



# MESSAGE GUIDE

MAY 4, 2025

## DEEP DIVE: PRACTICING THE WAY 2 - “BECOMING LIKE JESUS”



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We are in a three-part series based on the book Practicing the Way by John Mark Comer. We are calling this a “deep dive,” because we want to take a close look at a good Christian book that we are encouraging everyone to read. The book outlines three goals for every Christian, and we're using those goals as the titles of this three-part series. Last week, we looked at the first goal of “Being with Jesus.” Today we'll be looking at “Becoming like Jesus.” And next week, we will wrap things up with “Doing what Jesus Did.”

We would all likely agree that “Becoming like Jesus” is a good idea, but here are a couple important questions that we need to answer:

### 1. “SHOULD BECOMING LIKE JESUS REALLY BE THE GOAL OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE? OR MAYBE A MORE POINTED QUESTION: “IS BECOMING LIKE JESUS THE GOAL OF ALL CHRISTIANS? WHY DO YOU THINK SO OR NOT THINK SO?”

Let's talk about bad ideas for a second. Some bad ideas are pretty easy to spot right off the bat. Here are some examples:

- There is the kid who puts some Mento candies in a 2-liter bottle of soda . . . and then puts his mouth over the bottle to try and contain the chemical reaction. Bad idea.
- Teenagers who jump off the roof of their house...onto a trampoline...hoping to be propelled into a nearby swimming pool. Bad idea.
- There is the fellow who put superglue on his index finger and then held his finger to the bridge of his nose. Yep, he found out super glue really works. Bad idea.

Usually, we know a bad idea when we see it, but not always. Here are a couple examples:

- To many Western Christians, Jesus is (only) a delivery mechanism for a particular theory of atonement, as if the only reason he came was to die, not to live. This is a bad idea, because it is incomplete. Jesus didn't come just to die. He came to live, and to show us how to live. He came to bring the Kingdom of God... here to earth, and he taught his disciples to pray “May your kingdom come (now) and your will be done (here) on earth as it is in heaven.” He came to give abundant life here and now, not just eternal life somewhere, someday.



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- A second bad idea is Salvation by minimum requirements.
  - a) You are a sinner
  - b) God loves you
  - c) Jesus dies on the cross for your sins
  - d) Believe in him, you can go to heaven when you die

These things are all true but again, this is an incomplete gospel. Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my father who is in heaven.” Jesus also said, “Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like the foolish man who built his house on sand.”

For Jesus, salvation is less about getting you into heaven and more about getting heaven into you. John Comer states it this way, “*It's less of a transaction and more of a transformation. It's not just about what he has done for us but also about what he has done, is doing, and will do in us if we apprentice under him.*” The question should never be, “What’s the least I have to do to follow Jesus?” It should always be, “Lord, who are you helping me to become?”

## 2. DOES YOUR FAITH IN JESUS SEEM MORE TRANSACTIONAL OR TRANSFORMATIONAL? DO YOU BELIEVE THAT “BELIEVING IN JESUS” AND HIS WORD IS ENOUGH, OR DO YOU DESIRE TO HAVE A TRANSFORMED LIFE THAT INCLUDES PUTTING JESUS’ WORDS INTO PRACTICE?

The idea of “Becoming like Jesus” is the antidote to these incomplete ideas. The antidote or remedy is to be with Jesus and become an apprentice to Jesus. We must abide with Jesus 24/7. And we have to walk the path of intentional, conscious, committed discipleship.

One of the traits of Jesus is love. Jesus loves people! So, if we want to be like Jesus, we too need to love.

**Read Ephesians 3: 16-19.**

What we see in this passage is an increasing or rising trajectory of love. The image is of a growing plant. The plant is rooted and established, where?... in love, so that its source of energy is love. Paul’s prayer is that every Christian would have the power to grasp the all-encompassing nature of love. God’s love is wider, longer, higher and deeper than anything we can comprehend. God is love. And in addition, Paul prays for us to “know this love”. That means to have an experiential knowledge of love. Not an intellectual comprehension of love, but an embodied personal facility and intimate familiarity with love. And then finally, to be filled to an overflowing capacity with love.



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So, the trajectory of the Christian life is to become more loving as you spend more time with Jesus. Now this is not something that we can do by ourselves; all this growth and love is the product of the Holy Spirit working on us from the inside out. Verse 16 says that the Spirit strengthens us in our inner being. The Spirit and God's love are the source of our growth and development.

