

Saturday, May 08, 2010

Molded into Godly Character

by Rick Warren

Put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:24 (NIV)

As I mentioned yesterday, your character is essentially the sum of your habits; it is how you habitually act. The Bible says, "Put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." (Ephesians 4:24 NIV)

God uses his Word, people, and circumstances to mold us. All three are indispensable for character development. God's Word provides the truth we need to grow, God's people provide the support we need to grow, and circumstances provide the environment to practice Christlikeness.

If you study and apply God's Word, connect regularly with other believers, and learn to trust God in difficult circumstances, I guarantee you will become more like Jesus.

Many people assume all that is needed for spiritual growth is Bible study and prayer. But some issues in life will never be changed by Bible study or prayer alone. God uses people. He usually prefers to work through people rather than perform miracles, so that we will depend on each other for fellowship. He wants us to grow together.

In many religions, the people considered to be the most spiritually mature and holy are those who isolate themselves from others in mountaintop monasteries, uninfected by contact with other people.

But this is a gross misunderstanding. Spiritual maturity is not a solitary, individual pursuit!

You cannot grow to Christlikeness in isolation. You must be around other people and interact with them. You need to be a part of a church and community.

Why? Because true spiritual maturity is all about learning to love like Jesus, and you can't practice being like Jesus without being in relationship with other people.

Remember, it's all about love - loving God and loving others.

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[Becoming Like Jesus Is a Slow Process](#)

by Rick Warren

This will continue until we are . . . mature, just as Christ is, and we will be completely like him. Ephesians 4:13 (CEV)

Becoming like Christ is a long, slow process of growth. Spiritual maturity is neither instant nor automatic; it is a gradual, progressive development that will take the rest of your life.

Referring to this process, Paul said, "This will continue until we are . . . mature, just as Christ is, and we will be completely like him." (Ephesians 4:13 CEV)

You are a work in progress. Your spiritual transformation in developing the character of Jesus will take the rest of your life, and even then it won't be completed here on earth. It will only be finished when you get to heaven or when Jesus returns.

At that point, whatever unfinished work on your character is left will be wrapped up. The Bible says that when we are finally able to see Jesus perfectly, we will become perfectly like him: "We can't even imagine what we will be like when Christ returns. But we do know that when he comes we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is." (1 John 3:2 NLT)

Much confusion in the Christian life comes from ignoring the simple truth that God is far more interested in building your character than he is anything else. We worry when God seems silent on specific issues such as "What career should I choose?"

The truth is, there are many different careers that could be in God's will for your life. What God cares about most is that whatever you do, you do in a Christlike manner. (1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Corinthians 16:14; Colossians 3:17, 23)

God is far more interested in who you are than in what you do. We are human beings, not human doings. God is much more concerned about your character than your career, because you will take your character into eternity, but not your career.

The Bible warns, "Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. . .

. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you." (Romans 12:2 MSG)

You must make a counterculture decision to focus on becoming more like Jesus.

Otherwise, other forces like peers, parents, co-workers, and culture will try to mold you into their image.

Sadly, a quick review of many popular Christian books reveals that many believers have abandoned living for God's great purposes and settled for personal fulfillment and emotional stability. That is narcissism, not discipleship.

Jesus did not die on the cross just so we could live comfortable, well-adjusted lives. His purpose is far deeper: he wants to make us like himself before he takes us to heaven.

This is our greatest privilege, our immediate responsibility, and our ultimate destiny.

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