

Are You a “Radical” Believer?

By Bob Young

Are you a “radical” believer? Do you want to be? Should we be “radical?” Here is why we should answer, “Yes.”

The word “radical” has its fair share of baggage in typical English usage. The word “radical” conjures up concepts of persons who are extreme, fanatical, and out of touch with normal ways of looking at things. Radicals are counter-cultural—outside the cultural mainstream.

Our word “radical” is derived from the fourteenth century Latin word “radicalis” which means “from the root.” A few years ago, LaGard Smith wrote *Radical Restoration*, suggesting that restoration is at heart a radical enterprise. When one understands the etymology of the word, one is compelled to ask: Can biblical Christianity be anything but radical? Radical Christianity seeks to restore authentic discipleship—learning the ways of the teacher (not only the teachings of the teacher), total commitment to the teacher and his yoke, absolute surrender, and sacrificial living. These four dynamics of biblically rooted discipleship help genuine disciples say “yes” to Jesus as they commit to being all that he intended them to be.

Radical Christianity requires that the Christian (disciple) be rooted and grounded in God's nature and goodness—without the root of radical goodness there is no antidote to radical evil. The first requirement of being a radical is to learn the ways of the teacher. Radical disciples are students of God's Word. Imitating Jesus will return us to God's original purpose for our lives—to do the Father's will. Learning the will of God means nothing less than total selfless commitment to that will. Imitating Jesus demands that we recognize that everything must be rooted and grounded in faith that surrenders to God. At its radical core, Christianity is all about surrender. That surrender is evidenced by our immersion which pictures Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Finally, radical Christianity demands sacrificial lives. Radical Christianity turns ordinary unpromising lives toward sacrificial service to God.

Radical Christianity is not popular in today's churches or in today's culture. Biblical Christianity is not only counter-cultural, it is culture-denying and culture-rejecting. The world's way of doing things must always be rejected—at every point in every detail. No place exists for mixed value systems and half-way living. Some reject such a radical version of Christianity, because the contemporary versions of Christianity that exist on the street-corners of most U.S. towns and cities seem comfortable, familiar, and easy. The truth is that the easy yoke Jesus describes is only found in total commitment to the surrendered, sacrificial life of a follower. No more dependence on self, no more difficult decisions, no more conflicting priorities. Radical Christianity actually enhances, transforms and inspires life. One's walk with God becomes natural; personal ministry is part of the ebb and flow of life.

The key to radical, biblical Christianity is in developing healthy “roots” to help you become what God desires. Do you want the kind of life that is radically serious about Christ? Do you want the kind of Christian life that people oppose and even reject because its power in the community is so challenging? Do you want to experience the freedom of understanding the teachings so well that your way of life is changed? Do you long for the paradoxical ease that comes from committing to the surrendered, sacrificial life? You are ready to become a “radical” believer.