

Imitation And The Way

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[0:00] Alright, today I'm going to be speaking about imitation and the way.! We are about to start a series on discipleship, and one of the things in the early days of!

And they were referred to as those who follow the way. I think it's likely because Jesus said that he was the way, the truth, and the life.

And that was in the early days of the church how they were known. The way. I think I really like that terminology because it defines an extent to what Christianity is.

It's not distinctly a set of rules. It's not distinctly a religious philosophy, just a bunch of ideas that you assent to. It was a way of life. And that's how they were identified.

They were identified by their lives. It reminds me also of that passage where it says, they will know we are Christians by the love we have for one another.

[1:12] There was a way that they were, right? They weren't distinctly just another religious Jewish sect with more different rules, and they weren't another Roman philosophy with new and different ideas.

There was a way that they were. And they were disciples of Jesus. As things flush out through the book of Acts, at some point they start being called little Christs, which is Christians, because they looked like Jesus.

And the aspect of them that looked like Jesus, I believe, was their way. They had a way about them that was Christ-like. And they were known as little Christians.

One of the questions I've had coming into doing some more of these discipleship topics is, what makes Christian discipleship distinct?

What is it about Christian discipleship that's distinct from other forms of discipleship, let's say? I don't think Christian discipleship is fundamentally just teaching information.

[2:20] I grew up in a church where what they meant by discipleship was somebody was going through a curriculum with you. You were being taught information. It was fundamentally an educational endeavor.

You don't know certain things. And at the end of this, you will be able to learn more about the discipleship. And at the end of this, you will be able to learn more about the discipleship. And at the end of this, you will be able to learn more about the discipleship. And at the end of this, you will know certain things.

That's what they thought discipleship was. For other people, maybe another contender would be, maybe discipleship is just the enforcement and correction of rules that a person needs to have in their life.

Sometimes that's kind of what a lot of parenting can be, is just actually implementing order and reinforcing that order. And maybe that's an aspect of discipleship, as is teaching.

But I think that one of the things that is fundamentally distinct about Christian discipleship is that there is a way that can be imitated and contagiously imparted one believer to another.

[3:32] Okay? And, again, this is another question I've had. What is, as a parent or as a person who leads others, what is the thing that I do embody or extend to others that truly has the most influence in their life?

What is my highest leverage point or my highest leverage ability to influence? Again, is it my teaching? Is it the things I communicate?

Is it my correction? Is it my intervening and speaking into their life on how they should do things? Is it what I do?

Is it what they perceive me to be? There's many different ways in which I influence other people. I believe that there is a way that we are influenced by others, let's say our parents or those we look

up to, that is so contagious that you can find yourself in life unable to resist the things that they instilled in us.

There is a mode of influence that is so powerful, that is so contagious, that one day you might not want to be that way and you find yourself struggling for better or for worse.

[4:48] Okay? I think that there's an aspect of the way that a person is, that is sincere, say the sincere way of a person, the aroma of a person's life, the manner of life that they live, that can have such a patterned and contagious influence on another that looked up to them or follow them, that it like spiritually is imparted to them.

Okay? For better or for worse. I mean, how many of us who are adults have the experience of being in a way that you were able to be and you don't want to be that way anymore?

And it's really, really hard not to. And also, how many of us see other people and how their parents raised them and how well it goes for them because the way that they were led in was a good way and has borne great fruit in their life.

Right? So this is a little bit the dilemma we're talking about here. There's something about imitation. There's something about the way that makes Christianity and Christian discipleship very, very distinct because it's something you cannot get from a podcast.

Okay? Right? You also can't get it by just trying to follow all the rules and fit in. You also can't get it by just performing all the time.

[6:13] There is something about the raw and exposed real person that the Lord is after and wanting to sanctify and wanting to impart himself, one believer to another believer to another believer.

This is, I believe, one of the things that is unique about generational, sincere faith. There's something about it that is contagious. So, with all of that said, I am going to go ahead.

We can start in 2 Corinthians 2, starting in verse 14. 2 Corinthians 2, starting in verse 14. It's kind of a fun imagery of us being in a triumphal procession with Christ, like a victory march with Christ.

