



Created to Be Like Christ

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Chapters 22 & 23

Notes: This Bible Study is intended to be a companion to "The Purpose Driven Life" by Rick Warren. The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New King James Version.

Chapter 22: Created to Be Like Christ

What does Genesis 1:26 have to say about why God created us?

Genesis 1:26 - Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness

The third purpose for our lives that Rick Warren's book addresses is that we are to be in the image of God.

How are people in the image of God?

1. Like God, all people will exist into eternity.
2. As God has a triune nature, people are body, soul & spirit.
3. Like God, people are intellectual... we can think, reason, and solve problems giving us the capacity to be creative.
4. Like God, we are relational... we can give and receive real love.
5. Like God, we have a moral consciousness... all people have the capacity to discern right from wrong.
6. Like God, we have a will... we are able to make choices.

Are some people more in the image of God than others?

Certainly, born-again Christians have the spirits alive to the things of God. We have a capacity to share the thoughts of God that unbelievers do not have...

1 Corinthians 2:14 - But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

And certainly there are some Christians who are more in the image of God than others because there are varying degrees of spiritual maturity.

When will we be most like God?

When we are resurrected to have the same eternal spiritual body that Jesus has right now...

1 John 3:2 - Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

The Mormons, Hindus, New Agers, and other religions say that people not only become like God, they become a god. What is the flaw in this doctrine?

This teaching is based on the oldest lie in the Bible, it is a deception from Satan himself...

Genesis 3:5 - For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

The original KJV expresses this best, "*ye shall be as gods.*"

Does becoming like Christ mean that we will all be the same?

God created each of us to be unique so the opposite is actually the case. The closer we are like Christ, the more our unique personality will become apparent.

What does it mean to have the character of Christ?

To have the character of Christ is to have the kind of character described in the beatitudes of Jesus:

Matthew 5:3-11 - Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

Having Christ's character is having the fruit of the Spirit:

Galatians 5:22-23 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

To have the character of Christ is to have the kind of character described in Paul's great chapter on love:

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 - Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long and is kind; love

does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

The character of Christ is described Peter's list of an effective and productive life:

2 Peter 1:5-8 - But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus promised us an abundant life in John 10:10, so why does He allow difficulties and sickness to come into your life?

Life is not supposed to be easy, it is what enables us to grow:

Romans 5:3-4 - And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

We should never forget that our lives is not about us, we were created for God's purpose, not our own. Why would God provide us heaven on earth when the real thing is planned for eternity? This time in the world has been given to us to prepare us for eternity.

Can you become like Christ in your own power?

We can not become like Christ by our will alone. This is why New Year resolutions usually do not last into February.

Philippians 2:13 - for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

What does 2 Corinthians 3:18 have to say about how God gives us Christ-like character?

2 Corinthians 3:18 - But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Our becoming like Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit who resides in us. This process is called sanctification.

When you consider "the power of the Holy Spirit," what comes to mind?

Most people think of miraculous demonstrations and intense emotions when the power of the Holy Spirit is displayed but most of the time, the power of the Holy Spirit is released in you life in quiet, unassuming ways. God gives us nudges with a "*still small voice*" (1 Kings 19:12).

Why does God work so subtly in our lives? Why doesn't He make it more clear to us what He would have us do?

Some things God has made very clear in His Word. Other things are not so clear so that we will have the opportunity to grow in our relationship with Him. God could have created us like robots but He didn't because He desired a true relationship with us. Remember that life is a test... "*For we walk by faith, not by sight*" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

What is our role in our becoming like Christ?

The Holy Spirit presents us with an opportunity to grow by taking a step of faith, we must follow through and take that step for the power of the Holy Spirit to be released in our life. This pattern is laid out for us repeatedly in Scripture.

Can we grow more like Christ by exerting more effort?

While effort has nothing to do with salvation, it has a great bearing on how much like Christ we can become in our lifetime. There are a lot of places where the Bible encourages us to "*make every effort*" to grow like Christ, for example the AWANA motto:

2 Timothy 2:15 - Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

What does Ephesians 4:22-24 say are our three responsibilities in becoming more like Christ?

Ephesians 4:22-24 - that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

(1) Let go of old ways of acting, (2) change the way we think, (3) "put on" the character of Christ by developing new, godly habits.

Why is it so important to change your way of thinking about things?

It is important to change what you think about because actions follow our thought patterns. If we strive to look at things from God's perspective, we will be better at acting as He would act...

Romans 12:2 - And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Besides His Word, what else does God use to make us more like Christ?

Besides the truth we need to grow, God also provides His people to provide the support we need to grow and the environment we need to apply what we have learned. It is one thing to have theoretical knowledge about a truth, it is quite another to have experienced it first hand. That is the difference between knowledge and wisdom... wisdom is knowledge applied.

In many religions, it is considered to be highly spiritual to separate yourself from society in secluded monasteries. Is it possible to become more Christ-like in this way?

Isolation will not help you become more Christ-like. Jesus did not seclude Himself. Spiritual maturity is learning to love like Jesus and that requires interaction with others.

