



BECOMING
LIKE
JESUS

*Reflecting Christ
in Your Everyday Life*

CYNTHIA HEALD



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NavPress 

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Becoming Like Jesus: Reflecting Christ in Your Everyday Life

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*To my beloved family and friends,
who love and accept me as I seek
to become more like Jesus.*



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Opening Thoughts on Becoming Like Jesus

AFTER CHRISTMAS SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I went to a jewelry store to exchange a lovely bracelet I had received as a gift. Unfortunately, the bracelet had been too large for my wrist, and so the dear woman at the store very patiently helped me try on a number of bracelets. When nothing seemed to work, we began to look at earrings and necklaces instead. After about thirty minutes of searching, I finally chose a pair of earrings. At the cash register, she asked for my phone number to access my account. As she studied the screen, she suddenly asked, “Oh, are you the Cynthia Heald who writes Bible studies?”

First, I was surprised that she might know me. Then I immediately began to think, *Over the last half hour, was I nice? Was I kind? Did I exemplify someone who writes Bible studies? Was I like Jesus?*

What a humbling experience! She knew I was a Christian, and yet the whole time I was with her, I didn't even think about how I was relating to her as a Christ follower.

Although I accepted Christ as my Savior over sixty years ago and have walked with the Lord for many years, this occurrence challenged me to consider: *Am I faithful and kind in exemplifying Jesus' character to anyone I happen to encounter? Are his heart and ways so ingrained in me that I naturally reflect him to those around me, or have I become complacent, needing to be more alert and aware of God's purpose and work in my life?*

One day as I read through John's first letter to the early church, two verses seemed to be highlighted by a divine yellow marker:

Those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.

1 JOHN 2:5-6

Living as Jesus lived—is that even possible? Jesus was sinless, performed miracles, and atoned for the sins of humanity. He was God’s beloved Son! Yet here in Scripture was an incredibly specific, somewhat intimidating, and definitely challenging verse addressed to those who say they are Christ followers.

As I began to study and think about Christlikeness, one of the first places I went was the book of Ephesians, where I was reminded that it was God’s will and pleasure to adopt us into his family, purchase our freedom, and forgive our sins through Jesus Christ’s sacrifice on the cross (Ephesians 1:5, 7). Then in Romans 8:29, I read: “God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son.” The author of Hebrews clarified: “Therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God” (Hebrews 2:17).

According to these Scriptures, not only is it possible to become like Jesus, but becoming like him is God’s intended purpose for his adopted children. As one biblical commentator stated:

In his character and conduct we have the clear and complete expression of the will of the Father. To walk as he walked is the obligation of every one who professes to be in God.¹

As I became increasingly convinced of my need to be more intentional in seeking to walk as Jesus walked, I sensed the Lord prompting me to write this devotional study. I chose to focus on God's purpose and process of transformation, as well as the most notable human qualities of Jesus that we have been either commanded or instructed to reflect in our lives.

In becoming like Jesus, we need to consider how he lived and choose to imitate him. Therefore, in every lesson of this book, we're going to ask four key questions to help us do that:

1. How did Jesus live?
2. How can we reflect him?
3. What does Scripture tell us?
4. How shall I pray?

The intent of each lesson is to encourage you as you pursue Christlikeness, draw you in to Scripture, and give you questions for reflection and space to write

a closing prayer. You may choose to use this book as a personal devotional and an opportunity to study and journal, or you may wish to read and discuss it as a six-week Bible study with your small group.

I found the topic of becoming like Jesus exceptionally convicting. In fact, at one point I wanted to stop writing because I realized that my family and close friends might wonder how I could ever write about what it looks like to live like Jesus! I am still very much a work in progress. This study is for me as much as it is for anyone else.

Having a personal relationship with the Lord is essential to becoming like him. As Scottish evangelist Oswald Chambers told us:

I must know Jesus Christ as Saviour before
His teaching has any meaning for me other
than that of an ideal which leads to despair.
But when I am born again of the Spirit of
God, I know that Jesus Christ did not come
to *teach* only: He came to *make me what*
*He teaches I should be.*²

Being born again means acknowledging your need for a Savior and believing that God loved the world

enough to give his only Son to die for your sins. By inviting Christ into your life to be your Savior and Lord, you become a new creation—and that is the first step toward becoming like Jesus in your daily life and interactions. You are God's adopted child, and God's purpose for you is to transform you into the likeness of his Son.

