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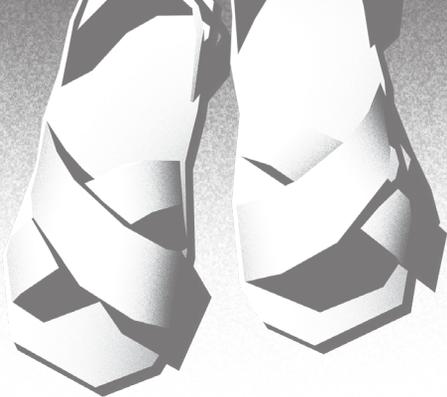
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WEEK 1

WALK LIKE JESUS

Go deeper: Watch videos online and download the Like Jesus app. LikeJesus.church/walk

GETTING STARTED

Max Lucado begins his excellent book *Just Like Jesus* with this powerful challenge:

What if, for one day, Jesus were to become you?

What if, for twenty-four hours, Jesus wakes up in your bed, walks in your shoes, lives in your house, assumes your schedule? Your boss becomes His boss, your mother becomes His mother, your pains become His pains? With one exception, nothing about your life changes. Your health doesn't change. Your circumstances don't change. Your schedule isn't altered. Your problems aren't solved. Only one change occurs.

What if, for one day and one night, Jesus lives your life with His heart? Your heart gets the day off, and your life is led by the heart of Christ. His priorities govern your actions. His passions drive your decisions. His love directs your behavior.

What would you be like?¹

Max goes on to talk about the "heart" of Jesus that can be ours—a heart of forgiveness, compassion, purity, worship, and hope. This is a valuable exercise, for it gives us an opportunity to reflect on how our lives might change if we truly allow Jesus to renew our heart and mind. It takes seriously the challenge of Philippians 2:5, that we should "have the same mindset [i.e., 'heart'] as Christ Jesus."

But is it enough to think like Jesus? The New Century Version (NCV) translates

Philippians 2:5 a little differently. There Paul commands his readers to “think and act like Christ Jesus.” In other words, Paul’s command is not just that we learn to think like Jesus but also that we learn to behave like Jesus. What a challenge!

Great as it is, this challenge is at the heart of this study. We want to look not just at the heart of Jesus but also at His habits, commitments, and behaviors. We want to probe deep and ask the difficult why and how questions about Jesus’ actions: How did He nurture His relationship with the Father? Why did He pray? How did He learn obedience? Why was the Holy Spirit so critical in His walk?

In this study, we will seek to answer these questions by taking a close and focused look at Christ’s life. We will spend the majority of our time, though not all of it, in the Gospels, since the gospel writers in particular sought to portray for the rest of us how Jesus lived His life. But the challenge to think and act like Jesus is not only found in the Gospels. In 1 John 2:6 we find the challenge of Philippians 2:5 stated in a different way. This is the verse from which the title of our study is taken.

Open your Bible, take a close look at 1 John 2:6, and copy it below. Highlight what you feel are the two or three most important words.

What words did you choose? Why?

This study is designed to help us discover not only what Jesus did, but also how Jesus did what He did. We want to pause long enough to evaluate what Jesus may have been thinking when He behaved in certain ways. As we examine why Jesus acted the way He did, we will be looking for a pattern—a pattern we can follow in order to faithfully think and act as He did.

My prayer is that you’ll catch a fresh glimpse of the biblical Jesus in the coming weeks. As you go through this study, I encourage you to evaluate any stereotypes you may have

of the Jesus who lived two thousand years ago. Hold them up to the light of Scripture and see if the images match up. My prayer is that you will find the Jesus who is alive today and still calls us to follow Him. Jesus is alive, relevant, and challenging. He always gives us new insights and He challenges many of our basic life assumptions. He desires for us to continually increase in our love and understanding of Him. May this study help you gain a deeper respect for the real Jesus of the Scriptures . . . and be ever eager to always “walk like Jesus.”

WHAT IT DOES NOT MEAN

Before we begin, it will be helpful to discuss what the command in 1 John 2:6 to “walk like Jesus” (NIV1984) does and does not mean.

As much as I hate to admit it, 1 John 2:6 does not mean that we are to move to Israel and walk where Jesus literally walked. I love Israel and have often longed to walk the famous “Jesus Path,” the path mapped out for tourists there. The Jesus Path lets you walk *where* Jesus walked. But it doesn’t help you walk *like* Jesus.

