



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

I Wanna Be Like _____ !

Relentless Joy, Philippians 2:5-11

Tim Badal | March 2, 2020



Turn in your Bibles to Philippians 2. We're in a series we've entitled "Relentless Joy" and are on a journey to find the joy we're missing and which the world advertises but leaves us wanting more. As Christ-followers, we have come to realize the more we know Jesus, the more we can know what joy-filled lives are all about.

This morning we come to one of the most well-known and beloved passages in all of Scripture. It's a passage dedicated to Jesus Christ. In fact, the early church put this text to music very quickly and sang it over and over again. I'm so thankful for Josh and our worship team who led us in songs that either quoted or alluded to this passage. There's something great that happens when the church sings about Jesus.

Sadly, in our world today—and in many of our churches today—worship is more about us than it is about Him. The reason we're here and sing and preach sermons and do the other things we do as Christians has nothing to do with us, but has everything to do with Jesus.

This morning we're going to learn what it means to imitate. Philippians 2 gives us the specific assignment to follow in the footsteps of others. Later we'll see where Paul wrote, "Follow in my footsteps." Then after that he wrote, "I'm going to send you Timothy, my spiritual son and disciple, and I want you to follow him." Finally, he told them about a man named Epaphroditus who came to visit Paul and he said they should follow his example.

While it's good to follow the example of other people, let's be honest. Every time we get behind someone—whether it's a political candidate, a movie star or an athlete—the closer we get, the more we realize they're not so much different from us. That's why Paul started this chapter on imitating others, not with himself or another man or woman in their church, but with Jesus Himself. We're called to imitate Jesus.

If you had known me when I was growing up, you would have known who I wanted to be like. If you had gone into my bedroom, you would have seen poster upon poster of one particular person in all kinds of settings. This was the man I wanted to be like. I even pretended to be in his shoes, doing what he did best. Like many of you, when I was growing up, I wanted to be like Michael Jordan. My prize possession was a McDonald's poster made up of smaller pieces that made up a six-foot-six picture of Michael Jordan. It had a ruler on it so I could measure how I continued to grow. I would do everything in my power—stretched, did whatever I could—to be like him.

I wasn't the only one. In fact, Gatorade came up with a song that spoke to an entire generation who wanted to "Be like Mike." The words are, "When I dream that he is me, you've got to see that's how I dream to be. I dream; I move; I dream I groove like Mike."

Let me ask you this morning: who do you want to be like? I'll be honest with you. At 43 years old, as much as Michael Jordan is a wonderful basketball player and a wonderful statesman for the MBA—and of course he's got lots of money—my desire to be like him got smaller and smaller as I grew older.

What Paul is telling us today is that we're all going to emulate someone and we need to be like Jesus. We need to walk like Him, talk like Him, act like Him, love like Him and serve like Him. We need to be kind as He was kind. Is that what you're seeking to be like this morning? Be honest—can you say today, "I want to be like Jesus"?

I actually did very little to be like Michael Jordan. Oh, I shot some baskets and hung up some posters, but when the rubber met the road and I needed to apply myself to my goal, I didn't do it. Can that be said of some of us this morning when it comes to being like Jesus?

We hang posters that say, "I love Jesus." We put fish on the backs of our cars that tell others we love Jesus. We listen to and sing certain songs about our love for Jesus. But when it really comes to who we are, what we do and how we order our lives, can we say we are truly doing all we can to be like Jesus?

Paul told the Philippians, "I want to be like Jesus." He also told them, "If you want joy in this world, it is to be found in a life that emulates Jesus." In Philippians 2:5-11 he described what that would look like:

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, ⁸ being born in the likeness of men. ⁹ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ¹⁰ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹¹ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Four ways we cannot be like Jesus

We want to be like this Jesus, but Paul gives us four ways we cannot be like Him. This should not reduce us to rubble; rather, it should raise us to rejoice. What we aren't, what we don't have when it comes to Jesus, is what makes Jesus so immensely beautiful and praiseworthy. It's why we give ourselves to Him.

We do not worship Him because He's like us. We worship Him because He's unlike us. Even though the Scriptures tell us much about Who He is, we know this only scratches the surface of our omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent God. Even when we get to eternity, we will continually be learning how different from us He is. Yet that different God was willing to be humble enough to put on flesh and make His dwelling among us, so that He might save us from our sins and reconcile us with the Father.

We are dust and Jesus is divine

The first way we can't be like Jesus is because we are dust and He is divine. In 1 Corinthians 15:47 we read, "*The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.*" Jesus had no beginning; He came from heaven. We were created from the dust of the ground, but Jesus—the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God—has been and always will be God.

