



Irene Frances

My Desire to Be Like Jesus

RECENTLY as I thought about my desire to live an authentic Christian life, the words of an old hymn came to mind. Lillian Plankenhorn based her 1946 song, *My Desire*, on the words of Jesus: “Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:24, *KJV*). My desire has always been to be like Jesus and to live for him. Sadly, the church got in the way and I got lost in religion, so far removed from the simplicity of following Jesus and experiencing the wonder of who he is.

For decades I believed that the church had all the answers, that I could learn to be a follower of Christ simply by doing what was preached from the pulpit: repent of my sins, have a daily “quiet time”, pray and read the Bible, tithe, be totally committed to, and fully involved in the local church, attend church twice on Sundays as well as the weekly prayer meeting, obey the church leaders unquestioningly—regardless of what they said or did, be a good, submissive wife and honor my husband as the head of the home, deny myself, and love all people regardless of how they treated me. Even as I write, I am shocked at how much my life was consumed by the church. There was so little room for me as a person, a wife or mother. And there was no room for Jesus, the one I had been so attracted to when I first became aware of how much God loved me.

My life fell apart when memories of an abusive childhood erupted into consciousness. My understanding of God, faulty as I now know it to have been, disintegrated when my husband, a

supposed Christian who had been very much involved in the church, told me he would not be with me on what would be a lengthy journey to healing and wholeness. Shattered beyond comprehension, completely bruised and broken, I left the church and concentrated on the hell of healing, a story all of its own. I gathered up the crumbs of my faith and let the words of Jesus become a healing balm as I trod that long and lonely path.

During those dreadful years I clung to God as a drowning woman to a lifebuoy. I began to read the Gospels again, picturing myself with Jesus as he touched the lepers, healed the sick, brought sight to the blind, forgave the sinners, fed the multitudes and taught the crowds about how to live for him and experience his love, joy and peace. Through the richness of my developing relationship with him I grew in my walk with God in ways I had not known when I went to church.

Life was not easy and there were many tough times that would repeatedly throw me into confusion, grief and heartache. However, despite all I have been through, I have learned so much about the wonder of our awesome God and what it means to live for him. The words of that old hymn capture my heart’s desire:

*My desire, to be like Jesus;
My desire to be like Him.
His Spirit fill me, His love o’erwhelm me;
In deed and word to be like Him. □*

Irene Frances blogs about “Authentic Christian Living” from her home in the Outback of Australia.