

BECOMING LIKE JESUS

In this lesson we are going to take a look at some of the principles we need to practice in our lives if we want to become like Jesus. A disciple is one who tries to imitate the one whom he is following. A true disciple will try to talk like Jesus, act like Jesus and think like Jesus. There are some major differences between a believer and a disciple. Jesus commanded us to make disciples of all the nations (*Mathew 28:19-20*). Let's look at some of the things that characterize a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

A. The Disciple Is Not Above His Master

Everyone who wants to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ must embrace his own cross and follow Him; the path of suffering, faithfulness and consecration that He followed. Jesus spent long hours in communion with the Father, and so must we if we are to be like Him.

Prayer to Him was more important than teaching, preaching, hobbies or any pastime. He withdrew to the wilderness to pray (*Luke 5:15*). Miracles, signs and wonders don't happen by themselves. A life of prayer and consecration is the cause. A disciple will not attain the same results that Jesus did without paying the same price; we are not above the Master (*Matthew 10:24*).

B. Be Holy As He Is Holy

We could do the same works Jesus did, because the Lord can't lie (*Luke 6:40, Matthew 5:48*). However, this is based on conditions and requirements we need to meet. As a man Jesus was tempted, needed food, rest and sleep. He suffered hunger, thirst, pain, loneliness and weariness. If we are to be His disciples, and manifest the character and power He manifested in His life, we must be like Him in holiness, consecration, meekness and compassion.

We must be like Him in prayer and communion with the Father, faith, fasting and self-denial. We should not make excuses for living a life full of sin and imperfections, but learn to deal with them. If you need deliverance, there is help available for you in the body. But most of the time, it is an issue of flesh and lack of discipline in people's lives.

Sin will drain you of God's presence and power in your life. Without the presence of God in your life, you will live a powerless, defeated Christian life, without the ability to be a witness or do much in the kingdom of God. Demons do not fear one who is not holy (*perfect*).

Being perfect does not mean that we never do anything wrong, or commit any kind of sin. What is perfection then? It has to do with godly character and living a consecrated, righteous life before the Lord. "My servant Job...a perfect and upright man, one that fears God and avoids evil" (*Job 1:8*).

Noah was declared also perfect by God in *Genesis 6:9*. Notice what it says: "Because Noah walked with God." Enoch was another one that was perfect before God because He walked with God (*Genesis 5:22*). Daniel, Joseph, Abraham, Elijah

and Elisha to name a few, lived lives of consecration (*perfection*) (**2 Corinthians 6:16, 7:1**).

Our character will never rise above our level of obedience to the dealings of the Holy Spirit with each of us. When you make a mistake, admit it. Errors can be forgiven, but foolishness destroys character. David made a mistake but corrected it when confronted (**2 Samuel 19:1-8**). Say the truth always, not half-truths. Half-truths are just as bad as a lie (**Proverbs 16:13**).

Godly character involves living a life of transparency, humility and accountability to other people, not just to God. Our character will be formed by all the accumulated responses to the Holy Spirit's refining process in our life. This process will slowly form an inner value system, a grid of convictions and personal heart issues that will guide us throughout our lives. But in order for this to take place, we have to make ourselves available to the Holy Spirit to correct our wrong attitudes, understanding and perspective of truth, and spend much time in God's presence and His Word to receive a divine impartation of His character and presence in our lives.

C. Jesus Christ Our Example

He is our example in word and deed (**1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 Peter 2:21-24**). We can walk as He walked and talk as He talked. But before we are able to walk and talk like He did, we must first begin to think as He thought (**Mark 7:21-23**). The Bible says that a man becomes what he thinks in his heart (**Proverbs 23:7**). To accomplish this we must bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (**2 Corinthians 10:5**).

This doesn't just happen. It is an act of consecration, discipline, purpose and continual application because our mind loves to wander. What you say must correspond with what you do, and what you do must correspond with what you say. When you offer to do something, do it. Not doing it speaks of weakness of character (**Ecclesiastes 5:4; Proverbs 6:2**). Words without actions are like clouds without water. Better not to promise, than promise and not do. Everything you do reflects character, because what you do is more important than what you say. Character is formed by actions, not words.

Our old way of thinking must be abandoned, and accept as our own the mind of Christ (**Phil. 2:5, 4:8**). The evil suggestions of the enemy cannot be stopped from entering our minds, but we do not have to dwell on it. We can drive them out by filling our minds with God thoughts (**1 Peter 2:21-22, 1 John 3:6**). We must walk in love and compassion for others even as Jesus did. His words were filled with power and authority (**Matthew 8:16**). Our words can also be with power and authority if we endeavor to talk and walk as He did.

D. Deny Yourself

Jesus walked the path of self-denial. And if we desire to be imitators of Him, we must deny ourselves. Many lack the power of God in their lives because they never deny themselves any pleasure or desire their bodies crave. Most Christians

pray very little and never fast. A disciple of Christ must make an effort, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to overcome the works of the flesh:

1. Uncleaness

This is what we could call immoderate desires, laziness and love of ease. In this nation, because of our permissive society, most Christians really struggle with this. We are just too spoiled.

2. Pride

The Bible says that God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (*1 Peter 5:5*). Pride manifests as self-importance, an independent spirit, stiffness, being demanding, boastful, love of praise, selfish, jealous, envious, and overbearing, love of being coaxed and humored, stubborn, and being un-teachable.

3. Strife

As a child of God, we should try to walk in peace with each other. Strife is the offspring of pride, and manifests itself as argumentative, quarrelsome, hatred, discord, contention, violent anger, rage, talkative, complaining, critical, nagging, fretting and unyielding.

4. Lust

The Bible talks about the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh (*1 John 2:16*). Lust manifests itself as love of food, money, power, unholy actions, undue affection, familiarity towards opposite sex and wandering eyes.

5. Dishonesty

Dishonesty is what the world would call a liar. A person that manifests this trait is deceitful, distorts truth, manipulates facts, exaggerates and tries to leave an untrue impression of self.

6. Formality

This is another word for what we would call a religious spirit and legalism. It manifests as spiritual deadness, lack of love, mercy & compassion, dryness, indifference and lack of tolerance.

E. Take Up Your Cross & Follow Him

What is a cross? The burden of pain, sorrow and sacrifice which we could choose to lay aside, but instead carry willingly for the sake of others. It is that which

in the natural we would lay aside. We didn't have to endure the cross. We must however take up the cross daily, willingly and carry it faithfully without fretting.

The world does not understand our cross, but each of us has our own God-appointed cross, whether we choose to bear it or not. It is not sickness, which we are helpless to lay aside. It is not unpleasant circumstances that we can do nothing about. It's that, which we accept willingly, at personal sacrifice to ourselves, in order to be obedient to God and bless others. When you take up your cross and follow Jesus Christ you are going to experience misunderstandings, unappreciated service, rejection, verbal and physical persecution, and in some countries, even death.

F. You Must Decrease & He Must Increase

You may call it self-respect, good breeding, poise, but Jesus calls it pride, and pride is a *sin*. We must come to realize our utter and total dependence upon God, and how little our own efforts are worth. Even our best efforts are futile. God must take full control of our life. But before that happens, our own personality, talents, knowledge and natural abilities must decrease in importance in our own eyes.

We must receive the revelation that the success of my life and ministry depends upon the amount or greatness of God in my life. It is only when self decreases in us that He starts to increase in us. The measure of how much God increases in us is proportional to how much self decreases in us. We have to decrease and He must increase in us, as we come to understand that without God, we are nothing!