

Being “With” to “Become”

On a scale of 1 to 10,
how important is it to you
to become like Jesus?

1

Never think
about it

5

I know it's
important but ...

10

I work to shape
my entire life
toward this goal

How much time and effort
did you invest this week to
become more like Jesus?

Three goals of a follower of Jesus:

(1) Be with Jesus,

(2) Become like Jesus,

(3) Do as Jesus did.

Following Jesus,
(aka “apprenticing” under Jesus)
means practicing a way of life.

Nothing is more important
to God than that you
become like Jesus.

The entire Bible is a call to be with God,
to live in identity and relationship with Him,
to reflect His likeness, do His will,
and be measured by these factors.

The entire Bible is also an exhaustive treatise
on the persistent subversion of this essential
and eternal purpose.

The fact is we are all following someone
or something and being formed into a
particular resemblance.

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world,
but let God transform you into a new person
by changing the way you think.
Then you will learn to know God's will for you,
which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Romans 12.2 NLT

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.

Romans 12.2 ESV

Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture
that you fit into it without even thinking.

Instead, fix your attention on God.

You'll be changed from the inside out.

Readily recognize what he wants from you,
and quickly respond to it.

Unlike the culture around you,
always dragging you down to its level of immaturity,

God brings the best out of you,
develops well-formed maturity in you.

Romans 12.2 MSG

What would you look like,
what would your life look like,
if you were a house lived in by Christ?

Following Jesus is intentional;¹
being with Jesus is deeply relational;²
becoming like Jesus is systematic;³
and these factors determine whether
we can do as Jesus did.

¹ e.g. Mark 1.16-20; Luke 14.26-27; Matthew 3.2; 4.17

² John 14.18-21, 23; 15.5-9

³ Colossians 3; 2 Peter 1.5-7

Christlikeness determines whether we
as husbands measure up or fall short
of God's standard for us—

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. (Ephesians 5.25-27)

Anything otherwise might be even
a good marriage, but it is not a
Christian* marriage.

Christian: resembling Christ; literally: “little Christ”

“Haphazard” and “unintentional” are
antithetical to following Jesus.

Being with Jesus

Being “with” someone is more than just being physically present; it involves—

- appeal and attraction,
 - awareness and attentiveness,
 - affection and affirmation.

“If anyone loves me and keeps my commands—
following my way and walking with me
just as I walk with my Father and follow His way—
that person will be loved by Us.

Furthermore, WE will come and make our home in him
through the other One of Us: the Spirit.

I tell you this so that my joy may be in you;
then your joy will overflow because you are my friend!”

In teaching them his practice of prayer,
he gave them two guidelines:

- (1) Find a quiet, distraction-free time and place.
(For Jesus, this was early in the morning.)
- (2) Pray to “your Father”. More than anything else,
prayer is about being “with”— sharing relationship,
having fellowship, being with each other.

Unless there is intentional “with” time,
any relationship will become stunted and eventually wither
until it no longer has any resemblance
to what it was or should be.

Other things or persons will become more appealing;
affection will be diverted;
our “other” will be neglected and made to feel unloved.

This is true of marriages, families, and especially,
our relationship with Jesus.

Becoming like Jesus

What does it mean to “put on the new self”?

- Previously, we were dead in our sin (Ephesians 2.1)
- By faith, we have been united with Christ in his death and resurrection (Romans 6.4)
- Consequently, we have been “made alive” with Christ (Ephesians 2.5)
 - ▶ We have been “born again” (John 3.3, 5-6)
 - ▶ We are given a new “spiritual” nature (Romans 8.10)
 - ▶ We are “indwell” by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8.11; 2 Corinthians 1.22)

However,
now that there are two “natures” within us,
there is conflict and contradiction—

I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good,
but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway . . .
I love God's law with all my heart. But there is another power
within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a
slave to the sin that is still within me. (Roman 7:18-19, 22-23)

The sinful nature wants to do evil,
which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants.
And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite
of what the sinful nature desires.
These two forces are constantly fighting each other,
so you are not free to carry out your good intentions.

Galatians 5.17 NIV

So the quest of a follower becomes:

How do I live
so that the way that I live
reflects the new life that I have in Christ?

- Simply put, the answer is Jesus—
 - It is becoming “renewed in the knowledge of the image of Jesus in whom we are a new creation.”
 - It is aiming our lives in the direction of Jesus—aiming our thoughts, consciousness, awareness, and affection toward Jesus.

Now the Lord is the Spirit,
and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.
And we all, who with unveiled faces
contemplate the Lord's glory,
are being transformed into his image
with ever-increasing glory,
which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3.17-18 NIV

- In the words of Jesus and the dynamic of being transformed, it is “Spirit-ual” formation—

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14.26)

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth . . . He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. (John 16.13-14)

Remember: the reality is that we are all following someone or something and being formed into a particular resemblance.

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How are we transformed by the renewing of our minds?

- We must recognize the ways in which we are following the pattern of the world—the cultural and social practices of those who are not followers of Christ.
- We must reformat the whole of our lives toward the goals of being with Jesus, becoming like him, so that we can do as he did.
- We must cultivate those habits that renew our minds, bringing us into a place of continual consciousness of his presence.

- We must spend time with Jesus, abiding in him, communing with him.
 - ▶ As I spend time with Jesus, I experience the Holy Spirit telling me about Jesus, showing Jesus to me, contrasting Jesus with self and the patterns of the world.
 - ▶ When I spend time with Jesus, I “taste and see that the Lord is good.” I develop a distaste for anything else and a complete attraction and devotion to Jesus.
 - ▶ Being “with” him, I am renewed into his likeness through the work of the Holy Spirit.