### 3. GOD IS LOVE. JESUS IS LOVE INCARNATE. AND “BECOMING LIKE JESUS” MEANS TO BECOME MORE LOVING EVERY DAY OF OUR LIVES. IF YOU ARE A FOLLOWER OF JESUS, HOW ARE YOU GROWING TO BE MORE LOVING?

In his book, “Practicing the Way,” John Mark Comer prefers to talk about apprenticeship to Jesus rather than being a disciple of Jesus. A third bad idea floating around in Christian circles is *that it is our job to disciple someone else and it's someone else's job to disciple us*. We talk a lot about discipling. We use the word disciple (which is a noun) and turn it into a verb (something it was not meant to be). We ask, “who are you discipling?”

The problem is that we can't make the same change (noun to verb) with other synonyms for disciple. Synonyms like believer, follower, or Christian. You will never hear someone ask: Who are you believer-ing? Who are you follower-ing? Who are you Christian-ing? The bad idea is that *It is someone else's job to disciple me into Christlikeness*. If disciple is something that is done to you (a verb), then that puts the responsibility for your spiritual formation on someone else, like your pastor, church, or mentor. But if disciple is a noun—if it's someone you are or are not—then no one can disciple you but Jesus himself.

### 4. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE WHAT AN APPRENTICE IS AND WHAT AN APPRENTICE DOES?

When we apprentice under Jesus, that means it is our job to put ourselves in a place under Jesus, and it is Jesus' job to transform us into someone who becomes like him. Someone who becomes more and more loving. Now, let's take a closer look at what apprenticeship requires.

**Apprenticeship requires an intentional choice**—a choice to apprentice to Jesus and become like him. Now, you may go to church regularly, read your Bible and pray regularly, give your tithe faithfully, but it doesn't necessarily mean you will become more like Jesus. These are all good things, but some people who follow this prescription for 30 years don't end up feeling “different”, they just feel “older.”

Jesus has extended the offer to “Come, follow me.” Yes, we need to choose to accept Jesus as our savior, but we also need to make the conscious choice to be his apprentice. Now, you might be thinking, “there is no way I can be an apprentice of Jesus!” But the truth is that Jesus really does believe in you.



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Jesus believes that you can become his apprentice. He believes that you can live under the loving gaze of his father; You can also become the kind of person who is like the father—loving and joyful and full of peace, patience, and kindness. You can grow into a person of happiness, even in times of great suffering. The kind of person who is not afraid of suffering or even of death, who is free of the emotional need for things to go your own way. You can fulfill your purpose. You can even learn to do many of the incredible things Jesus did. To see the signs of his Kingdom manifest in your ordinary life. It's all possible...but it's not inevitable. It will require you to reorder your entire life around following Jesus.” You have to choose to become his apprentice.

**Apprenticeship requires a strategy.** There are two kinds of strategies: good ones and bad ones.

Three losing strategies:

- *Willpower*: “You cannot become more loving by trying to become more loving, no matter how much effort you bring to the table. Effort is good, but it isn't enough. Our willpower is limited.
- *More head knowledge*: You can't think your way into Christlikeness. Love isn't an intellectual theory; it is an embodied way of being. Information alone does not produce transformation, because knowing something is not the same as doing something.
- *Relying on Mountaintop spiritual experiences to transform you*: Mission trips, conferences and great worship services are all good things. They can inspire us to action, but they don't change us for the long haul. After the inspiration wears off, we're back to where we started.

**Apprenticeship needs the right strategy and the right elements.** The right strategy is to approach apprenticeship like training for a marathon.

Elements of a marathon mindset:

- **Recognize that training takes TIME.** The problem is that we're all busy. Who has time to train? Only the person who makes the intentional choice to train. Who has time to train? Only the person who removes things from their busy life has the time.
- **To seriously undertake new spiritual practices.** Spiritual disciplines are a box of tools that we can practice, so God can do His work in us—transforming us to be more loving like Jesus.
- **Do all of this in community. You can't do it alone.** You can only become more loving, when you are in a relationship. And relationships, by definition, require more than one person. The best way to train for a marathon is to find a running buddy. The best way to follow Jesus, is to do it in a community of others who are training right alongside you.

**5. HAVE YOU BEEN TRYING TO FOLLOW JESUS WITH LOSING STRATEGIES? WHAT NEXT STEPS WILL YOU TAKE TO GROW AS AN APPRENTICE OF JESUS?**