

HOW TO GROW MORE LIKE JESUS – Part 2

1 Peter 3:8-12

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Today we're continuing a three-week series called "How to Grow More Like Jesus."

Every Christian in our church needs to understand these two things very clearly.

2 FACTS EVERY CHRISTIAN MUST UNDERSTAND

First, God calls you to pursue spiritual growth.

2 Peter 3:18 (CSB) says, "but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

You are not allowed to stay the way you are.

And you will never arrive – you will never get to the point to where you have learned all that God wants you to know, and you have become as mature as God wants you to become. Until the day you die you will have lots of room to grow.

And that means that you should be actively pursuing spiritual growth, whether you are a child, a baby Christian, or a seasoned Christian.

Unfortunately if you do decide to be obedient and pursue spiritual growth, you will be in the very small minority of Christians in America.

Many Christians are pursuing improvement in their finances; they are pursuing improvement in their physical fitness; they are pursuing improvement in their luxuries and comforts and technology; they are pursuing improvement in their mode of transportation; but very few Christians are pursuing the growth that matters most – spiritual growth.

- 85% of the people in the United States call themselves Christians – 247 million people.
- Those who call themselves Christians are no more likely to give assistance to a homeless person on the street than non-Christians.
- Those who call themselves Christians are no more likely than non-Christians to correct the mistake when a cashier gives them too much change.
- A Christian is just as likely to have an elective abortion as a non-Christian.
- Christians divorce at the same rate as those who consider themselves non-Christians.
- Even though there are more big churches than ever before filled with people who proudly wear the title Christian, 50 percent of Christian churches didn't help one single person find salvation.
- When the Barna Research Group did a survey involving 152 separate items comparing the general population with those who called themselves Christians, they found virtually no difference between the two groups. They found no difference in the attitudes of Christians and non-Christians and they found no difference in the actions of Christians and non-Christians.¹

Recently I asked a guy to visit our church. He asked what denomination our church is. I said Baptist. He said, "You see, I'm not Baptist." I said, "What are you?" He said, "Christian." I said, "Baptists are Christians." After we talked awhile I realized he was clueless. If he is saved, he very immature.

And that's pretty much the way most Christians are in America. They are not pursuing spiritual growth and are spiritually immature.

But we're not going to be normal Christians at Church Acadiana. We're going to pursue spiritual growth together.

Here's the **second thing** that every Christian in our church needs to know.

Spiritual growth means becoming more like Jesus in your character, conduct, and convictions.

¹ Dave Ferguson. *The Big Idea*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007.

You can't grow until you know the what growth means.

You can't hit a target if you can't see it.

So what is spiritual growth? It is **becoming more like Jesus in every way.**

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

In all you say and do, it's helpful to ask yourself, What would Jesus do?, and then do it.

But here's the problem. **You can't become like Jesus if you don't know what Jesus is like.**

How can you imitate Christ's character, conduct, and convictions, if you don't know what His character, conduct, and convictions are?

If you want to grow, you have to learn what Jesus was like.

And the way we do that is by studying the Bible.

3 WAYS TO DISCOVER WHAT JESUS IS LIKE IN THE BIBLE

There are three primary ways to discover what Jesus is like in the Bible.

First, you can study the stories about Christ – the four gospels at the beginning of the New Testament – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Study how Jesus talked, and treated people, and responded to evil, and handled temptation, and how He prayed, and how He endured suffering and hardship.

The second way to discover what Jesus is like in the Bible is to study the commands in the Bible.

To be a follower of Jesus is to obey His commands. In fact, one of the best indicators of spiritual maturity is your obedience.

John Piper wrote a book that I highly recommend called *What Jesus Demands From the World*. It has fifty chapters, each taking an in-depth look at fifty of Christ's commands.

And those are just the commands of Jesus.

The Bible is filled with hundreds and hundreds of commands for us.

Here's what you need to understand about the commands in the Bible: *When God commands you to do something, it's because obedience will make you more like Jesus*.

The third primary way to discover what Jesus is like in the Bible is to study the vices and virtues in the Bible.

The Bible is filled vices and virtues. A virtue is a morally excellent behavior, or a Christlike behavior, and a vice is a sinful behavior – an un-Christlike behavior.

Let me give you some examples.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (CSB) says, “9 Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or males who have sex with males, 10 no thieves, greedy people, drunkards, verbally abusive people, or swindlers will inherit God's kingdom.”

