



## Stop Including Jesus in Your Life

Who made a resolution already? Diet? Exercise? Spiritual? Anyone already break theirs? ☺

### New Year's Resolutions:

- 38% of Americans typically make a New Year's resolution
- That's about 121,182,000 Americans
- Only 8% of those who make a resolution typically achieve success!
- 24% of those who make resolutions report that they *never* achieve success!
- Of those in their 20's, 39% typically achieve success in their resolutions
- Of those in their 50's, only 14% typically achieve their resolutions
- 1 out of every 4 people will break their resolution within the first week of making it!

Perhaps you are one of the 8% who always keeps their resolution. My friend Stephen Dellinger is a machine on most of this kind of stuff. He has his own faults, but when that kid commits to something like this he is typically all in. I admire him for that.

We aren't all like that, and some of you are probably in the camp of those who will break their resolution in the first week. In today's American culture, resolutions are almost expected to be broken. Some of you may be thinking, "That's why I don't make any resolutions!"

That's also why I don't want to ask you to start doing anything new in today's message. If you are working on some new things to do to improve your quality of life in 2017, I think that is great. But this message will not add one more thing for you to start *doing* in 2017. Instead, the intention of this message is to address the purpose you have adopted for your life.

### The Power of Purpose:

- Your purpose will decide the resolutions you make
- Your purpose will dictate your attitude through life's ups and downs
- Your purpose will determine the way you process opportunities and make choices
- Your purpose will direct your priorities

**Resolution = Something to do.**  
**Purpose = Something to live and die for.**

Don't worry about adding a resolution today. I'm not going to ask you to do that. Instead, would you prepare your heart to focus on what you have really been living for by evaluating your lifestyle and

choices in 2016? Would you allow the Lord to soften your heart this morning as you ask Him how He wants to change your purpose – what you live for – in 2017?

Instead of asking you to *start doing* something, I am going to ask you to *stop doing* one thing. When I ask you to stop this one thing, I hope it will cause you to immediately focus on your purpose and what you are living for. Ready?

### **Stop including Jesus in your life.**

There is no place for you to incorporate Jesus into your life as a Christian. Listen to these passages of Scripture: Jesus never called you to include Him in *your* life. Listen to what God's Word says...

#### **Galatians 2:20**

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

#### **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

#### **Romans 12:1**

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

#### **Matthew 16:25**

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

#### **Consider the story of the rich young ruler. If you don't know the story, it is very short:**

- Jesus was teaching and preaching about the ways of the Kingdom of Heaven to his disciples and to many other people.
- He was approached by a rich young man
- The man asked Jesus, "What good thing must I *do* to get eternal life? (He wanted to make a resolution!!)"
- Jesus points the young man to what the law of God says to *do*.
- The young man boasts, "All these I have kept! What do I still lack?"
- Jesus moves away from something to *do*, by addressing the young man's purpose in life – money.
- "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven."
- Then Jesus gives the young man an incredible invitation: "Then come, and follow me."
- The young man went away disappointed, because he had great wealth.
  - In other words, he wasn't willing to change His lifestyle to live the Jesus Way.
- To this, Jesus told His disciples that it was only with great difficulty that any rich person would enter the kingdom of heaven.

Many Christians have misunderstood this story. Some think that Jesus wants everyone to sell everything they have and give it away to poor people. Some think that Jesus was being unfair to the young man, asking Him to do something more than He was asking of others.

The truth is, Jesus wasn't doing either of those things. The young man was trying to incorporate God, Jesus, and the amazing gift of eternal life into his own life. He wanted to gain what Jesus was offering without losing anything he himself had already collected. He wanted to hold on to his life and gain Jesus, too. In this story, Jesus simply met that man where he was. Jesus would not allow the young man to think that he could gain eternal life and keep his own life. The rich young ruler would have to either die to Jesus, or die to self.

