

CONSUMER CHRISTIANITY/KINGDOM CHRISTIANITY

INTRO

Jesus' first call to men was follow me—come after me and to become a follower meant one going in the same way. It also expresses likeness and oneness or one becoming like. We would use the word disciple which literally means to learn—mathetes—root of the word “math” indicating thought accompanied by endeavor. So one who follows one's teachings; one who adheres to the teaching of the one they are following. Jesus wants disciples. He does not make or force anyone to follow. He cannot make disciples out of those not following.

I. Greatest Threat to Making Disciples.

- A. What is the greatest threat to developing fully devoted followers of Jesus?
1. Is it humanism (man is the center, measure of all things, and highest authority)?
 2. Is it hedonism (pursuit of pleasure is the center, measure of all things, and highest authority)?
 3. Is it relativism (whatever I believe is the center, measure of all things, and highest authority)?
 4. Is it materialism (pursuit of material wealth is the center, measure of all things, and highest authority)?
 5. Is it socialism (society—not individual is the center, measure of all things, and final authority)?
 6. Is it statism (state or civil government is the center, measure of all things, and final authority)?
- B. I would not argue against the negative impact of any of these “isms,” but I would like to add another one.
- C. Consumerism.
1. Consumerism is all about customizing choices to satisfy personal desires.
 2. Consumerism demands products and services customized to individual choice.
 - a. For example, coffee choices—use to think choices regular/decaf; with cream/without; with sugar/without.
 - b. That will not cut it in consumer culture.
 - c. Today Starbucks provides 20,000 beverage combinations.
 - d. Why settle for a coffee shop flavor of the day when you can customize your beverage in accordance with your unique personal tastes?
 3. Consumerism is not just about materialistic values. Consumerism is about choice and about customizing life to suit your personal tastes, styles, and preferences.
 4. In the consumer culture—guess who is king? The customer is king.

II. What Then Is Consumer Christianity?

- A. Consumer Christianity.
1. It is all about customizing and constructing my own Christian discipleship by creating a Christian lifestyle and church connection that conforms to my personal tastes, needs, desires, styles, and preferences.
 2. Consumer Christianity has to do with viewing the Christian life and church involvement as a series of choices based on personal likes and dislikes—choices of preferences and styles.
 3. The function of the church in consumer Christianity is to supply spiritual goods and services for people to choose from based on their individual and family preferences, tastes, and styles.
 4. The primary concern is not whether people are growing in Christ-like maturity and doing His mission, but whether they are satisfied customers; hence, the phenomenon called “church shopping.”

- a. Long gone are the days you joined a church because God led you by His Spirit no matter what it offered and by what you offered to make the church better.
 - b. Gone is choosing a church of Jesus' choice.
 - c. Gone is choosing a church because the Lord ordered your steps.
 - d. Gone is choosing a church where the Lord planted you because we are tree of righteousness, the planting of the Lord.
 - e. Gone is letting the Lord choose where you pitch your tent—where He has a vision designed to draw out the divine potential in you; where He has things to deposit in you for your future that only He sees. Where He has the right relationships and people for your children so your whole blood line is not cursed but blessed with a godly heritage.
 - f. Remember the Bible records someone choosing where they would pitch their tent whose name was Lot. He ended up living in Sodom, barely escaping judgment and whose daughters (raised in Sodom) committed incest with him and gave birth to the sons who produced the Ammonite and Moabite people, two enemies to God's people.
5. What happens if a religious consumer does not like the programs and services offered? (Knowing that the moral absolute of consumerism is that the consumer is always right.)
- B. Go to customer service and complain (murmur).
1. Religious consumers do what all consumers do when they are dissatisfied—they complain and will take their complaint to whatever level.
 2. Many even threaten to take their business elsewhere.
 3. Many even tell their consumer friends about how badly they were treated.
 4. In a consumer culture the temptation for churches is to focus on attracting a crowd of consumers rather than developing fully devoted followers of Jesus.
 5. Consumer Christianity is totally incompatible with Christian discipleship as defined by Jesus. In consumer Christianity, the customer is king and customer is always right, but in the Kingdom Jesus is King and He is right.

III. Kingdom Christianity.

- A. The antidote to consumer Christianity is Kingdom Christianity.
1. **Jesus is King** Isaiah 9:7; Matthew 28:18; Revelation 19:16.
 2. **His primary agenda is to advance the Kingdom** Daniel 2:44; Matthew 6:9,10,33.
 3. **The Kingdom advances by making disciples** Matthew 28:19.
 4. **The key agent in this task is the local church** Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 3:9-11.
- B. Give up your rights.
1. Matthew 10:38-42; 16:24-28; Mark 8:34,35; Luke 9:23; 14:27.
 2. It is by seeking first the Kingdom that we are delivered from our self-centered preoccupations and self-centered focus Matthew 6:33.
 3. **Christ** at the center of our decisions; **Church** at the center of our involvement and community; **Commission** at the center of our focus and work.
- C. In Kingdom Christianity the consumer is not king the king is King Jesus.
1. It is all about submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
 2. It means giving up control. Including giving up control of the right to make my own choices based only upon my own preferences, tastes, styles, and my own perception of my needs.
 3. It means submitting to the authority, will, choices, values, and agenda of another, which by the way, flies in the face of the core values of consumerism where the customer is king and always knows best.
 4. Consumer Christianity is all about “me,” my desires, my choices, my preferences, my style, and my judgments. Kingdom Christianity is all about submission to Christ's Lordship and Christ's agenda.
 - a. Yielding to others my rights.

- b. Serving others in love because the big “I” was crucified with Christ Galatians 2:20.
 5. The health of our soul requires us to commit/submit to something bigger than ourselves Philippians 2:3-8. We are to let this be our mindset.
- D. One of the keys to our own spiritual formation into this Christ-likeness is first to make and faithfully keep commitments to a local church.
 1. Commitment to Christ must lead to commitment to Christ’s church and Christ’s Kingdom.
 2. What is faithful? A pastor was once asked to define faithfulness and this was his reply: “All I ask is that we apply the same standards of faithfulness to our church activities that we would in other areas of our life.” For example:
 - a. If your car started two out of three times would you consider it faithful?
 - b. If the paperboy skipped Mondays and Thursdays would those papers be missed? Would he be faithful?
 - c. If your refrigerator quit a day now and then, would you excuse it and say, “Oh it works most of the time?”
 - d. If you did not show up at work two or three times a month would your boss call you faithful?
 - e. If your water heater greets you with cold water one or two mornings a week while you were in the shower, would it be faithful?
 - f. If you miss a couple of mortgage payments in a years time, would your mortgage holder say, “Oh well, 10 out of 12 is not bad?”
 3. I think the target, goal, example we should shoot for is God. Let God be the standard of what we define as faithful. God is faithful 1 Corinthians 1:9; if we confess our sins, He is faithful... 1 John 1:9; consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus who is faithful to Him that appointed Him Hebrews 3:1,2.
 4. Every week we count on faithfulness—prayers, givers, workers.
 5. To become like Jesus Christ, to follow Jesus, we need to be committed to what Christ is committed to and Jesus Christ is committed to building His Church Matthew 16:18.
 6. The mission of the church is to go and take the Gospel to people so they can believe it and enter into the Kingdom of God and receive eternal life.
 7. Submission to the rule of Christ in our lives is how we oppose evil and satan’s power. It is how we are salt in the earth and light in the world.