

To know and be more like Jesus

The Main Goal for 2024
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Philippians 3:10-11 (NLT) I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, ¹¹ so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!

Introduction: The tale is told of a talented and gifted bloodhound in England that started a hunt by chasing a full-grown male deer. During the chase a fox crossed his path, so he began now to chase the fox. A rabbit crossed his hunting path, so he began to chase the rabbit. After chasing the rabbit for a while, a tiny field mouse crossed his path, and he chased the mouse to the corner of a farmer's barn. The bloodhound had begun the hunt chasing a prized male deer for his master and wound up barking at a tiny mouse.

We sometimes miss the great opportunities of life because we get sidetracked.

The Apostle Paul refused to be sidetracked. He knew that living his life for the honor and glory of God was his top priority. He accomplished this not just by preaching the Gospel, but also by getting to know Jesus more and becoming more like Him.

Keep in mind that Paul is writing this letter from a prison cell, not a beautiful hotel room. His life could end at any moment, yet he makes his priorities clear.

- I desire to know Christ
- I desire to experience the power of that raised Him from the dead
- I desire to suffer with Him, sharing in His death

In a nutshell, he's saying, "I want to know Christ and be like Him." I want to be like Him, experiencing the same Holy Spirit power and grace to live and even die for the sake of others.

Paul wasn't always this way. He had personal ambitions and was self-centered prior to Christ.

Philippians 3:4b-6 (NLT) Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more! ⁵ I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. ⁶ I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault. ⁷ I once thought these things were valuable...

When you truly encounter Jesus your priorities and selfish ambitions change.

After meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus, the course of Paul's life was drastically altered. All of his personal ambitions to become a well-known Pharisee or religious leader in his day were shattered. The things that were most important to him before had suddenly become useless

and worthless endeavors. There is now only one thing that Paul cares about: knowing Christ and becoming more like Him.

Philippians 3:7-8 (NLT) I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. ⁸ Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ.

Paul's goal for this new life journey was not to become a better person, but to put an end to his selfish ways of living. He was driven by a desire to know and become more like Jesus.

“To become like Christ is the only thing in the world worth caring for, the thing before which every ambition of man is folly and all lower achievement vain.” Henry Drummond

Jesus was absolutely selfless, mission-oriented, and completely submissive to the will of God the Father, even to the point of death.

Philippians 2:5b-8 (NLT) You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. ⁶ Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. ⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, ⁸ he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

Paul desires to live and even if necessary die like Jesus so that he could live the resurrected life.

He knew that although positionally he was already in Christ he needed to strive to be more like Him in his actions and mission.

Philippians 3:12-14 (NLT) I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. ¹³ No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

To be more like Jesus requires intentionality and a reality check

1. **Remember there is always room for growth** (*Not that I have already achieved*)
2. **Remember that the goal is to be like Jesus** (*I press on for the perfection for which Christ first possessed me*)

You may be further along than other's but the goal isn't to be better than others but to be like Jesus.

3. **To grow requires focus** (*I focus on one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead*)

We will never grow in our walk with God if we keep looking back to where we came from.

4. **To grow requires determination** (I press on to reach the end of the race)

“Being a Christian is more than just an instantaneous conversation; it is like a daily process where you grow to be more and more like Christ.” Billy Graham

As followers of Jesus, God wants us to reflect His likeness in all that we do via His grace. Jesus' ideas, words, and deeds during His life and ministry provide us with an example of how to honor God in our own lives.

Philippians 2:3-5 (NLT) Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. ⁵ You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

Ephesians 5:1-2 (NLT) Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. ² Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.

¹ John 2:6 (NLT) Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.

¹ Peter 2:21 (NLT) For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps.

Here are some character traits of Jesus that we should imitate.

- **Self-control** (Luke 4) *When tempted by the devil in the wilderness with food, power, and many other things, Jesus controlled His desires and submitted them all to the will of the Father.*
- **Servant's heart** (Mark 10:45) *The Son of man did not come to be served but to serve.*
- **Obedience to the Father** (John 6:38) *I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will.*
- **Loved imperfect people** - Jesus was open to eating with people who were imperfect and different (Levi, Zacchaeus) (Mark 2:16) *But when the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees saw him eating with tax collectors and other sinners, they asked his disciples, "Why does he eat with such scum?"*
- **Slow to pass judgement** (The woman caught in adultery) (John 8:1-10) Jesus didn't justify her conduct he simply showed her mercy instead of condemnation.
- **Quick to forgive** (Luke 23:34)
- **Compassionate** (Matthew 9:36)
- **Self-sacrifice** - Jesus down His life even for his enemies

There are so many other character traits we could focus on but let's start just with these.

You may ask, how do I grow to be more like Him?

The truth is that spiritual growth is something that occurs when you place yourself in the correct setting.

We have plants at home that require attention. They begin to dry out if we do not water them. It's remarkable how little water it takes for a wilting plant to come to life.

Just as our physiological bodies can recover when we give them the correct nutrients and get sick when we don't, so our spirit man can grow to be more like Jesus when we allow the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to nourish our hearts.

The Holy Spirit builds Christlike character in us through the Word.

Let me give you some practical things that can create a setting to become more like Jesus in your daily life.

- Get to know Jesus through the word (Do a study on the life of Christ)

He that would be conformed to Christ's image, and become a Christ-like man, must constantly be studying Christ Himself. R.C. Ryle

- Talk to him in prayer
- Be aware of His presence
- Get around people who are growing and are open to challenge you.
- Fast with us for the 21 days starting January 5th

The world doesn't need more role models, it needs more of Jesus, the ultimate role model. People will not find a better person to emulate positive character traits from than Jesus Christ himself.

Let knowing and being more like Jesus be number one on your list of new year's resolutions. If you make this your primary goal, everything else will fall into place.

Matthew 6:33 (NLT) Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

Don't end up barking at a tiny mouse when you should have been chasing the prize of the high calling of God!!!