

I Am, Therefore I Act

By Bob Young

We spend a lot of energy in the church trying to get people to do what they ought to do. We study motivation—we encourage, we scold, we “lay on” guilt trips. We have missed a basic truth of Scripture. I am, therefore I act. One cannot get “faith actions” out of “unfaith” people. According to James 2, faith acts. If faith is present, actions follow. If actions are lacking, faith is lacking. My actions tell others who I am. My identity comes first—my actions follow. My actions are consistent with my identity. If I am a person of faith with loyalties and allegiances, priorities and purpose clearly defined—I do what I am made to do, what I am intended to do, what I must do to live a consistent life (without internal conflicts which lead to doubts).

The great need in the church is to develop genuine faith that determines the nature and actions of my life in every circumstance. Paul told the Corinthian church that Christians are “compelled by Christ”. Some churches have spent a lot of energy developing mission statements—statements of desired or intended actions. Some mission statements begin with identity statements. This is as it must be. Most churches would do well to develop identity statements. “This is who we are, therefore, this is what we do.”

We have let people think of themselves as “church members” without becoming disciples. We have made it easier to be a member (be baptized) than to be a disciple (total commitment of all I am and do and have). People are baptized but worship only sporadically. We use the word Christian impotently. Some are called Christians (or call themselves Christians) who little resemble Christ. Some who call themselves Christians jump in and out of church like it was a social club or automobile association. Genuine Christians are not “in it” for the benefits. Genuine Christians are “in it” because of who they are, or better, who they have become through the transformation effected in Christ and by Christ.

When people look at our lives—what we do—do they take note that we have been with Jesus?