



Becoming like Jesus

A Lent Study Guide



UK AND IRELAND

Langham
PARTNERSHIP



Study Notes

This study guide provides seven Bible studies, incorporating video resources provided on the Langham Partnership (UK and Ireland) '9-a-day' website
<https://uk.langham.org/get-involved/free-lent-study-guide/>

Some church groups may want to meet over a period of six weeks, while others may wish to meet for seven weeks, incorporating Holy Week. The first six studies, therefore, are a complete course, with the seventh week providing an 'extra' study if wanted.

Each study provides a series of activities. There is no necessity to complete every activity. The study leader may wish to use some activities one week and not others.

Each study consists of:

- A quotation with questions to be used as an 'ice-breaker'. It is recommended that this is a brief discussion.
- A 5-7 minute video in which a number of Christians give their views on the topic under discussion. It is recommended that the group have a pen and paper to hand to jot down thoughts from the video which can be shared at the end of the video. The study page gives the title and the URL address for each video.
- Alternative Track 1 and Track 2 Bible studies

Track 1: Examples from the life of Jesus taken from Matthew's Gospel

Track 2: Encouragements to become like Jesus taken from the Epistles

Tracks 1 and 2 provide options for the study leader to decide which track to use if they wish; both tracks need not necessarily be followed in the same year. The unused track can be used as a second Lent Study course on a separate occasion. Different groups within a church may, however, choose to follow different tracks in the same year.

In some studies it is suggested that leaders research material online before the meeting to provide the group with background information for the passages being studied. Please look at the individual studies in advance to check what is needed.

Lent Study 7: Important preparation

Lent Study 7 is an opportunity to share the story of a Christian each person has read about during Lent. The study provides some examples of Christian biographies which can be recommended to the group. It is important in week 1 to tell the group that they need to read a Christian biography over the Lent period. It may be worthwhile reading the question for this activity to the group, so they are aware of what is needed:

How does the life of the person in the story or a particular incident provide an example of 'becoming like Jesus'?



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Lent 1: Why does it matter?



Starter Quote:

'Do as I say, not as I do'

- Have you ever been on the wrong end of this attitude?
- Have you ever been tempted to use this phrase yourself?

Video:

Watch *Why is it important?*

<https://youtu.be/We0MihofbM?si=MK26IzODCPTZ8cSJ>

- While watching, note down a phrase that strikes you as important. At the end of the video share this phrase with the group and say why you think it is important.

Track 1: The example of Jesus:

(In preparation: look online for information about the economic situation in Israel in Jesus' time. Consider how the miracle in the passage below would impact the crowd.)

Matthew 14:13-21—Jesus' compassion on the crowds

- Why did Jesus go to a solitary place? What does this teach us about Jesus' humanity?
- Contrast the disciples' attitude to Jesus' attitude to the crowd.
- From John's account of this story (John 6:5-15) we know that the five loaves and two fishes were provided by a boy. Contrast the boy's attitude to that of the disciples.

- In verse 14:19,20 what principles does Jesus lay down in receiving and distributing the bread?
- What does the feeding of over 5000 people tell us about the character of Jesus?
- How can the example of Jesus here be applied in your own life?
- Are there specific situations either as a church or as an individual that you can approach differently and in doing so 'become like Jesus' to others?

Track 2: The encouragement to become like Jesus:

1 Peter 4:1-11—*Contrasting lifestyles*

- Read 3:18, 4:1,2. What difference has Jesus' death made to our capacity or desire to sin?
- Write a list of the sins that would characterise our society. Are there significant differences to those listed by Peter?
- Have you ever been under pressure to do something you considered wrong? How did you deal with that situation?
- List the things Peter says Christians should be or do. Do you see these things as characterising your church? If not, what steps can be taken to change that situation?
- The two lists in 1 Peter are radically different. Christians are to be radically different. Is such a contrast possible in the communities you engage with (home, neighbourhood, work etc.)?
- How do you respond when the media reports the wrongdoing of Christians?
- What active steps can you take to show that you, as a Christian, are different?