Author and pastor Richard L. Strauss urged:

Life's highest goal for the believer is to become more like Christ, to allow Him to express more of His character and His attitudes in us. That is how we can fulfill our destiny and bring glory to God.³

We are invited to authentically express the Lord in our everyday lives. As we do, we will find purpose and fulfillment in experiencing God's presence and plan for us. Blessings as you bring glory to God and become all that he wants you to be—which is like Jesus.

*Keep your hand in his—
Cynthia Heald*

LESSON ONE

GOD'S MASTER PLAN



WE GROW IN CHRISTLIKENESS as we fix our eyes on Jesus, study how he lived, and choose to reflect him. In this lesson, we examine God's master plan, which determines our perspective on and acceptance of what happens in our everyday lives. We learn to ask ourselves: *What is his plan, and what is his purpose for me?*

How did Jesus live?



God created human beings in his own image.

GENESIS 1:27

*My servant grew up in the LORD's presence
like a tender green shoot,
like a root in dry ground.*

*There was nothing beautiful or majestic
about his appearance,
nothing to attract us to him.*

ISAIAH 53:2

*Now Jesus and the ones he makes holy
have the same Father. That is why Jesus*

*is not ashamed to call them his brothers
and sisters. . . .*

*Because God's children are human beings—
made of flesh and blood—the Son also became
flesh and blood.*

HEBREWS 2:11, 14

*Being in God's image means that humans
share, though imperfectly and finitely, in God's
nature, that is, in His communicable attributes
(life, personality, truth, wisdom, love, holiness,
justice), and so have the capacity for spiritual
fellowship with Him.*

ALLEN P. ROSS

Jesus, fully God and fully human, shows us what it looks like to bear God's image in human flesh. Jesus did not have anything "to attract us to him," so as God molds us into the image of his Son, we, too, are freed from worrying about our appearance or performance. We have the same Father, and we have the same Spirit within us, which means we can bear Christ's inward likeness. As we manifest his image and are increasingly shaped into Christlikeness, we carry into the world the actions and mind of Christ.

How can we reflect him?



Those whom He foreknew [of whom He was aware and loved beforehand], He also destined from the beginning [foreordaining them] to be molded into the image of His Son [and share inwardly His likeness], that He might become the firstborn among many brethren.

ROMANS 8:29, AMPC

God's ultimate purpose is that His Son might be manifested in my mortal flesh.

OSWALD CHAMBERS

In my study of becoming like Jesus, I began to search the Scriptures and read the reflections of other Christians who have explored Christlikeness. One verse in particular stood out to me. In Romans 8:29, the apostle Paul succinctly states that God's plan from the very beginning was to shape us into the image of Christ. A masterful and lofty plan! But surely this plan must be for very special, chosen people. Jesus is perfect and sinless, and to become like him seemed an impossible goal. I love the Lord and want to be who he wants me to be, but is it even possible to represent him consistently in my everyday life?

I immediately thought of one aspect of my everyday: communicating with my husband. I struggle with representing the Lord consistently in this relationship, for I tend to respond too quickly and impatiently. But I know that as I desire to become like Jesus, I will begin to reflect him more and more in this area.

In the midst of my journey of becoming like Jesus, I have found encouragement from the writings of nineteenth-century pastor and author J. R. Miller:

There are few people whom God calls to do great things for him, but the best thing most of us can do in this world is to live out

a real, simple, beautiful, strong Christian life in our allotted place. Thus in our little measure we shall repeat the life of the Master himself, showing men some feeble reflection of his sweet and loving face, and doing in our imperfect way a few of the lovely things he would do if he were here himself in our place.¹

Yes! I like the words *feeble* and *imperfect* because that is who I am. Yet I wondered about the process. Was I doing all I could to become a moldable piece of clay in the Lord's hands?

I was helped by this thought from pastor and author Warren Wiersbe:

The divine "genetic structure" is already there: God wants us to be "conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:29). The life within will reproduce that image if we but diligently cooperate with God and use the means He has lavishly given us.²

This is God's master plan: Empowered by the "life within"—the Holy Spirit freely given to each of

us—we reflect Christ's life as we cooperate and yield in loving obedience to his work in conforming us.

