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Title: The Way: Become Like Jesus

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Scripture: [Philippians 3:10-16](#)

Text: [Luke 6:39-40](#)

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There was a big announcement this week by Apple, the tenth anniversary iPhone was unveiled. I don't know many who are rushing out to buy one. At \$1,000, you'd have to be a real Apple junkie to put down that down that much cash. One of the big new features is facial recognition software. Instead of your thumb print, your face

will open the pricey new phone.

Even though Apple likes to be on the cutting edge, they weren't the first to offer a phone with this technology. The Samsung 8 released in March has facial recognition as one of its major selling points for security. But it turned out that it could be defeated by simply holding a picture of the person's face up to their phone.

Facial recognition software is cutting edge but it clearly has some challenges. What about people who look like you, your doppelgänger? We all have a double. There are even apps you can download to search for your celebrity doppelgänger because, everyone looks like a celebrity, don't they? Would someone who could be your twin fool facial recognition software and open your new \$1000 iPhone X? Who do you look like? Let's shift that question from pop culture and put it into the context of worship. Spiritually, who do you look like?

Last week, we began a sermon series of discipleship, an annual look at the question, "What does it look like to follow Jesus?" I've titled the series "The Way" in part because I spent the last days of my summer sabbatical walking an ancient pilgrimage in Spain, the Camino de Santiago. Camino means "way." But the title is more influenced by scripture. The first followers of Jesus were called "followers of the way" or "people of the way." They weren't called Christians.

The word Christian is found only three times in the New Testament. These people of the way were called followers students or disciples. The word

disciple is found 268 times in the New Testament. People of the way were disciples of Jesus and as such they wanted to be with Jesus, to become like Jesus and do the things Jesus does. There's a definition of being a follower of Jesus. "Be with Jesus. Become like Jesus. Do what Jesus did."¹

Being a follower of the way is not a path to travel, but rather a pattern to follow, a practice if you will. If Jesus is the way—and he certainly says he is when he says, "I am the way, the truth and the life." (John 14:6) - then in order to follow the way, we have to be like the way. We have to imitate the way. The early followers of Jesus were trying to become carbon-copies of Jesus. They wanted to talk like, walk like Jesus, become like Jesus, and eventually do the work of Jesus. If you'd ask them the question, "who do you look like?" they'd say, "I hope I look like Jesus."

Last week, we looked at the first step in that process of discipleship-to be with Jesus. The way we accomplish that is in worship. We come together in gladness to experience the presence of Jesus. Jesus promised where two or more are gathered, he would be there. He is the host of the table where in the symbols of bread and wine, body broken and blood said, the Way points to way to our final destination. Worship re-oriens and re-centers your life and when practiced regularly, it becomes a way of life, the way to be with Jesus.

This week, become like Jesus. You can't look like Jesus, you can't be his doppelganger, if you don't become like Jesus. Paul says it this way, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him..." (Philippians 3:10). Do you? Is it even possible?

Jesus says it is. In the middle of his most famous sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, the sermon where he basically pulls together his way and truth and life together, his pattern and practices for living, he tells this parable. It is one of the shortest parables in the Bible Jesus says this. "He also told them a parable: "Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully qualified will be like the teacher" (Luke 6:39-40) The NIV says, "...fully trained will be like the teacher." (Luke 6: 40) Another version says, "fully prepared will be like the teacher."

It's really a simple parable. Did you know the blind leading the blind was from the Bible? The whole point of this little parable is Jesus says, yes, it is possible for you to become like your teacher, like me. In fact, it's not just possible, it is what being a disciple is all about. Becoming like Jesus requires

active apprenticeship, a commitment to be a student of his way in order to be fully trained, qualified, and prepared.

That training will change you. It will overhaul and remodel your character and nature. The Bible calls this overhaul, transformation. In 2nd Corinthians, Paul describes it this way. "And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image..." (2 Corinthians 3:18) To become like Jesus is to be transformed into his image.

