



# TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Articles

## LEARNING (AND SHOWING) JESUS

David Anguish

- “From that time Jesus began to proclaim, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near’” (Matt. 4:17, NRSV).
- “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt. 11:29).
- “That is not the way you learned Christ!” (Eph. 4:20).

Matthew 4:12-25 announces how Jesus began his work of showing that God’s long awaited reign was dawning. Verses 12-16 tie his work to Isaiah 9:1-2, but also to how he showed “a great light” to people who had been in “darkness.” Matthew then illustrates that following Jesus in his reign meant giving up everything and going where he led (4:18-22), a thrilling ministry to broken people needing deliverance (4:23-25). Matthew 5:1-7:27 elaborates what life as his disciple was to be like.

Matthew 11:25-30 tells us how Jesus and the Father were inseparable, that indeed, “all things have been handed over to me by my Father” (v. 27). It makes perfect sense, then, that the laboring and heavy laden should turn to and follow him with complete and unmixed loyalty, submitting to “learn from me.”

Ephesians 4 calls on the Christ-followers in Ephesus to let the influence of Christ be seen in them in a pagan world that was presented with multiple choices (polytheism, philosophies, and cults), but no real solutions. Those disciples were to give up muddled, darkened thinking and “learn Christ.” Once transformed, they would share both his message and life with the culture around them (Eph. 4:17-24 and the following sections).

A few years ago, Earl Lavender added his voice to a chorus of New Testament students who have stressed that there is no “silver bullet” that will allow the church to return to the miraculous growth pattern of its early years.” Rather, “the power of conversion was the everyday life of the ‘normal’

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believer. It was the living out of loving one's neighbor, doing to others what one would have them do to oneself, and helping the poor as if they were Jesus that made the difference." Indeed, "the life [Jesus' disciples] lived was of such stark contrast to the complex paganism of their day that people, one by one, experienced conversion because the Christ-way offered a better story for their lives." (Earl Lavender, "The City and Early Christianity," *Missio Dei* 3.2 [August 2012]: 29, 31, 34.)

In light of the teaching and example of the New Testament, that is both right and sensible. We wonder how much difference it will make if more who profess allegiance to Jesus do more of what they did.

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*www.davidanguish.com*