

Encountering Jesus the Leader

Carl Jung notes: "We have a bleak, shallow rationalism that offers stones instead of bread to the emotional and spiritual hungers of the world. The logical result is an insatiable hunger for anything extraordinary . . ." Some social analysts claim that emerging adults between the ages of 18-30 years have been indoctrinated to believe "I'm OK," thanks to Mr Fred Rogers. In fact, we are all OK, thanks to Sesame Street. This means our culture has been baptized into celebrating diversity, sanctifying differences and affirming the radical uniqueness of every person. Alan Mann says that contemporary culture does not provide us with a clear grasp of what is right and what is wrong.

The so-called "i" generation stands for isolation, ipod, iphone, ipad and a robust ego that says "I'm self-important." Jeffery Arnett insists igens "are driven by endless possibilities and are actively exploring them - jobs, travel, love, sex, identity and location. They collect experiences more than money." But a centrality of "me" culture based on a false belief "I can be anything I want to be" is resulting in high levels of depression and sadly, suicide.

Encounter Jesus the leader. Jesus has a "genuine compassion and commitment to something that transcends the superficiality" of 1st-Century and 21st-Century culture. Dan Kimball writes "what turns igens off about church is that it's too organized, political, judgemental, chauvinistic, homophobic, arrogant and fundamentalist." Whether this perception is accurate or not is not the issue. But the encounters with Jesus the leader in Mark's Gospel present a very different picture than that experienced under the 1st-Century leadership of the religious elite.

Jesus' leadership style broke all the norms. Jesus knew that the only way to make a radical difference involved a cross for both him and his disciples (Mark 8:34-38). He refused to accept titles (Mark 1:24) and told leaders not to allow themselves to be exalted above the common person (Matthew 23:1-12). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus casts a vision for a kingdom characterized by righteousness, holiness, love, peace, forgiveness, acceptance, genuineness and eternal values. He came to serve, to be a slave and to die in order to free people from life-long slavery (Mark 10:42-45).

If you have an "insatiable hunger for anything extraordinary" then follow Jesus. Commit your life to being like and modelling Jesus. Being a disciple of Jesus creates a world of possibilities unequalled by anything or anyone else. But be warned, it involves losing the "i" for the sake of Jesus and the gospel. It includes being persecuted, rejected and perhaps the ultimate price, forfeiting your life (Mark 8:34-38; 10:29-31). Yet, as strange as it sounds and feels, the promise is that in losing your life for Jesus and the cause of the gospel, you will actually find life. If you want to stand out, make a difference that counts, then commit yourself to following Jesus. There is no greater challenge.