You would think that would be a given, but in our world today there are billions of people who think things that are contradictory to what the Scriptures clearly teach which is that Jesus always has been and always will be God. What do they say about Him? "Who is Jesus?" is the most important question anyone can be asked. Jesus asked His disciples in Mark 8:27, "*Who do people say that I am?*" The disciples offered several suggestions of who people thought He was. But then He asked, "*But who do you say that I am?*" This was one of the times when Peter got it right. He said, "*You are the Christ,*" —the Messiah, the Anointed One— "*the Son of the living God.*" When Peter said this, he damned himself as a heretic according to the Jewish faith. In their minds, there was only one God. Yet Peter was confessing that Jesus was God and it's on that confession that the church and Christianity is built.

Christianity was not built because Jesus was a great Teacher—even though He was. Christianity isn't built on Jesus being a worker of signs and wonders—even though He was. Christianity is not built on Jesus' ability to create a ground swell—even though that's what the church did. Christianity rises or falls on one thing—the reality that Jesus is God.

What does the rest of the world think? Hindus say Jesus is the reincarnation of Lord Krishna. They like Jesus. He's important to them. But they think He, like us, is just a reincarnated being in the ongoing circle of life.

Muslims believe Jesus Christ was a miracle baby, born from the virgin Mary, but was only a man who was the forerunner of the prophet Mohammed. They think Jesus was a prophet in the line of Moses, but He wasn't the last and greatest prophet. For them, that was Mohammed, 700 years after Christ. They think Jesus was only a man through whom God spoke. Those are nice things to think about Him; it's not bad to think God speaks through someone. But when that's all someone thinks about Jesus, it's defamatory. He is so much more than that.

The Mormons believe Jesus was the byproduct of a relationship between the resurrected Adam and Mary. Through His holiness and righteousness, He became the good one of two brothers: Jesus and Lucifer. His father was the "second Adam" who, with Mary, gave birth to those two sons. One son went bad and became the god of the underworld; the other became the god of those who walk in righteousness. They think Jesus is our model and we too can attain His status as gods when we pursue good deeds and acts of righteousness.

Then there are the Jehovah's Witnesses who come knocking on our doors. They believe Jesus is the first created being, the first thing off God's creative assembly line. He goes by the name Michael, the archangel, and is thus lower than God the Father, Jehovah. Yet He's

greater than us because of being created first. Thus the Jehovah's Witness translation of the Bible—the New World Bible—translates John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god."

Even contemporary individuals have other ideas about Jesus. Dan Brown, who wrote The DaVinci Code, said Jesus was a great teacher and a great leader who not only started a movement, but also a royal lineage through His marriage with Mary Magdalene. He created what is the aristocracy now of France and the church's job is to protect that aristocracy no matter the cost.

As you can see, there are a lot of opinions regarding Who Jesus is. But as followers of Jesus Christ, we must always get back to the fact that Jesus always has been and always will be God. When we hold on to that pillar, we're holding the same pillar Jesus Himself articulated. It was fought against by the scribes, Pharisees and chief priests in His day, but it was celebrated by His disciples and codified by the early church through its creeds.

Write these things down to help the next time someone says, "Hey, I'd like to talk to you, because your view of Jesus is wrong." Why do we believe Jesus is divine?

1. Jesus said He was divine. He told His disciples, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father Who is in heaven" (John 14:9). He believed He was God and equal to the Father.
2. He was condemned by His enemies. In Luke 15 we're given a story where Jesus was in a home and there was some ruckus up on the roof. Eventually a hole opened up and some men lowered their paralyzed friend down in front of Jesus. Being amazed by their faith, Jesus told the paralyzed man, "Your sins are forgiven," then healed the man. You would have thought everyone in the room would be excited by the healing, but the scribes and Pharisees jeered, saying, "This man is speaking blasphemy. Only God can forgive sin." Jesus' enemies knew exactly what He was claiming to be and it was for this blasphemy that they eventually put Him on the cross.
3. It was celebrated by the disciples. In John 20:28, after Jesus had died and risen, the disciples were gathered together in an upper room. They were afraid of what might be happening next. Then Jesus appeared to them in bodily form—although somehow He was also able to pass through a closed door. Thomas had declared he would not believe that Jesus was alive unless he could see and touch Jesus. So Jesus invited Thomas to touch His hands and His side. Thomas touched a real, living man, then declared what again was heresy for a Jew, "My Lord and my God." He knew Who Jesus was.
4. Finally, the church believed. Unlike Dan Brown, who felt he needed to come up with a new story, the church agreed on what was true about Jesus. In the Nicene Creed, they declared their faith in "one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages; Light of Light: true God of true God; begotten, not made; of one essence with the Father."

