

Whole-Hearted Living - A Life Set Apart

I remember walking into Living Hope Church in Port St Mary one Sunday morning not long after my first visit. This time felt different from the rest. This time I felt like I was a part of something rather than just a visitor.

It was this day that I responded to the Gospel call. To be honest, I had probably wanted to respond many times before but until that day, I had managed to reason myself out of it. I remember feeling like a bit of a hypocrite. I had spent a great portion of my life being someone who had often denied the Gospel and my need for God and yet here I was that day crying out to Him. Afterwards, I chatted things through with my wife and we agreed that we had to go all in; there couldn't be any room for chopping and changing our minds, being Christians one minute and not the next. The last thing I wanted to do was come crashing out of Church and back into my old life with this new confession of faith being little more than a fad or a phase. We decided that from this day forward, we would say yes to God in everything that He asked. We called it our 'Yes Year' but it quickly surpassed a year. It is now almost 10 years later and we are still saying yes.

Following Jesus should not be about a one-time event and a weekly visit to Church. Instead, it's about an invitation to a whole lifetime of being set apart and poured out for God and His kingdom.

"But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"
- 1 Peter 1:15-16

Peter describes in a simple yet profound way the calling God places over our lives; the call to a life of whole-hearted living, to be holy in all that we do.

Paul tells us in his letter to the Romans that we should offer our lives as living sacrifices.

"And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect"
- Romans 12:1-2

To be holy means to be set apart. It is more than just believing in Jesus but instead it is actively separating ourselves from the behavior and the customs of the world around us and being set apart from them as an example of God's holiness to others.

Saying yes to Jesus is a great privilege but it is not always easy. It requires faith and perseverance to keep growing and maturing. Jesus said that,

"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."
- Matthew 16:24

And John the Baptist said people should,

"Bear fruit in keeping with repentance"
- Luke 3:8

In other words, our lives must be a continuous demonstration of our changed hearts for all to see.

It can often take time and effort to unpick our old ways of doing life, like in our marriages, our parenting, our work, hobbies, social activities and friendships, and sometimes we can drift back into old ways and habits. But if we begin each day by setting our minds on the things above before the things on earth then we can slowly navigate ourselves back towards His call to become holy in all that we do.

"Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take."
- Proverbs 3:6

As we pray and fast today, let's ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the areas of our lives that could better align with God's heart and ask that He gives us the ways and the strength to make the necessary changes.

At the beginning of this new year, why not ask God for a fresh "Yes"; for a new desire to seek first His kingdom and live a life that is set apart for His glory.