The disciples were listening to all this go down, and Peter spoke up:

**Matthew 19:27-30**

27 Then Peter said in reply, "See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?"  
28 Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 ***And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.*** 30 But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

Can you see it in Scripture? Reflect carefully on what has been said so far, and don't miss this truth: **You cannot keep your life and share Jesus' life.**

That is why this message is all about speaking to your life purpose, not adding a new resolution. That is why the focus of this message is to challenge you to stop incorporating Jesus, His Church, and His mission into *your life!* To be a follower of Jesus means giving up your life and building a brand new life on Jesus and His way of living! It is a change in lifestyle. It is a new beginning. You can't keep the old and have the new. The Jesus way is radically different than every other way of living. Stop incorporating Jesus into your life. Instead, build your life on Jesus and let everything else be part of living out the Jesus Way.

There is something you need to realize at this point in the message: Without a clear understanding of Jesus' Church and Jesus' mission, living out the Jesus Way is really impossible.

There is a way that many people think about church that is extremely American. Did you know that the way you view the church is not only influenced by God's Word?

- **Local context (lens)**
  - Ethnicity
  - Gender
  - Age
  - Education
  - Family values
  - Denomination
  - Friends
  - Hobbies
  - Addictions
  - Sin issues
  - Personality
  - So much more

When a preacher like me talks about giving up your entire life and adopting the Jesus lifestyle and living it out with your local church, that will mean something totally different to each one of you, because your understanding of what it means to live out the Jesus Way is unique to your local context.

Living the Jesus Way with your local church is not about the building the church meets in or the annual budget the church approves. It is not primarily made up of elders and deacons or other church leaders. It isn't the tithes, the programs, the fellowship events, or the Sunday services like the one you are attending here. These are things our local church does together, but it isn't how you should see the Jesus' church biblically.

If you think about church like that, then it might sound like I am saying you need to find a different job so that you can have time to volunteer in all the right church programs. Or it might sound like I am encouraging you to make a greater commitment to the Sunday service or to give more to the church, even if it comes at great personal sacrifice. These things can be good, but they are trivial in the big picture. These are American spins on what it means to live the Jesus Way with your local church.

Next week, Pastor Jerry is starting a **new series of messages** *The Local Church*. These messages will clearly address what it means for you to be part of a local church. The new series will emphasize the Jesus Way by showing us Jesus' strategy for His church to work as a team in fulfilling His mission. In many ways, this message is a prelude to that series.

So, this morning I have one goal. It is my desire that this message would speak to your heart concerning what you are living for – your purpose. Do you understand that you cannot incorporate Jesus into your life? You must give up the American Way, or your own way, in order to live the Jesus Way.

The rich young ruler wanted to live life his way, but also share in the life of Christ (by having eternal life). Jesus made it clear to the ruler that he could not have any share in His life unless he was willing to give up his old life and live the Jesus Way.

Just like the rich young ruler, you are called by Jesus to recognize and surrender your own life so that you can become partakers of the life of Jesus. But, as Americans, we share something in common with the rich young ruler – we are all rich.

#### **Wealth in the World:**

- If you made \$1500 last year, you're in the top 20% of the world's income earners.
- If you have sufficient food, decent clothes, live in a house or apartment, and have a reasonably reliable means of transportation, you are among the top 15% of the world's wealthy.
- Have \$61,000 in assets? You're among the richest 10% of the world.
- If you earn \$25,000 or more annually, you are in the top 10% of the world's income earners.
- If you have any money saved, a hobby that requires some equipment or supplies, a variety of clothes in your closet, two cars (in any condition), and live in your own home, you are in the top 5% of the world's wealthy.
- If you earn more than \$50,000 annually, you are in the top 1% of the world's income earners.
- If you have more than \$500,000 in assets, you're part of the richest 1% of the world.

How many of you brought in \$1500 or more in income in 2016? You are all part of the top 20% wealthiest people in the world.

We don't realize how wealthy we are in this country. Sub-par living here is living the high life in many areas of the world. You may think you have it bad, but I'm not sure there is anyone in this room who isn't extremely wealthy in the eyes of the world as a whole. As a rich person, you face a severe challenge. Jesus said clearly that it would be with great difficulty that you would enter into the kingdom of heaven. Why? Because you must be willing to live your life the Jesus Way instead of living the American Way – and your wealth and desire for wealth is a competing lifestyle to the Jesus lifestyle.

