

The Learned Christian



Imitating Christ

The Learned Christian (Imitating Christ)

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Imitating Christ

Opening Prayer

Prologue

As we continue on the preaching series "The Learned Christian", we thank God for the way he has led us and continues to lead us. It has really been a great blessing to me and I trust the same is true for you.

OBJECTIVES

(with the help of the Holy Spirit challenge us to):

1. Review (Review our walk – self examination)
2. Repent (and ask God's forgiveness for our sinful ways)
3. Resume (Get back on track following in Jesus footsteps)

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Definitions

Learned - (of a person) having acquired much knowledge through study. There is a strong place for study in process of learning. As the disciples followed Jesus, they listened to him, studied him and **Learned** from Him.

Christian - The Greek word for a Christian is “Christianos”, **meaning** “follower of Christ”. “Follower” here refers to imitating the character of Jesus. So really, if we profess to be Christian, and we are not imitating the character of Jesus, we need to review our follower-ship.

A **Christian** is someone whose behaviour and heart reflects Jesus **Christ**.

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Introduction

For me, one of the key prerequisites to being a Learned Christian is to have a teachable spirit. I may be stating the obvious, but sometimes, the obvious is not always obvious.

Jesus taught the disciples, they learnt at his feet. Apostle Paul taught his brethren, they learnt from him. Are we teachable by God (His word)? Are we teachable by others?

As a leadership, we recently had a discussion around correction - a teachable spirit is one that amenable to **correction by God's word** (**2 Tim 3:16** - *¹⁶ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for **correction**, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, **thoroughly equipped for every good work. Like Jesus***).

Also willing to **accept correction by a sister or brother** as and when the need arises. (**Gal 6:1** - *Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should **gently and humbly help that person back** onto the right path*)

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Introduction

You see, we are considering the theme "The Learned Christian"... such a person cannot be puffed up with pride: Paul reiterates this in ***Philippians 2: 3-5*** : ³ *Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.* ⁴ *Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.* ⁵ **You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had** – **A LEARNED CHRISTIAN MUST BE HUMBLE IF THEY ARE TO TRULY IMITATE CHRIST!!**

Let us not be proud. As Christians, we are pilgrims together on a journey, our destination is heaven. We are not competitors in a race, we are co-workers in the same vineyard, the vineyard of our master and saviour, Jesus Christ; We are our brother's keeper, looking out for one other, helping and encouraging one other to be more like Jesus day by day.

I want to leave that thought with us as we get into this morning's message.

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Introduction

I believe that imitating Christ is all about **imitating His character**, his whole character We will touch on this later. Today, I will focus on imitating the **holiness** of Christ. God said, be ye Holy, for I am Holy. If we are diligent in emulating the Holiness of Jesus, then we would have succeeded in emulating the character of Jesus and thus all His associated attributes.

Consider a plant, if you water it's leaves, branches and flowers **ONLY**, the plant would eventually die. Conversely, if you water the root solely, the branches, leaves and every part of the plant would benefit and prosper.

For me, imitating the holiness of Jesus is akin to watering the root of our faith in him. The other attributes like compassion, love, forgiveness, mercy, grace, truth, righteousness, etc. **will then flourish effortlessly.**

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Biblical Basis of Imitating (Called to "Be")

1 Peter 1:15-16 But as he who called you is holy, **you also be holy in all your conduct**, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (not only holy in our prayers, thoughts, words, but holy **in all our CONDUCT that's what God's word tells us**)

- Behaviour
- Manner
- Comportment
- Ways

Imitating Christ is a call to "**BE HOLY**" ... a book by Al Caldenhead called ...

"God's Call to Be: When Being Precedes Doing" (self discovery – being who God want us to be – reminding us we are created in His image).

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Biblical Basis of Imitating (Verbs – Doing Words)

The bible is not ambiguous in the imitation methods or process

1 Peter 2:21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, **leaving you an example**, so that you might **follow in his steps**.

