



IF JESUS WAS SERIOUS ... THEN WE DON'T HAVE TO CHANGE OUR CIRCUMSTANCES TO CHANGE THE WORLD.

In order to fully participate in the church's mission, many Christians assume they are required to dramatically change their circumstances. For example, for those who say the church's mission is to "make disciples, who make disciples, who make disciples," the best, most devoted disciples of Jesus must be those

who give their full energy to this work. In other words—pastors and church leaders. To really engage in this mission, therefore, would require most of us who work outside the church to change our vocations.

From passages like 1 Corinthians 15 and Ephesians 4, we see that the true scope of Christ's mission is far wider than most Christians have been led to think. Jesus isn't merely interested in saving souls or ruling over the church. He desires to reign *over all things*, which means being a disciple must extend to domains far beyond what we label "sacred" and far beyond the structures of the institutional church. But there's another implication of this wider vision of Christ's mission that we don't often acknowledge. If His goal encompasses all things, then fully participating in Christ's mission does not require us to change our circumstances.

Consider the apostle Paul. Some have called him the greatest missionary in world history; a man entirely devoted to the work of Christ and determined to "make disciples." And yet, unlike so many churches and Christian leaders today, Paul did not believe being a full disciple of Jesus meant changing a person's circumstances or vocation. For example, when asked whether a believer should change their relational status (married or single), their religious status (circumcised or uncircumcised), or their vocational status (slave or free), Paul gave a stunning answer: *remain right where you are with God* (see 1 Cor. 7:17–24).

Paul understood that the fullness of the Christian life was available to anyone, anywhere, because the fullness of the Christian life is Jesus Christ Himself, not our work for Him. And, in addition, he understood that God's mission to rule over all things meant manifesting God's kingdom, as Jesus' disciple, right where we are. Paul's reluctance to remove believers from their existing relationships, vocations, and circumstances reveals how skewed our modern vision of the church, ministry, and mission has become.

We assume fulfilling Christ's call means telling people to abandon their ordinary lives and activities to do more in the church, and we often define disciples as those who forsake earthly things to focus on heavenly things. But that's exactly backward. For Christ to rule over all things means welcoming the presence of heaven into the earthly things we are already doing.

Dallas Willard said it this way: "As Jesus' disciple, I am his apprentice in kingdom living. I am learning from him how to lead my life in the Kingdom of the Heavens as he would lead my life if he were I." Notice that Willard, like Paul, says nothing about changing his circumstances. Following Jesus doesn't mean becoming a Jewish rabbi. It doesn't mean becoming an itinerant preacher. It doesn't mean becoming a first-century carpenter. And it certainly doesn't mean doing more church work. Being a disciple who participates in God's mission means living your life, doing your work, engaging your relationships, and inhabiting your community *with Christ* and in a manner that manifests His rule right where you are.

Read: 1 Corinthians 7:17–24; Matthew 28:16–20