

June 16

Scriptures: Read John 8

Key Verse: “If you abide in My words, you are My disciples indeed.” (John 8:31)

Overview

I like the way the NIV puts it, “If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples.” The word “hold” is a strong verb; it speaks of mothers embracing their newborn, and shipwrecked sailor clutching the lifeline, refusing to let go. It speaks of commitment.

Whenever young couples come to me for premarital counseling, I tell them there are three words to remember in terms of making marriage last. Those words are, 1) commitment, 2) commitment, and 3) commitment. The marriage ceremony underscores the word—“... to have and to hold from this day forward. For better or for worse. In sickness and in health. For richer or for poorer. Till death us do part.” That’s the kind of foundation you can build a life on!

I’ve sometimes wondered if it might not be a bad idea for some of us evangelical pastors to make a bit more of a person’s commitment to Christ at salvation than merely have them publicly “come forward”. Why not put together a public ceremony wherein vows are expressed to Christ: where a new believer is gripped with the thrilling but awesome responsibility of what it means to call oneself a follower of Jesus, after he has made that initial “come forward” move.

The vows could go something like this: “I_____ take you now, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, as my Savior and Lord. I have acknowledged and confessed my sin; now I declare before this body of believers that my repentance has already begun. I turn away from my sin, and walk in a new direction. And, even as I do so, I charge this body with the responsibility of correcting and guiding me, as I grow from faith to faith. I am no longer my own. I belong to Christ even as I now take my place in His Body. I take hold of His teaching. I am His disciple. So help me God.” Amen.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we have confessed You openly before Your church in our water baptism and now we receive Jim’s advice. Help us to confess Jesus afresh as we renew our membership in the local congregation.