Let's see how smart you are. *Is this a list of vices, or a list of virtues?* This is a list of vices – 9 to be exact. Now let's look at another passage.

Galatians 5:22-23 says, “22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control....”

Are these vices or virtues? These are virtues. These are morally excellent, or Christlike behaviors.

The Bible is filled with vices and virtues.

And so one way to learn what Jesus is like is to study those vices and virtues, and then adopt the virtues and avoid the vices. And as you do, you will become more and more like Jesus.

And that's what we're doing in this sermon series. We're studying four verses that give us a list of nine vices and virtues, and we're taking an in-depth look at each of these attributes.

Why? Not so that we can be smarter, but so that we can know what Jesus is like, and then imitate Him. We want to understand the virtues so we can adopt them, and we want to understand the vices so that we can avoid them.

So now let's get back to 1 Peter and learn what Christ is like so that we can grow more like Jesus.

Turn to **1 Peter 3:8-12 (CSB).**

8 Finally, all of you be like-minded and sympathetic, love one another, and be compassionate and humble, 9 not paying back evil for evil or insult for insult but, on the contrary, giving a blessing, since you were called for this, so that you may inherit a blessing.

10 For the one who wants to love life
and to see good days,
let him keep his tongue from evil
and his lips from speaking deceit,
11 and let him turn away from evil
and do what is good.

Let him seek peace and pursue it,
12 because the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous
and his ears are open to their prayer.
But the face of the Lord is against
those who do what is evil.

9 WAYS TO GROW MORE LIKE CHRIST

So in this passage we can see a list of nine virtues, or 9 ways to grow more like Christ.

Last week we looked at the first five, all of them in verse eight.

Follow along in verse eight as we review.

First, underline the phrase “like-minded”. That means be a person of unity, or make every effort to get along and work together with church family.

Second, underline the word “sympathetic”. That means rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. The idea is to feel what others are feeling; identify with the feelings of others.

Third, underline the phrase “love one another”. This is talking about love for church family. Use your gifts and resources to help meet the needs of your church and church family.

Fourth, underline the word “compassionate”. That means to feel sorrow and concern for the sufferings and misfortunes of others. It's not just pity, but pity that moves into action.

And **fifth**, underline the word “humble”. Humility is seeing yourself the way God sees you.

Now let's look at two more virtues.

9 WAYS TO GROW MORE LIKE CHRIST

6. Forgiveness.

Look at **verse 9**. “Not paying back evil for evil or insult for insult but, on the contrary, giving a blessing, since you were called for this, so that you may inherit a blessing.”

That may be the best verse on forgiveness in the entire Bible.

It doesn't use the word forgiveness, but it is describing what forgiveness is.

Forgiveness is not feeling good about someone who has wronged you. It is choosing to act good to someone who has wronged you.

If I could sum up forgiveness it would be this: **Be kind to those who have wronged you.**

Many people are confused about forgiveness, so let me tell you what forgiveness is not.

8 THINGS FORGIVENESS IS NOT

1) Forgiveness is not a feeling; it is a choice.

You can forgive someone even if you still feel deeply hurt by them. It's a choice.

Raise your right hand. That was a choice; an act of your will.

Forgiveness is the same thing. It's a choice; an act of your will.

It doesn't matter how you feel, God calls you to forgive.

2) Forgiveness is not dependent on the other person.

You are not just to forgive someone if they apologize and make amends.

You are to forgive even the unrepentant.

3) Forgiveness is not the same as reconciliation.

Reconciliation is a restored relationship.

That's not forgiveness.

Reconciliation requires forgiveness, but forgiveness doesn't require reconciliation.

Reconciliation requires forgiveness and repentance. It takes two people.

Forgiveness is just about you.

4) Forgiveness is not the same as trust.

Just because you forgive them doesn't mean you should trust them.

Trust is earned. Forgiveness is free.

Trust is expensive. Forgiveness is a gift.

I'll forgive you no matter what you do. But if you want me to trust you, then you need to earn it.

5) Forgiveness does not mean hiding your pain.

It's not saying, "What you did was no big deal; I'm over it; I'm okay." That's not forgiveness.

Forgiveness is saying, "You really hurt me; and I'm still recovering; I may never recover; but I forgive you; I choose to be kind to you anyway."

