

## Rediscover Jesus: An Invitation (Kelly, Matthew)

Truth is radical. To abide completely by the truth in every situation in our lives is incredibly difficult. It requires both the heart of a saint and the diplomacy of an experienced ambassador. Every day we are tempted in dozens of ways to have a casual relationship with truth. Many situations emerge each week in which we are tempted to ignore the truth, or bend it, stretch it, or massage it, out of political correctness, a desire to be liked, expediency, or convenience. But Jesus didn't have a casual relationship with truth, and that is radical. He was interested in getting to the root of things. Through this lens of truth Jesus places everything in its proper place, bringing order to every aspect of life, and demonstrates the true value of things. We all yearn for this divine ordering. The challenge is to surrender and allow God to put our lives in order. The fruit of this surrender is the peace and joy that we all desire.

SIMPLE IS NOT THE SAME AS EASY.

It's that unique combination of humility and gratitude that

I am not speaking of the love of self that is blind and boastful, but rather the love of self that acknowledges that we are weak and wounded, and at the same time that we are amazing children of God. It's that unique combination of humility and gratitude that

When we love ourselves we don't do things just to get noticed or praised or accepted.

We live in a secular culture that despises suffering as useless and proclaims that it should be avoided at all costs. As a result, pain relievers are constantly being thrust at us in the form of pills, products, experiences, and distractions. The world has its own gospel. The message of the world is incomplete, and nothing demonstrates this incompleteness more than the world's inability to make sense of suffering. The world cannot make sense of suffering because it views suffering as worthless. The world has no answer for the inescapable, unavoidable, and inevitable suffering of our lives.

VERSE TO LIVE: “We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.” ROMANS 5:3–4

I waste so much time and energy judging, and it makes me unhappy. When I judge others I hurt them, I create negativity, I feel bad about myself, and I am more likely to judge myself in unhealthy ways. “Do not judge.” Now, that is a radical invitation.

GOD HAS A BETTER WAY OF DOING THINGS.

“Everybody is looking for an easier, softer way.” It’s a generalization. It may not be true for everyone. But it sure seems true for most people. We want life to be easier. We want the path we walk to be softer. We want to be comfortable

I like comfort—and there is so much comfort available. It is so easy to make comfort a priority in our lives. This leads to comfort addiction. Then even the slightest discomfort makes us irritable, restless, and discontent.

Jesus was clear. He didn’t promise or even allude to an easy path. He did not promise comfort. He promised quite the opposite. He set denial of self as a primary condition of discipleship, and he promised that each of us would have a cross of our own to carry.

When we get comfortable we start to behave as if we are going to live on this earth forever—and we are not.

For example, there is a direct connection between a person’s ability to succeed and his or her ability and willingness to delay gratification.

There is something about denying ourselves that dissolves our blind spots and allows us to see things as they really are. The constant denial of self in small things gives us the clarity of heart, mind, and soul to see the present for what it really is and the future for what it still can be.

This self-denial also allows us to see ourselves for who we really are, and to see in ourselves that best-version-of-ourselves that God created us to be. The daily denial of self allows us to see that we are sinful, but also opens us up to the grace we need in order to overcome our sinfulness.

The most important things in life are almost never urgent.

And you want a joy that is forever—not fleeting moments of pleasure, but a joy that goes on and on, with no end. You want complete joy.

At different times in our lives we think that so many things, people, accomplishments, or pleasures will bring us the joy we desire, but they all leave us wanting.

Would the Holy Spirit ever bear this pessimism? Pessimism belongs to the slaves of this world, not to the children of God. This kind of pessimism has a twin brother: cynicism. Both are enemies of faith. We live in a cynical time. Cynicism strangles joy, kills hope, and fills our hearts and minds with doubt.