

Discovering God's Ultimate Purpose for Your Life

Why do we do what we do as believers? What's supposed to happen to you as a result of being a Christian? Why are we "supposed" to go to church, read the Bible and help others? Why do we invest in church buildings, Christian education, youth and children's programs, Christian TV, Christian music, Christian books, missions and all the rest of it? What's the point of all the time and energy put into weekend programs? What's the purpose of the Christian life or of Christian ministry?

By watching some Christians, you might get a very skewed answer to those questions. The purpose might seem to be:

- To be healthy, wealthy and wise. How's that working out for you? Some of God's best friends in the Bible and some of Jesus' closest followers on earth today were (or are) sick and poor. Surely one's spirituality is not determined by one's bank account or physical health.
- To be entertained and part of a great social club. That sounds so wrong and superficial, doesn't it? And what if the production is poor or the people unfriendly? Focusing on the Christian subculture can become downright unsatisfying and sometimes even destructive.
- To get into heaven. Really? Are all your good works and Christian activities going to get you into heaven? Didn't we dispense with that belief when we came to understand that our eternal standing with God is determined only by saying yes to Jesus?

So again, why do we do what we do? What's the point of all our Christian activity?

If we don't wrestle with that question, we'll easily end up trying to preserve programs and institutions that distract

from and distort what Jesus had in mind. So what has been God's goal for us all along? Seems like that would be a very good place to start.

"For those whom He foreknew, He predestined *to be conformed to the image of His Son*, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom. 8:29, emphasis added).

God's Goal for Us Is That We Become Like Jesus

That is exactly the same as God's original intention when He created humankind "in His image" (Gen. 1:27). The same way you as a parent love (or cringe) to see yourself reflected in your son or daughter, God desires to see Himself reflected in you and me.

That means we are to increasingly come to think like, feel like, talk like, act like, "smell" like, love like Jesus did.

That is not some sentimental love "feeling." Loving like Jesus means, among other things, sometimes taking dominion and exerting strength while valuing people as priceless.

This includes seeing Jesus as our divine example. The disciples modeled their behavior and ministry after what they had seen Jesus do. But it's far deeper than that. It means our very nature, our character, our motivations and attitudes and default responses become like those of Jesus.

Jesus expressed this directly just before returning to heaven after His resurrection: " Then Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. *Go therefore and make disciples* of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:18-20, emphasis added).

Jesus didn't direct His followers to go turn people into

church members, or Christian consumers, or environmentalists, or justice workers, or good citizens or “nice” people. All of those things may have merit if and only if they are part of the main thing—becoming disciples.

And being a disciple means you follow someone and increasingly become like the one you are following.

That idea should seriously challenge everything we assume and do in our Christian life.

Is what you do yourself (Bible study, prayer, church attendance, volunteering and so on) leading you to increasingly become like Jesus? If not, something needs to change.

Is any ministry we do helping others become followers of Jesus, and increasingly become more and more like Him? If not, something needs to change.

If my books or speaking or this blog is not helping people in some way become more like Jesus, then let’s stop it all right now!

How to Become Like Jesus

Hopefully you and I have learned by now that simply trying harder doesn’t change our character. It doesn’t get us very far in becoming more like Jesus.

And yet simply standing back and waiting for God to do something in us doesn’t work either. How many people do you know who have been Christians for years, perhaps decades, and don’t look anything at all like Jesus?

What makes the difference?

Only a few weeks after Jesus had returned to heaven, Peter and John were arrested for healing a lame man in the name of Jesus, and were hauled before the temple authorities. “When

they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were illiterate and uneducated men, they marveled. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

As a result of being with Jesus, Peter and John were different. Being with Jesus changes people—including you and me.

“But we all, seeing the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces, as in a mirror, are being transformed *into the same image* from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18, emphasis added).

“Unveiled faces” –that’s being in His presence. By being with Jesus, we become increasingly like Him. The more we are in His presence, the more we experience the transformation He desires for us. You can’t spend time in His presence and not be changed.

Get in God’s presence often—regularly with other believers, and daily in your own time with God. Stick around long enough in His presence, and you will become like Him.

Your Turn: *Have you become more like Jesus as a result of your Christian activities? If not, what do you need to change? Leave a comment below.* {eo}

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This article originally appeared at .