

Becoming Like Jesus

From “deformed” to “counter-formed”

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

And we know that in all things
God works for the good of those who love him,
who have been called according to his purpose.
For those God foreknew he also predestined
to be conformed to the image of his Son,
that he might be the firstborn
among many brothers and sisters.

Romans 8.28-29 NIV

Becoming like Jesus is
what will matter most
in eternity.

And those he predestined, he also called;
those he called, he also justified;
those he justified, he also glorified.

Romans 8.30 NIV

Our Problem: Born Deformed—

- The reality is that every human since Cain and Abel, including you and me, is born deformed.

Behold, I was brought forth in [a state of] iniquity; my mother was sinful who conceived me [and I too am sinful]. (Psalm 51.5 AMP)

- The “doctrine of original sin” means that we were born corrupted by sin, that we inherently possess a “sin nature” with the capacity to willfully act contrary to the nature of God and inflict on others the effects of our sinful capacity and nature.¹

¹ Romans 5.12-13; Romans 3.23; Ephesians 2.1-3; Galatians 5.19-21; 5.15

Our Problem Compounded: Conformed—

- Not only are we born corrupted by sin with an inexhaustible capacity to sin and afflict others with the effects of our sin, we are also conditioned and conformed by the “accumulated wrong-doing and wrong-thinking, and hence wrong being” of the world.

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do . . . (Ephesians 4.17)

In which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air . . . (Ephesians 2.2)

“You have heard that it was said . . . But I tell you . . .” (Matthew 5.43)

- Biblically, sin is defined as “missing the mark.” What is the “mark”? It is the glory (the “image” or “likeness”) of God (Romans 3.23).
- In our sinful condition,
 - ▶ we are inherently prone to **do** sin—to act according to our own will, perspective, and self-orientation;
 - ▶ we carry from birth and accumulate throughout life the effects of sin done **to** us—reflecting those experiences in our actions;
 - ▶ we are shaped, or further deformed, by our environment, the sin done **around** us, such as exposure to the values of our culture, relationships that are physical or digital.

- The perspective of Jesus is that we are “sin-sick” and “sin-lost”—
Jesus answered them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor,
but the sick. (Luke 5.31)

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” (Luke 19.10)

- Because our sinful behavior has made us enemies of God, we
need to be reconciled and justified to God through the atoning
work of Christ (Colossians 1.20-21).
- Because our minds and souls are deformed and diseased by sin,
we need to be sanctified—renewed and restored to the likeness
and wholeness of Jesus (Colossians 3.10).

- The issue is not whether we will be conformed; our default setting is to live according to the sin that has shaped us, internally and externally, exhibiting what the Bible calls “the acts (or fruit) of the flesh”— the sinful nature (Galatians 5.19-21; Colossians 3.5-9).
- The question is whether we will be “counter-formed” to the extent that we think like Jesus and act according to the likeness of Jesus (the “fruit” or result of abiding in him), reflecting his image to all around us.

This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. (John 15.8)

The Solution: Be Transformed—

- The first step in recovery and sobriety is confession. Not only is this true of programs like AA, it is a Scriptural premise. Whether announcing the advent of his kingdom or correcting the churches, the message of Jesus was to recognize we are on the wrong way and to repent.

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8-9)

- The second thing is to remember that haphazard and unintentional are antithetical to following Jesus. We need to apprentice ourselves to Jesus so that in his words, when we are “fully trained, we will become like our Teacher.” We need:
 - **Truth** in place of the narratives that have shaped us;
 - **Practices** in place of the habits we have developed;
 - **Community** in place of our individualism, isolation, or relationships that reflect our culture.

- ▶ The habitat of the **Holy Spirit**—cultivating an environment of prayer and immersion in Scripture so that His grace can deeply influence us and share us into Christlikeness.
- ▶ The commitment of **time**. Spiritual formation and transformation takes time and is a lifetime commitment. (After all, we are following Jesus into eternity.) If we are too busy to invest *much* time in our apprenticeship with Jesus, we will never be fully trained or become like him.
- ▶ The efficacy of **suffering** in our lives—purging us of sin (1 Peter 4.1-2), forging our character and developing perseverance (James 1.2-4), fostering hope and enlarging our hearts to experience the love of God (Romans 5.5)

The Kingdom of God is righteousness,
joy, and peace in the Holy Spirit.

Romans 14.17 NIV

Is that what I am experiencing? And is that what others
are seeing reflected by my life as a follower of Jesus?