

# The **Disciple** as an *Illustration* of TRUTH

It's becoming increasingly clear to the bulk of us who serve teenagers and families that **not-yet-believing youth** are hesitant to invest themselves in discovering truth solely constructed by words.

Rather, not-yet-believing teens long to investigate, discover, and experience truth as they see it in the lives of others. This is not to say that what we communicate with words about God isn't true or helpful. It *is* to say, however, that it's not the most effective way to reveal who Jesus is—all the while unfolding God's mission.

What we do is more important than what we say. As we think about re-culturing our youth ministries, we must be mindful that the equipping of our students by revealing Jesus to them should be accomplished primarily through inspiring them toward a way of life, not solely through a collection of assorted words or phrases, regardless of the truth found in those words.

Further, I contend that we need to develop in our students the desire to live artistic and progressive lives, and in doing so not neglect altogether the speaking of truth but primarily provide illustrations or pictures to accompany the words we speak.

To inspire toward a way of life, we must have a working description of a biblical way of life. A way of life that, when lived out, becomes the illustration of truth. An illustration that calls not-yet-believing teenagers to investigate, discover, and experience Jesus.

## Our New Life as a Way of Life

When one chooses to surrender her life to Jesus and becomes one of Jesus' followers, she enters into a new life. This new life then can become *a way of life*. The book of 1 John gives us a great description of our new life, which can become our way of life. (The following is adapted from a list given to me by one of my theology professors, Floyd Barackman.)

### 1 John 1:3—Community with God and God's People

"We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ."

The disciple as an illustration of truth lives in community with other followers of Jesus and in union with God. She projects truth to the watching world via healthy relationships with others and through a life balanced with all that comes with being human and all that comes with longing to be with the divine.

### 1 John 2:3—Conformity to God's Intended Ways

"We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands."

The disciple as an illustration of truth seeks to do what is right. Not what humanity thinks is right, but what God says

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is right. Can it really be that simple? Yes. It may not be easy to carry out, but it is certainly easy to comprehend. A follower who's been given a new life longs to live in obedience to God and God's intended ways.

### 1 John 2:29—Becoming Holy

"If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him."

Out of a commitment of obedience to God, the disciple as an illustration of truth becomes a holy person. Or, at least he's increasing the frequency and duration of the holy moments in his life. Otherwise a watching world wonders (sometime out loud) how we can say one thing and do another. "Isn't that hypocrisy?" they ask.

### 1 John 3:14—Loving God's People


"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death."

A disciple who does not love other disciples only thinks he is a disciple. According to 1 John 3:14, one who doesn't love has not actually received new life. What is your relationship like with other followers of Jesus? What do teenagers see in you? A disciple as an illustration of truth loves God's people. This means that we live in community with all people, even those with whom we disagree.

### 1 John 4:15—Confessing Jesus

"If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God."

A disciple as an illustration of truth confesses Jesus. As mentioned earlier, words are not the means to communicate truth, but they are important. However, they aren't any more important than actions. In fact, if anything they are less important because, unless godly actions are associated with them, they're empty words—and not creeds or real sets of beliefs.

If the saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words," is accurate, then a disciple living life as an illustration of truth is worth a thousand words, too. 



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