One of my favorite Bible teachers, David Jeremiah, told about his reply to those who gave the excuse that they didn't come to church because there are too many hypocrites there. He used to address this cop-out by telling them that you shouldn't be watching other people that you should be watching Christ. But after reading numerous passages in the New Testament where Paul encouraged people to become like Christ by following himself, he had to modify his standard reply. For example: *"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ"* (1 Corinthians 11:1). The problem is that we don't see Christ today apart from Christians who are imitating Christ. So what we should be doing seeking out godly Christians to be our examples in life. We certainly need to understand that this side of the resurrection, that no one is perfect but this does not mean that we can not learn to be more like Christ from those who follow Him.

How long does it take to become like Christ?

A lifetime, we can not say we have arrived this side of the resurrection...

Ephesians 4:13 - till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

When will we be like Christ?

We will be like Christ when we are resurrected, the Lord will finish up any unfinished work to make us like Him...

I John 3:2 - Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Which is more important to God, what you do or your character?

God cares more about building our character than what we do. He leaves choices like what career we should pursue up to us because there are many options that are all within His permissive will. We will take our character into eternity, not our career. As Rick Warren said, *"we are human beings, not human doings."*

In what area of my life do I need to ask for the Spirit's power to be like Christ today?

I need to be better at taking the steps of faith God is calling me to take. I need to step out of my comfort zone more and take risks so that I will grow more spiritually.

How is becoming like Christ different from the way most people understand discipleship?

A review of many popular Christian books shows that many believers have abandoned living for God's purposes and are pursuing personal fulfillment and emotional stability. This is narcissism, not discipleship. Jesus did not die so that we can have comfortable, well-adjusted lives, He wants to make us like Himself before He takes us to heaven.

Chapter 23: Transformed by Truth

Is Spiritual growth Automatic?

Spiritual growth is not automatic, it requires an act of the will on our part. Christians who are stuck as spiritual babes are that way because they have made a decision that they do not want to grow.

What does Matthew 9:9 tell us about how a person may begin to become like Christ?

Matthew 9:9 - As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him.

We begin to grow when we respond to the Lord's call to follow Him. You must decide that you want to grow and then follow through on that decision.

Why is it important what we are committed to?

What we are committed to is very important because they define us. Rick Warren said, *"tell me what you are committed to and I'll tell you what you will be in twenty years."*

What happens to people who are afraid to commit to anything?

People who want to keep their options open just drift through life, *"tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine"* (Ephesians 4:14).

What happens to people who make half-hearted commitments or have competing values?

People who make half-hearted commitments or have competing values will encounter increasing frustration and be stuck in mediocrity.

What happens to people who are fully committed to worldly goals like to become famous or wealthy?

People who seek to become famous or wealthy may end up that way but they will also be disappointed and bitter.

Why do people who seek wealth or fame become disappointed and bitter once they achieve this?

Because what ever wealth or fame they obtain, there is always someone else with more wealth or fame, it is a struggle to hold on to what they have, and it does not satisfy our God-given desire to satisfy His purposes for our life.

What is the biggest problem with burning your life to seek wealth or fame?

Wealth and fame have no eternal value...

2 Peter 3:11 - Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

What does Philippians 2:12-13 have to say about how we become more like Christ?

Philippians 2:12-13 - Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

In this verse the word "salvation" means our sanctification. There are two parts to spiritual growth, working out and working in our sanctification. The working out is our responsibility, the working in is what God does. Thus our sanctification is a collaborative process with the Holy Spirit.

How do we know that Philippians 2:12-13 is talking about sanctification rather than earning salvation?

It does not say "work for" salvation, it says "work out" salvation. In a physical work out, you exercise to develop your body, not to get a body.

Why is what we set our mind on so important in charting the course of our lives?

The cliché, "you are what you think," is very true...

Proverbs 4:23 - Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.

By sheer willpower, a person can force themselves to make improvements in their life such as eating less, exercising more, quit being disorganized and late but this will only result in stress unless the root cause of old thinking patterns are not changed.

How can we person change our thinking patterns?

The best way to change thinking patterns is to replace our natural world view with God's perspective.

Romans 12:2 - And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Seeking God's perspective will open us up to the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit. It is only by working in

tandem with Him can we really change ourselves for the better...

Ephesians 4:22-23 - put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind

What does 1 Corinthians 14:20 have to say about how we may renew our minds?

1 Corinthians 14:20 - Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.

Developing the mind of Christ takes two steps: stop thinking like children and start thinking like an adult. It is amazing how many adults still think like children.

How do children think?

The thought patterns of children are more like babies than adults... Babies by nature are completely selfishness. They think only of themselves and what others can do for them. They are incapable of giving, they can only receive. This is immature thinking that is the source of sinful behavior...

Romans 8:5 - For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

How do you think like an adult?

Adults think more of meeting the needs of others than themselves. This is what love is all about and the summary of Paul's chapter on love...

1 Corinthians 13:11 - When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

This is the example Christ gave for us, it is what He did for us when He made it possible for our sins to be forgiven...

Romans 15:2-3 - Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me."

What do people demonstrate when they show that they are thinking of others?

People who show that they are thinking of others demonstrate Christ-likeness, this is evidence of spiritual growth. This kind of thinking stands out in the world because it is rare, unnatural, counter-cultural and difficult. It is God who makes this kind of thinking possible:

1 Corinthians 2:12 - Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

What is one area I need to start thinking God's way?

I need to start thinking more proactively about how to reach people for Christ.