



DO YOU DARE TO BE A RADICAL?

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Do you dare to follow Jesus and be a radical like he was? Do you have the courage to overcome the stigma?

Dishonest tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus' sermons; but this caused complaints from the Jewish religious leaders and the experts on Jewish law because he was associating with such despicable people—even eating with them!

Luke 15:1-2 (TLB)

Jesus was a radical in the way he treated social outcasts like prostitutes, the poor, the sick, lepers and others. He treated them in a way that was completely contrary to social conventions of the day. Christ's love brought a sense of dignity and value to those on the margins. Being his followers, we are called to love as he did.

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Something we clearly see in Jesus' life and teachings is the way he included people that everyone else left out. Everyone was welcome at his table. Can we offer the same?

As Christians we must adopt the kind of humility Jesus modeled, our hearts open as his was when he approached people in need. He understood them and had empathy. Jesus was able to walk with them—as one with them. If we could only do that!

If we could only love the way our Lord does! If we could only see beyond the walls society has put up against those who are thought to be different! If we could only see beyond what they appear to be and look into their hearts, recognizing what they truly are—people not unlike us.

In Mark 5:1-20 we read how Jesus healed a demon-possessed man living in a cemetery—a person most would stay clear of. Jesus showed how even a man like this deserves mercy, respect, and kindness. No matter how far beyond hope they seem to be, we are called to love such people. Love may not always heal the body or mind, but it will heal the heart. Too often we regard people with severe problems as worthless. But from Christ's perspective every human being is of infinite value.

Jesus was motivated by compassion and love. To follow Jesus, we could help those in need with many things: our time, food, clothing, shelter, transportation. Even more important would be the friendship, love, and encouragement we can offer. Being there for a person needing care when he is sick or lonely is one of the most loving things we can do.

Lord, help us find ways to be your presence for those who need you. Fill us with your love and help us share that love with others.

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