

QUO VADIS? HOW DO WE FOLLOW?

Dr. Fred Fourie ~Sunday, October 22, 2006



[Mark 8: 31-38](#)

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this

adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." <>

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Towards the end of his eventful life Napoleon Bonaparte is quoted saying, "I am struck with the contrast between Christ's mode of gathering people to himself and the way practiced by Alexander the Great, by Julius Caesar, and by me. We gathered people by fear; Christ gathered people by love. Alexander, Caesar, and Napoleon were men of war, but Christ is the Prince of Peace. We forced people to follow us; Christ drew people to him. We captured people by forced conscription; but people discovered for themselves who Jesus was and freely followed him!"

Christianity originated from the life, teaching and example of Jesus. Millions upon millions found a faith that would enable them to climb every mountain and to follow every dream ~ doing so while following in the footsteps of the Master. What is true faith? The Bible defines true faith as follows! "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

Our beloved church decided to embark on a journey that can be best explained with the legend about the Apostle Peter who, at the crossroads of his life, asked the question, "Quo Vadis, Domine?" Translated, "Master, Jesus where are YOU going?" He then followed Jesus to the end of his life and showed the way for many to reach their destination in life. Discover the way Jesus is leading and you will find the way to meaningful living and, eventually peaceful dying!

I believe that the secret of how to fulfill your divine destiny is to decide what your purpose in life is. It is exciting to wake up each day knowing where you are going, which direction you are taking to get there and what you want to do! One of the best ways to discover your purpose in life is to discover who Jesus is, and to learn from him, not only how to live, but also how to die!

I love to tell a story that explains a lot about how some people think, argue and live. A tourist walked down a pier and watched an angler pull in a large fish, measure it, and throw it back. He caught a second fish, smaller this time, he measured it, and put it in his bucket. Oddly, all the large fish that he caught that measured ten inches or more he imme-

diately threw back in the water. All fish smaller than ten inches he kept. Puzzled, the curious onlooker questioned, "Pardon me, but why do you keep the little ones and throw the bigger ones away?" The old fellow looked up and without blinking an eye said, "Why because my frying pan measures only ten inches across!"

Did you know that our faith is often as small as a ten-inch frying pan? Limited faith will always prevent us from moving away from the reality of self-imposed limitations! For some, the lack of vision and faith prevent them from realizing their dreams and reaching their goals. For many people a ten-inch frying pan represents their inability to reach beyond the ordinary. Their ten-inch frying pan is the handicap and hindrance for their physical, mental and spiritual capacities! We often limit our ability to live life abundantly because all we think we have is a ten-inch frying pan.

In order to succeed we need to shed the limitations of a ten-inch frying pan. Small frying pans must never limit our vision and understanding of the ability of our God! Expect great things! God is able - and if we can dream it, we can do it!

Jesus said, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." What does that mean? In denying ourselves and taking up a cross, it often has to do with discipline and hard work. It has to do with unselfishness and committing ourselves to the finest of which we are capable. It has to do with forgetting ourselves and concentrating on the needs of others. It has to do with a commitment to excellence in all things.

In 2006, people who succeed in their faith-life still deny themselves and take up a cross. You do not get to be the best by staying in your comfort zone. You do it by working until you proverbially sweat blood; you sit at your computer or your designing board or your blueprints or your lesson plan or whatever, long after everybody else has gone home. That is what it often means to deny yourself and take up a cross. It works! It is not about talent or luck, but it has to do with sincere hard work. **The secret of success is to be like a duck. Smooth and unruffled at the top ~ but paddling furiously underneath!**

True faith also has vision. I love the story of the two shoe salespersons that went to darkest Africa to open up new territories. Three days after their arrival, the first salesperson sent a message, "I am returning on the next plane. I cannot sell a single shoe here! Everybody goes barefoot." The second salesperson disappeared for about two weeks. Then he sent a fat air-express envelope with this message for the head office: "Fifty orders enclosed. The prospects are unlimited! Nobody here has shoes!"

Most people find that material success is not satisfying. There are many lonely people driving expensive cars, living in homes with marble floors and crystal chandeliers who find out too late that they are still spiritually and morally bankrupt. Earthly wealth is definitely not a formula for spiritual fulfillment in life.

Jesus is not talking about wealth, security and Rolex watches at all! He is talking about forgetting ourselves for the sake of others. That is exactly what he did! That is the real significance of following Jesus! He is not talking about becoming real **go-getters** but real **go-givers**. He is not talking about winning the rat race, but serving a suffering world in Jesus name. That is the kind of self-denial and cross-bearing Jesus is talking about.

The answer Jesus gives goes beyond the superficial values of today's materialistic culture. It goes beyond selfish self-service! It is about forgetting ourselves and losing ourselves in service to others.

A Gallup poll suggests that less than 12% of Americans are "**highly spiritually committed.**" Amongst them are those who truly understand what Jesus meant when he said, "deny yourself, take up a cross and follow me." The members of this group are 'a

breed apart from the rest of the world in several ways: They are happier. Their families are stronger. They are tolerant and accepting of people who are different of them. They are community minded. They are involved in service to others. They are cross bearers that really make a difference! That is what faith is all about.

Following Jesus Christ in times like these is a wonderful experience. He is not only the broken and crucified one – He is also the one to help us discover the inner strength and power to follow him to a richer and fuller life of love and service - **He is the one who opens for us a way to the heart of God.** We do not only follow him but we also share in his triumph and glory.

“I sing the mighty power of God that made the mountains rise; that spread the flowing seas abroad and built the lofty skies; I sing the wisdom that ordained the sun to rule the day; the moon shines full at God’s command, and all the stars obey!”

**AMEN**