1 John 2:6 Whoever says he abides in him ought to **walk in the same way** in which he walked.

Matthew 5:16 In the same way, let your light **shine** before others, so that they may **see your good works** and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may **discern what is the will of God**, what is good and acceptable and perfect (we learn the will of God, so we can follow, so we can imitate Christ, who said, as he died on the cross, in pain and agony, ***Luke 22:42*** - *“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; **yet not my will, but yours be done.**”*



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Positional Holiness

Positional holiness is the result of what Christ did FOR us on the cross – set apart from sin, set apart unto God. When we receive the salvation of Christ, we become saints. (see **2 Cor. 5:21, Heb. 10:10-14, 1 Pet. 2:9-10**)

Believers are positionally holy because Christ's righteousness has been imputed to them. Imputation is a theological (and biblical) term borrowed from accounting. It means that Christ's holiness is credited to our account, and our sin is credited to His.

- a. Positional holiness isn't based on our inward holiness of heart.
- b. It results from our identity with Christ from the moment of our salvation.



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Perfected Holiness

Perfected Holiness has to do with our final state. When we are finally glorified and in the presence of Christ, we will be perfectly holy.

1 John 3:2 - “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.



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PRACTICAL HOLINESS (CHARACTER)

Practical holiness is the result of what the Holy Spirit does **WITHIN** us.

This is **holiness** that Paul speaks about when he admonishes the Corinthians to follow him as he follows Christ (and we shall come back to Apostle Paul later)

True **holiness** has no sense of religiosity here but of a continual awareness of God's presence affecting and governing every aspect of life.

If we are truly imitating the holiness of Jesus, then it should never be a burden to bear but a delight to enjoy ... as it was with Jesus. (let's think about this)

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Imitating the Holiness of Jesus

- To be Holy is to be like Jesus, not in authority, but in character. (A Holy person is one who acts properly, reacts properly, and **leaves no doubt in anyone's mind** that he/she is a child of God. God is seen in this person from the inside out and from the outside in)
- Being holy is a **lifestyle** – it is not something we put on and off, like a winter coat...
- The bible tells us that we are a chosen people, a holy nation, we are set apart, just as Jesus was set apart as our saviour
- Imitating holiness is our **duty**
- Can I go as far as saying **being Holy** is our job or occupation as true believers? I believe so!

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Imitating the Holiness of Jesus

If we desire to be a church that is effective, demonstrative, and infectious for Christ, we must be a people that imitate the holiness of Christ

- **Imitating Christ should be a joy, but nevertheless it's hard work.** It requires diligence, dedication, disciple and (earnest) desire, **but it is not optional**; every believer must imitate Christ. Are we imitating?
- Imitating Christ holiness ***is not*** a code of conduct, moral virtue, religious tradition, a restraining of sin for fear of consequence, or even about good conduct, **it *is* a matter of the heart, it *is* the fruit of loving Christ and His Word – Love of Christ is the Key to imitating His Holiness**
- **As young children, our parents would always say to us: Show me your friend and I'll tell you who you are – do we **love** hanging out with Jesus, or are **ashamed** to be associated with him?**
- **Are you a friend of Jesus, am I a friend of God?** We sing that song in church, but do we still harbour malice against our brother or sister... God sees your heart.

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God is our Righteousness, but We Have a Part to Play

- Man is not the source of holiness, we cannot please God through our own righteousness. Spiritual goals cannot be attained by carnal means. (**Phil. 2:13** “It is **God who is at work in you**, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” – however verse 12 **commands us** to “**work out**” **our salvation** with trembling and fear
- **2 Pet. 1:2-4** - **We have all things pertaining to life and godliness.** However, verses 5 -7 **commands us** to **supply diligence, moral, excellence, supply knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love.**

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THE WHOLE CHARACTER

Whilst we focus on imitating Holiness, we don't get to choose which virtue of Jesus we imitate and which we ignore. Imitating Christ means replicating the whole character of Christ. We cannot imitate truth without forgiveness and compassion, we cannot imitate being just without being merciful, we cannot imitate strength without love, we cannot imitate holiness without humility.....



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A CHIEF OF IMITATORS

You know, on the subject of imitating Christ, we cannot but refer to one of the scriptures chief imitator... I will never cease to be captivated by this BOLD statement made by Apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 11:1: "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ".

- **What gave Paul the right to say this?**
- **Was he proud?**
- **Was he perfect?**
- **Or was he just old-fashioned deluded?**

I say a categorical **NO** to these conjectures, and I will submit to us some reasons why.

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Conjecture #1: "Apostle Paul the Proud"?

