

# Following in the Footsteps of Jesus

## DEVELOPING the CHARACTER of JESUS

Matthew 5:1

April 30, 2022

So far in our discipleship journey, we have talked about ASSUMPTIONS, TRANSFORMATION, COUNTING the COST, and SURRENDER-ADJUST-OBEY, which brings us now to DEVELOPING the CHARACTER of JESUS.

**One day as the crowds were gathering, Jesus went up the mountainside with his disciples and sat down to teach them {Matthew 5-7 NLT}:**

**"Blessed is the one who realizes his NEED for Jesus...."**

Developing Jesus' character involves dependence - accepting the fact that we can no longer live life independent from God - knowing that Jesus is our only hope. We leave self-sufficiency at the side of the road because He will call us to do things which are humanly impossible as we are placed in situations that will require faith and dependence on Him.

**"Blessed is the one who MOURNS...."**

Developing Jesus' character involves shifting our focus from the things of this world to eternity.

We will see the sinfulness of our own sins. We will mourn over the separation from God they have caused and will desire restoration and reconciliation.

We will see the world as Jesus sees it - a place of desperate need - a place steeped in darkness - a place unaware that it is dancing toward eternal loss - and we will mourn over it as Jesus does.

**"Blessed is the one who is HUMBLE...."**

Developing Jesus' character involves understanding exactly what we are before a Holy and Just God. Humility doesn't mean we lack power, rather humility means we choose to hand over our power and insistence on personal control to Jesus. The humble are those who trust God and surrender to His authority even when they can't make sense of the circumstances.

**"Blessed is the one who hungers and thirsts for RIGHTEOUSNESS...."**

Developing Jesus' character involves leaving our self-righteousness at the side of the road recognizing that it amounts to nothing more than a pile of filthy, stinky, disgusting rags. We are no longer nourished by our own righteousness, so we grow hungry and thirsty for the righteousness of Jesus - we yearn for the transformed life that is found only in Him.

**"Blessed is the one who is MERCIFUL...."**

Developing Jesus' character involves *"HESED"* = loyalty, goodness, kindness, devotion, faithfulness, favor, mercy, unchanging love --- going above and beyond what is expected. *"HESED"* moved Jesus to action and it will lead His disciples to be moved to action as well.

**"Blessed is the one whose HEART is PURE...."**

Developing Jesus' character involves a change in our motives. As we hunger and thirst after God's righteousness, He fills us with His authentic internal righteousness which replaces our outer shows of fake righteousness. As that happens our intentions and motives become pure.

**"Blessed is the one who WORKS for PEACE...."**

Developing Jesus' character involves committing to peace. A peacemaker resolves conflict, is quick to apologize, does not seek revenge and loves his enemy. As Francis of Assisi prayed: *"Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy."*

**“Blessed is the one who is MOCKED - PERSECUTED - LIED ABOUT because he is My follower and lives for God....”**

Developing Jesus’ character involves knowing full well that we will be mocked and persecuted and our motives will be misinterpreted and misrepresented because we choose loyalty to Jesus above all else. We know that nothing will be fully made right until Jesus returns, so we stop wasting our time worrying about this thing or that thing. We become less concerned about personal rights, slights and injustices and more concerned about introducing others to the only sure guarantee of hope and a future.

**“You are the salt of the earth..... You are the light of the world -- glowing in the night for all to see.”**

Developing Jesus’ character involves having a positive impact for Jesus in every situation we find ourselves in + active participation in the Great Commission. Salt makes everything around it salty and light permeates even the darkest of corners and so should it be with the disciple of Jesus.

**Mother Teresa** - Let no one come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God’s kindness: kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile.

**“You have heard that the law of Moses says.... But I say.....”**

- Do not murder..... If you are angry with someone, you are subject to judgment!
- Do not commit adultery.... Anyone who even looks at a woman with lust in his eye has already committed adultery with her in his heart.
- A man can divorce his wife by merely giving her a letter of divorce.... A man who divorces his wife, unless she has been unfaithful, causes her to commit adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.
- Do not break your vows.... Don't make any vows.... Just say a simple, 'Yes, I will,' or 'No, I won't.' Your word is enough.
- An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.... Don't resist an evil person! If you are slapped on the right cheek, turn the other, too. <sup>40</sup> If you are ordered to court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. <sup>41</sup> If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles.
- Love your neighbor' and hate your enemy.... Love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!

Developing Jesus’ character involves realizing that lawbreaking begins where no one can see it - in our mind. Obedience is not adherence to a set of rules, but devotion to a Person and that moves us beyond external rules - the “do’s” or “don’t do’s” - on a wall to an internal reality of obedience based on loyalty and devotion and gratitude.

- **Galatians 5:22-23** - But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law.

**“Don’t do your good deeds publicly, to be admired.... But when you give to someone, don’t tell your left hand what your right hand is doing.”**

**“When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them.... But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father secretly.”**

**“And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, who try to look pale and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting.... But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will suspect you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in secret.”**

Whose applause do you seek? The applause of men or the applause of nail-scarred hands?

Developing Jesus’ character involves becoming a stealth servant. Disciples of Jesus don’t make choices to participate based on how much publicity they will receive or to what degree they will be the center of attention. They don’t do anything hoping for recognition or reward. They serve from a place of humility and gratitude.

**“I tell you, don’t worry about everyday life -- whether you have enough food, drink, and clothes.... Why be like the pagans who are so deeply concerned about these things? Your heavenly Father already knows all your needs, <sup>33</sup> and he will give you all you need from day to day if you live for him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern.”**

Developing Jesus’ character involves infinite trust in the provision and power of God. Disciples of Jesus are not worriers they are trust-ers.

**“Stop judging others, and you will not be judged. For others will treat you as you treat them. Whatever measure you use in judging others, it will be used to measure how you are judged. And why worry about a speck in your friend's**

**eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log from your own eye; then perhaps you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye."**

Developing Jesus' character involves careful and considered judgment. Disciples of Jesus are not *"judgy"* and they do not throw judgment around as if it is their right and prerogative to do so. They are fully aware of their own faults and shortcomings. They realize their own need for Jesus and are fully committed to personal transformation. If persistent and willful sin persists within the body of Christ it is dealt with, but always in a way that is redemptive.

### **In all these things, Jesus was our example.**

- He was God, yet depended fully on His Father.
- He mourned over the world He came to save.
- He was humble to the point of death.
- He yearned to impart His righteousness to all He came to save.
- He was merciful.
- His motives were pure.
- He worked for peace.
- He was mocked - persecuted - and lied about every day of His life.
- He was salt and light.
- His obedience flowed from His *"Love for God"* and he exuded love, joy, peace patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control.
- He was not moved by man's praise or by his censure. He sought recognition from one Person only - His Father.
- He did not concern Himself with the cares of life, but only with doing what His Father lead Him to do.
- He was careful with His judgments and did not needlessly cause pain. He spoke the truth and upheld the truth, but He did so with tears in His eyes and redemption in His heart.

You might look at this list and think, *"impossible"*, yet that is the beauty of life with Jesus. As we walk with Him and take to heart His example to us, we slowly, but surely, become like Him - morphing happens.

**No doubt about it, the way to identify a person is by the kind of fruit that is produced.**