

Form and Substance

by A.W. Tozer

True discipleship requires a deeper understanding of the Lordship of Christ, separation from the world, and the crucifixion of the natural man, rather than just external compliance with the text of the Bible.

Scripture: Matthew 23:23, Romans 6:3

Topics: "Discipleship", "Spiritual Understanding"

Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the danger of literalism in discipleship, where individuals adhere strictly to the letter of the law while neglecting its deeper spiritual meaning. He critiques the Pharisees for their focus on minor rituals like tithing herbs, while ignoring the essential principles of justice, mercy, and faith. Tozer warns that this approach leads to a superficial faith that fails to recognize the Lordship of Christ and the true essence of discipleship, which requires self-denial and a genuine commitment to follow Jesus. He argues that without understanding the inward meaning of Christ's teachings, believers risk building their faith on a shaky foundation. Ultimately, Tozer calls for a deeper engagement with Scripture that transcends mere external compliance.

Transcript

Another substitute for discipleship is . Our Lord referred to this when He reproached the Pharisees for their habit of tithing mint and anise and cumin while at the same time omitting the weightier matters of the Law such as justice, mercy and faith. Literalism manifests itself among us in many ways, but it can always be identified in that it lives by the letter of the Word while ignoring its spirit. It habitually fails to apprehend the inward meaning of Christs words, and contents itself with external compliance with the text. If Christ commands baptism, for instance, it finds fulfillment in the act of water baptism, but the radical meaning of the act as explained in Romans 6 is completely overlooked.

It reads the Scriptures regularly, contributes consistently to religious work, attends church every Sunday and otherwise carries on the common duties of a Christian and for this it is to be commended. Its tragic breakdown is its failure to comprehend the Lordship of Christ, the believers discipleship, separation from the world and the crucifixion of the natural man.

Literalism attempts to build a holy temple upon the sandy foundation of the religious self. It will suffer, sacrifice and labor, but it will not die. It is Adam at his pious best, but it has never denied self to take up the cross and follow Christ.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-tozer/form-and-substance/>

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