



Worship at home'

June 25th 2023



As we worship, we are again reminded of the many ways in which we experience God in the 'ordinary' times and places of our lives, and are empowered by the Spirit to be Christ's followers in all of who we are and what we do. As you come to worship, you might bring a pen and paper to aid your prayer time.

Opening

Loving God, you call us to turn away from our own self-centred interests, to take up our cross, and to follow you; to find our lives, that we might live them in service of your mission.

Give us open hearts
and open hands;
make us eager to hear your voice
and seek your guidance.

Open our minds to your ever-present spirit
that is always moving within and around us.

Open our spirits to your nudging
and open our lives to your love.

~ adapted from **The Minor Keys**. <http://theminorkeys.blogspot.ca/>



In the first century, following Jesus Christ was not always easy. For many, it meant leaving behind their own traditions and families to join a new community. Jesus' teaching often went against the prevailing culture, and followers of "the Way" risked persecution and death.

Which aspects of following Christ do you find easy?

Which aspects have been challenging for you?



Those who have grown up in Western society may not have faced persecution or death for their faith, but Christians in other countries do. Even so, following Christ is not always easy, as we are challenged to put aside our self-centred desires and look out for others. For many, growing in faith, to become more like Christ, is a process of letting go of old traditions and finding new ways of being and doing.



Matthew 10:24-39

"No pupil is greater than his teacher; no slave is greater than his master. So a pupil should be satisfied to become like his teacher, and a slave like his master. If the head of the family is called Beelzebul, the members of the family will be called even worse names! "So do not be afraid of people. Whatever is now covered up will be uncovered, and every secret will be made known. What I am telling you in the dark you must repeat in broad daylight, and what you have heard in private you must announce from the housetops. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather be afraid of God, who can destroy both body and soul in hell. For only a penny you can buy two sparrows, yet not one sparrow falls to the ground

without your Father's consent. As for you, even the hairs of your head have all been counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth much more than many sparrows! "Those who declare publicly that they belong to me, I will do the same for them before my Father in heaven. But those who reject me publicly, I will reject before my Father in heaven. "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the world. No, I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. I came to set sons against their fathers, daughters against their mothers, daughters-in-law against their mothers-in-law; your worst enemies will be the members of your own family. "Those who love their father or mother more than me are not fit to be my disciples; those who love 2

their son or daughter more than me are not fit to be my disciples. Those who do not take up their cross and follow in my steps are not fit to be

my disciples. Those who try to gain their own life will lose it; but those who lose their life for my sake will gain it.

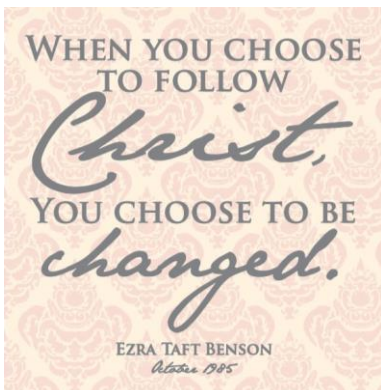
Good News Bible

Which parts of this passage challenge you?

Which parts do you find comforting?

Jesus was about to send the disciples out in mission. He knew that it would not be easy for them, that they would face many hurdles and obstacles. They would need to leave behind their old ways and find new ways of being and doing, relying on God. This was probably not an easy message for them to hear, and it is no easier for us today. But he assures them all the way through that there is no need to fear: God loves and will be with them every step of the way.

A few weeks ago a young Christian woman from another country came to our Bible study. My faithful churchgoers commented on how much easier it must be to follow Jesus in Australia, not risking opposition or fear of persecution. Without hesitation, this young woman challenged our attitudes. "No", she told us, "it is much harder to be a Christian in Australia. Why, I fear I will lose my faith, because there is nothing to keep it focussed and strong. I don't need to rely on God in the same way that I do in my own country."



This passage challenges us about our priorities. How many of us can really say that our relationship with God is the most important part of who we are and what we do? This doesn't mean that our family and friends and passions and activities are unimportant, but that we place God as our priority in the middle of our other relationships and activities.

Write down some of the things that are important to you. Pray about each of them, asking God to indwell every aspect of your life.



Prayer

God of the impossible,
we pray for justice, peace and reconciliation;
when the challenges seem too many,
remind us of your resurrection power;
when the task seems overwhelming,
remind us of the miracle of love;
and when apathy threatens us,
remind us of your vision of a world made whole.
Help us to hope that the impossible can happen
and live as if it might do so today. Amen.

*~ from Creation Sings Your Praise
edited by Annabel Shilson-Thomas, Canterbury Press, 2010*

<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/>

*Discipleship is living every day to the glory of God in front of
other people and inviting them to join you on the journey.*

Tom Neary

Closing

*I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low for thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
thou art mine, and I am thine.
So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven.*

Amen

- Wesley Covenant Prayer 4