



Face the Issue:

This week, Jeremy challenged us to be consistent. Why is it so hard to be consistent in our walk with Christ? We live in a time when there are voices and words coming at us from everywhere. Social media, television, talking heads on the news all tell us things. Many of these voices claim to be “Christian” but are they consistent with what Christ called us to do?

With all these voices, it is more important than ever that calling ourselves Christians demands not only that we hold to a set of beliefs, but that we live out those beliefs in such a way that others want to know what makes us different. In other words, our actions must consistently match our words and BOTH must consistently fall under the authority of Christ.

In what ways do Christians blend into the culture instead of being distinct from it? How could we become more consistent in the way we live out biblical principles?

How is our witness for Christ compromised when our words and actions do not match?

Into the Word:

Read Daniel 3:8–30.

In the Old Testament book of Daniel, three of Daniel’s friends—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—were faced with a life or death decision. They either had to bow down and worship the golden image set up by the king or face being thrown into a blazing furnace.

It was not only verbal allegiance the king was requiring of these three men but observable, deliberate action. Their willingness to “bow down” in worship to the image would have erased all of their words and devotion to God previous to that moment. They knew that identifying with God in that moment required them to live out their professed faith in a way that carried a high price.

Though most of us are not faced with imminent death as a test of our allegiance to God, we are still prone to shrink back from identifying with Christ when there is a price to pay. This can cause us to be inconsistent in our faith.

What types of “golden images” in popular culture are you tempted to “bow down” to? Do you think most Christians realize that these things can compromise their devotion to God?

How might a more consistent identification with Christ require you to think differently about the choices you make with money, discretionary time, or relationships?

Application:

Read Matthew 5:13–16.

There is a quote attributed to St. Francis of Assisi that says, “Preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words.”

We live in a time when words are cheap. Everyone has an opinion about every conceivable topic, and it often doesn’t matter whether your opinion is an informed one or even based on fact. The important point is that you express it. That’s what drives much of television programming, talk radio, blogs, and social networking sites. But the words we confess as Christians must include consistent action if our witness for Christ is to have any chance of being distinguished from the deafening roar in which our culture is drowning.

Consider how you might be compromising your witness for Christ by sending a mixed message to people in your life if your words and behavior don’t match. Once you become aware of those inconsistencies, ask Christ to help you make changes to make them congruent.

Get involved with a person, group, or cause, and demonstrate your faith in a bold way that publicly identifies you as a Christian.