Following Jesus is about our lifestyles

Jesus summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it.” —Mark 8:34–35

Christians too often preach a self-absorbed gospel of piety and religiosity, rather than a “lifestyle gospel.” The gospel is so radical that if we truly believed its message, it would call into question all the assumptions we currently hold about the way we live, how we use our time, whom we relate to, how we marry, and how much money we have. Everything we think and do would be called into question and viewed in a new way. [1]

I believe that we rather totally missed Jesus’ major point when we made a religion out of him instead of realizing he was giving us a message of simple humanity, vulnerability, and nonviolence that was necessary for the reform of all religions—and for the survival of humanity. We need to dedicate our lives to building bridges and paying the price in our bodies for this ministry of reconciliation (Ephesians 2:13–18). The price is that we will always, like all bridges, be walked on from both sides. Reconcilers are normally “crucified,” and the “whole world hates them,” because they are neither on one side nor the other. They build the vulnerable bridge in between, which always looks like an abdication of ground to the supposedly “true believer.”

~~The way of the cross looks like failure. In fact,~~ we could say that Christianity is about how to win by losing, how to let go creatively, how *the only real ascent is descent.* We need to be more concerned with following Jesus, which he told us to do numerous times, and less with worshipping Jesus—which he never once told us to do. [2]

From the 2/19/2023 email of Franciscan Father Richard Rohr <https://email.cac.org/t/d-e-zdyttc-tlkrtrjjdh-g/> Adapted from his books, [*The Good News According to Luke: Spiritual Reflections*](https://email.cac.org/t/d-l-zdyttc-tlkrtrjjdh-y/) (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 47, and [*Simplicity: The Freedom of Letting Go*](https://email.cac.org/t/d-l-zdyttc-tlkrtrjjdh-j/), rev. ed. (New York:  Crossroad, 2003), 80−81.