

The Circle of Your Affinity May Cost You Everything

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In the 1950s, on the popular “Candid Camera Show,” several people were set up by the director to face the rear of an elevator. Then we watched as unsuspecting persons were filmed entering into the elevator without any knowledge that this was a setup. As you can imagine, they automatically faced to the back of the elevator just like the others! Doing anything else was just too difficult to manage psychologically.



We naturally prefer the acceptance our conformity affords rather than the friction our nonconformity creates. Jesus wasn't that way. He said, “I do not receive glory from men” (Jn 5:41). What he meant by this, in the context it was said, was that he did not bother with or care about conforming to others expectations, but lived solely in obedience to the Father.

A few words later, Jesus indicts the Jewish religious leaders by asking, “How can you believe, when you receive the glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God” (Jn 5:44)?

Do you understand what he meant? Unlike Jesus, these religious leaders sought to be acknowledged and valued for their conformity to the each other. But to believe in Christ took something bold. A believer in Christ will face forward when everyone else is facing backward. He is, at heart, a nonconformist, unwilling to be dissuaded from lure of Christ, even if his peers argue otherwise.

The Greatest Tug

Perhaps there is no greater appeal to our minds than to conform to those we like. Some may even go to their death to do it. It happens in every field of life. Try your own experiment. Line up five people who are prepared to give the wrong answer to a question. Place an uninformed person on the end of the line. Most of this time the last person will give the answer the others have given, even if his mind tells him he is wrong. If the five respond to the question, “What U. S. President was shot in a theater?” by saying “President Garfield,” the last person will almost certainly say the same. His need to conform, to seek the affirmation and respect of the others, will outweigh what he has always believed is true.

These Jewish leaders sought the glory of each other, and it was the stated position of the group to reject the rabbi Jesus who was causing such a stir and offending so many leaders. So Jesus says that caring that much for the group's opinion and respect makes it impossible for them to believe in Christ. “How can you believe” if you do that? They have to be willing to renounce the group to seek the glory coming from the Father by believing in Jesus.

And You?

Are you really any different than these religious leaders. Do you seek the glory from your family, your office associates, your school friends, your disobedient church or religious group? You will know Christ and be given eternal life only when you decide that glory from the Father is more important than the acceptance and honor of all others.

Christianity is a collective arrangement. That is, it is designed by the Master architect to be inclusive of the entire Christian family wherever we find them. We are to “accept one another even as Christ has accepted” us. But coming into that family is another matter. It isn't done in a group, but alone. And a great decision must be made to do so, the decision to reject the will of others, often very important others, around you.

It's as if you are invited onto the Ark built by Noah. Noah was a man rejected by his society but loved by God. He was considered out of his mind as he built on a huge boat for decades and warned others of a coming disaster because God told him to do so. Imagine what it must have meant to publicly come over to Noah's side. We know of none who did that outside of his family. The social leap was too great. And many of you would have little encouragement in this day either. Your peers would laugh at even the mention of joining with Noah. Yet the Ark was the only hope for Noah's contemporaries. God closed the door and sent the flood to drowning people who wished they had honored God instead of their peers.

When you come to Christ you cross over never to come back again. It's a big decision, costing you dearly. You won't do it if the acceptance or “glory” of others is more important to you than the glory of God. So, make your decision—if you can.