

Imagine

John Lennon recorded a song called *Imagine*. It calls the listener to envision a world where there is no war and everyone has their basic needs met. Several of the phrases in this song echo concepts that Jesus talked about:

- living for today
- living life in peace
- being one
- getting rid of possessions
- sharing

These are certainly lofty and worthy concepts. The problem with Lennon's approach is the assumption that humans are basically good and can do all these things by themselves. The song starts out challenging us to imagine no heaven. In other words, no God, no higher power. We are on our own and we can do this ourselves. If nothing else, history has clearly taught us that this is not true.

Our Father in heaven, thru His son, taught us that we cannot accomplish good apart from Him. Jesus said:

I am the vine. You are the branches. He who remains in me, and I in him, the same bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. (Joh 15:5)

In fact, Jesus himself recognized that even he could do nothing apart from the Father: **Jesus therefore said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and I do nothing of myself, but as my Father taught me, I say these things."** (Joh 8:28)

Imagine Actually Following Christ

Christendom has been the source of many wars, injustices, prejudices, abuses, etc. Much of this has come about because there are so many human teachings added on to what Jesus taught. Jesus said his teachings were simple and that in order to find the Kingdom of God we have to accept and follow his teachings with the faith and simplicity of children (Mat 18:3). But, we just can't seem to be able to leave things alone; we feel like we have to "improve" them. And, that means making things more complicated than they are supposed to be.

Imagine what it would be like if professing followers of Christ **actually followed him** and abandoned all other human teachings. The very first group of followers demonstrate something for us to imagine what it could be like today:

All who believed were together, and had all things in common. They sold their possessions and goods, and distributed them to all, according as anyone had need. Day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. The Lord added to the assembly day by day those who were being saved. (Act 2:44-47)

Unfortunately, human teachings very quickly started creeping in and followers of Christ were diverted from a simple faith to a complicated system. For example, instead of seeking the Kingdom, they were told to join a system that is now referred to as “church”. Jesus never even used the word “church” but he spoke constantly about the Kingdom. Along with the “church” system came multitudes of increasingly complex (and contradictory) theologies that people were asked to adhere to. Of course, divisions between followers were a natural result of an increasingly complicated faith. And when divisions occur, it is no longer possible to be “together” and have “all things in common” as the very first group of believers did.

Imagine what it would be like if all followers of Christ focused only on his teachings and the life he modeled as found in the Gospels and ignored everything else. I am convinced that we would rediscover what the first group of believers found: unity, gladness and singleness of heart, no one in need and increasing numbers.

Does this sound too simplistic? Is following Jesus more complicated than that? No! It is time to stop following “spiritual leaders” who want us to depend on them and their complex theologies and start simply following Jesus. When we do that, what we imagine can finally become reality, the one that Jesus prayed for:

Not for these only do I pray, but for those also who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that you sent me. The glory which you have given me, I have given to them; that they may be one, even as we are one; (Joh 17:20-22 WEB)

Leave the complicated religious systems behind. **Listen to Jesus alone and follow him.**

Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from the Bible come from the World English Bible translation (<https://worldenglishbible.org>).