Lent 2: What's the point?



Starter Quote:

'Religion poisons everything'

- How do you react to this common view in society?
- How would you respond to a friend or neighbour who thinks it is true?

Video:

Watch *What is the purpose of becoming like Jesus?*

<https://youtu.be/Koxsw4rh2k?si=8CSnx4u88llnYmJ>

- While watching, note down a phrase that strikes you as important. At the end of the video share this phrase with the group and say why you think it is important.

Track 1: The example of Jesus:

Matthew 26:6-16—Jesus is anointed

- What significance is there in the description of the home owner as 'Simon the Leper'? How does this reflect on Jesus? [Note: There is no specific indication in the gospels that this man had been healed by Jesus, although Jesus did heal people with leprosy. Since the events take place in Bethany, some commentators suggest Simon and Lazarus are the same person.]
- Why do you think the woman chooses to pour this expensive perfume on Jesus' head? Contrast the disciples' reaction to Jesus' reaction?
- Does the woman's action teach us anything about worship?
- How would you answer the disciples' comment that the poor would have benefited more?

- Has your church ever had to decide between the use of resources for enhancing the church or providing for the needs of others? How was the matter resolved?
- Judas betrays Jesus for personal gain. How do we ensure that money does not become the centre of our worship?
- What aspect of the life of Jesus in this story would you want to emulate?

Track 2: The encouragement to become like Jesus:

Philippians 1:27, 2:1-11—*Being like Jesus*

- Read 1 Peter 4:11 from last week's study as a reminder of the purpose of becoming like Jesus.
- What conduct is essential to be 'worthy of the gospel of Christ'?
- How important is reputation? Do you cultivate a good reputation even among people you are unlikely to meet or whose lives will have little or no impact on your own?
- How important is what you do in private to how you conduct yourself in public?
- Is true unity possible in a church? What could be involved in seeking this—for yourself and as a group of Christians?
- What characteristics does Jesus display in becoming a man?
- How would the Philippians have understood the phrase 'taking the very nature of a servant'?
- What would 'taking the very nature of a servant' involve for Christians today?
- Why does Paul emphasise 'death on a cross'?
- How do you understand being 'humble'?
- What would it mean to adopt the humility of Jesus?
- Jesus has been exalted 'to the highest place' and everyone will worship him. How important is it to you that the people you know do so willingly?

Lent 3: How does it happen?



Starter Quote:

'I don't believe in bar code Christianity.'

- What do you think this means? Do people see Christians as all the same? Does being like Jesus mean we are the same?

Video:

Watch *How does it happen?*

https://youtu.be/XiGRe2HGfQ0?si=XQy-Q23X_JHJKCs

- While watching, note down a phrase that strikes you as important. At the end of the video share this phrase with the group and say why you think it is important.

Track 1: The example of Jesus:

Matthew 14:22-36—Faith in Jesus

- Refer back to 14:1-21. What is the context of this story? If you were Jesus how would you feel at this time?
- What priority does Jesus give to prayer, with regard to his time and the setting for his prayers?
- What can we learn from Jesus' prayer life?
- Why did Jesus choose to walk across the water to the boat at around 3 o'clock in the morning?
- Jesus tells Peter to come to him. What purpose does Jesus have in this?
- What part do faith in Jesus and doubt play in this story?
- Jesus performs two miracles; walking on the water and, apparently, stilling the wind. How can we overcome our familiarity with this story and allow the events to enhance our worship of Jesus?

- Compare 14:14 and 14:36. What does this teach us about Jesus' attitude to the sick?
- Is there any aspect of this example of how Jesus lived that you want to pray God will help you with?

