

Sharing the Good
News of Jesus and
His Kingdom and
equipping the
church to do the
same.



Greg West, Evangelist

Sharing Christ and Overcoming Obstacles

Is following Jesus an upgrade?

BY GREG WEST

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Rather, He reveals the nature of
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GREG WEST

Is becoming a follower of Jesus an upgrade? Many think, “If I become a Christian, it will be a drag – there are too many rules to follow and I won’t be able to have any fun.” They believe God is a cosmic killjoy. We who know Christ have the privilege and calling of dispelling the false reports. We are indeed ambassadors of Christ!

There are more important questions than: “Is becoming a follower of Jesus an upgrade?” Yet, this is often what people are asking and there is wisdom in meeting people right where they are. Even more important than having the “right answers” is that we are abiding in Christ. Are the peace, joy and love that we receive from the Holy Spirit visible in our lives? A joyful Christian is a light in the darkness and has the power to spark a spiritual hunger in those who don’t yet know Christ.

I’ve shared these verses with many people who were considering the faith. They clearly contradict the idea that following Christ is a burden.

“In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:3-4).

“But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do” (James 1:25)

Helping people to see that our faith is less about “keeping the rules” and more about “falling in love” has been an effective approach for me. Consider what God has done in and through Christ! If it’s true, then God’s love for us is amazing beyond words! And our response to this is to love God! “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).



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Upcoming Ministry Events

June 6: Ebenezer UMC

- 11:00a.m. Worship in-person and online.

June 13: Ghent UMC

- 10:00a.m. Worship outside and online.

June 20 & 27: Virginia Beach Christian Church

- 10:00a.m. Worship outside and online.

July 18: Grace UMC

- 10:00a.m. Worship in-person and online.



Deeper Walk International provides people with resources to work through key issues in a balanced manner while remaining consistent with scripture.

Resources Deeper Walk provides to accomplish this include Journey Groups, which are essentially small groups. Individuals can connect with a Journey Group leader easily by looking at their Google Doc of leaders, complete with contact information. Journey Groups meet weekly in-person and/or online.

Additionally, Deeper Walk International provides educational webinars and eCourses. Examples of eCourses offered include: *What Every Believer Should Know About Jesus*, *Understanding the Wounded Heart*, and *The Other Half of the Church: Moving Beyond Half-Brained Christianity*.

Finally, Deeper Walk International offers and publishes a variety of books on topics ranging from spiritual warfare and mental illness to marriage and family.

Father and Creator in Harmonious Union

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God as Creator and God as Father can sometimes be presented as if the two personas exist outside of one another. However, the truth is that God encompasses both titles in a harmonious union. The fruition of this union can be seen in many places but can often best be seen and experienced in the world of outdoor ministry.

By outdoor ministry, I am referring to those organizations or camps that function to bring the Word of God to souls within the setting of creation. While often this is geared towards camp ministry, it is not exclusive to it.

Often, outdoor ministry is seen as a separate entity from the church. However, it is simply an extension of the church taking place in an unconventional setting. Creation has a way of reminding us that no matter where we were before coming into it, all of us are equal under the vast night sky, looming trees, blankets of grass, muddy hills and running water. The vast night sky makes us feel small, while also making us feel seen and known. The looming trees and blankets of grass offer comfort and security amid a vast wilderness. The muddy hills offer the thrill of adventure, or simply the chance to release one's inner child to play in the mud. The running water provides refreshing coolness and life-giving nectar for the body. Within the world of

creation, and within the world of outdoor ministry, something much greater than ourselves is the driving force behind the life of these things that surround us within creation.

Outdoor ministry allows us to experience creation for its beauty, its power, its provision, and even its care. All those elements can point us back to the Creator while simultaneously experiencing the Father through Christ's work on our behalf. Creation knows who the Creator is before the individual soul realizes their identity as a child of the Father. But God, who is both Creator and Father, cares for all with love. Creation points us back to the magnificent power and intricately woven care God takes in all endeavors. How much then does the Father love and intricately weave himself throughout our lives and souls if even the minnows of the smallest ponds have God's attention? Outdoor ministry allows us to experience the unfathomable vastness of God's power and imagination, the thrilling adventure of exploration among life outside of humanity and the intricately intentional love the Father has for all His children and His creation in simultaneous collisions.



So, we help people move from the mindset of "Will my life get better if I become a Christian?", to "Consider who Jesus is and what he has done for me." Some better questions than the upgrade question are: "Is the Gospel story true?" "Is Jesus really the Son of God and the image of the invisible God?" and "Did Jesus actually rise from the dead?"

Many people believe that the Christian faith is one choice among many, and we get to pick which one is best for us. They think search isn't necessarily for truth, but rather for what makes me feel the most peace, a sense of purpose, or which one "works for me." This is the world view of relativism – that truth is not absolute, but relative. So, you can have your truth and I can have my different truth. This isn't a problem if we're talking about which toothpaste is the best, but it cannot stand with ultimate truth claims.

Islam makes the claim that Jesus is not the Son of God and that He was not crucified. The Bible clearly states that He is the Son of God and that he was crucified. It's one or the other with both claims. Either Jesus is the Son of God, or He is not . . . He was either crucified or He was not. It cannot be both. At some point people need to see that all faiths make ultimate truth claims that will necessarily contradict other truth claims. Our pursuit must be for ultimate truth rather than what suits us best.

C. S. Lewis says it so clearly, "I didn't go to religion to make me happy. I always knew a bottle of Port would do that. If you want a religion to make you feel comfortable, I certainly don't recommend Christianity."

I believe strongly that following Jesus is an upgrade; but I follow because He is who He claims to be and because he died and rose again for me! Sometimes following Jesus is difficult and it creates real problems. At times it may be easier in the short term not to walk in the way of Christ, but if we don't follow him, we're going "against the grain of the universe" and the universe gives some tough splinters. Jesus does not give "good advice." Rather, He reveals the nature of the universe. He does not dish out arbitrary rules, He calls all of humanity into a relationship with himself. He gives invitations and commands and all of them flow from His perfect love for us.

Friends, let's live, love and serve in such a way that the lost, the lonely and the least of these will know Christ is real. I close with these words from Jesus, our Savior, our Lord:

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

"In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father" (Matthew 5:16).