And uses us to spread, here's this, this is a really key phrase, to spread the aroma and knowledge of him everywhere. There's something about being part of Christ that has an aroma.

Okay? It's a really, really good analogy. There's an aroma that little Christs have. For we are, to God, the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and to those who are perishing.

[7:38] To the one, we are an aroma that brings death, to the perishing. To the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task? Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit.

On the contrary. In Christ, we speak before God with sincerity. As those sent from God.

So, I just want to tie in some of this here. There's an aroma. There's an aroma of Christ that can reside in your life. And can itself be something that wins others over to Christ.

Okay? There is a way that it smells to be a Christian. Hopefully, it's an aroma, not a stench. Also, there's something about that that's tied in with sincerity.

And I would say that if we examine our own hearts and our own lives, there are certain sincere people that we've come across in our life that have really awoken something inside of us.

Something that no lecturer being told what to do could have done.

[8:42] There's something that was fanned into flame. There was a little spark in the soul that didn't quite have the wind of the Holy Spirit blowing into it in the way that really brought it to full life.

And I think that there's something about this aroma, about this way, that is even in the way that we express and glorify triumphantly the Lord, we can express it through the sincere aroma of our own life.

Right? I think one of the reasons why this is really important is especially as parents, we can get choked out by the cares and worries of this world and be all in on a bunch of different rules and details and different things we need to tend to.

And we actually lose the importance of like, what is your way? Who are you being all the time? You know what I mean? What is your manner of life? And that's the thing I think even for us, if we think you're our parents, we remember not all the detailed little things.

We just remember in general what their way was. Right? For better or for worse. It's so easy to remember the way a person is, even though it's kind of a vague thing to actually articulate.

[9:48] It's actually hard to kind of articulate. There is a way that we are. And that is what the Lord is trying to transform. And that's the thing in your life that has really disproportionate influence.

The unfortunate thing, the unfortunate reality about this, in my recollection, is that sometimes we don't actually have hope that that part of ourself will fundamentally change.

And so we just choose the religious cosmetics instead and hope for the best. You know, hope our kids don't know. Hope all those in our care don't catch what we have, which is I don't really care about any of this.

I'm just hoping I'm betting on the right phone here. You know what I mean? Hebrews 13.

Remember your leaders.

Those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life. And imitate their faith.

[10:52] So again, it's kind of bringing it all together here. It is so powerful when we have people and we look up to people and we allow influence from people who have like this sincere faith and have a way of life that has an outcome worthy of imitating.

You know what I mean? One of the things, and I don't think we necessarily struggle with this, but we do live in a day and age where everything's like really sectioned off. Lives are really disjointed. And there's a lack of continuity in terms of actually quality of life and actually sharing of life together oftentimes. A lot of times the people who have the most influence in our life have no overlap life on life with us.

You know what I mean? This is actually one of the big dilemmas with Christian celebrity. This is a bunch of people you're just hoping that you're, again, betting on the right pony. You're just hoping that their actual life is worthy of being imitated because at this point you're only getting catechized by them.

You use Adam's from it. Right? This is a dilemma. One of the quotes.

[12:03] So when I went to school at the conservatory, and one of my teachers used to always say this, and it's always stuck with me because it's something that's pertained to all of life. He would say, Music is not understood in its notation.

It's understood in its expression. And I've always thought about that as pertains to the Lord.

Because in a lot of ways, that's actually what a lot of, in a lot of ways that is Christianity.

It's really easy to just say the right answers. It's actually really hard to live it out. And even for those of us who earnestly want to live it out, it's really hard to flesh it out without the body having this aspect of influence.

There are people whose lives imitate the way in such a manner as to give you the gift of that way. But there's a requirement of actually having a way of life that is shared together.

There's a little bit of an assumption that this way, this life is being shared person by person. But sometimes that's just actually not happening, right? Sometimes we are just clocking in and clocking out.

[13:09] And it's all just, you know, it's another job. It's another Christian church. It's another, that Christianity and the church is just another job for us. They clock in and clock out, right?

And I think one of the big costs there is the most powerful thing is actually the contagious impartation of sincere faith, one person to another.

One of the things that I would say has definitely changed in the last couple of years is we definitely have had an increase of just like peace in the home. The aroma of our home has really changed.