Track 2: The encouragement to become like Jesus:

Galatians 5:22-25—*The work of the Spirit*

- Read the book of Galatians [with perhaps members of the group being assigned to scan through a chapter each]. What does Paul's letter tell us about the conduct of the Galatian church?
- Read 5:13. What do you consider 'freedom' means?
- Read 5:16,17. What do you think 'live by the Spirit' means?
- Where do you think personal responsibility fits into Paul's call for Christians to 'live by the Spirit'?
- Take each of the fruit of the Spirit in turn; love, joy etc. Can you think of a gospel story where Jesus displays this fruit?
- Can you think of an example where you have seen another Christian displaying one of these fruit?
- Do you see the fruit of the Spirit as individual characteristics to be cultivated or all one fruit to be displayed?
- What does it mean for us to crucify 'the sinful nature with its passions and desires'?
- What steps can you take to ensure that you remain 'in step with the Spirit'?

For another time:

Becoming Like Jesus (The Book)

Langham Publishing has produced a book on the fruits of the Spirit.

Get a copy here:

<https://langhamliterature.org/becoming-like-jesus>

Lent 4: How does the Bible help?



Starter Quote:

'No nation is better than its sacred book.'

- Do you agree with this statement? Which book defines your nation?

Video:

Watch *Place of the Bible in the process?*

https://youtu.be/SxwFZgWu_As?si=IOS8iCiCj8-Vn762

- While watching, note down a phrase that strikes you as important. At the end of the video share this phrase with the group and say why you think it is important.

Track 1: The example of Jesus:

Matthew 4:1-11—Jesus and Satan

- What has happened immediately prior to this story?
- Why would the Spirit lead Jesus from this 'mountain-top' experience of God's blessing to a sustained period of difficulty and temptation?
- Have you ever faced a situation where God has richly blessed you, only to experience great difficulty in your life? How did you deal with this? In retrospect what did you learn about your faith and about God?
- Jesus chooses to fast for 40 days and nights. Does his example set a model for Christians to follow?
- If so, should your church encourage this and how should adequate safeguards be provided?
- What aspects of fasting do you think are useful for Christians?
- How does Jesus answer Satan's temptations?
- What importance does Jesus give to what is written in his scriptures?
- How may the Bible be misused?

- How does Jesus' knowledge of the Hebrew Bible encourage you to have a better understanding of your Bible, both Old and New Testament?
- On the third temptation Jesus dismisses Satan. What does this teach us about how to deal with temptation?
- If you were asked to name an aspect of Jesus' life in this story that speaks to you the most, what would it be?

Track 2: The encouragement to become like Jesus:

Ephesians 4:11-16—Growing up in Jesus

- Paul describes roles that Jesus has given within the church. What is the purpose of these roles? Are these roles exclusive to church leaders appointed to these tasks?
- What do you understand as 'works of service'?
- What do you understand by 'unity in the faith'?
- What do you understand by 'the whole measure of the fulness of Christ'?
- Does your church aim to help its members to become mature Christians? In what ways is this being promoted?
- Jesus says that we need to become like children to enter the Kingdom of God (e.g. Matthew 18:3). How does this match Paul's instructions to 'no longer be infants'?
- How important is the Bible to your growth to be like Jesus?
- What prominence is given to the Bible in your church?
- What prominence is given to the Old Testament? Has the Old Testament any role in us becoming like Jesus?
- How well do you feel equipped to deal with 'every wind of teaching' that threatens to undermine your faith? What steps can you take to deal with any concerns you have?
- Picture your part in the body of Christ. What support can you give to those around you as they support you?

Lent 5: Where is the focus?



Starter Quote:

'Every Christian here is either a missionary or an imposter.'

- What are the implications of this statement?

Video:

Watch *Evangelism vs discipleship tension?*

<https://youtu.be/SoVkJTrkGJ7c?si=Aa-yw4-8ccKo6Lfs>

- While watching, note down a phrase that strikes you as important. At the end of the video share this phrase with the group and say why you think it is important.

