



40 Days of Purpose

Week 4 – Discipleship: You Were Created to Become Like Christ

Notes: This Bible Study is taken from the 40 Days of Purpose Weekly Lessons guide available from www.purposedriven.com. The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

I. INTRODUCTION

Welcome back to our study of the *Purpose Driven Life*. We're halfway through our six weeks together. I hope you've enjoyed our study of God's five eternal purposes.

In this session we'll look at the third purpose for your life: discipleship. You were created to become like Christ.

Once you're in the family of God and experiencing fellowship, God wants you to spend the rest of your life developing family characteristics. He wants to make you like Jesus Christ. If you want to know what God wants you to be like, just look at Jesus.

II. HOW DOES DISCIPLESHIP HAPPEN?

Many of us have heard people say, "Jesus changed my life." How does Jesus do that? Does He do surgery or brainwash you? Does He zap you with something and all of a sudden you're changed?

There's a lot of confusing advice coming out today on how God changes us. Some people say, "Just wait on the Lord." Other people say, "If it's to be, it's up to me." One is the passive approach; the other is an activist viewpoint. As we'll see, it is a partnership that results in Christ likeness: God's part and our part...

A. God's Part and Our Part

What does Philippians 2:12-13 have to say about the process for our fulfilling God's purposes?

Philippians 2:12-13 (NIV) - "...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."

Notice the words "work out" and "works in." Working out is your part. Working in is God's part. We are to work out what God is working in.

1. Our Part: Working Out Our Salvation

Is Philippians 2:12-13 advocating salvation by works?

It doesn't say, "work for" your salvation. It says, "*work out*." The Bible says, salvation is "*Not of works, lest any man should boast*." (Ephesians 2:9 KJV). Paul is writing to Christians. He is saying to them, exercise what you already have.

Did you get it... work out, exercise? What do you do in a physical workout?

You work out not to get a body, but to develop the body you already have. When a farmer works the ground, he's cultivating it, not creating it. In the same way, we don't work for our salvation, but we do work out the implications of it.

What is the significance of the phrase, "your salvation?"

Paul is talking about an individual assignment. You must accept personal responsibility for your own spiritual growth. No one else can grow spiritually for you. It's your life, not somebody else's, and God wants you to put your salvation to work.

What does the phrase, "with fear and trembling" mean?

- It doesn't mean we are to be afraid of God because God's children never need to be afraid of their heavenly Father. Jesus paid the penalty for all our sins on the cross and we've been given God's grace so we're now a part of His family.
- What we should be afraid of is that we might miss out on all God has made for us. We must take our salvation seriously because it has eternal implications. This is our part of the spiritual growth equation.

2. God's Part: Working In Us

What is God's part in making us like Christ?

Our verse says: "*for it is God who works in you*." The word translated "works" is a Greek word from which we get the words "energizer" or "energy." In other words, God is the energizer for change in your life. He says, "I will give you the desire and power to do what you need to do."

B. Three Tools God Uses to Make You Like Jesus

With this in mind, you need to understand there are three tools God uses to work Christ-like character into our lives, and three choices we need to make to work this out in the way we act, think, and respond. Let's first look at the three tools God uses to make you more like His Son, Jesus Christ:

1. The first tool God uses to make you like Jesus is the BIBLE.

Which tool to make us like Jesus is addressed by 2 Timothy 3:16-17?

2 Timothy 3:16,17 (LB) - *"The whole Bible was given to us by inspiration from God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives; it straightens us out and helps us do what is right. It is God's way of making us well prepared at every point..."*

If you want to get serious about changing to be more like Jesus, you need to get into the Bible. Read, study, memorize, and meditate on it, and begin to work it into your heart and mind. The more you get the Word of God in your life, the more you're going to be changed. **So the first tool God uses to make you like Jesus is the BIBLE.**

How can the Bible help people who say, "I just don't have any faith?"

Our question in response to this statement should be, "Are you reading your Bible every day?" If they're not, what do they expect? The Bible tells us in Romans 10:17 (NKJV), *"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."* You get faith from getting into God's Word.

How does the Bible reveal God's plan for your life?

So much of God's will for your life has already been revealed in this book. As you read His word, God will speak to you. An old pastor once said, "When you open your Bible, God opens His mouth. When you shut your Bible, God shuts His mouth." Through the principles, commands, and examples in Scripture we discover God's plan for our spiritual growth.

