

10 Common Traits of a Jesus-Driven Church

The Word of God teaches us in Romans 8:29 that believers were “predestined to be conformed to the image of [Jesus Christ].” The apostle Paul wrote this to the church in Rome; therefore, the subject of this verse was written to the corporate body of Christ. From this passage, we learn that local congregations are called to become Christlike in their methodology, mission and essence.

Although numerous attributes can be unpacked, in this article, I am narrowing the focus to 10 traits every Jesus-driven church must have. Of course, Jesus Christ was the only one perfect human being who ever lived, which means that every other person or community will fall far short of His glory, no matter how hard they try. The best we can ever do is to attempt to walk in His grace in our journey, understanding that we will never find a perfect church or entity on this side of heaven.

That being said, the following are 10 traits every Jesus-driven church must attempt to walk in:

1. There is a spirit of joyful service. Jesus taught that the greatest in the kingdom is the one who serves (Matt. 23:11). He modeled this when He knelt and washed the feet of His disciples (John 13). This was totally against the Roman/Greco ethos of His day, which taught that humbling oneself before others who were not your superior was inappropriate and unacceptable. Consequently, the Jesus-driven church must celebrate voluntary service for the good of others.

2. There is an expectation of the miraculous. When the apostle Peter was preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, He described Jesus as the one who “went about doing good and healing all

who were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38b). Thus, Jesus was equated with the miraculous power of God. Jesus even told His followers that He expected them to do more wondrous works than He did (John 14:12). Consequently, the Jesus-driven church will have within its culture a corporate faith that expects the miraculous.

3. There is a sense of divine mission and purpose. When Jesus preached His first sermon, He read from the prophet Isaiah the passage that prophesied His mission (Luke 4:18, Isa. 61:1-2). He was a man on a mission who had objectives and goals from day to day (Luke 13:32). He told Pilate that his life's purpose was to testify to the truth as the King (John 18:37). In light of all this, the Jesus-driven church will have a compelling vision to ignite a sense of purpose and mission among their congregations.

4. There is ample discipleship. As we read the four gospels, it is evident that Jesus' primary ministry focus was to first pour into His 12 disciples and, secondly, to pour into His 70 disciples (Luke 9:1, Luke 10:1). Local churches that are conformed to the image of Christ will base their whole ministry on making disciples rather than merely attracting crowds.

5. There are genuine fellowship and community. Jesus did not merely teach His disciples. He lived among them and did life with them. He shared His pain with them, ate with them and prayed with them (Luke 14:14-46). The Jesus-driven church will have, as a core value, the practice of genuine fellowship and community.

6. There is a focus on the Father. Jesus was always in the bosom of the Father and was described from the beginning as being with God (John 1:1-18). Verses such as these reveal how intimate Jesus was with His Father. He also said that He and His Father were one (John 10:30) and that He only speaks what His Father gives Him and always does what pleases His Father

(John 8:28-29). Consequently, the Jesus-driven church will walk in a spirit of adoption as sons of the living God who cry out from the abundance of their heart "Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15). This kind of church runs counter to the orphan spirit in the world, thus ministering healing to the brokenhearted and disenfranchised of society.

7. The Spirit of prayer is a priority. Jesus regularly practiced rising before dawn to pray (Mark 1:35). His disciples, realizing that the secret of His power was prayer, asked Him to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1). Hebrews 5:7 describes the days of His humanity as a time when He offered up prayers with loud cries and tears. Since Jesus was a man of regular, fervent prayer, the Jesus-driven church will also be a community of much fervent prayer.

8. Patience and perseverance are necessary attributes. The Bible tells us that Jesus, with patience, "endured the cross" because of "the joy that was set before Him" (Heb. 12:2). Even though He was born God, the Son, He did not minister or do any miracles during the first 30 years of His life. This took great patience (Luke 3:23). Any church that conforms to Christ Jesus will be a church with a strong ethic of patience amid tests and suffering.

9. They adopt a way of life rather than a religion. Jesus said, "I am the way" (John 14:6). He did not say, "I am the religion."

The early Church described its journey in Christ as a life and a way (Acts 5:20, Acts 24:14). Churches that are legalistic, ritualistic and religious (attempting to follow Christ based merely on rules and regulations) are not mimicking Christ but rather manmade religion (Gal. 3:1-3, Col. 2:16-23). The Jesus-driven church will express a relationship with God in an organic, relational way.

10. They speak truth to power. Many contemporary pastors and

leaders' goal is to avoid cultural conflict to become "relevant." However, the Lord that such pastors claim to follow always spoke truth to power. A cursory reading of Scripture demonstrates how He purposely healed people on the Sabbath, an affront to religious leaders (Mark 3:1-5, John 5). He spoke about His kingdom to a Roman leader named Pontus Pilate (John 18:36-38), and He rebuked religious leaders for putting their traditions ahead of the Word of God (Mark 7:1-23). The Jesus-driven church will never water down the truth but will adequately reflect the whole counsel of God in their values, words and mission.

In conclusion, we can say many other things in regard to being conformed to the image of Christ; however, if we attempt to walk in the 10 points above, we will leave a powerful imprint on the world around us. {eoa}

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