

Foreword



This book deeply troubled me. For several days after my initial reading I went from being slightly irritated to bordering on desperation. It literally kept me up at night. It crawled under my skin and burrowed into my mind. A nagging frustration developed. A soul splinter was lodged and irritated me constantly. After a couple of days of this frustration I began to come to an understanding of why this might be so. There are likely several reasons, but the most basic and prevailing one is this: the gulf between the practices of Christ followers in the first few centuries and my own practices was enormous. Then to my horror, I started to actually believe that they were right and I was wrong! How far we have drifted from our original course faithfully set for us by the Apostles, martyrs and faithful ones of the early centuries! My experience and practice of baptism, faith, and suffering bear almost no resemblance at all to theirs. So, if they are indeed right and I am indeed wrong then I have much work to do, much ground to cover. This book has propelled me on a journey to close that gulf by leaving my comfortable but shaky notions of discipleship and starting to walk toward the much richer theology and practice of those earliest followers. In this regard, this book is both a compass and map.

It is a compass because it contains large sections of the actual writings of the most recognized and respected teachers of those early centuries. These writings can help us get our bearings

and find True North. But it's not enough to just know the coordinates of where we need to be. At some point we must step out and start walking. It is a map because Chris has given us practical, useable concepts on following the compass to a better place.

So, this book is desperately needed in a day when discipleship has often been trivialized to "fill in the blank" curriculum. These notions while well intentioned – to get as many "in" as possible as fast as possible – are misguided. We need more than a course correction. We need to get back to the starting place. To do that we must submit ourselves to the wisdom of earlier generations whose faith was forged in deep suffering and patient endurance.

Chris has stayed in my home on many occasions. I have had the opportunity to live for many months in close proximity with him and his wife. I have observed his life and ministry closely and been the recipient of his gifts of teaching and hospitality. We have broken bread and shed tears together. I am convinced after all that time of two things: he is a man of the deepest character and profound intellect. Rarely, if ever, have I observed those two qualities co-existing so naturally and so fully in one person. What he writes he deeply believes, and what he believes he puts into practice.

With that, I can wholeheartedly commend this book and its author to you. They can be trusted and relied upon to lead us to a place of more fully, more faithfully following the Way.

May you experience the fullest frustration and then the accurate guidance of which this book is capable.

Kevin Rains
Cincinnati, Ohio
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*The Feast of
St. Peter and St. Paul*