

Losing religion, finding relationship.

Enjoying the Journey of Relationship with Jesus

If you've ever traveled with a large group of people in challenging situations, you know that nothing brings out the beast in us quite like bumping up against different personalities in uncommon or uncomfortable settings.

Think about groups you've traveled with in the past. What qualities are possessed by a good traveling companion?

Which of these traits are your strengths and which do you need to cultivate?

If we want to *enjoy* the journey of relationship with Jesus, why are these qualities important for us to develop?

Several years ago, I traveled to Israel for a two-week tour with a guide by the name of Ray Vander Laan. Ray doesn't lead the typical tourist trip. He likes to call it "learning with your feet". Which is a fancy way of saying we hiked over 100 miles. Before we signed on the dotted line, we were warned of the challenge. And we did it anyway. That trip taught me the following attributes of a good traveler.

#1 Be Prepared

Knowing the physical challenges that lay ahead, I trained my tail off! Determined not to be the weakest link, I strapped a weighted pack to my back, laced up new hiking boots and climbed every staircase and hill I could find. For four solid months.

Most of our group was physically ready, but the unprepared were unable to fully enjoy many aspects of the experience. How prepared were you for life as a Jesus follower? If you're like most of us, the answer is "not very". Read Luke 14:25-33. What does Jesus teach His followers about being prepared?

Do you view these instructions as a one-time commitment, or a daily commitment? What would that change in your day-to-day life if these words of Jesus were part of your preparations for each day?

What other preparations strengthen you spiritually for each day, and how do they affect your enjoyment of the journey?

#2 Learn to Follow

Each day in Israel, we surrendered to the agenda of our experienced guide without knowing our destination. Our job was to show up every morning at the bus, on time, and trust his leadership as he led us to a new adventure.

Jesus said the words, “Follow Me” 13 times in the New Testament. He never invited anyone to “pray a prayer”, but to submit to His lordship. He is our friend, absolutely. But He is Lord first and foremost. Learning to follow is not optional.

Why is learning to follow a necessary attribute to enjoy the journey of relationship?

Read James 4:7-8 and Hebrews 4:16. What advantages to following Jesus do you see from these verses?

How we follow Jesus has everything to do with our enjoyment of the journey. We can follow Him with an attitude of drudgery and duty, or we can follow Him with a heart of love and delight. Describe your own experience with each of these attitudes. Which do you find most common in your relationship with Him, and why?

Read John 14:15, 23-24. What does Jesus say is the antidote to obedience from an attitude of drudgery and duty?

Now read 1 John 2:3. Based on what does John tell us about obedience, how do we grow in our love for Jesus?

As we grow in our knowing of Him, dear one, our love for Him will grow. And as our love for Him grows, we will *want* to obey Him. Obedience will be the natural outflow of a heart on fire with passion for the One who set us free.

#3 Have a Good Attitude

The most delightful traveling companions display certain characteristics. Read the following verses and list the attitudes that are advantageous and how those particular traits are helpful to enjoying life with Jesus.

Philippians 2:5-8

Matthew 20:25-28; John 13:1-17

Romans 5:3-4

James 1:2-4

Galatians 5:22-23

Think about the following quote and consider how adopting this mindset could help you enjoy the journey of relationship with Jesus.

“A good traveler has no fixed plans and it not intent on arriving”. Lao Tzu

