



## Follow the Crucified, Not the Americanized, Jesus

### CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

- Within the church, to “Americanize” Jesus is to follow him because he makes life better and more enjoyable.
- It is possible to be *Christ-centered* but not *cross-centered*. To be Christ-centered is to be captivated by Jesus as a triumphant Savior who offers us an abundant life with greater sense of power and influence in our lives. To be cross-centered is to follow Jesus as a Savior who embraced the cross, making that the pattern of our lives and leadership.
- Four key differences between the world’s discipleship and Jesus’s discipleship:

The World’s Discipleship	Jesus’ Discipleship
Be popular.	Reject popularity. ( <i>Be popular with me.</i> )
Be great.	Reject “greatness-ism.” ( <i>Be great with me.</i> )
Be successful.	Reject “success-ism.” ( <i>Be a success with me.</i> )
Avoid suffering and failure.	Embrace suffering and failure. ( <i>Be faithful to me.</i> )

- When who we are—our identity as a loved daughter or son of God—becomes inseparable from our leadership role, we are especially vulnerable to one of the most subtle and treacherous temptations from the Evil One: to equate our worth with our success in ministry and leadership.
- Three essential practices for following the crucified Jesus: relax in Jesus, detach for Jesus, listen to Jesus.

## DISCUSSION

1. What stood out most to you from this chapter on “Follow the Crucified, Not the Americanized, Jesus”?
2. To be Christ-centered rather than cross-centered is to reject the centrality of the cross by fixating on how our relationship with Jesus makes our life better and gives us a greater, not a lesser, sense of power, control, and influence.
  - Such “Americanizing” of discipleship is often subtle. How did the examples of Madison, Alex, and Joan (pages 63–65) help you better understand and recognize what it means to embrace rather than avoid the cross in discipleship?
  - What subtle or not-so-subtle examples of Christ-centered discipleship do you recognize within your own church, ministry, or organization? Within yourself?
3. There are four key differences between worldly discipleship and Jesus’s discipleship.
  - *Be popular versus reject popularity.* Most of us place a higher premium on what other people think than we realize. Subtle examples include lying in order to be a “good witness,” pretending things are okay when they’re not, saying yes when we would rather say no, remaining silent about preferences out of fear of what others might think, or any other preoccupation with securing the approval or affirmation. In what ways might this temptation to be popular be uniquely challenging for leaders in your context? In what ways, if any, has it led you to do and say things to impress people or to make decisions you might not otherwise have made?
  - *Be great versus reject greatness-ism.* Greatness-ism is preoccupied with status and privilege. The alternative to greatness-ism is lowliness. Lowliness is a humility that expresses itself in a willingness to be curious, open, flexible, and teachable—regardless of the title or position we hold. Briefly identify a current leadership challenge you face. How would you approach it if greatness-ism were your sole concern? If lowliness were your sole concern?
  - *Be successful versus reject success-ism.* According to Jesus, success is becoming the person God calls you to become and doing what God calls you to do—in his way, and according to his timetable. The final temptation Satan posed to Jesus in the desert was to do what God had called him to do but *not* in God’s way or according to God’s timetable. In what ways might this be a temptation for your church, ministry, or organization right now?

- *Avoid suffering and failure versus embrace suffering and failure.* Jesus had a choice—to leave the cross or stay on it. Out of love, he chose to stay. Embracing the cross is possible only when we have a choice to do otherwise—to save ourselves instead. Jesus described taking up one’s cross as a *daily* choice (Luke 9:23). As a leader, what kind of daily choices do you face to embrace the cross or save yourself? To choose suffering and weakness or to save face?

4. Three practices can help us take steps to follow the crucified Jesus: relax in Jesus, detach for Jesus, listen to Jesus. As you read the descriptions of each practice, which did you feel most drawn to or intrigued by? Briefly share why.



## READING ASSIGNMENT

Before your next meeting, read Chapter 5, “Embrace God’s Gift of Limits.” Between now and then, take note of any limits you encounter. For example, limits on your time, money, energy, emotions, or circumstances.

## GOING DEEPER

- Listen to the Emotionally Healthy Leadership podcast episode, “Waiting on the Cross with Jesus,” accessible at <https://www.emotionallyhealthy.org/podcast/detail/Waiting-on-the-Cross-with-Jesus/?v=4096ee8eef7d>.
- Journal your responses to these two questions from the book:

*In what ways do I try to avoid the suffering and failure Jesus might be setting before me?*

*Before whom do I most dread looking foolish? Name them, offering your responses back to the Father in prayer.*