

I'M TIRED

The exhausting work of being someone Jesus never asked me to be.

I'm tired.

I'm tired of constructing an image. I'm tired of protecting my credibility. I'm tired of watching my words. I'm tired of calculating how something will land before I say what I actually believe. I'm tired of trying not to rock the boat. I'm tired of wondering whether saying what I really think will cost me a relationship, an invitation, an opportunity, or a seat at someone else's table.

Mostly, I'm tired of being someone Jesus never asked me to be.

I've spent much of my life in and around the Church. I know the language. I know the expectations. I know how to stand in a room full of Christians and instinctively sense which things are safe to say and which things will change the temperature of the room. And I've become pretty good at navigating it.

That's part of the problem.

There is a subtle kind of exhaustion that comes from constantly managing how other people experience you. You learn when to speak. You learn when to soften something. You learn which questions are welcomed and which questions make people nervous. You learn how far you can push before someone begins wondering whether you're still one of them. Eventually, you start editing yourself before anyone else has the chance.

I have.

Sometimes I've called it wisdom. Sometimes I've called it discernment. Sometimes I've called it honoring people. And sometimes that is exactly what it was.

But not always.

Sometimes I was protecting myself.

I wanted to be accepted. I wanted to be respected. I wanted people to believe I knew what I was talking about. I wanted pastors and leaders to listen to me. I wanted to be invited into the room. I wanted credibility.

And credibility is exhausting when you believe you have to protect it.

You begin constructing a version of yourself that is easier for other people to understand. You polish the rough edges. You explain the strange parts. You make your questions sound less threatening. You package your convictions carefully enough that people can consider them without becoming too uncomfortable.

Before long, you aren't simply communicating. You're managing an image.

And I'm tired.



The strange thing is that Jesus never asked me to do any of this. He never asked me to build a reputation. He never asked me to appear successful. He never asked me to make everyone comfortable with where He was leading me. He never asked me to protect myself from being misunderstood.

He said, *"Follow me."*

That sounds increasingly different to me than it once did.

Following means moving. It means I don't always know where we're going. It means Jesus gets to choose the direction. And it means there will be moments when following Him takes me somewhere other people don't understand.

I'm beginning to wonder how much energy I have spent protecting a reputation Jesus never asked me to build.

That question bothers me.

Because if I'm protecting my credibility, I'm also protecting something I can lose. If I'm protecting my image, I'm protecting something I created. If I'm constantly managing what people think about me, I'm trying to control something that was never mine to control.

And underneath all of it is self.

My reputation. My opportunities. My relationships. My influence. My future. Me.

That is a heavy person to carry around.

Maybe that is why I'm tired.

I don't want to become reckless with people. I don't want honesty to become an excuse for cruelty. I don't want courage to become arrogance. Love still matters. Humility still matters. Listening still matters.

But fear doesn't get to masquerade as wisdom anymore. Self-protection doesn't get to masquerade as discernment. And maintaining an image doesn't get to masquerade as faithfulness.

I want to become increasingly unconcerned with constructing a version of myself that people will approve of and increasingly consumed with following Jesus wherever He leads. Even when I don't know where that is. Even when it costs something. Even when someone misunderstands. Even when the boat rocks.

Because I'm tired of spending so much energy trying to remain someone I was never asked to become.

I'm tired enough to put him down.

And keep following.