

Plaster Casting (Suffering For Christ) (Maturity) (Imitating Christ)

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. 1 Peter 2:21

The Basic Bible Truth

Jesus left us an example to follow. From the world's perspective, it may not be all beauty and perfection. Our path of imitating Christ may well take us down the same dark alleyways He strolled through. We may suffer for His cause. But we are to imitate Him, none the less, because, the final result will bring glory to God. That is sufficient reason for all that we do—to bring God glory and honor. It is all about Him and not us.

The Object

Plaster Of Paris
Water
Mixing Container
A Throw Away Pie Plate



This is a classic craft idea for little kids. I remember making a hand plaque for my mother in kindergarten as a little child. But I use it as an object lesson for this topic. You simply mix the plaster of paris according to the directions on the package, and typically let it set up just a bit to thicken a little. It can then be poured into the pie plate, and after the plaster has set up a bit more, press your hand into the mixture, leaving a hand print behind. If done at the right consistency, your handprint will include details like wrinkles and creases found on your hand, or an imprint from a ring, or in my case, a small part of a fingertip that is missing. It will take 20-30 minutes to set hard, and may become quite warm in the process as the chemical reaction in the plaster takes place.

The Lesson

In several places in Scripture we are admonished to follow Jesus, wherever that may lead. We are to imitate Him and that may or may not be a pleasant experience for us. We tend to shun discomfort, and yet we see Jesus' life filled with difficulty. Our ability to conform to His image is directly related to how much detail we see in His life. Are we as familiar with the Bible as we should be? Do we read and study it on a regular basis?

The purpose of a plaster hand cast is twofold. First, it is a marker, set in plaster, of what our hand looks like at this moment. The size and shape, the creases, the jewelry, the scars, the missing parts...all tell a portion of the story of our lives. Jesus left an imprint for us to follow. The New Testament lays out for us in detail what God desires in our lives. As we study the life of Christ, we become aware of the subtle nuances that define Him. And it is not the vague generalities that define us as people, because it is quite obvious that most of us have 2 hands, 2 feet, 2 eyes, and 1 nose. It is the little things that make us unique and differentiate us from others. We see it in the shape and folds of our ears, the size and shape of our nose, the unique color of our eyes. Those things become important in describing our physique to another. An artist charged with painting our portrait would be intensely interested in even the most minor of characteristics. We are to be a portrait to the world of what Jesus is like. We, like a portrait artist, need to know as many details as possible.

Secondly, the plaster cast is a benchmark. The cast I made for my mother 55 years ago, she kept for many, many years. It was a reminder to her of who I was once—a little child totally dependent upon her. As I grew older, she could see the plaque on the wall and judge how much larger my hands were becoming. My handprint now would dwarf that little one. So it should be for the Christian. As we go through life, we need those benchmark moments to remind ourselves that we are indeed growing in Christ. I firmly believe that the transmission that drives the direction of our lives only has a forward or reverse gear. There is no neutral position for the child of God. We are either gaining ground in our quest to become like Jesus, or we are losing ground. We cannot shift into neutral and coast downhill for a while. Life doesn't work that way. Life is more like a 4x4 pickup barreling through a mud bog, than a chauffeur driven limo cruising down the interstate.

And if our imitation of Jesus is an accurate one, we will find ourselves often in direct conflict with the rest of the world. The politically correct world that we live in is quite comfortable with defining sin down to the point that the offensiveness of it no longer seems appropriate to proclaim. The issue of gender identity and the confusion that results when the Biblical view is discarded is an excellent example. We are told that people should be allowed to choose their gender, that biology no longer is the defining factor. We find stories praising those brave enough to undergo the medical transformations that our technology now allows. What is left off of the front page though, is the daunting fact that one third to one half of all those who undergo the procedures will commit suicide, disillusioned with the direction life has taken them. That is far off of the norm.

Taking a stand for right, in spite of what the world said, cost Jesus everything. We might presume the same. We should expect the world to cause us discomfort. And we should follow His leading always.