The Greek word for transformation is μεταμόρφωση (metamórfosi). That word should sound familiar to you because from it, we get the word metamorphosis. I can see the light bulbs going on when everybody thinks about being in school and studying the process of a caterpillar turning in to a pupa and then eventually becoming a butterfly. That's metamorphosis and it is a description of what we are to be about. To become like Jesus is to have the same profound change, to be transformed from the inside out just like a butterfly.

The process of becoming like Jesus is called spiritual formation. I like Dallas Willard's definition of spiritual formation. "Spiritual formation" in the Christian tradition is a process of increasingly being possessed and permeated by such character traits (of Jesus) as we walk in the easy yoke of discipleship with Jesus our teacher... Our aim is to be pervasively possessed by Jesus through constant companionship with him." ²

Spiritual formation isn't just a Christian thing, it is a human thing. We are constantly being shaped and changed. Human beings aren't wired to be static; we are dynamic and changing. Another way to talk about it is to say we are always in formation. Behavioral psychologists will tell you that there are things that together shape and form who you are. Stories and habits, environment or community.

We all have stories which we live our life by, narratives that help us make sense of the world. Habits are equally powerful. The things we do, our habits, get into the core of our being and actually shape our loves and longing. People, community, relationships shape us. The group of people you associate with is who you become like. You talk like them, dress like them, act like them.

The stories we believe, the habits we practice, and the people we hang out with, shapes you into a very specific kind of person. This doesn't happen in a moment; it happens over time as you experience life. This has always been true and it is probably even more true today. We can see it all around

us and is at the core of many of the cultural challenges that we are experiencing in our country and our world today. You are formed and shaped in by the stories you believe, that habits you accumulate and people you associate with. It happens whether you want it to or not. We can't escape it which is why we must be intentional about our spiritual formation, about becoming like Jesus. Not surprisingly, our transformation takes place with the same three ways: with story, practice and people.

If you're going to look like Jesus, you need to know his story. God's word is his story. A disciple is a learner who is acquiring more information about God through the Scriptures. Scripture challenges us to take every thought of Christ captive (2 Cor. 10:5), to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2). A follower of Jesus will be a student of the Word, one "...whose delight is in the law of the LORD." (Ps. 1:2)

If you're serious about following Jesus, you will drink up every opportunity to learn more about God's Word, what Jesus requires of us, and what he desires for the world. You don't just show up for worship and the sermon; you're there for adult education classes; you join a small-group Bible study; you read your Bible every day. Disciples want to understand God and his Word; you drink up knowledge. You want to learn.³ It's why we offer and are always creating small-groups and Bible study as way to connect. You should be involved in a study and if you aren't, I hope you'll pick up a connect card and find a place.

Bible study isn't so you can know the difference between right and wrong. The best kind of study gets in your head with a vision of the good life. It gives you a reference for sorting out the false stories in our world. It countermands the narratives that we hear in the world around us that just aren't true. Knowing God's Word is essential but it isn't enough because knowing something isn't the same thing as doing something. Spiritual formation, becoming like Jesus isn't about getting the information. We can't think our way to Christ-likeness, because the way of Jesus is a Way, not just a set of ideas. We have to practice, form habits because habits shape our love and our longings.

The practices of Jesus have been recognized for centuries as the core activities of the spiritual life. If we believe what Jesus said about the spiritual life, it only makes sense we should do what Jesus did. Through the ages, disciples of Jesus have formed habits through spiritual practices of prayer and meditation, of setting aside time for solitude and silence, by fasting or abstaining from something you want or need to help connect with God. The practice of keeping the Sabbath and worship is a spiritual discipline. Journaling is a spiritual practice. Disciplines do not earn us favor

with God or measure spiritual success. The spiritual practices allow God to work with us, creating the partnership needed to become like Jesus. Transformation is a joint experience between God and us. It's like that expression, "Without him we can't; without us, he won't." God has a part; you have a part. We have to partner with God.

Practice requires practice. For instance, prayer doesn't just happen. It requires intentional repetition so that it get down inside of you, that it becomes so familiar, so much apart of your subconscious, your inner being, your heart that it reshapes your way of life and your longings. That's what habits do, what practice does.