6) Forgiveness does not always mean hiding someone's sin for them.

Sometimes it does.

For example, let's say you call me after church because you're mad at me and you yell and scream and curse and insult. Forgiveness in that case might involve me hiding your sin and not telling anyone about your weak moment. That's just between you and me.

But let's say a neighbor molests one of my kids and we find out. Forgiveness doesn't mean that I don't call the cops.

That may seem nice to him, but that's very cruel to the rest of the kids in the neighborhood who might be victimized.

If my neighbor molests a child, then he is a threat to other children, and the police need to get involved to prevent him from hurting other children.

But calling the police doesn't mean that I haven't forgiven him.

7) Forgiveness doesn't mean not protecting yourself.

For example, let's say that a man beats us his wife, and so she decides to move back to her parent's house.

So the husband says, "God says you're supposed to forgive."

Just because she moved out doesn't mean she hasn't forgiven.

And forgiveness is not necessarily moving back in with her abusive husband.

She is called to forgive, but she also needs to protect herself.

8) Forgiveness is not simply avoiding revenge.

Forgiveness is going beyond avoiding revenge to actually showing love and kindness to the person who hurt you.

Go back to **verse 9**. "Not paying back evil for evil or insult for insult but, on the contrary, giving a blessing, since you were called for this, so that you may inherit a blessing."

There's a great example of forgiveness in Numbers 12.

Moses was leading the Israelites through the wilderness, and his brother and sister, Miriam and Aaron, decided to rebel against him. The criticized Moses for marrying a Cushite woman and they basically said, “Why does he get to be in charge? We’re just as good as him (my paraphrase).”

This angered the Lord, and so God instantly struck Miriam with leprosy. Her skin became white and flaky like snow. When Aaron saw Miriam he said to Moses, “Moses, please forgive us!”

So **Numbers 12:13** says, “Then Moses cried out to the LORD, ‘God, please heal her!’” And the Lord did just that.

Not only did Moses avoid revenge, but he paid her back with a blessing. He showed love and kindness to her.

In **Matthew 5:44** Jesus said, “But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

In **Luke 6:27-29** Jesus said, “27 But I say to you who listen: Love your enemies, do what is good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29 If anyone hits you on the cheek, offer the other also. And if anyone takes away your coat, don’t hold back your shirt either.”

Romans 12:19-20 says, “19 Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for God’s wrath, because it is written, Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay, says the Lord. 20 But If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For in so doing you will be heaping fiery coals on his head.”

In other words, your forgiveness will make him feel guilty for opposing you.

7. Edification.

Look at **verse 10**. Verses 10-12 are actually a quotation or a paraphrase of Psalm 34:12-16. It says, “For the one who wants to love life and to see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit.”

If you want to be like Jesus, then you need to “keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. In other words, you need to avoid evil speech.

To put it positively, you need to be a person of **edification**.

Let me explain that word.

When I was in high school we had a new youth minister who came to our church named David Donham. And our youth group would meet twice a week; we would meet for Sunday school, and then we would meet on Wednesday nights at somebody’s home. And anytime someone would say something mean or inappropriate David would say, “Edification.” And pretty soon it caught on to the rest of the group. Pretty soon all of us were reminding one another, “Edification.” What does that word mean?

It comes from **Ephesians 4:29 (NASB)**. “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for **edification** according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.”

You should only use words that are edifying.

What does that word mean? It’s a Greek word (Gk *oikodome*) The word literally means to build up.

You should **only use words that build others up**. That’s what it means to be a person of edification. Only use words that help people grow in Christ; words that promote spiritual health; words that make Christ look good; words that Christ would use; words that encourage.

Let’s talk about what it means to have an edifying tongue; to be a person of edification; to avoid evil speech. As I studied this week I identified **15 types** of evil speech. If you want to grow more like Christ, your speech should not be...