As I gained further insight on my life as well as insight concerning God's plan, I identified four truths that can guide us as we seek to become like Jesus in our day-to-day lives:

1. Our lives find meaning and purpose as we understand that God wants to conform us to Christ.
2. When we know God's ultimate plan and his power to accomplish his purpose, we can accept and respond to the things that happen in our lives instead of spending our days resisting and reacting.
3. As we accept God's plan and yield to his Spirit within, we will experience his strength and peace when encountering trials and difficulties in this uncertain world.
4. Trusting God in all circumstances frees us and gives us confidence that God is working all things together for our good—which is to become like Jesus. As Dwight L. Moody reportedly said: "Give your life to God; he can do more with it than you can."

What does Scripture tell us?



The success or non-success of our earthly plans is of very little consequence in comparison with the building up of Christ-likeness in our souls. Do not be surprised if you fail to have your own way at many a point. God would teach you that true success lies in the doing of his will, not your own, and the realizing of his plan for your life, not your plan.

J. R. MILLER

God's Plan

1. God intends to mold us into the image of his Son. How do the following Scriptures help you

understand how this plan can be implemented
in your life?

- Isaiah 64:8

- Luke 9:23

- John 14:23-26

- 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

- Ephesians 1:11-14

- Titus 3:4-7

2. As you reflect on these Scriptures and God's goal of making you like Jesus, what are some specific ways you believe that God intends to accomplish this purpose in your daily life?

Stand still awhile, and seriously consider the noble end for which thou wast created, and for which God hath placed thee in this world! Thou wast not created for time and the creature, but for God and eternity, and to employ thyself with God and eternity.

GERHARD TERSTEEGEN

Our Response

3. Recognizing that we are made for God and eternity, what do you learn from the following Scriptures about how we should respond to God's plan?

God's Master Plan

- 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

- Ephesians 5:1-2

- Colossians 3:1-4

- 1 Peter 3:8-9

- 1 John 2:5-6

- 1 John 3:24

4. We are called to be imitators of God and to live as Jesus lived. In light of these Scriptures, what changes in attitude, motivation, or action do you want to make in order to cooperate with his purpose for you?

How shall I pray?



One day while Jesus was praying, the light dawned on His disciples—maybe there was some connection between the power and wisdom He demonstrated on the one hand, and the diligence of His prayer life on the other. So when He finished praying, one of the disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). . . . If anyone had a right to speak on this subject, Jesus did. He was a man of prayer. If we want to be like Him, we too will become people of prayer.

RICHARD L. STRAUSS

King David prayed in Psalm 138:8: “The LORD will work out his plans for my life—for your faithful love, O LORD, endures forever. Don’t abandon me, for you made me.” Close by writing a prayer of surrender and commitment, asking God to mold your life into the likeness of his Son.

Author's postscript



I have fond memories of playing follow-the-leader with neighborhood friends as a young girl. The game is about imitation: We all had to copy whatever our chosen leader did. If he ran, hopped, or skipped, we did the same.

Imitating Jesus as I go about my day is a challenging goal. But one commentator encourages us as we seek to pattern our lives after Jesus:

Above all, do not be afraid of this blessed life,
lived hour by hour and day by day under the
guidance of thy Lord! If He seeks to bring

thee out of the world and into very close conformity to Himself, do not shrink from it. It is thy most blessed privilege. Rejoice in it. Embrace it eagerly. Let everything go that it may be thine.³

Because we do have God's divine genetic structure, new life through the indwelling Holy Spirit, and our Savior's needful grace, we are equipped to reflect Jesus' communicable attributes (aspects of his character humans are capable of emulating) and to fulfill the purpose for which we were created. As God's children, it is possible to have a strong family resemblance to his Son: This is God's plan.

My conformity to Christ is still very much an on-going process. I must continue to guard against pride, impatience, and complacency. I can never presume that my past walk with God will carry me through the present. My ability to reflect his character comes only through a daily walk with him in which I surrender my thoughts, actions, and plans to his will. I am humbled at the thought of becoming like Jesus, and this divine

goal encourages me not only to accept his purpose for me but also to desire it.

In my small measure, I want to reflect the life of the Master himself. I want to live an authentic, simple, beautiful life in my allotted place. I want him to be my pattern. I don't want to miss out on the plan God has for my life. I want my responses, though imperfect and feeble, to be loving, others-centered, and gracious. I want to become like Jesus.

*The best Christian is he who most reminds
the people with whom he lives of the Lord
Jesus Christ.*

GEORGE HODGES

Lord, I yield myself to you for your purpose to be fulfilled in me. Thank you for your faithfulness in molding me to be like your Son. May I leave a sweet fragrance of Christ with any family member, friend, or stranger I might encounter. I want to be to others what Jesus is to me. Amen.