Walking as Jesus walked also does not mean that we are to buy a robe and some good leather sandals, grow our hair long, and walk from town to town. While this might make a good movie (or at least provide entertainment for our neighbors), it does not fulfill the command of 1 John 2:6.

WHAT IT DOES MEAN

How then, in the twenty-first century, are we to obey this command? What does it look like to walk like Jesus?

The word translated “walk” in this passage is the Greek word *peripateo*. It is used in the New Testament to mean “following, making progress, regulating one’s life, or conducting oneself” after the pattern of another person. To walk like Jesus, then, means that we are to emulate the pattern of living that Jesus modeled for us.

What is your initial impression of what this means to walk like Jesus? Describe it as clearly as you can below:

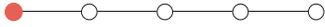
FOR DEEPER REFLECTION

Look closely at the context of 1 John 2:1-10. Read it aloud. What do you think was on John's mind when he commanded us to walk like Jesus?

In what ways do you think it's possible to walk like Jesus?

In what areas do you think it's impossible to walk like Jesus?

DAY ONE



THE MESSAGE OF JESUS

As I have studied the life of Christ over the last thirty-five years, I have concluded that there are at least three approaches to the subject. The first approach is to study His message. What did He say? What did He mean? The people who heard Jesus' message recognized that He came with a new teaching, and He delivered it with unparalleled authority (Mark 1:27).

Moreover, Jesus articulated His message in a variety of ways and in a variety of settings. He delivered sermons, spoke in parables, and used illustrations from daily life. As a result, His message was both simple and profound at the same time. His message of the good news of the kingdom was radical in its impact and scope. It touched every area of life. It was filled with hope and expectation. It challenged the basic worldviews—both Jewish and Roman—of His day. A person could spend his or her entire life (and eternity!) studying Christ's message and probably never fully grasp all that He had to say.

Over the next couple of days, we'll look at two other approaches to the study of Jesus' life. Today, we'll start our investigation by looking at His message.

Look up these verses and write down what they tell us about the everyday message Jesus communicated:

Matthew 4:17

Matthew 6:19

I am an historian, I am not a believer, but I must confess as a historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very center of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history.

—H. G. Wells

Matthew 6:31–33

Matthew 9:12–13

Matthew 10:37–39

Mark 10:45

Luke 5:12–13

HOW DID THOSE CLOSEST TO JESUS RESPOND TO HIS MESSAGE?

Matthew 7:28–29

Matthew 13:54–56

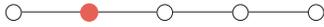
FOR DEEPER REFLECTION

Identify some of the key themes in Jesus' teaching. What seems to come up again and again?

What is missing from Jesus' teaching that you expected to find there? That is, what doesn't He talk about?

How would you summarize the message of Jesus?

DAY TWO



THE METHODS OF JESUS

Last time we examined the message of Jesus. There is another common approach to the study of the life of Christ. Rather than emphasize the message of Jesus, some people look at His *methods*.

In his classic book *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, Robert Coleman examined Jesus' strategy for spreading His message about the kingdom in the world. Focusing on the methods of Jesus requires asking a new set of questions: How did Jesus share His message? How did He identify, train, and send His disciples? What were the strategies that motivated His decisions?

Focusing on Jesus' methods doesn't mean we neglect His message. To the contrary, this is a different look at Jesus that gives us brand-new insight into His message. When we begin to see and apply Christ's methods to the pattern of our own life, we gain a fresh and powerful new understanding of Jesus. Christ's methods help us appreciate and understand His message, for Jesus' methods were as unique and powerful as the message He taught.

Today we want to look briefly at some of the methods of Jesus. But before we begin, what would you list as some of His unique methods? List as many as you possibly can.

Look at these passages of Scripture and identify what they tell us about some of the methods Jesus used.

John 1:14 (Hint: What was Jesus' method of choosing to interact with us?)

John 1:37–39 (Hint: How did Jesus relate to His first followers?)

John 2:1–3 (Hint: Where did Jesus choose to do His first miracle? Why do you think He made this choice?)

John 2:13–19 (Hint: How did Jesus act during His first public Passover?)

John 3:22 (Hint: What was Jesus' main priority?)

John 4:1–14 (Hint: What did Jesus avoid? What didn't He avoid?)

John 7:1 (Hint: What was Jesus intentional about at this stage of His ministry?)

John 8:49–59 (Hint: How subtle was Jesus in His dealings with Jewish leaders?)

John 13:1, 4–5 (Hint: How did Jesus deal with His disciples?)

