

Here is something to chew on.

Pastor's quote: "There are basically two types of followers of Jesus: those who seek Him for blessings and those who follow Him because of who He is."

After almost 37 years of studying God's word, I have come to the conclusion that while I can find many types of followers of Jesus, it all boils down to two basic groups. The main text for this conclusion can be found in John's Gospel, chapter 6. There are, however, many other places in the New Testament where these two groups can be illustrated.

Those who follow Jesus for the blessings are more interested in what they can receive than give. Their faith and commitment are based primarily upon what they receive that they can interpret as blessings. These blessings are first viewed as physical in nature (Do they fill my physical needs or desires?). Secondly, they are viewed as social (Are there activities that I will enjoy and are fun or make me feel socially accepted?). Thirdly, they are viewed as emotional (Do the services and activities make me feel good about myself and lift me up?).

The followers of Jesus for blessings require a church that is all about them. From their perspective, all or most activities, programs, teachings, preaching, worship style, music, etc. must be centered around their perceived needs and preference or it is not from God. If a church can't provide these things or the message is making them uncomfortable, they will leave and look for a place where they can again feel good.

Most but not all churches that are growing have employed this method of approach to the followers of Jesus. It requires a lot of planning and people to make a church function as a church of blessings. The only problem with this approach is that most of these followers remain shallow in their faith. Their faith is based upon how they feel and not on what they believe.

Those who follow Jesus for who He is do not require all of the perks and pleasures offered to the ones seeking blessings. Jesus is enough. His offer to save them from sin and give them eternal life is sufficient. All activities are centered on the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word. Instead of seeking blessings, they seek ways to serve Him and bring glory to His name. Their concern is the welfare of the local body of Christ and its members particularly. They desire to be obedient to His Word because they love Him. Their blessings are to bless others with their sacrifice of service and commitment to the Lord. Their love is genuine and not self-serving or self-centered. Because they do not look for blessings as the object of their affection to Christ, they receive far greater blessings that are spiritual in nature and are eternal.

In John 6, Jesus fed 5,000 men plus women and children. They wanted to seize Him and make Him their king. The reason was the perceived blessing of the loaves and fishes. What a miracle! His message to them on the following day was hard for them to digest. It was offensive. It wasn't about them, it was about Him and that they needed to take Him into their lives to sustain them spiritually as food sustained them physically. They could not get past the physical, social, and emotional to discern the spiritual. When He explained it to them, they still left Him because this is not what they wanted. When He turned to the remaining twelve disciples and asked them if they were also going to leave Him, Peter stated the real reason to follow Jesus. *John 6:68-69, "Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."*

While you may find fault with what I wrote, or me, the question still stands: What is your real reason for following Jesus? The wrong reason will lead you down the wrong path and eventually leave you empty.

Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

May His grace abound in, through, and to you.

In His Grace,

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