What the Bible says over and over again is exactly what Paul was declaring in Philippians 2: that Jesus has always been and always will be God. The moment we begin to take Him off that pedestal, we reduce Him to something less than the omnipotent and most holy God that He is. This is why Paul says in Colossians 1:19 that Jesus was the fullness of deity dwelling in bodily form. All that made God was in Jesus Christ. We read this in Philippians 2:6, "...*though he was in the form of God...*" The word "form" is the Greek word *morphe*, which is not referring to appearance—that's the word *schema*. Rather, it refers to the essence or substance of God. All God the Father is is also what Jesus is.

When the day comes that we do see Jesus, we can know we are also seeing the Father. He is all that God the Father is, except that they are separate persons. I know that makes your head spin. We'll probably need the rest of eternity to learn what that's all about, but this is how the Bible describes our God.

We live for ourselves, but Jesus left heaven for others.

Jesus could have stayed in His position in heaven as God. He had everything heaven offered, including total worship and praise. He could do anything He wanted, whenever and however He wanted to do it. He was God. But He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. That's the second thing that makes Jesus different from us: We live for ourselves, but He left heaven for others. From what we are told, He made this decision even before the foundation of the world. Before They created the world, the Trinity realized the creatures They were creating would rebel against Them. Jesus told His Father and the Holy Spirit that He would become one of them to redeem them back to Themselves. Jesus left heaven for you and for me. He didn't leave because He needed us or because He was lacking something in His life. He didn't need humans to be His "pets." God had the fullness of fellowship in the community of the Trinity, but He wanted to show mercy and grace and love to a people far less than Himself.

When Jesus left heaven, He did the very opposite of what the devil taught us to do. In Isaiah 14, we get a glimpse into what life was like before the creation of the world. God was in heaven with the angels and Lucifer was the chief cherub. The Bible tells us that sometime in eternity past, pride entered into his heart. Isaiah 14 walks through five "I will" statements Lucifer made when he decided he wanted to

ascend to God's throne. "I will be like the Most High. I will ascend to the holy mountain." Lucifer was expressing his desire to be God. His influence in heaven was so great that a third of the angels bought into his plan.

Not wanting to have sin in His eternally perfect heaven, God thrust the devil and what would become demons down to earth. It was in Eden then where the devil tempted Adam and Eve to also desire to be like God, having the knowledge of good and evil. That was the nature of our fall, because as men and women we perpetually live for ourselves. From our low position, we will do everything we can to raise our status. We will steal. We will hurt others. We will cut others down. Whatever it takes, we want to work ourselves up the ladder. We live for ourselves. It's "dog eat dog" and it's "survival of the fittest."

Jesus did the opposite. Though He was great, He became small. When we're living for ourselves, we're living antithetically to the way Jesus lived. He was rich, but He became poor and weak for us, so that we might be reconciled back to God. We live for ourselves, but He left heaven for us.

We sin, but Jesus saves.

The third way we cannot be like Jesus is that we sin, but He saves. As it says in Philippians 2:6-8, *"Though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."*

Jesus left heaven. Some translations say He "emptied Himself" which is a doctrinal concept known as kenosis. Scholars have tried to figure out what this means. There was a first century heresy that taught Jesus was a man who led a good life, so God decided to indwell Him through the Spirit at Jesus' baptism. After that, Jesus spent the next three years as God's chosen instrument. But when He went to the cross—because God cannot die—Jesus then gave God's Spirit back to Him and died merely as a man.

That heresy is not the emptying Paul was talking about. Never allow anyone to tell you Jesus was anything less than God in human flesh. When He made Himself nothing, that means He set aside some of the prerogatives and privileges He had in heaven for our benefit. This way He could be a High Priest Who is able to understand what we go through because He was tempted as we are.

So what are some things Jesus set aside?

1. He set aside heavenly glory. Instead of being worshiped here, He endured mocking and scorn. Jesus set aside His glory so we could spit on Him and beat Him.
2. He set aside His independent authority. As the second person of the Trinity, He didn't have to ask someone's permission or go by the beat of someone else's drum. God doesn't say that kind of thing. While Jesus was on earth, He sought only to do the will of His Father. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed, "Not My will, Father, but Your will be done" (Matthew 26:39; Luke 22:42). Jesus set aside His authority to bring honor to His Father.
3. He set aside riches for poverty. In 2 Corinthians 8:9 we read, *"Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich."* Jesus traded the God-life to become a pauper.
4. He set aside a favorable relationship with the Father to become sin on our behalf. Jesus, Who had always been in perfect fellowship with the two other persons of the Trinity, cried out from the cross, *"My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?"* (Matthew 27:46). He traded favor with the Father for alienation from Him—for us.

