

No Accidental Christians

When thinking about spiritual matters, what is your intention?

Sometimes intentions are more like wishing and dreams. We might think how nice it would be to live in a nice house like 'that'; but there is no real intention of buying that house. We might think how good it would be to possess the good character or insightfulness of a friend; but there is not real intention to actually gain such character or insight. We might think how good it would be to possess a level of spiritual maturity like someone we know; but...

What is your intention...?

Many people talk about and think about religion, salvation, and spirituality. Some just talk. They are interested in possessing the good things seen in a spiritual life, but is their interest more of a wish or a real intention?

Intent deals with the will and carries the idea of purpose. Christianity is not a stroke of luck like some sort of door prize. A person must come to Christ with clear thought and a determined will. A person understands the benefits, but also the costs.

Jesus told two 'treasure' parables in Matthew 13. In one parable the treasure was stumbled upon quite by accident. In the other parable a merchant was searching for the treasure and found it. In both cases, the individual sold everything in order to possess the treasure.

The treasure represents the kingdom of God, and though the treasures were discovered in different ways, both individuals recognized the immense value of the treasure. Then with determined intent each one set out to obtain the treasure. Every Christian should be able to identify with one of the two individuals in the parables.

Just before his death, Jesus asked his Father if there was another way, a way to complete

his mission without dying on the cross. His request was followed with, "Not as I will, but as You will." His submissive will demonstrated his deep sense of purpose. He was determined to continue his mission to seek after those who were spiritual lost. So He deliberately walked the path straight to the cross.

Jesus did not come to earth and then *chicken out*. His purpose was so strong and his intent so keen that he was already walking toward the cross before he took on human form; even before creation.

Some Christians act as if they have purchased salvation as a packaged object to possess. It might be better compared to a marriage. The wedding ceremony is wonderful, but only the beginning of the marriage. A good solid marriage takes effort and patience preceded by a determined will and commitment on the part of both. In the same way, the point at which a person becomes a Christian is a wonderful occasion. However, spiritual maturity comes with *intent*. The Apostle Paul wrote: "Work through your own salvation with fear and trembling." Each Christian must have a genuine intention of seeing things through to the end.

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith . . . (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Jesus stands as our example. He demonstrated by his life how to live each day for God's purpose. He demonstrated how to bring life to its conclusion as God desired. May each of us *intend* to be like him.

Mark Stinnett