

“Spiritually Confused Christians”

Matthew 16:21-28

Introduction

Spiritual confusion exists when our opinion or belief challenges God’s Word, when we support Satan’s kingdom agenda, and when human thoughts receive greater prominence than God’s thoughts. Believers must address their spiritual confusion if they want to receive the rewards of discipleship.

In Matthew 16:21-23, Jesus tells the disciples about His death and resurrection. Peter, not wanting to hear about the death of his friend and Lord, rebuked Jesus, saying, “God forbid it, Lord!” Peter’s response can be strange to us because, in part, it can make Peter appear to believe that he knows more than Jesus. The problem in this exchange is that Peter used his own human perspective and challenged God’s Word. Jesus took the challenge seriously because He tells Peter, “Get behind me, Satan!” He wasn’t calling Peter out to be the devil; however, Jesus was acutely aware that Satan was busy at work in an attempt to stop Him from carrying out God’s kingdom agenda. Like Peter, believers who love Jesus and want to see His kingdom come can get caught up in worldly perspectives, and therefore end up out of alignment with God’s plan. When we operate in our own human understanding and thoughts rather than God’s divine revelation and God’s divine will, we join Satan by being a stumbling block. This puts us in an illegitimate position, and we can very quickly find ourselves confused and out of God’s will.

Jesus corrects Peter and educates him on discipleship (vv. 24-28). He tells Peter that he must be a committed disciple to correct his spiritual confusion. When we commit our lives to Jesus Christ and surrender in obedience as we read, understand and apply His word, we are also committing ourselves to the interests of Jesus Christ over our own. Denying ourselves involves the willingness to adjust to Christ’s rule in our lives, take up our cross and identify with the shame and suffering that comes from association with Him. Following Jesus may not always be acceptable or popular with other people or with the public. When we identify with Christ, we make a choice to prioritize His interests over self-interests and accept righteous suffering while whole-heartedly following Him. This is a singular devotion. You cannot have two masters. You must be committed to the Lord and follow His instructions and direction alone.

Too many Christians today hear and follow too many voices. We let cultural voices and our own voice interfere with what God is doing and what He has planned. Every committed believer must address this spiritual confusion and reject it. This will allow them to receive the rewards of discipleship both in time and in eternity. Believers can look forward to multiple rewards: Jesus will save your soul, He will give you a new and abundant life and He gives you a special manifestation of Himself. When believers have and maintain a singular focus on Him, they will not only enjoy more of His presence, but they will live with crystal clear clarity and avoid the cloudiness that comes from living spiritually confused. Commitment to Christ changes the way we live and it paves the way for a greater experience of Him on earth and in the hereafter.

Getting Started

1. What part of this week’s sermon stood out most to you?
2. Have you ever considered the concept of spiritual confusion and how it can inhibit the rewards of discipleship?

Let’s Get Personal

1. Have you ever been spiritually confused? As believers, we may not want to think we would challenge God’s Word, but have you ever struggled with this? Share with your group how you have overcome this struggle.
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2. What have you learned about what it means to have a single-minded focus? As a believer, have you always had this focus or has it developed over time? If it has evolved over time, what has been the development process?
3. Considering we need to choose God's interest over our own, what are some interests you may need to rethink to align yourself more with God?

Take the Next Step

1. Have you made the decision to be a sold-out Christian for Christ? Based on what you have learned, how would you rate your commitment to discipleship? What areas can you improve?
2. There are many voices in our culture pulling at our attention. To reject spiritual confusion, what are some of the things you can do to limit contradictory voices?
3. Share some of the ways you have already experienced God's rewards for your commitment to discipleship. How would you encourage others to commit to greater discipleship?
4. Want to dig deeper? Take a look at the following passages: John 12:24-26; Luke 9:23; Psalm 142:7; Hebrews 12:2; 1 Peter 2:7-8; 1 Corinthians 1:18, 23; Matthew 16:15-18; 17:1-8; Galatians 5:11; Proverbs 14:12; 1 Timothy 6:12; Isaiah 55:8-9.

Renew Your Mind

*"If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself,
take up his cross, and follow Me."*

Matthew 16:25
