

PRACTICING|PRINCIPLES

Introduction

The United States has been called the “Grand Experiment.” A nation formed “for the people, by the people.” These principles were certainly different than what the world at large had experienced previously. But like all new principles, they bump into existing practices, and that creates a lot of tensions. The same is true for Christians. Jesus saw it coming, so he gave us some advice.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe a “principle” in your life and a “practice” that helps you to live it out? For example, you want to be generous with your finances (the principle) so you earmark a percentage of your money to a charitable organization (the practice). Or describe a “principle” in your life and a “practice” that keeps you from fulfilling it.
2. The U.S. Constitution affirms that everyone has certain rights, including Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. Have you ever experienced a situation where you felt these rights were inaccessible?
3. In what ways do you see Christians saying one thing and doing another?
4. Read Matthew 16:24-25. This is the recipe to following Jesus. Did you come to Christianity with an understanding that your practices and behaviors would be challenged? What practices have you already given up once you realized they were counter to Christian principles?
5. Are there any practices in your life that are misaligned with Christian principles? What additional practices must you exercise (or sacrifice) as a reflection of denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Jesus?

Moving Forward

Becoming a Christian costs you nothing. Living as a Christian will certainly cost you something. Maybe everything. If there’s a gap between our Christian principles and our not-so-Christian practices, then something needs to be done. But are we willing to actually do it?

Changing Your Mind

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

– Matthew 16:24