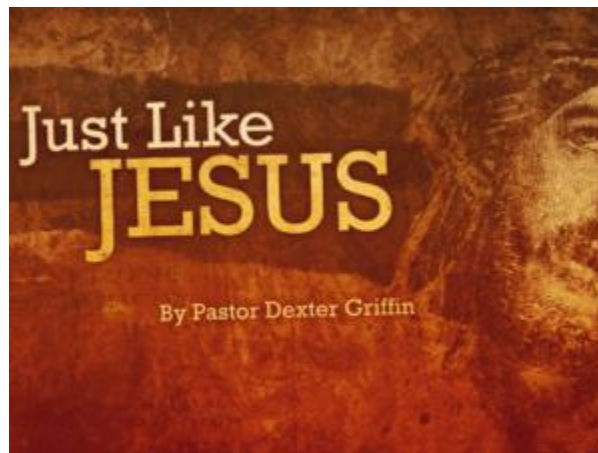


Welcome back to our Fall preaching series, **"Living The Purposed Life: How God Meets Your Five Deepest Needs."** This series is inspired off of the writings and ministry of Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Church in California. Today, we are exploring the third dynamic truth and reality of discipleship that forms and shapes us – and that is you and I were **CREATED FOR CHRISTLIKENESS**. Every human being is like a snowflake – distinct, artistic, beautiful, and a one-of-a-kind miracle! And yet, God designed every single one of us, to share one binding, life-giving attribute in common, even in all of our unique diversity. It is that we all become like His Son Jesus.



<https://www.vcctracy.org/sermons/just-like-jesus/>

Which begs the questions: **What was Jesus like?** What was his personality and temperament? According to the Myers-Briggs temperament sorter, **would Jesus be an ESTJ – or – would he be an INFP?** According to author, leadership coach and speaker, BIOLA University professor, Dr. Paul

Sohn, in an article published December of 2016, Jesus would most likely be **INFJ** – which is ---just one letter away from me (ISFJ)!

In his book With, Skye Jethani tells about a test that Scot McKnight (New Testament scholar, historian of early Christianity) gives to his incoming college students every year. The test is all about our -- LIKENESS! (personality and temperament).

It begins with a series of questions about ***what the students think Jesus is like. Is he moody? Does he get nervous?*** Is he the life of the party or an introvert? The twenty-four questions are then followed by a second set— with slightly altered language—in which the students answer questions about their own personalities. ***What am I like? How do I respond?***

The test came from the work of **Paul Froese and Christopher Bader** in their book "**Four Gods.**" While there are four general ways they contend that we conceive of God, their research bears out an even more revealing truth. ***Turns out, the results are remarkably consistent—everyone thinks Jesus is---JUST LIKE THEM!*** McKnight added, "The test results also suggest that, even though we like to think we are becoming more like Jesus, the reverse is probably more the case: ***we try to make Jesus like ourselves.***" McKnight's personality questionnaire confirms what the **French philosopher Voltaire** said three centuries ago: ***"If God has made us in his image, we have returned him the favor."***

For two-thousand years, humanity has been **DOMESTICATING Jesus**; reframing his life to fit into our worldviews and ideologies. We have done this to our own peril. For two-thousand years, the Bible has told us...

"We must become like a mature person, growing until *we become like Christ* and have his perfection."

Ephesians 4:13b NCV

O to be like Jesus. Stellar faith, unshakable convictions, calm nerves in difficult situations, compassion for even the most difficult people, loyal love, grounded knowledge of scripture, and closeness with God. Truly, who is equal to such a life? The quick and simple answer is -
- NO ONE! And when we realize our deficiencies, when we become

disappointed in faith, God, or outcomes --- we may falsely conclude that Christianity has failed. But in reality, as Philosopher and Theologian G. K. Chesterton has so masterfully observed,

"The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried."

G.K. Chesterton

So how do we stay in the story of discipleship transformation (sanctification – being made holy) long enough to sustain progress and see breakthrough? The most important thought you can take away from this message today is in response to that question. The key to becoming "LIKE CHRIST" is not about producing lots of religious activity; not about muscling through hard passages; or training for Bible memory. **CHRIST LIKENESS IS NOT ABOUT IMITATION -- BUT RATHER ABOUT INHABITATION** (*Jesus dwelling and living in us*)! It's not about us trying to **ACT** like Jesus – it's about letting Jesus enter in and take over our lives. **INHABITATION.**

Which brings us to our text today. Paul was sharing with the Jesus disciples/followers who lived in Rome, that God has very intentionally ordered and purposed their lives for His kingdom family. Part of His architectural plans include this foundational notion of becoming just like Jesus: **CREATED FOR CHRISTLIKENESS!** This is how he shared those thoughts:

Read Romans 8:26-30 CEB

26 In the same way, *the Spirit comes to help our weakness.* We don't know what we should pray, but the Spirit himself pleads our case with unexpressed groans. 27 The one

who searches hearts knows how the Spirit thinks, because **he pleads for the saints**, consistent with God's will.

28 We know that **God works all things together for good** for the ones who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 We know this because God knew them in advance, and he decided in advance that **they would be conformed to the image of his Son**.