Matthew 11:29–30 versus/contrasted with Matthew 23:13–17 (Hint: How does Jesus' tone differ between needy sinners and arrogant Pharisees?)

FOR DEEPER REFLECTION

Which method(s) of Jesus do you feel were the most radical?

Which method(s) do you feel are missing in some ministries today?

Which method(s) of Jesus do you need to develop in your own life? Why?

DAY THREE



THE MODEL OF JESUS

For the past couple of days, we've explored the message and methods of Jesus. If we want to walk like Jesus, it is critical that we understand what He taught and how He lived. However, for many, a focus only on the message of Jesus can result in a *message-centered* Christianity. Are we talking right? Are we saying the right things? Is the preacher preaching the right things? With this mindset, being a Christian becomes mainly about getting the *message* correct—saying the right things.

A focus on only the methods of Jesus can, in the same way, end up in a *method-centered* Christianity. Are we acting right? Are we doing the right things? Are our leaders acting the right way? Being a Christian becomes mainly about doing things right.

Nevertheless, the Scriptures point us beyond both the message and methods of Jesus and challenge us to look at the very *model* of His life. After all, we are commanded to walk "as" Jesus walked. To do this, we need to look at the complete pattern of His life and pattern our life after His.

This approach requires new questions: What was Jesus like in His humanity? How did Jesus behave as a real man in a real time and place?

When we focus on Jesus' message and methods we are considering His deity—what was He saying? And how, as God incarnate, was He acting?

But looking at the model of Jesus' life is more about who Jesus was as a human being. The pattern of Jesus' life is the example of what it means to be fully human. This is the heart of the challenge of 1 John 2:6. When Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us, He told us to look hard at how He lived His life and to follow that pattern. The operative word in 1 John 2:6 becomes the little word "as." Looking closely at Christ in His humanity causes us to look at our humanity and to examine it in light of Jesus' example. Walking as Jesus walked becomes our focus.

As a child I received instruction both in the Bible and in the Talmud. I am a Jew, but I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene. No one can read the Gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word. No myth is filled with such life.

—Albert Einstein

As was noted before, Philippians 2:5 says that we are to “think and act like Jesus” (NCV). How does this verse challenge us to look beyond the message and methods of Jesus?

Read the following passages. How do they challenge us to look beyond Jesus’ message and method, and call us to imitate the very example of His life?

John 6:57

John 13:15

John 13:34

John 14:12

John 15:10

John 17:18 and 20:21

1 Peter 2:21

1 John 2:6

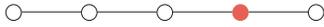
FOR DEEPER REFLECTION

Which of the above statements do you find most challenging? Why?

Do you find it hard to believe that you could think and act like Jesus? Explain your answer.

If you study only the message or methods of Jesus, is it possible to miss the true meaning of His life? How?

DAY FOUR



A SUMMARY OF JESUS' LIFE

The gospel of Matthew provides two famous statements that summarize His life and mission for His disciples. The first is known as the Great Commandment, the other the Great Commission.

The Great Commandment is found in Matthew 22:37–40. What is at the central challenge of this commandment? How does this commandment go beyond Christ's message and methods?

Some have described this commandment as simply loving God and loving people. It identifies the heart motive of Jesus and a fulfillment of the laws of the Old Testament. This is the motive behind the mission. If love for God and love for people were at the very core of Christ's life here on earth, what are the immediate implications for us today?

The Great Commission is found in or alluded to in at least five passages of Scripture (Matt. 28:16–20; Mark 16:14–18; Luke 24:44–49; John 20:19–23; Acts 1:4–8), but the most common is Matthew 28:16–20. How would you summarize the Great Commission?

Matthew 28 contains three verbs—*go*, *baptize*, and *teach to obey* that modify the command to “make disciples.” This command literally means to make disciples who can make disciples. This is to be done in all nations. Many scholars believe Jesus gave this commission to the five hundred spoken about in 1 Corinthians 15:6. Regardless of whom it was directed to, it serves as a summary of Jesus’ life and a call to Jesus’ followers to do what He did: make disciples who can make disciples and do this to the ends of the earth. While this commission is great in terms of its challenge and scope, it really is an everyday commission. It is for every believer, every moment of their everyday life. After all, Jesus promised, “I am with you always [this literally means the whole of every moment], to the very end of the age.”

If you summarize the motive and the mission of Jesus as simply loving God and loving people (Great Commandment) by making disciples who can make disciples (Great Commission), what does this tell us about the focus of Christ’s life? What effect should this have on our daily life?

