

His Incomparable Life

Loving Our Magnificent, Invincible Savior

It is our happy task to be “imitators of Christ.” Jesus said that a disciple fully formed (that’s you and me in the making) will be like his teacher. When it comes to showing us how to live, Jesus really is the Master. Trying to copy His ways from the outside in, however, is a guaranteed formula for frustration and failure. We need to see how He did it from the inside out.

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:1 ESV

The Imitation of Christ

Truly Jesus lived an incomparable life! No one in the history of the world has ever lived so perfectly, so admirably, or so lovingly. That puts Him head and shoulders above the rest of us, but God isn’t content to leave it there. Our Father is out to conform us to the image of His Son, inviting us to “grow up” into the full stature of what Jesus Himself displayed. One phrase that describes this high calling is the “imitation of Christ.”

“What Would Jesus Do?” is a good question to ask in terms of general orientation, but it can easily lead to misdirection. Unquestionably, we are meant to represent Christ to the world. We are to make Him known both by our words and by how we live. The believers at Antioch evidently re-presented Christ to their world so effectively that they were derided as Christ-ians—“little Christs.” The church picked the nickname up, dusted it off, and has been wearing it proudly ever since.



Just How Do We Imitate Him?

Yes! We want to be like Christ! But how do we go about doing that? One way certainly is to study the gospels, watching closely how Jesus handled Himself in every situation. This way of looking at the life of Jesus is just like looking at the laws of scripture: it sets the boundaries for how we are to behave. This works for broad outlines, but fails in the details.

We can see, for instance, that He was gracious to many (yet thoroughly reprimanded the Pharisees), was helpful to everyone (except the Syrophenician mother at first), never sinned (though He broke the Sabbath and cleared the Temple with a whip), was ready to heal (but a lot depended on how people reacted to Him), could easily do miracles, and had no trouble casting out demons (even from people who didn’t want to be free). How do you “copy” that? His incomparable life cannot be duplicated by striving to reproduce the outward form of it!



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It would take perfect memory to recollect and perfect judgment “apply” the right response of Jesus to every person and every circumstance you encounter. The problem is that you won’t be in any of His circumstances. You are going to be in all kinds of situations that have no obvious Biblical counterpart. We see only limited selections from three years of Jesus’ life in ancient Israel. The most we can do is try to find universal principles by studying His life and then seek to apply them to ours. Again, this is good for setting boundaries, but it will fail us in the complexities of daily living.

Not Another Law!

The real problem, however, with this approach to the imitation of Christ is that it throws everyone who attempts it back on trying to keep laws in their own strength. “Law keeping” is the very thing that the gospel has come to liberate us from doing! If I am studying Jesus’ life from the outside, then His words and actions become a new set of laws for me to try to interpret and apply. That makes me a New Testament believer who is just as “law-bound” as the Jewish believers who were trying to interpret and apply the Old Testament laws. Wow! That’s an easy one miss.

We have been set free from the Law of the Old Testament, not so that we can be immoral (and break the Law), or so that we can adopt new rules of our own. Our freedom from law-keeping liberates us to trust and follow the One who set us free! When we yield to Jesus, He leads us by His peace and by His Spirit. “Walking in the Spirit” is our new and living way of fulfilling the Law. In this way Jesus navigates us through the thorny problem of finding the right thing to do in each situation we face. We simply follow His lead in childlike simplicity one step at a time.

Everyone who surrenders their life to Jesus in this way, knows exactly what the gospel is describing as “walking in the Spirit” or “abiding in Christ.” Experiencing this requires our willingness to be “crucified with Christ.” If we are not willing to take up the cross of self-denial as needed (Jesus said “daily”), we won’t be able to follow Jesus in this way. Those who don’t want to surrender all, never understand or experience this. They go back to law-keeping in one form or another. Please, don’t let that be you!

