. By this token, it could mean that we believe the law is no longer applicable to us because of what Jesus went through! This is both dangerous & seriously flawed because we believe that once saved, God in His fullness of grace, abolishes all law from our lives.

Paul warns us that in the end times, many will live this way, but scripture dictates that law still applies as mentioned in the new testament (***Gal 5:13-14***)

Galatians 5:13-14 NIV

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

We must understand that the law still applies; not like in the Old Testament by way of rituals, routine or regiment, but with love. Paul teaches that we are not under the law. We don't obey laws in order to be righteous / saved. Instead, because we are saved & righteous, we therefore obey the law. We do so because we have a living relationship with God & we want to obey Him.

2 Thess 2:12 ESV

¹² in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

We're in Christ, so it's ok to live in sin, because we're forgiven. This is deluding ourselves from the truth

All that has been mentioned up to now are just various perceptions of Jesus. Some are wrong, but not all are.

They reflect just some of the many facets / characteristics of Jesus; very much like our own many personal facets / characteristics (eg. Men can be seen as father, husband, golf player etc...).

All these **collectively** define us, but if we only follow 1 of these facets, we could end up being gravely wrong / mis-informed!

3. The Right Perception of Jesus

3.1 The Saving Jesus

This is the Jesus of our first love. This the reason we became believers in the first place! It's the right perception, but if it's the only one, we have the wrong perception. Why? Because if this is the only perception we have of Jesus, then we only need to pray & be baptised!

If this is the only perception we have of Jesus, we don't need to go for service, we don't need to serve, & we don't need to do anything; everything being optional. We serve Him in our spare time & offer Him any spare cash. Other things can come first. Everything becomes ok if we believe in only a Saving Jesus.

3.2 The Disciple-making Jesus

This should be the main perception of Jesus. It's the most important perception of Jesus, because lots of people believe in the Saving Jesus & that's that! Sadly many believers stop short of a Saving Jesus.

John 8:30-32 NIV

³¹ To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³² Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Notice what Jesus said. If we believe, we must abide in Jesus.

**The real disciple of Jesus is a Disciple-Making Jesus.
What Jesus wants to do is change us, making us more like Him.**

If we follow a disciple-making Jesus, He will teach us to deal with our anger.

Many of us are like turtles. We hide in our shells when we get angry. Some of us engage in cold wars, giving each other the silent treatment.

Still others are like bulls; the problem must be settled quick & fast; charging forward, hurting ourselves & others in the process.

The proper way to deal with anger is to settle it with Jesus first. Tell Him what makes us unhappy & allow Him to tell us why He is unhappy with us, & even if we're right, He will settle our emotions & we still stop being angry with others. This is what following & being like Jesus is like, but it's not possible without a relationship with Him; spending time talking & relating to Him. Pretty much like some married couples.

These days, even friends sit down together and go into their electronic worlds. Often, our relationship with Jesus is likewise.

We need to talk with Jesus or He cannot talk to us. It's all about establishing a relationship with Jesus.

In a family where all parties settle unhappiness with Jesus, there'll be nothing to settle with each other. There will be peace at home.

When people see this as the order of the day, they will want to be with us, making it possible for us to disciple them!

Conclusions

Our final goal is to we want to be a disciple for Jesus. Our image of Jesus cannot just be one of Him dying on the Cross for us, or it wouldn't have taken Him 3 years in the making. Jesus wanted to make disciples. He spent 3 years making 12 disciples before He was crucified. That's what Jesus IS today. He doesn't just want to be our Saving Jesus. He wants to be our Disciple-making Jesus!

The question we really need to ask ourselves is: "Do we have a vital intimate relationship with Jesus?"