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

(9) And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (10) Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

How about this? Rom 12:16

¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.^[a] Do not be conceited.

And this ... ? 1 Corinthians 15:8-10, KJV

For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

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Conjecture #2: "Apostle Paul the Perfect"?

"Au contraire, Au contraire, mon Ami..." listen to this:

Ephesians 3:12

¹² Not that I have already attained,^[a] or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. ¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have ^[b]apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

The Christian calling is not a calling to perfection. It is a calling to remain uncomfortable with our imperfections so that God's glory can shine all the more powerfully through us (Paula Gooder, 2016)

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Conjecture #3: "Apostle Paul the Deluded"?

One thing you cannot take from someone is experience. The blind man said, once I was blind, now I can see...

A wealthy, highly respected pharisee, on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians, knocked down, blinded and saved by God through revelation, Apostle Paul lived a life of suffering, love and gratitude. He had a passion for winning souls. Here are his words – **Phil 3:8:** *"⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ"*.

No he was not deluded when he said follow me as I follow Christ. This is the statement of a man who has been humbled by God, and in humility acknowledges his past. He was a sinner saved by Grace. Appreciative, and now trying to show others how much he desires to mould his own life in the image of God.

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THE ULTIMATE TEST OF FOLLOWERSHIP

You see, Paul made himself vulnerable, and opened himself to public scrutiny. As we have seen, he was the first to acknowledge that he was not perfect, but passionate in his desire to imitate holiness.

For me, this statement is an ultimate litmus test of our followership of Christ. Are we in a position to say the same? That's a scary question but one we must seek to answer in our closet with Jesus!

D.A. Carson, in his book titled [From the Resurrection to His Return: Living Faithfully in the Last Days](#) asks: “Do you ever say to a young Christian, ***‘Do you want to know what Christianity is like? Watch me!’*** If you never do, you are unbiblical.

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CLOSING - Summary, Conclusion & Application

For the past year, we have been reciting our pandemic-busting declaration, filled with great hope - *"By the help of God, we will come out of this pandemic fitter and stronger for the master's use"*.

By the special grace of God, the end of this pandemic is in sight. Are you fitter and stronger (spiritually) for the master's use? Am I fitter & stronger? **If we cannot answer with a resounding "YES", it is not too late to make amends.**

Let us not see ourselves through our own eyes, let us not see ourselves through our spouses, friends, family or even our leader's eyes. Let us see ourselves through the eyes of Jesus, and then decide if we are truly imitating Him. How does Jesus see you? How does he see me? This is not a statement of condemnation, it is a statement of challenge and encouragement – If we have been diligent in our walk, we can be better (good2great), if we have not be quite as diligent, we can repent and get back on track.

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Summary, Conclusion & Application - Benefits -

If we imitate Christ, we will ...

1. See spiritual progress in our lives
2. Experience the Holy Spirit working in our life
3. Have a strong hatred toward sin
4. Serve God out of love
5. Demonstrate a spiritually disciplined life
6. Love God's Word (to be more like God, we must know what pleases him and be familiar with His nature)



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Summary, Conclusion & Application

If we imitate Christ, we will ...

7. Love, associate and fellowship with God's people (as iron sharpens iron)
8. Walk in truth and integrity
9. Be perceived (by others) as having "been with Christ" (Peter & John in **Acts 4:13** - *When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.*) ... **can or will people take note or recognise that Jesus lives in us and that we are imitators of Christ?**

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Summary, Conclusion & Application

At the start of this message, I mentioned 3 R's as my objectives:

Can you remember:

- ❖ Review***
- ❖ Repent***
- ❖ Resume***

As the service draws to a close, and we come off the air, don't rush away to your next activity. I strongly believe God will be pleased with us if we take a bit of time out for personal reflection - to review, and if necessary repent, then resolve to follow or resume following Christ (in the beauty of His Holiness)?

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We have been considering the theme **The Learned Christian-imitating Christ**. If you are listening to this message and you have not received Christ into your life as your personal saviour, but would like to do so and join this wonderful journey with the family of God, then pray this prayer with me:

*Dear Lord **Jesus**, I know that I am a sinner, and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins and rose from the dead. I turn from my sins and invite You to come into my heart and **life**. I want to trust and follow You as my Lord and Saviour..*

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CLOSING PRAYER