

Show Them How to Live: Training Disciples in the Way Jesus Lived

I grew up in a church culture. From the time I left the hospital until I graduated high school, I was put through every program, participated in every activity, and was faithful to every event our local church had to offer. Children's church, R.A.'s (Royal Ambassadors), Bible Drill, Children's & Youth Choir, Puppet Ministry, Youth Group/Ministry, Sunday School, Discipleship Training, Christmas/Easter Dramas...you name it, I was in it.

I was converted at the early age of 8, right in the middle of all the busy life a committed church-goer. Looking back, however, **one of the most glaring (and I would add scandalous) omissions is that my church never taught me how to live.** I knew how to do a ton of religious things, not the least of which was checking off the boxes on my tithe envelope, but when it came to living out my faith as a disciple of Jesus, I really had no clue. I just knew how to get in the system and let the system do its thing.

> The System and Spirit Within Christendom

What this system has produced, rather unintentionally I might add, is a spirit of consumerism through the culture of Christendom. In this system, who you are (**identity**) is defined by what you do (**performance**). I am a Christian because I go to church, and the fruit of my faith is manifested in my participation and religious performances. This system works within Christendom because Christianity and culture has been syncretized so that being religious or good is tantamount to being a disciple of Jesus.

The metrics for this appraisal of religious devotion are the church's programs, activities, and events (think gatherings and special services). **Instead of teaching disciples of Jesus how to live in the world, we take them out of the world and teach them how to be busy in the church building/campus.** The centralizing effect made the church like the indoor shopping mall, servicing the needs, wants, and preferences of all within Christendom. The consumer was in control, and the church was there to make sure their product was good enough to have them buy into their church.

But just like the indoor mall has seen its day, so has Christendom. There has been a great divorce between Christianity and culture in recent years, and **fewer and fewer people are attracted to this religious marketplace mentality.** Ironically, many proponents in this system are lamenting the lack of enduring fruit from this well-oiled, efficient system.

- **Why is it that around 1% of Christians ever share their faith?** Could it be that they do not know any unbelievers? Could it be that they have never been taught how to love their neighbor? Could it be that their understanding of evangelism is exceptionally gifted leaders using an extraordinary platform rather than ordinary people doing ordinary things with gospel intentionality?
- **Why is it that there is little qualitative distinctiveness between disciples of Jesus and those in the world around them?** Could it be that we have assumed the gospel

and replaced it with behavioral modification? Could it be we have substituted repentance and faith with try harder and do better? Could it be that we have trained people to value programs and activities in place of authentic community and missional living?

Could it be that we have measured religious activity and assumed that is the same thing as pursuing holiness?

Read [Part 2](#).