And one of the things that I've always believed was the better job we do in terms of ordering our home, the more peaceful our home will be. And one of the paradigm shifts I've had in the last couple of years, insofar as parenting is concerned, is even more than being consistent in discipline and even more than making sure that we have like the praying with the kids to go to bed and all these different things that are really powerful, good things to include in your parenting.

One of the things that I've realized is when we have an aroma of peace personally, that itself is disproportionately influential to our home than just trying to be orderly all the time, if that makes sense.

[14:23] My character, my character, where I am before the Lord, sincerely has an aroma, has an aroma.

And it can be an aroma that actually is itself changing the aroma of the space, if that makes sense. Or it can just be selfish and I can be that hypocrite.

This is kind of the dilemma like you who steal or sorry, you who say don't steal. Do you steal? You who say don't lie. Do you lie? One of the things we can get into as parents, this is one of the things I've really struggled with is disciplining our kids for bickering when we bicker all the time.

Right. Or disciplining our kids for constantly raising their voices when we raise our voices all the time. You know what I mean? And there's this thing is actually it's actually kind of an interesting question.

Do you think that who you are being is more influential to your kids or what you're telling them to do? Because what if you're doing the opposite? What if you are the person who's contentious all the time and you're constantly disciplining your kids for being contentious?

[15 : 29] Who wins out here? Now, I actually don't know. I don't know what the answer to that question is. But I do know that it's of the utmost importance that in the hierarchy priority that we're sorting our own heart out before the Lord first.

You know, that we're removing the log from our eye first. Right. And I think this is part of the way. Right. Part of the way is not zeroing in on really achievable things that you can pat yourself on the back for.

It's actually like, who am I? It's actually the question Tom Bombadil asked Frodo. He said, who are you? Yourself alone and nameless.

Who are you stripped down to the core? What if, here's just a conjecture. It doesn't say it's in the Bible. What if the most lasting legacy you have in your life is you stripped down to the core, planted as a seed in your life and reproduce?

That naked part of yourself that you hide so often. What if that's actually secretly being reproduced through the generations?

[16 : 41] But also, what if that part that has been delivered and set free and the Holy Spirit has like powerful domain in them? What if that's what's being planted in the ground, reproduced in the generations?

Right. It seems to me, again, Scripture doesn't say it explicitly. It seems to me this is one of those things that can really slip under the radar in terms of like really, really, really having disproportionate influence.

You know what I mean? Sometimes we like to believe that our performance is what passes through the generations or our teaching or ideas. I think a lot of it is actually the sincere person stripped down to just their way, their actual way, the real way of life.

Right. All right. This is a quote from Donald Miller, Blue Like Jazz. I never liked jazz music because jazz music doesn't resolve.

But I was outside the Baghdad Theater in Portland one night when I saw a man playing the saxophone. I stood there for 15 minutes and he never opened his eyes. After that, I liked jazz music.

[17 : 51] Sometimes you have to watch somebody love something before you can love it yourself. It is as if they are showing you the way.

I used to not like God because God didn't resolve. But that was before any of this happened. I was actually thinking, too, about my friend Kendall. Some of you guys know Kendall Anderson.

He first came to the Lord when he was in his earlier 20s, maybe like 22, 23, something like that.

And the way he came to the Lord is he had a buddy who was actually Catholic.

And Kendall was a very, like, very devout atheist, if you will say. Nihilist, living a pretty dark life. He had this buddy he was hanging out with really late who was Catholic.

And Kendall is like an evangelist for atheism. And so he is essentially evangelizing this guy about, you know, your belief in God and debunking Jesus and all this stuff.

[18 : 52] And his friend, who is not like a super educated kid, was just like, hey, look, bro. You are so much smarter than me. And you make a lot of really good points. And I don't have answers for any of them. But the thing about Jesus and God is you can actually just meet them and realize all the gravity and reality of them.

Because you can just meet them personally. And I have met them personally. And so there's actually literally nothing on earth that you could tell me that would convince me that they don't exist. Because that's how you can know them.

And Kendall was so intrigued by this. He was like, his absolute confidence and belief in this was so substantial that he was like, I'm going to change my tactics.

