

Week of November 25-December 1

WWJD?

Scripture Reading: Read 1 Peter 2

WWJD? Have you seen this before? Perhaps it was on a bracelet or maybe on a sign somewhere. It's shorthand for "What would Jesus do?" It's intended to challenge folks to make choices that are in line with Christ's character and values instead of what feels right or what will benefit them. By utilizing the bracelet, the owner is given a constant reminder to make a Christian worldview decision.

This recent emphasis on WWJD, though, is not new. Over a hundred years earlier, an author by the name of Charles Sheldon addressed the same topic in a book he wrote entitled, "In His Steps." The fictional work follows the lives of a number of people who watch their community turn upside down when they begin to ask "What would Jesus Do?" and then follow through in obedience. The book took the world by storm and has sold over 30,000,000 copies, making it the 9th most purchased book in history. It's a book still worth reading today for its inspirational message.

Yet, Sheldon's book was not the first attempt to challenge people to follow in Jesus' footsteps. No, the first effort took place over 1,800 years earlier when the apostle Peter wrote: *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.*"

Interestingly enough, Peter's declaration that we are to follow in Jesus' footsteps doesn't come in the context of a specific command to love, to walk in purity, or to choose a moral life, although we are certainly called to follow in his steps in those areas too. Rather, the call to follow in this passage comes in relationship to suffering unjustly (see verses 19-20, 22-23). Peter's audience was beginning to feel the first wave of attacks against the church from the powerful empire of Rome. More would surely follow and the temptation to fight back, to take matters into their own hands, or to become bitter would be strong. Peter counsels against it. He challenges his readers to look at how Christ handled unjust suffering instead. Jesus is their example. His stance of trusting his Father, of forgiving those who sinned against him, and of not retaliating with words or actions is their model to follow.

Peter's words continue to ring true twenty centuries later. As we look around us, we are witnessing growing signs of a culture that is choosing beliefs and practices contrary to those of Christ and Scripture. Where once we could count on our Judeo-Christian values to be affirmed, they are now being devalued and dismissed. It is obvious, barring an awakening from God, that there will be an increased conflict between those who hold to a Christian worldview and those who don't; conflict that could ultimately lead to suffering...even in America. While we may not relish that fact, knowing how Jesus handled unjust suffering will help us when it's our turn to suffer. All we have to do is follow in his steps.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: If you get a chance, read Sheldon's book or rent a copy of the movie version of the book. Pray that the Lord would empower you to follow in the footsteps of Jesus in all areas of your life, including when you are called upon to suffer.

Take-a-way: *Decision-making for believers isn't really that hard. Just ask WWJD?*