What role should feelings play in our understanding of God's will for us?

Feelings should take a back seat to what God's Word says. Sometimes people will say, "I feel this is God's will for my life," but when you hear what they say, you know it couldn't be because the Bible teaches the exact opposite. God's will never contradicts God's Word.

How can feelings that seem right be wrong?

Feelings often lie. You can get feelings from a lot of sources: the memory of a TV show stored in your mind, your hormones, or the pizza you ate last night. We must

always trust the Word more than our feelings. A lot of Christians are confused about God's will simply because they don't know His Word.

2. The second tool God uses to make you like Jesus is His HOLY SPIRIT.

Which tool to make us like Jesus is addressed by Romans 8:11?

Romans 8:11 (Ph) - *"Once the Spirit lives within you, He will bring to your whole being new strength and vitality."*

When you commit your life to Christ, Jesus puts his Holy Spirit inside of you. God's Spirit inside of you will give you the power you need to change—to drop bad habits, develop new ones, change the way you think, and respond to situations the way Jesus would. **So the second tool God uses to make you like Jesus is His HOLY SPIRIT.**

What does 2 Corinthians 3:18 have to say about the role of the Holy Spirit in making us like Christ?

2 Corinthians 3:18 (LB) - *"As the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him...."*

This is an incredible truth... it is God's Spirit who works in and with you to accomplish God's purpose in your life: becoming more like Christ.

How does the Holy Spirit use God's Word to make us more like Christ?

God's plan is to tell us how to change through His Word and to give us the power to change through His Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the One who helps us to understand God's Word...

John 14:26 - the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

Unfortunately, we don't always cooperate with God's plan to develop us. So God sometimes has to use a third way to change us when we don't respond to the Word or the Holy Spirit...

3. The third tool God uses to make you like Jesus is CIRCUMSTANCES.

What does Romans 8:28-29 have to say is the third tool God uses to make us like Christ?

Romans 8:28-29 (NLT) - *"...we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. For God chose them to become like his Son...."*

Even if you read your Bible for an hour each day, this stills leave 23 hours a day for you to have circumstances. Thus, God uses the tool of circumstances even more than He uses

the Bible. He uses problems, pressures, difficulties, and stresses to mold and shape our character. **So the third tool God uses to make you like Jesus is CIRCUMSTANCES.**

Does Romans 8:28-29 say that everything that will happen to Christians will be good?

No, He says He will use everything that happens to us for good. Everything that happens to you, good or bad, God uses to grow you.

So where do our problems come from then?

Our problems come from a variety of sources: First, we live in a sinful, fallen world. Adam blew it, and we're experiencing the consequences. Second, we have an enemy. His name is Satan, and he wants to destroy our lives; he's always working against us. Third, we sometimes make poor decisions and bring problems on ourselves.

Do the sources of our problems impact the degree to which God can use them for good in our lives?

It doesn't really matter where the problems in your life come from. God can and will still use them for good in your life if you respond to them the right way.

If God is going to make us like Jesus should we expect to face the kinds of problems He faced when He was on earth?

Certainly, God is going to take us through everything Jesus experienced—including a lot of problems. Jesus was lonely. Jesus was tempted to be depressed, get angry, or be impatient. Jesus was criticized and misunderstood. God allowed His own Son to go through these experiences so we should not be surprised when He takes us through the same circumstances.

Why does God allow problems to come into the lives of His children?

God allows these problems in our lives because He wants to develop us. He wants us to grow up. He's more interested in our character than in our comfort.

These are the three tools God uses to make you more like Christ: the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and circumstances.

C. Three Choices That Will Help You Become More Like Jesus

Now let's switch gears and look at our part. What three choices do you need to make in order to cooperate with God's spiritual growth process? What is your part of the equation?

1. You can choose WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT.

What does Proverbs 4:23 have to say about what kind of choice we can make to be more like Christ?

Proverbs 4:23 (TEV) - *"Be careful how you think. Your life is shaped by your thoughts."*

Everything starts in your mind. The way you think determines the way you feel; the way you feel determines the way you act. So if you want to change the way you act or feel, you must start by changing the way you think.

So you can choose WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT.

Why does change require new thinking?