I've been trying to prove God doesn't exist. I'm just going to flip it around and see if this guy is actually findable. You know, and that was the beginning of it. Because there was something about that testimony that didn't even have an argument behind it.

You know what I mean? Just, I know God. I know God. I think that sometimes we can get choked out by what cares and what is this world. I'm speaking for myself as well.

[19:54] And forget the power of just a sincere heart to form for your mind. You know what I mean? You get choked out by what cares and what is this world. And here's the other thing.

This is a little bit to the analogy of the virgins who didn't have oil when the bridegroom returns. The ones that did and the ones that didn't.

I think that there can be a little bit of a dilemma where we're trying to encourage people in things where our heart is not in a good place in the first place. I think that's actually a real recipe for us being overly religious rather than actually spiritual before the Lord.

Is that we get content with having religious cosmetics and doing nothing about it and just hoping for the best. And maybe get upset when we see that in our vicinity.

When probably we should also just be being convicted. Because we're probably part of probably who we are is being contagious in those moments. You know what I mean? Like if we are content with religious cosmetics, that is the way that we are influencing.

[20:58] Does that make sense? So this is an aspect of examining our own hearts. Knowing that when we examine our own hearts, it actually has implication outside of just our hearts.

We're not this vacuum where our sin doesn't affect other persons that have. We have a wake. We have a wake behind us. And this also, I believe, is part of the mystery behind why the sins of the Father passed to the third generation.

Right? I think that's the dark side of this. Because there's an extent to which the idols of our heart are contagious. And we can actually love and see and be transformed by the Lord and idolize Him appropriately.

Or we can actually idolize other things. And I think that these are the things that actually can hang us up in our ability to be powerful ministers to our children and those who are discipling and those who follow us.

Right? Right? I also think... that this is also part of the mystery of training up a child.

[22:11] Yeah. Training up a child in the way he should go. And even when he's old, he will not depart from it. I've seen a lot of Christians... I'm trying to think I'll say this exactly.

Believe strongly in the power of sin to reproduce itself across a generation and little believe in the ability of the Lord to triumph through the generations.

Right? Again, back to the same idea. I think we all have things that were instilled in us by our parents that we find irresistible. Right?

For better or for worse. I believe that the Lord is the changer of hearts, the creator of new creations. And He is in the business of redeeming us, even our areas and parts of us that are full of bondage. I think one of the things that hangs us up is that we cover over and are in denial of what's going on in our sincere heart.

[23:13] Right? And I believe that the sincere faith of leaders, remember, the sincere aroma of our life, the sincere faith of parents, is something that carries such disproportionate influence in the lives of those who are looking up to us, who are wanting to imitate us.

Yeah. Yeah. I think that one of the things that is probably a category of highest conviction to me, especially in my household, is that first and foremost, my heart would just be the least sincere.

And that I would live in sincerity in such a manner that I'm not leaving any room.

Well, what's the other best things? I don't want to trust in formulas. I don't want to trust in religious routine. I don't want to trust.

And even just like even the routine of just like praying for your kids, which is a beautiful routine. It becomes a not beautiful routine if it's only a routine and there's no sincerity.

[24:27] Some of the people who built into my soul the most important cornerstones that turned into stronger and stronger faith, some of the seeds that grew the biggest roots, were actually like here and there things that happened where it was just like incredibly encouraging sincerity on display.

If that makes sense. I'm thinking about there was this guy who did prayer meetings. This is actually Sam Miles who planted Midtown Baptist Temple. When I was in high school, he had a prayer group

Like the Lord was just at work there in that prayer meeting. And it was like one of the only things all through high school, all through college that I did periodically that was like really uplifting to the soul. You know what I mean? It's because he was so full of faith and he was so sincere. He just loved the Lord. And you could go there and be a part of that and be inspired just even kind of like this guy I was talking about. You know what I mean? Anyway, all that to say, I believe that what makes Christian discipleship distinct is the emphasis on imitation because the way of Christ is a manner of life that gets imparted believer to believer through the actual walking out of real life. You know, when Jesus called the disciples, he called them to follow after him. And there's an extent to which they got to walk with God himself how God would walk.

And there's this sincere way of life that was exposed believer to believer that passed down generation after generation after generation after generation after generation and has come all the way before us today.

[illegible]