

Confronted by Calvary Part 1: Admirers vs. Followers

Discussion Guide – March 23, 2025

²¹ From then on Jesus began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that he would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead.

²² But Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him ^[k] for saying such things. “Heaven forbid, Lord,” he said. “This will never happen to you!”

²³ Jesus turned to Peter and said, “Get away from me, Satan! You are a dangerous trap to me. You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God’s.”

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. ²⁵ If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. ²⁶ And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul? Matthew 16:21-26

Quotes:

“I paint all this suffering, but I don’t suffer myself. I make a living of it. What we do is just create admirers, we don’t create followers. Christ’s life is a demand. We don’t want to be reminded of it.... I paint the comfortable Christ, with a halo over his head. How can I show what I haven’t lived? Someday I might have the courage to venture. Not yet.” – A Hidden Life

“Jesus says that every Christian has his own cross waiting for him, a cross destined and appointed by God. Each must endure his allotted share of suffering and rejection. But each has a different share: some God deems worthy of the highest form of suffering, and gives them the grace of martyrdom.”
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

“What then is the difference between an admirer and a follower? A follower is or strives to be what he admires. An admirer, however, keeps himself personally detached. He fails to see that what is admired involves a claim upon him, and thus he fails to be or strive to be what he admires... Admirers are only all too willing to serve Christ as long as proper caution is exercised, lest one personally come in contact with danger. As such, they refuse to accept that Christ’s life is a demand.... When there is no danger, when there is a dead calm, when everything is favourable to Christianity, it is all too easy to confuse an admirer with a follower. And this can happen very quietly. The admirer can be in the delusion that the position he takes is the true one, when all he is doing is playing it safe. Give heed, therefore, to the call of discipleship!” Soren Kierkegaard

“The cross that confronts us also forgives us.”

Discussion Questions

1. Was there a particular story, scripture, or quote that lingered with you?
2. Maybe the story of the missed opportunity in the locker room was relatable. Have you ever had a moment like that—where you wanted to say or do something courageous but didn’t? On the flip side, can you think of a time when you did take a small but uncomfortable step? What happened?
3. Let’s be vulnerable: what do you think your cross looks like right now? (Could be a habit, fear, relationship, or decision.)
4. Are there any small steps of faithfulness gnawing at you to take this week? Would you be willing to share with the group?