Track 1: The example of Jesus:

In preparation:

- look online at pictures depicting the stories in the passages given below. Generally, the children are healthy, nicely dressed, happy—sometimes positively angelic!
- research online first century Jewish society's attitude to children and child life expectancy.

Matthew 18:1-6 and 19:13-15—Jesus and children

- What would the lives of children have been like in first century Israel?
- Read 19:13-15. Why were these children brought to Jesus?
- Why would the disciples have wanted to send them away?
- What do we learn from Jesus' attitude to children?
- Read 18:1-6. What is behind the disciples' question? Do we suffer from self-importance or wanting to be seen as better than others? Can churches suffer a similar problem? How can such problems be avoided?
- In what ways must we become childlike to enter the Kingdom of Heaven?

- Elsewhere the Bible encourages us to grow up as Christians. How do we understand this apparent difference in the Bible's message?
- Consider 18:5. In Jesus' time children were not well regarded. In our society, where children are often central to policies and practices, does Jesus' message still resonate? What active role should Christians and churches adopt in any specific problems you highlight?
- Read 18:6. Are there issues within churches that Christians should repent of and resolve?
- What action should you take having read these stories?

Track 2: The encouragement to become like Jesus:

1 Corinthians 9:19-27—All things to all people

- How does your church view the 'tension' between evangelism and discipleship? Are you more naturally drawn to evangelism or discipling others?
- We have considered Christians being radically different. How can we reconcile Paul's teaching here?
- What lengths should you go to be the same as others you want to tell about Jesus? Can you think of a specific new way in which you can relate to a group of non-Christians?
- Are there dangers in engaging with others in adopting their norms? How can we avoid these dangers?
- How can we encourage Christians to be engaged in society?
- How do you react to Paul's picture of an athlete in training as a picture of Christian living?
- Is it possible to promote discipline in the church today as having a role in Christian living?
- How important is becoming like Jesus to you?

Lent 6: Who is it for?



Starter Quote:

'The Church is the only society on earth that exists for the benefit of non-members.'

- In what sense, if any, do you think this is true?

Video:

Watch *For social or personal benefit?*

<https://youtu.be/hxEpTHkIF00?si=OqPooeM1USOex6O9>

- While watching, note down a phrase that strikes you as important. At the end of the video share this phrase with the group and say why you think it is important.

Track 1: The example of Jesus:

In preparation: look at a map showing Tyre and Sidon. (Jesus was probably at or near the Sea of Galilee, 14:34.)

Matthew 15:21-28—Jesus and the Canaanite woman

- Why is the location and mention of the woman's ethnic background important to this story?
- Does this story relate to non-local or overseas mission, or does it have something to say about those on the margins of society?
- What significance is there in the way the woman first addresses Jesus? How does this compare/contrast with the way Jesus is addressed by his own people?
- Consider 15:23. How do you react to Jesus' behaviour?
- How do you react to the behaviour of the disciples?
- Read 15:24. What does Jesus mean by the 'lost sheep of Israel'? Can you think of other examples where Jesus helps those outside this definition?
- The woman's second appeal is more desperate than the first. What are the implications in Jesus' response?

- How does the woman's response, 15:27, match Jesus' comment?
- Why does Jesus heal the woman's daughter?
- What does this story teach us about persistence in faith?

Track 2: The encouragement to become like Jesus:

James 2:1-7,14-18—Interacting with others

- Read Genesis 1:27 and Galatians 3:26-28. How central are these passages to understanding the equality of men and women in the eyes of God?
- Why do we rank ourselves and others?
- What examples of favouritism have you witnessed recently? Is favouritism ever justified?
- Are there practices in your church which honour some more highly than others?
- James gives the rich a bad press! How do you imagine the first century church situation to which he is writing?
- Compare your church membership to society. How well or otherwise does your membership reflect society?
- How can 'the rich' use their influence to build up the church and not weaken it?
- How can 'the poor' contribute to the building up of the church?
- Why should faith be validated by deeds?
- Why is it important for the church to meet real needs within society? Is your church guilty at times of offering platitudes but not meeting real need?
- Is there a difference between financial support of a good cause and getting directly involved?
- What examples of Jesus meeting needs can you think of?

