

Am I Willing to Take a Stand?

It's popular today to talk about being spiritual but not religious. Some people want to be considered spiritual, but they are not sure they want to take a stand for Jesus.

Other people tend to think about religion in terms of family or tradition. Children or spouses act as though someone else can maintain a relationship with God for them - that having godly parents or grandparents will somehow qualify them for life in heaven. But that simply does not work.

Jesus Himself acknowledged that being a follower is a personal matter that will not always be easy. In fact, it may at times cause divisions even in families. He says, "*Do you think that I have come to give peace on the earth? No, I tell you but rather, division. For from now on there will be five in one family who have been divided, three against two, and two against three*" (Luke 12:51-52).

In saying these words, Jesus was just being honest. No one will doubt that, in times past, Christians have faced opposition because of their faith. Probably all of the apostles with the exception of John died violently because of their faithfulness to Christ. Moreover, the list of martyrs has lengthened in every century.

So, what do Jesus' words say to each of us? Many of us grew up when being a Christian was popular and respected. What do Jesus' words mean for us as 21st-century followers of Christ living in post-Christian Australia? Hopefully, His words will cause each of us to pause and take stock of our faith. If our faith is never challenged, is it possible that we have made our faith so much like our world that it simply offends no one? Have we come to the point that the world sets the standards for our faith, rather than us setting standards for our world by living out our faith? Jesus clearly indicates that there are times when the truth of His Word will create division and controversy.

Does that mean we have to get involved in difficult issues? Does God want us to take stands? There is a simple answer to those questions: Jesus did.

How peaceful His life could have been! He could have remained in the carpenter's shop in Nazareth. He could have preached and healed and won great popularity among the people. But Jesus did what He had to do, even if the consequences were a cross.

And there we find our challenge and our comfort. Following Christ and taking a stand for Him may at times cause divisions and troubles. It certainly will not be considered politically correct by many in our society. But, at the same time, we know that when we do follow Christ and stand up for Him and for the truths of His Word, there is no cause for fear even if others choose to ridicule or attack us. We are standing with the very One who gave His life on the cross so that we can have eternal life.

Once when Martin Luther was at the height of his struggles with the Roman Church, someone asked him what he would do if the princes and their supporters deserted him. "Where will you be then, Martin?" he was asked.

The bold reformer replied, "I will be where I have always been, in the hands of God."

That is still true today when we take our stand for Jesus. We are always in the hands of God, and we can count on Him. I pray that God will give each of us the courage to take our stand with Jesus in our lives each day. The following hymn is a wonderful reminder of staying in the hands of God and trusting in Him:

WHO TRUSTS IN GOD, A STRONG ABODE

1	2	3
Who trusts in God, a strong abode In heaven and earth possesses; Who looks in love to Christ above, No fear his heart oppresses. In Thee alone, dear Lord, we own All hope and consolation; Our shield from foes, and balm for woes, Our great and sure salvation.	Though Satan's wrath beset our path, And worldly scorn assail us, While Thou art near we will not fear, Thy strength shall never fail us. Thy rod and staff shall keep us safe, And guide our steps for ever; Nor shades of death, nor hell beneath, Our souls from Thee shall sever.	In all the strife of mortal life Our feet shall stand securely; Temptation's hour shall lose its power, For Thou shalt guard us surely. O God, renew with heav'nly dew Our body, soul, and spirit, Until we stand at Thy right hand, Through Jesus' saving merit.

Hymn 384