15 TYPES OF EVIL SPEECH

- 1) Lying/deceitful (Col 3:8-9; 1 Pet 3:10; Eph 4:25)
- 2) Cursing/dirty (Col 3:8-9; Eph 5:4)
- 3) Insulting/criticizing/demeaning (2 Tim 3:2; James 4:11; 1 Pet 3:9)
- 4) Gossiping (Pr 11:13; 16:28; 17:9 20:19; Rm 1:29-31) Telling someone else's secret; talking about people behind their back.
- 5) Slandering (2 Tim 3:3) Telling lies about someone.
- 6) Complaining (Phil 2:14; James 5:9) About circumstances or people.
- 7) Arguing/Quarreling (Phil 2:14) The difference between an argument and a discussion: In an argument, voices are raised, speech gets faster, you start cutting each other off, then you start talking over each other, then sarcasm and insults come out, then you get angry and your adrenaline starts pumping, and this can manifest itself different ways – your heart starts to beat faster, your body gets hotter, your face turns red, and your body starts to tremble.
- 8) Triangulating (Mt 18:15; James 5:9) Triangulation is when someone wrongs you, and you go and talk to a third person about it, involving a another person in the conflict when it should have been kept between the two of you.
- 9) Flattering (Rm 16:18) When you tell someone what they want to hear in order to deceive them into giving you what you want.
- 10) Blaspheming (Ex 20:7) Taking God's name in vain, or misusing God's name. God's name is not meant to be a curse-word.
- 11) Hasty (Pr 18:13; Pr 29:20) Speaking before thinking.

- 12) Boasting (1 Cor 1:31; 2 Tim 3:21; 2 Pet 2:18)
- 13) Harsh (Pr 15:1; Eph 4:31) Expressing your anger by using rough words or by raising your voice.
- 14) Retaliating (1 Pet 2:23; 1 Pet 3:9) Returning insult for insult.
- 15) Mocking (Ps 1:1; 2 Pet 3:3) Making fun of someone or something in a cruel way (Google).

15 TYPES OF CHRISTLIKE SPEECH

What about Christlike speech? How can you talk like Christ? I also identified 15 types of Christlike speech. If you want to talk like Christ, then your speech should be...

- 1) Edifying (Eph 4:29) Only use words that build others up.
- 2) Gracious (Eph 4:29; Col 4:5-6) Courteous (polite and well-mannered) and kind (considerate – be careful not to hurt or bother others).
- 3) Seasoned with salt (Col 4:6; Col 3:17) You should have a missionary mouth. You should make people thirsty for Jesus by the way you talk.
- 4) Ready to give a defense (1 Pet 3:15) Ready to explain why you believe.
- 5) Evangelistic (Acts 1:8; Col 4:5-6; 1 Pet 3:15-16). Looking for opportunities to share the gospel.
- 6) Thankful (Eph 5:4, 20; Col 3:15)
- 7) Gentle (Pr 15:1; 1 Pet 3:16) As opposed to harshness, stay calm and kind when you are angry.
- 8) Respectful (1 Pet 3:16) Talk to people as if they are very valuable and important.

- 9) Restrained/Calculated (Pr 10:19; 17:27-28) Choose your words carefully.
- 10) Honest/truthful (Eph 4:25)
- 11) Encouraging (1 Thess 5:11; Heb 3:13; Heb 10:25) (Gk *parakaleo*) Comfort, exhort, strongly urge, cheer up, inspire, motivate, spur on, embolden.
- 12) Forgiving (1 Pet 2:23; 1 Pet 3:9) As opposed to retaliating; respond to insult with a blessing.
- 13) Teaching (Col 3:16) Teach others how to grow in the faith.
- 14) Admonishing (Col 3:16) Warn someone of evil to be avoided; rebuke/correct a fellow believer who is in sin.
- 15) Praise (Mt 8:10; Mt 16:16-17; Mt 25:21; Mt 25:34-36) Express approval or admiration; to give a compliment.

Let me put it like this. This is what it means to keep your tongue from evil. Make it your goal to cultivate a “missionary mouth.” With every word you say, try to say in a way that would attract unbelievers to Christ, and encourage believers to keep growing.

There are two verses that express this idea.

Colossians 3:17 (NLT) says, “And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.”

Always remember that you are a representing Christ when you speak. Speak words that make Him look good; words that please Him; words that He would endorse.

Colossians 4:5-6 (CSB) says, “5 Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person.”

I love the phrase seasoned with salt. Remember, salt makes people thirsty. Speak in a way that makes people thirsty for what you have – a relationship with Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

The big idea of this series is that God wants you to grow, and that means growing more like Jesus Christ.

But to become like Christ you must know what Christ is like,

and so in this sermon series we are studying nine virtues, or Christlike attributes so that we can apply them to our lives and become more like Christ.

I hope you'll join us next week as we conclude this series by looking at the last two virtues.