Lent 7: Does it work?



Starter Quote:

'If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?'

- What type of evidence would you expect to be presented?

Video:

https://youtu.be/aC4jJJSCEjA?si=nHxLs4c_8EHKIUHP

Books:

Briefly share the story of the biography you have been reading.

- How does the life of the person in the story or a particular incident provide an example of 'becoming like Jesus'?

Track 1: The example of Jesus:

Matthew 26:36-56—Jesus in Gethsemane

- Read 26:36-46. Why would Jesus want encouragement from his disciples?
- How does Jesus deal with his disappointment in others?
- What is Jesus' attitude towards the trials he is about to face?
- If Jesus can ask God to let him avoid difficulty, can we do so? What should our attitude be if God chooses otherwise?
- Read 26:47-56. What is Jesus' attitude to Judas? Does this reflect his command to his followers to love their enemies?

- Given that Jesus is about to be subject to violence, what do you understand by 26:52?
- What does Jesus' teaching on fulfilling prophesy teach us about his obedience to God?
- Here the disciples flee. After the resurrection they do not. What has changed their lives?

Track 2: The encouragement to become like Jesus:

Ephesians 5:8-11, 15-21—*Encouraging each other*

- What does 'live as children of the light' mean to you?
- How do we live with the 'greys' of life, where there does not seem to be a definite right or wrong?
- How do we live alongside Christians that adopt different standards from ourselves?
- How can you find out 'what pleases the Lord'?
- When Paul asks us to 'expose' the 'fruitless deeds of darkness', what steps should you or your church take? What consequences may there be in that? What consequences are you prepared to accept?
- What do you understand by making the 'most of every opportunity' in your life?
- As has often been noted, the phrase 'be filled' indicates an ongoing filling, not a single experience. Why is an ongoing experience of the Spirit essential?
- How active is your church, outside formal meetings, in encouraging you in your daily life? Do you think that the church is interested in your life beyond church activities?
- What do you think 'submit to one another out of reverence for Christ' means? How would this work out in practice?
- In what ways do you encourage other Christians?
- In what ways are you encouraged by other Christians?

Recommended Biographies

Classic stories:

Eric Liddell: Pure Gold. David McCasland. (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2012)

George Muller: Delighted in God. Roger Steer. (London: Christian Focus Publications, 2008).

The Hiding Place. Corrie ten Boom. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2004).

The Greatest is Charity: The Life of Andrew Reed. Ian Shaw. (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2005).

Through Gates of Splendour. Elisabeth Elliot. (Milton Keynes: Authentic, 2005).

More recent:

Chasing the Dragon. Jackie Pullinger. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2010).

Faith Like Potatoes. Angus Buchan. (Oxford: Monarch, 2006)

I Dared to call him Father. Bilquis Sheikh. (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2003).

In Japan the Crickets Cry. Steve Metcalf and Ronald Clements. (Oxford: Monarch, 2010).

Joni: An Unforgettable Story. Joni EarecksonTada. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001).

Quotation sources:

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'Religion poisons everything' C. Hitchens. *God is not great: How religion poisons everything* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007)

'I don't believe in bar code Christianity.' R. Gardner, *Christlikeness—how does it happen?*, Langham Partnership (UK and Ireland), 2013.

'No nation is better than its sacred book.' D.J. Brewer, 1837-1910.

'Every Christian here is either a missionary or an imposter.' C.H. Spurgeon. *Sword and Trowel*, 1873.

'The Church is the only society on earth that exists for the benefit of non-members.' W. Temple, 1881-1944.

'If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?' D.O. Fuller, 1903-1988.



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especially in countries where churches are under resourced.

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