That way his Son would be the first of many brothers and sisters. 30 Those who God decided in advance would be conformed to his Son, **he also called**. Those whom he called, **he also made** righteous. Those whom he made righteous, **he also glorified**."



<https://samuelashwood.wordpress.com/2018/04/09/romans-829-conformed-to-the-image-of-his-son/>

sýmmorphos is the exact word (vs. 29). It means **CONFORMED** and is properly understood to speak of character, content, conduct and a credible facsimile. But the genius of this command, this vision and ideal, is the **TOTALITY** of the replication inside and out. Not unlike a clay pot that gets spun, squeezed, pressed, shaped and enlarged – **FROM AN INSIDE-OUT FORCE** – so to is *sýmmorphos*—we become **conformed (like) by sharing the same inner essence-identity (substance); showing similar behavior (form) from having the same essential nature.** God wants you and me on the Potter’s wheel for life!

No, in case this is not clear for you, **The POTTER’S WHEEL** is not very much like a Lazy Boy chair, nor a dream vacation destination. The **POTTER’S WHEEL** is where my life gets stretched, and spun and pressed into contours I didn’t think possible. And I, like humanity, am not always happy and cooperative. Jeremiah knew this:

“Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, *‘Why did you make me like this?’* Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?”

Romans 9:20b-21 NIV (see Isaiah 29:16)

Oh, how we are quick to question, complain and re-direct God’s work upon our lives. And so it is, that at every juncture of life, we are challenged to **choose GOD’S PURPOSE over OUR PREFERENCE.**



Wouldn't it be great if important life adjustments and character changes could be accomplished by the mere stroke of a pen, the filing of a brief or the stamp of county clerk's approval? Becoming a mature Christian isn't about changing your name, adding a title or finding a shortcut! We can't change our identity simply by changing our name. There are certain intrinsic transactions that must take place as God seeks to shape our lives.

God's most profound purpose for you and me on planet earth **does not concern our COMFORT, but focuses on our CHARACTER!** And Jesus, is heaven's **RE-DO SPECIALIST!** Since "Character Transmission" is God's "parental strategy," it shouldn't surprise us that life on earth is not about comfortable desires but about character development! Paul makes it clear to the Romans, Here is what God is committed to over your life and mine:

1. The Holy Spirit **STRENGTHENS** us (vs. 26)
2. The Holy Spirit **PRAYS** for us (vs. 27)
3. God works **GOOD** from all things (vs. 28)
4. God planned **CHRIST LIKENESS** (vs. 29)
5. God **IMPLEMENTED CHANGE** (vs. 30)

In Heaven, there are no unfunded mandates. God always resources what He requires. From bumper-to-bumper, it's all God's work. No wonder Paul says to the Philippians, "**He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion, to the day of Christ Jesus**" (Philippians 1:6 NIV). I wonder, today, where we all are on the journey of becoming just like Jesus?

I've said in the past, the longer I live, the more I sense my earthly father's imprint within me. I feel, think, look, speak and even, sometimes, act like my earthly father. It's an observation that has sometimes terrified my wife and children. The transference of his likeness into my life is profoundly mysterious, yet I know ***it comes from a very long and enduring relationship spanning many of life's seasons, stages and struggles.*** On our spiritual journey of becoming like Jesus Christ, it's the same. It is the Holy Spirit's job to make that transfer of character happen, so that the likeness of Christ will be found living in us. The Bible says,

"As the Spirit of the Lord works within us, *we become more and more like him*** and reflect his glory even more"**

2 Corinthians 3:18 NLT

Author and pastor Max Lucado, in his book "Just Like Jesus, has said: ***"If we are to be just like Jesus, we must have regular time of talking to God and listening to his Word."*** Opening our lives daily to let Jesus live in us and through us is not only the key to transformation and growth, but the vision that God has for our lives. Here's the bottom line: God uses the scriptures, people and circumstances to shape our lives. Warren says,

"God's Word provides the *TRUTH*** we need to grow, God's people provide the ***SUPPORT*** we need to grow and life circumstances provide the ***ENVIRONMENT*** we need to practice and perfect Christ likeness."**

Pastor Rick Warren

The only question is, will we fully avail ourselves to the process and journey of becoming new? It does take time, commitment, energy and adjustment.

In her article on **Spiritual Transformation**, **Ruth Haley Barton** (the founding president/CEO of the Transforming Center) reminds us of the seven-fold nature of our growing into Christlikeness:

- 1. Christ is being formed in us**
- 2. The Renewing of our Minds**
- 3. The Work of the Spirit**
- 4. Embracing Mystery along the way**
- 5. The Role of Spiritual Disciplines**
- 6. The Necessity of Community**
- 7. All for the Sake of Others**

What's growing in your life today? What is shaping your likeness? Are you willing to give yourself to these **seven POTTER'S WHEEL truths?**



My friends, becoming a new person – and being shaped inside and out – is by no means a simple, quick or painless work. It's usually messy; takes time and pressure; and means complete trust with how the **POTTER'S HANDS** will move upon your life. **TOGETHER**, over time, we will become a **MASTERPIECE** if we will remain on the wheel – and stay in the story!
Amen!