

Journey CHURCH

Pastor James Greer

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Session 2 Quitters

Anne Rice, one of today's most successful writers, first won fame with her Vampire Chronicles in the 1970s. About a decade ago, she spoke of "a new spiritual beginning" as she re-embraced the Christian faith of her childhood and began writing a series of book about the life of Christ. She told the story of her spiritual journey in a book entitled Called Out of Darkness.

But in 2010 she announced her decision to "quit being a Christian" and spoke of Christians as being "quarrelsome, hostile, disputatious, and deservedly infamous. "She reaffirmed her commitment to Christ, but added, "Following Christ does not mean following his followers. Christ is infinitely more important than Christianity and always will be, no matter what Christianity is, has been, or might become."

Many of us have felt that way, We've experienced being fed up with Christianity. In the midst of life's disappointments perhaps we've sensed that God hasn't done what we were led to expect him to do. We're torn; we don't want to give up Jesus, but we're unsure we want to continue being associated with anything "Christian"

The apostle John points us to be a better way, the way of a disciple.

Discussion Starter

Have you ever felt tired of Christianity and trying to live a Christian life? If so, what factors led to that feeling? Perhaps there are others close to you who have completely turned away from Christianity. What reason did they express for doing this? How much of it had to do with their view of Jesus himself?

Video Overview For session 2 of the DVD

In his old age, the apostle John wrote a letter to followers of Jesus who had been dispersed throughout the Roman Empire. With the perspective of his long, hard eventful life, he reiterated the point of Jesus had made in John 13: "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God." (1 John 4:7)

John emphasized that God, in his essence, is love, and that was proven to us in Jesus: "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: he sent his one and only Son into the world that we might love through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins" (4:8-10)

John could never doubt this love because he had seen it in Jesus, as an eyewitness.

God's love is for everyone. Every single person we encounter is someone God loves- and for that individual, God has sent his Son as atoning sacrifice. John had personally seen Jesus offered on the cross as the sacrifice. And now, decades later, he was as convinced as ever that Jesus was the Son of God who came to sacrifice for our sin.

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Because of that, John says, we have an obligation: “Dear Friends since God loved us, we also ought to love one another” (4:11). The little Greek word translated here as “ought” is a financial term about indebtedness. There’s a debt-debtor relationship is the gospel that we need to understand. It’s there between us and every single person we ever meet, and it’s there also between God and us. Since God so loved us, we owe it to others to love them. More specifically, since God loves others, we owe it to God to love others.

When others are unlovable, we can remember that we’re called to love them because God chose first to love us.

There’s a sense in which we’re indebted to God because of his overwhelming love for us, for which he doesn’t even want us to pay him back. He is saying, “In return, all I ask is that you love other people.”

We’re to love others in such a remarkable way that outsiders will notice.

Our problem is that for too long we’ve settled for the brand “Christianity” and we’ve given up on our leverage in our culture. We gave it up when we opted for something other than love.