

# THE WAY OF JESUS

John 14:6

It is my conviction that ministers have a sacred mission, entrusted to them by Jesus, to “equip the saints for the work of ministry”<sup>1</sup> (*Ephesians 4:7-12*). As a minister, I fulfill my mission by being devoted to Jesus and the scriptures that reveal him and then by teaching people to similarly be devoted to Jesus and the scriptures through both my words and my actions.

Merely articulating my mission in words, however, neglects an important part of ministry – ministry takes place in a world filled with people who have no interest in Jesus or his teachings (*cf. 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 4:2-5*). Ministry sometimes takes place in churches filled with people who have “a hard forehead and a stubborn heart” (*cf. Ezekiel 3:4-11; Isaiah 6:1-13*). Ministry sometimes takes place among people whose preference for wealth eclipses their love for Jesus (*cf. Matthew 19:16-25*); sometimes it takes place among people who, although grieved by their choice, nevertheless choose personal comfort and privilege over Jesus.

Most of the forty-five years of my life have unfolded in a seemingly peaceful society, a place that felt far removed from the violence that permeated so much of the biblical world. But a few occasions stripped back that thin peace to reveal a thriving world of ugly and divisive things (*cf. the Los Angeles riots surrounding the Rodney King incident or 9/11*). We are living in one of those moments now. The peace of our society, already parted by pandemic and economic crises, was split by the protests and riots that followed the death of George Floyd. Deep resentments, prejudices, frustrations, and disregard for people and for law have violently paraded themselves throughout many cities across our nation.

I do not intend to tell you how to respond to these things in this lesson. I do intend to remind you of Jesus’ teachings so that his words can instruct you. Consider, therefore, Jesus’ instructions:

Willingly give up your rights for the benefit of others  
(*Matthew 5:38-42*)

Love and actively do good to your enemies  
(*Matthew 5:43-48; Luke 10:25-37*)

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<sup>1</sup> All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.

Reject power and control for selfless service  
(*Matthew 20:20-28*)

Treat other people the way you want to be treated  
(*Matthew 7:12; Philippians 2:3-8*)

Use your privileges to benefit other people  
(*Luke 12:13-34*)

Practice forgiveness rather than seeking justice  
(*Matthew 18:21-35*)

Be devoted to protecting and serving the powerless and  
marginalized people in our society  
(*Matthew 25:31-46*)

The teachings of Jesus listed above, teachings that outlines the way he wants those who follow him to live, compose expectations both daunting and inspiring. As you begin to think about what it looks like in your life to obey those teachings, consider the following thoughts:

- Jesus' way is the only way (*John 14:6*).
- Jesus' way rejects the wisdom of our world (*Matthew 16:13-20; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31*).
- Jesus' way is hard (*Matthew 10:34-39*).
- Jesus understood most people would reject his way (*Matthew 7:12-13*).
- Jesus' way requires the right actions and the right heart (*Matthew 7:21-23; 15:1-20; 23:23*).
- Jesus' way offers real, lasting, and healing peace (*Matthew 11:28-30*).

We live in a broken world filled with broken people. Jesus calls us to join his mission to heal that brokenness. Our role in his mission centers on embracing the upside-down way of life outlined in his teachings, a way of life that seeks to unseat our world's values with values that reflect God's will for human life.