

Last week Taylor Swift released a new album called “Midnights.” I’m not talking about that today. When an artist who is as *huge* as Taylor Swift releases an album, reviews of it flow in seemingly every direction. Those reviews range from, “This is the best album of all time.” To, “Taylor Swift is a terrible songwriter, singer, and musician!” While the extreme reviews may be representative of a world focused on getting clicks rather than honest and thoughtful engagement, even that isn’t what I want to talk about. I want to talk about the *responses* to the reviews. When a positive review is posted, inevitably there has been a backlash against it from those who disagree. When a negative review is posted, the reviewer has been bombarded with Swift apologists trying to change their minds. It seems as though we’ve lost the capacity to allow others to have their own take on something without starting a fight! We’ve lost the capacity to just be satisfied and at peace with our own sense of something...and that is what we’re going to talk about today on the Covenant Weekly Podcast Season 2 Episode 6, *As for you...* .

### *Theme Music*

I had a local candidate show up at my door the other day to try to get me to vote for them. I’d already voted so they smiled and said, “I hope you voted the right way!” I knew that they *meant*, “I hope you voted for me.” But so often we do slide into the perspective that what *I* think is the best way or the most accurate thought or the clearest perspective is *THE* best way. But for *most* things in life, there is space for personal opinion - this is true especially of most art and entertainment - or the issues are *so* complicated that it is actually quite reasonable for someone else to have a different perspective depending on what variables they are prioritizing.

Ideally, we could live in a world where if someone has a different perspective, we could learn to listen and ask questions and be moved into deeper consideration. Instead, all too often, we fight. In fighting, we try to become more deeply entrenched in our current standpoint or change the other person's view.

There's a brief encounter at the end of John's gospel that suggests there may be a better way for those of us that align with Jesus. In the encounter, Jesus gives Peter a small glimpse as to what will happen to him later in his life. Peter's response is to look back at the one described as "the disciple Jesus loved" (presumably John) and ask, "What about him, Lord?" Peter is focused on trying to figure out John's journey rather than heeding Jesus' words about his own.

Jesus will have no part of it and says, "...what is that to you? As for you, follow me." There are three quick things to highlight from Jesus' response. The first is found in the language Jesus uses. Peter...you follow me. This highlights the fact that life with God is a journey. We are meant to be following Jesus on a path, not to try to establish ourselves in a fixed position. If your perspective hasn't changed, if your mind hasn't changed, if your life hasn't changed, if your love hasn't changed in a year or five or twenty, it is worth asking yourself if you've been following Jesus. There are certainly other biblical metaphors like Jesus being a firm foundation, but even then, it's the foundation that stays firm. That's different than saying what is built on the foundation has never changed over time! The biblical image of following Jesus along the path, the road, *the way* he leads is one of the most common and important ones for us to grasp.

The second quick thing to notice is that John's journey with Jesus will be different than Peter's journey with Jesus. While we may walk together, our exact steps with Jesus cannot and will not be the same.

And that leads to the obvious third thing to see. That Jesus calls Peter to walk *his* journey with Jesus, not to try to figure out John's journey. He needs to have enough humility to let go of trying to control others' journeys and enough focus to walk his own.

If we're busy trying to convince or control others or if we're working to more deeply entrench ourselves where we currently are, we're not following Jesus on our own journey. Now, following Jesus doesn't mean we aren't *concerned* about others. It doesn't mean we don't *listen* to others or take advantage of opportunities to share our stories. In fact, listening to others and sharing our own stories are primary ways God helps us to follow. But at the end of the day, we will all - individually and collectively - live and love best when we heed Jesus' invitation. "As for you...follow me."

### *Transition Music*

I really want to highlight our push to get all of our information up to date in the next few weeks. We have paper Information Update forms available at the church building or you can go to our website [www.covenantchurch.ca](http://www.covenantchurch.ca) and click on the red banner across the top of the page to go to the electronic form. Even if you are sure that we have all your correct information, please take a few moments to fill out this form to help us make sure of it.

Don't forget about our weekly ministries - our Men's Connection on Tuesdays at 10 am, our Women's Bible Study on Wednesdays at 10 am, and our Midweek Youth Program. This coming Sunday, we are continuing in Matthew 5 by looking at how Jesus points us forward beyond laws about Vows or Oaths in verses 33-37. I'm looking forward to being together on Sunday morning.

And finally, I want to remind you that the Celebration of Life for Mac Dickson is at our church building, 95 Robert St. E., Penetang, this coming Saturday morning at 11 am with a luncheon to follow.

As we move through this week, may we move through it focused on our own journey with Jesus leaving room and space for others on their journey. And as we do so may we be released to listen to and love each other well.

May you enjoy the peace of Christ this week.

*Theme Music*