I've experienced this first hand this past summer on the Camino de Santiago. Several of you have asked why I thought I could walk 88 miles. And the answer is pretty easy. I practiced. I trained. I didn't start out walking that far. But I walked every day, adding more miles each week. I trained. That's what the spiritual discipline is all about. Not trying to become like Jesus. But training to become like Jesus. So, I was prepared to walk each day and when I started the pilgrimage, I was pleased that I was ready. But this is what surprised me. The day after I finished the Camino, I wanted to walk again. And now, the thing I have missed most since coming back from sabbatical is walking and the solitude of that time.

The spiritual practices are just that. Jesus understands that following his way take a lifetime of practice. It's why at the end of his sermon on the mount, when he lays out all of his way, he tells a parable, "...everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock..." (Matthew 7:24-27). Spiritual habits and practice change the orientation off our heart, our dreams, our actions so that we want to become like Jesus.

That spiritual transformation can't take place alone because you can't follow Jesus alone. Jesus didn't have a disciple. He called disciples. Spiritual transformation takes place through the body of Christ, with fellow pilgrims who are trying to follow the Way, who are working on becoming like Jesus. It does so in two ways. It exposes you to others who are trying to become like Jesus. As you see their ways and practices, we begin to see the ways and practices of Jesus. Remember, we become like the people we hang out with. A community of followers of Jesus who are becoming like Jesus does that. They model behavior. They give reference points about where you are on your journey, how far you come or how much more work you need to do. It exposes but it also encourages. Community is the place where we can support each other on our walk, sustain each other through life's many challenging times, pray for each other to stay on the Way as we seek to

become like Jesus. This has always been and always will be the way of following.

Again, I experienced this first hand on my pilgrimage, a reminder that community is important and offers these gifts. On the first day of the Way, I walked alone. I started my walk later than others and I didn't see any other pilgrims. The first seven miles are easy and I was making good time, enjoying the solitude, singing hymns and anthems in my head. When I reached Neda, I saw my first fellow pilgrim, a woman stopped on a side street, about to return to the trail. I learned later that she'd stopped to eat. I didn't wait for her but instead, moved on and here is why. I was conflicted about sharing my silence. I didn't know if I wanted a companion for the journey. But an important part of the Camino pilgrimage is the community of fellow travelers who are walking the way. So I literally had an argument with myself about going on alone or stopping and letting her join me.

I stopped, let her join me, formed a community of two and quickly discovered all of the gifts that we received in becoming like Jesus together. Even though she spoke very little English and I very little Spanish, we became companions on the way.

Her name is Roselita. She was an experienced pilgrim, having walked the 500 miles of the Camino Francés. I was encouraged by her when, after addressing our first of many steep hills, a half mile climb of about 60 degrees, I wasn't any more out of breath than she was. "I can do this," I thought. It was encouraging. Then, walking through a small town, we missed an arrow. We got lost together but we corrected our mistake quickly because she could ask someone, in Spanish, how to find the way. I was glad that I had community, encouraged by companionship and found myself thinking of that little verse in Ecclesiastes 4. "Two are better than one..."

But the greatest gift of the community we formed came near the end of the day. Trying to communicate with each other, we would point out things and exchange words. I saw a butterfly and pointed it out, partly because of its beauty but also because she had a tattoo of a small butterfly on her neck. I said butterfly. Butterfly, she repeated. Then, "mariposa." Then, she tapped her neck and tattoo and said, "esta es la razón de mi camino."

It took me a while to comprehend what she said and then I got it. "It is the reason for my Camino, the reason for walking this way." She was walking to be transformed, to have a metamorphosis, to become like Jesus. I realized then who she looked like. She looked a little like Jesus.

People can say that about you. It can happen as you follow the ways of the Way. It just takes a commitment to know his ways, practice his ways and to do so within a community of Christ-followers. You can become like Jesus.

¹ Inspired by John Comer, Practicing the Way @Bridgestone.church.org

² Why Bother With Discipleship?

RENOVARE Perspective, Vol. V, No. 4, October 1995. First published in a Biola University bulletin. Available in The Great Omission, San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2006. <http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=71>

³ Smith, James K. A.. You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit (p. 4). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.