And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." Luke 9:23-24 ESV

The New and Living Way

As our Example, Jesus showed us how to live our lives. Unquestionably, He lived within the moral boundaries and even told us to do the same, distilling the Old Testament’s hundreds of laws into [two great commandments](#). But did Jesus Himself live by law-keeping? You might be surprised what He had to say about it.

Jesus was explicit on many occasions recorded in John’s gospel that His focus was not on the Law, but on the Lord of the Law—His Father. He stated emphatically that He always kept His eyes on the Father, only did what He saw the Father doing, and only spoke as He heard the Father speaking. In love He conformed Himself to the guidance that He was receiving directly from the Father.

So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise." John 5:19 ESV

Through faith-conversion, our God has come to us in a very similar way. We are to fix our eyes on Jesus, yield in trust to Him as He did to the Father, and then follow Jesus' leadings by His Spirit just as He followed the Father's leadings. Little children do this by an unconscious grace. Jesus said that if we want to enter into His Kingdom way of living, we would have to become like little children all over again. This way of entry into Kingdom life on earth—not just access to heaven in the end—is what the new birth makes possible. Listen to how Paul put it:

For when I tried to keep the law, it condemned me. So I died to the law—I stopped trying to meet all its requirements—so that I might live for God. My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die. Galatians 2:19-21 NLT

Finding Life through Death?

Paul says that through Jesus he "died to the law" and actually stopped trying to keep it. This surely means that we are not supposed to be "keeping laws" either. We are not to keep the new laws of the New Testament by trying to keep them, any more than we are to keep the Old Testament laws by self-effort. Nor are we meant to imitate Jesus as if His actions were a new law to interpret and apply. We do not worship and serve the Law. We trust in and follow the Lord of all laws—Jesus! Follow Paul's thought into the next sentence and it is clear that the new life comes to life in us (so to speak) whenever we trust in, cling to and rely on Jesus.

The way we imitate Jesus is, therefore, by this interior orientation of the heart to continually surrender to and submit to Him in trust and obedience. This is how Jesus tells us He lived His life—in intentional surrender and submission to the Father, moment by moment. Are we "above" our Master? How could any other mode of life possibly be described as living as He lived, or walking with God as He walked with God?

This new and living way alone brings the flow of peace and other fruit of the Spirit which transforms us from the inside out. It also enables us to follow a path through our very complex, modern lives that is led by the Spirit step by step—no matter how active or demanding our circumstances may be. If we choose to trust and follow Jesus moment by moment, we will be living in imitation of Jesus' own way of living. Our lives will inevitably become as Holy Spirit filled, empowered and overflowing with love as His own: His incomparable life will be released through us like a river once the dam has broken!

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-25 ESV



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Explore More about Jesus

The Man Going Down Jesus came down from heaven to be with us. That we can easily see. But His descent didn't end there—with becoming like us. He descended further and became what we had always been meant to be. Then He had to descend even further to become what we had never been meant to be. We, on the other hand, can hardly wait to rise higher. We all-too-often hate and fear the descent, even though it is life-saving and soul-transforming.

His Terrible Death No one could see it at the time. Jesus had to descend into the abyss of suffering and sin without a guide to lead Him through it, or a friend to cheer Him on. How it must have looked like a colossal mistake, a ghastly travesty of justice. In reality it was the most noble and valiant conquest of a hideous foe—all that is fallen and corrupt in our nature. The innocent Victim became the invincible Victor—even before He died!

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Scriptures on His Incomparable Life

So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him." John 8:28-29 ESV

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. John 14:10-12 ESV

For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. John 12:49 ESV

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Ephesians 5:1-2 ESV

Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'" Hebrews 10:7 ESV



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About the Author: [Steve Evans](#)

For over a decade Steve Evans and [Healing Streams](#) have been helping people recover inner peace and freedom through the free eCourse for healing, [Matters of the Heart](#). Through Forerunners4Him he has been showing how we can be saved for heaven and teaching the way to live a Spirit-filled life on earth. Go now to receive a completely free primer, [Getting to Heaven](#) and/or an introduction to [Living in the Spirit](#) at our website.



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