

THE TRUTH

by Shaun Groves

Originally written for youth magazine On Course.

I'm old. I drive a mini-van and listen to Veggie Tales with my three kids. I have a cool haircut that I hope fools you into thinking I'm younger than I am but now the truth's out: I'm old. I'm so old that I have a hard time remembering what I was like when I was your age, which is good news for you I guess. No matter how completely weird or awkward or unpopular your life is right now, one day you'll be so elderly that you won't remember it.

But what's my point? My point is I'm trying to recall what I needed to hear when I was your age, before I got old and I'm coming up with only one thing. It's not the one thing I would have wanted to hear back then. It's nothing I even knew I needed to know but here it is: Following Jesus doesn't work.

Now stick with me for a minute - this will get good I promise. Lots of Christians both young and old think we're supposed to follow Jesus because it always works. They think that if you pray, love people, tell the truth, go to church and live the way Jesus would if He was wearing skin today, then life will be mostly good. They think people will like them, they'll get good jobs, they'll stay healthy, raise good kids and basically have an easier more comfortable life. That's a lie.

I don't know where that lie comes from, but I can tell you there are Christians in other countries who don't think this way. They read their bibles the way I do now. They notice that Jesus was poor, sometimes alone, sad from time to time, and not liked by everybody. He wasn't even liked by most people. Luke says that after one sermon the crowds that had followed him deserted him and Jesus was left with only the 12 disciples as friends. Paul was a good guy and wound up shipwrecked, stoned, put in prison and hated. And let's not forget that all the disciples except John were eventually executed, like Jesus was, for doing what was right.

I think if someone had told me at your age that living like Jesus would sometimes make me lonely and sad, unpopular and hurt, I would have lived differently. I think I would have been more courageous and less whiny. I would have been encouraged to know that I wasn't alone when life kicked me in the teeth. I would have been inspired by the people who lived for Jesus no matter what the cost in centuries past. I would have prayed less for the perfect life. I would have wasted less time chasing after comfort and approval and spent it on things that really matter.

I don't believe in the story of Jesus because it makes my life better, though sometimes it surely does. I believe the story of Jesus because it's true. And it's worth living AND dying for.