Interestingly enough is that in this text there is a second command at the end of Matthew 28:20. The command is the simple Greek work *idou*, translated in the NIV as simply “And surely” or in some translations as “Behold.” This literally means that while we are fulfilling the command to make disciples, we are to keep our eyes on Jesus because He said, “surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Could it be that the degree to which we keep our eyes on Jesus, walking as He walked, is the degree to which we will be able to fulfill this everyday commission and everyday commandment?

As we continue in this study, you will see I passionately believe that we are to go beyond just the message of Jesus, and even the methods of Jesus, and dive deep into the very model of His life. We are to “think and act like Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5 NCV). The very Jesus, who walked on this earth as the perfect human, set an example for us to follow. Jesus began and ended the gospel of John with the phrase “follow me,” and He meant it (John 1:43; 21:22). As we continue in this study, we will seek to unpack what this calling looks like.

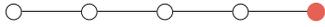
FOR DEEPER REFLECTION

Look carefully at the Great Commandment in Matthew 22:15–40. Read it aloud. What is the context and background of these verses?

How can a message or lifestyle of “love” often silence the arguments of your critics? Give an example from personal experience.

How does “making disciples who can make disciples” differ from just “making disciples”? Give an illustration of how you’ve seen this lived out.

DAY FIVE



“FOLLOW ME”

The mandate for every Christian is clear. We are to follow Jesus. As we stated last time, this is clear in the bookends of John’s gospel where Jesus says, “Follow me” (John 1:43; 21:22).

The Greek word translated “follow me” in John 1:43 and 21:22 is *akoloutheow*, which means, “to walk in the steps of, to conform to, or to follow behind closely.” Growing up on a farm in South Dakota, I would often wake up early with my dad to go out to the barn and do chores. I remember my father leading the way on more than one occasion through a winter snowstorm, cutting a path in the snow with his strong legs. I simply followed in his path. This is the image Jesus’ words “follow Me” bring to my mind. *I am the author and perfecter of your faith, Jesus says. I have gone before and blazed a trail for you. Now walk in My steps.*

The concept is clear. But it poses a radical challenge. How do we truly follow Jesus today? What does this command mean in the twenty-first century? How do we walk like Jesus?

The key to really following Jesus is making sure we are following the real Jesus!

The Scriptures testify to at least three different periods in Jesus’ existence: the pre-incarnate Christ, the incarnate Christ, and the resurrected Christ. The preincarnate Christ played a key role in creation.

What do you discover about the preincarnate Christ in these verses?

John 1:1–4

People talk about imitating Christ, and imitate Him in the little trifling formal things, such as washing the feet, saying His prayer, and so on; but if anyone attempts the real imitation of Him, there are no bounds to the outcry with which the presumption of that person is condemned.

—Florence
Nightingale

John 8:58

John 17:5

Colossians 1:15–17

Hebrews 1:3, 10

After His earthly ministry and resurrection, this God/Man Jesus ascended into heaven. Having become flesh and dwelt among us, Jesus is now the firstborn from among the dead (Col. 1:18). The resurrected Christ now has a unique role.

Read the following passages. What can we learn about Christ's present role as the resurrected Christ?

John 14:18–20

John 14:23

Romans 8:34

Ephesians 1:20–23

Colossians 1:18

Ephesians 4:7–11

Hebrews 13:20–21

It is important to understand that we are not called to walk as the preincarnate Christ or the resurrected Christ. We are called to walk like Jesus when He became flesh and dwelt among us. The fully human Christ modeled for us what true, biblical humanity should look like. The pattern of the incarnate Christ is the one we are called to follow.

I have seen many people shrink from the challenge of walking as Jesus walked, because they believe several false claims, including:

1. Jesus was God, but I am just a human being; therefore I could never do what He did!
2. Jesus was sinless, but I am sinful; therefore I cannot do what Jesus did.
3. Jesus was a superhuman, but I am just an average person; therefore I cannot do what He did.

Each of these views has some truth in it. Unfortunately, they are all based on some false assumptions that have serious consequences. Understanding the true humanity of Jesus will give us confidence that we can truly walk like Jesus.

In the rest of this study, we will look more in depth at Christ's humanity and its implications for us as we walk like Jesus.

FOR DEEPER REFLECTION

Referencing the above passages in your Bible, describe how these two roles of Jesus—preincarnate and resurrected—differ.

How are they similar?

What have you found the most challenging in Week 1?

What was something new that you realized?

WEEK 1 SUMMARY

Jesus is our model for life and ministry, and we are commanded to walk as He walked.