In order to help you see how the American Way impacts each one of us, let me draw some comparisons for you. Consider these drastic contrasts between the American Way and the Jesus Way:

- **Materialism and greed vs. living simply and being content**
  - Matthew 6:25-34 - "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.
  - Overcommitted finances
  - Overcommitted calendars
  - Overcommitted to do lists
  - Collecting too much stuff
  - Going in to debt for what I want instead of being content to have only that which I need (and justifying my choices so I feel good about myself!)
  - Always dreaming about what I want instead of appreciating what I have
  - Feelings of entitlement that I don't even realize I am acting on
  - Believing I deserve more than I have simply because I have worked hard most my life and I should have earned this stuff by now! Folly!!
- **Prideful consumer vs. humble servant**
  - Philippians 2:4-11 - Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
  - Realizing my commitment to church is not about me first, but about Jesus and other first

- If I am doing good spiritually, I might just skip being with my church.
    - If I am doing poorly spiritually, I don't want to be around people.
    - If I am committed to love Jesus and others, I will live the Jesus Way regardless of how I feel!
  - Realizing that Jesus *is* the Master but He came as the ultimate servant.
    - I am not above my Master.
    - I must wash His disciples' feet.
    - I must give my life up for the sake of the world.
- **Individualism vs. community**
  - Ephesians 4:4-6 - There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
  - No such thing as a Lone Ranger Christian (people say, quote, “doing well spiritually”)
  - The American Way is to keep our personal issues private. The Jesus Way calls for confession of our sins to one another and sharing life together.
- **The pursuit of happiness vs. the pursuit of peace**
  - John 16:33 - I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”
  - Happiness is circumstantial and almost impossible to find in this culture. Peace is a spiritual gift from God.
- **The priority of family vs. the priority of the church**
  - Yes, a biblical case can and should be made for the priority of the family. However, believers in American often usurp the authority of Jesus for His Church in the name of family loyalty.
  - This one typically goes back to living simply. We over extend our commitments as a family. We buy too much, enroll in too many programs, over-commit to our kids success in their curricular activities, etc. As a result, there just simply isn't time or money left to be all in for Jesus with His Church. We tell ourselves that if we had more to give we would, but we simply don't have time and money left after taking care of our family.
  - After the story of the rich young ruler...
  - Matthew 19:27, 29 - Then Peter said in reply, “See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?” And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or *children* or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.
  - There is a need to care for our own families, but there is also such a thing as usurping the authority of Jesus Christ by over-prioritizing family and neglecting our calling to live in community with the body of Christ and share the purpose of Jesus with our church.

Can you personally relate to any of the observations I just made? Can you see how your lifestyle and way of thinking is heavily influenced by our American culture? Make no mistake about it – the American culture is now anti-Christian. It used to be pro-Christian, and perhaps there was a season when it became indifferent towards Christians. The culture of American today is now anti-Christian. You cannot live the American Dream and the Jesus Way. The lifestyles contradict. You must be willing to reexamine your American ideas and leave behind anything that doesn't align with the Jesus Way. If you don't you are still incorporating Jesus into your American life.

#### **Leaving the American Way, Living the Jesus Way:**

- I must not try to incorporate Jesus into my life.

- I must give up my life.
- I must live the Jesus Way.
- I must work as a team with my local church.

*How do I start today, on January 1, 2017?*

Don't just make a resolution, ask Jesus to transform your heart and give you His purpose. Commit to join Him by joining His Church. You do that here by joining a group. You can learn how our groups are working as a team to live the Jesus Way over the next several weeks in our new series: *The Local Church*.

Most importantly, based on today's message, you must decide that you are no longer going to try to incorporate Jesus into your life. Instead, you must resolve to learn how to live out the Jesus lifestyle with your local church, and let that be the center of your life.

*Are you ready to surrender?*

**1<sup>st</sup> Call:** Alter Open (Start this New Year with a renewed purpose)

- If you need to surrender your life to Jesus for the first time, come talk to our elder Nathan Redman.
- If you have already surrendered your life to Jesus before, but you need to surrender yourself and stop incorporating Jesus into your life, the alter is open (others will come and pray with you)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Call:** The alter is still open, and Nathan is still here, but if there are any others who need prayer for any reason, please come down to the front and stand here. As soon as you come, others from our church will come and pray with you about your request.