Change always begins with new thinking. Ephesians 4:23 (NLT) says, "...there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes." The Biblical word for change is the word "repentance." In Greek, this word literally means, "to change your mind."

What do we do when we repent?

When I repent, I change the way I think about God, myself, the world, and others. I change my outlook. Spiritual growth is the process of replacing myths, lies, and inaccurate thoughts with God's truth. To grow up spiritually, you have to challenge some old ways of thinking and old values.

The question, then, is, "How do I renew my mind?"

The Bible tells us...

Psalm 119:9 11 (NIV) - *"How can a young man keep his ways pure? By living according to Your word. I seek you with all my heart. Do not let me stray from Your commands. I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You."*

The way you change your life is through re-programming your mind with the Word of God. The more you fill your mind with God's Word, the more it transforms your life.

2. You can choose to depend on God's Spirit moment by moment.

What does John 15: 4-5 have to say about what kind of choice we can make to be more like Christ?

John 15:4-5 - "Take care to live in Me and let Me live in you. For a branch can't produce fruit when severed from the vine. Nor can you be fruitful apart from me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever lives in me and I in him shall produce a large crop of fruit."

A branch is totally dependent upon the vine. When it is cut off from that vine, it won't bear any grapes, berries, etc. A branch cannot produce fruit by itself; it's got to be connected. Jesus is saying that's the way we have to be with God. We have to be plugged in. God has the power, but you do not automatically get it. You only get God's power when you're plugged into God, depending on Him. **So you can choose to DEPEND on God's Spirit moment by moment.**

How do you know when you're depending on God's Spirit?

Check your prayer life. Whatever you pray about is what you're depending on God for. Whatever you don't pray about is what you're not depending on God for.

What does it mean to depend on God?

It means to pray continually about everything. You pray about your decisions, feelings, relationships, deadlines, purchases, everything. That's what it means to depend on His Spirit.

If I am going to do my part in changing me, I must choose what I think about, and I must choose to depend upon God's Spirit moment by moment. There's one more choice I need to make...

3. You can choose to RESPOND to circumstances the way Jesus would.

Do you see the parallels between the tools God has provided us and our choices?

God uses the resource of His Word; but we must choose to read it. God gives us His Holy Spirit; but we must choose to depend on the Holy Spirit. God uses circumstances; so we must choose our response to the circumstance.

So you can choose to RESPOND to circumstances the way Jesus would.

What does James 1:2-4 have to say about the attitude we should have about respond to our circumstances?

James 1:2-4 (Ph) - "When all kinds of trials crowd into your lives don't resent them as intruders but welcome them as friends. Realize that they come to test your faith and produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance is fully developed and you become people of mature character, people of integrity, with no weak spots."

Notice the word "process." The Christian life is not a one-time event. It is an event followed by a process. If you're ever asked, "How long does it take to become a Christian?" you can truthfully say, "A moment, and a lifetime." You're born again instantly but you've got to grow and develop for the rest of your life.

Victor Frankl, the famous psychologist, was imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp in World War II. He recalled that one day they stripped him naked, took his clothes, shoes, family, wedding ring, and everything else they could. But standing there in front of the Nazi soldiers he realized there was one thing that could never be taken from him: his freedom to choose his response. This is the ultimate freedom God has given you. You cannot choose what happens to you, but you can choose how you will respond. And if you choose to respond the way Jesus would—with love, trust, obedience, faith, joy, and patience—you will discover God uses it to make you a better person instead of a bitter person.

You cannot choose what is going to happen to you next week, next month, or next year. But you can choose how you will respond, whether to the situation will make or break you, whether your response will be a stepping stone to maturity or a stumbling block to failure. The choice is yours.

III. APPLICATION

As we close today, think about and discuss how some of the problems and circumstances you have encountered this week could be used by God to make you more like Jesus Christ. If we do our part, He will do His part and a wonderful thing will happen: we will become more like Christ.

Dear Father, thank You so much that You love us. Thank You that You created us to become like Your Son, Jesus Christ. Not to be gods, but to be godly. Thank you for giving us Your Word, Your Holy Spirit, and Your custom made circumstances to help us grow. May we do our part by reading and studying Your Word, depending on Your Holy Spirit, and responding in faith to all that happens to us. Make us more like You, Lord. In Jesus name, Amen.