Why did He do all of these things? Because of His rich grace and mercy, He longed to reconcile us back to Himself. Romans 5:8 says, *"God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* He did not have to, but He did. Make this personal. Out of God's immense love for you, Jesus traded heaven to be a human. He did this so you and I could be reconciled to God.

To put this in perspective, in a few minutes you're going to get in your car. If you look at your speedometer, you'll see that your car has the ability to drive probably 120 miles per hour. How far have you tested that? You're in church, so be honest. Probably most of us have never taken our cars to their maximum speed. Either because of the laws or for personal safety, we've made the decision to limit the speed of our car. We're going to set aside that fifth gear we never use, even though it's there.

That's what Jesus did. He never lost the ability to do 120 million lightyears of speed, but He chose not to use that ability. Jesus wanted people to see that being made right before God was possible. He became one of us to show us that. We sin, but Jesus saves.

We are all fame seekers, but the name of Jesus reigns supreme.

Since the beginning, all of us are bent on seeking glory for ourselves. We want our name in the lights. Jesus' name is the only name for which one day every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth will bow. In other words, on a day of God's choosing, all of

creation will confess and acknowledge the name that is above all names. Is it just the name “Jesus” that matters? It simply means Jehovah saves. In Paul’s day, there were a lot of men named Jesus. That’s why He’s sometimes identified as Jesus of Nazareth.

So what exactly is the name above all other names? Paul says in Philippians 2 that because Jesus has lowered Himself to become a man, there will be a day when God lifts Him up and puts His name above all names and all creation will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. There are no other Lords. There are a lot of people, but only one Lord. On that day, Jesus will be forever vindicated and forever valued by all creation. God will say, “It is this Jesus Who sits at My right hand, Who was in the beginning, Who was there throughout it all and Who will be forever God—He is Lord.”

Have you ever noticed that people don’t have a problem with Jesus being a good teacher or a good leader or a good healer? The problem they have is with His nature as Lord. But on that day, everyone will bow before Him. I could spend a lot of time on this passage, because every word is significant. But now that we know Who Jesus is doctrinally and how He’s different from us, let’s look at some things we can learn practically from this text.

Four ways we can be like Jesus

There are four ways we’re told that we can actually be like Jesus. This is the central purpose of Philippians 2. We read in verse four, “*Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*” How do you do that, Paul? “*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.*” Paul gave us this doctrine, not to make our heads bigger, but to make our hearts of love bigger. He wanted us to act practically based on what he wrote. Here are four things I want you to think through, because it will be up to you to apply this to your particular lives.

Be a giver, not a grabber.

First, if you want to be like Jesus, be a giver and not a grabber. By that I mean Jesus was willing to give so others would have new birth and experience peace, joy and love. He gave and gave and gave, even when it hurt. He even went so far as to die on a cross. So if we want to imitate Jesus, we cannot be trying to grab everything for ourselves. Instead, we give. We give of our time. We give of the talents God has given us. We give of the treasure God has given. Why? Because Jesus was not a grabber. He did not consider equality with God something to be grabbed or grasped. Rather, He made Himself nothing. He gave. If we want to imitate Jesus, we must be generous with our lives.

Be humble, not haughty.

Second, we need to be individuals who not only give, but who are also humble instead of haughty. We say with our created voices, “Look at me.” It’s hilarious to realize we are the slugs of the world. Compared to God, we’re earthworms. Go outside sometime when it gets warmer and dig up a few earthworms. Put one on a pulpit, then say, “Look at how great this earthworm is compared to you other earthworms.” You will see the hilarity that comes when we humans say, “Look at me.”

O man, who are you, that God would be mindful of you (Hebrews 2:5-9)? You’re puny, created lower than the angels. So what makes us think we can pontificate on the greatness of who we are when apart from Jesus we can do nothing?

How haughty are you? Maybe you’re smart enough not to say anything out loud, but it can come out in your thinking. “Boy, I’m glad I’m not like him.” “Look at her; she’s a mess. I’m glad I’ve got my life put together.” When those moments come, look in the mirror and you’ll see you’re one of the most beautiful earthworms you’ve ever seen. We’re nothing, so why would we be haughty?

Paul says our focus should not be to look to our own interests, but to the interests of others. How do we do that? Verse three says, “*In humility count others more significant than yourselves.*” We need to put others in front and not make things all about ourselves.

Be obedient, not obstinate.

Third, we need to follow Jesus, Who became obedient and not obstinate. He became not only obedient to death, but even lowered Himself to death on a cross. He was willing to die a humiliating and excruciating death in obedience to His Father.

Obedience to God is always going to be costly. It may cost us friendships, promotions, status in our community or relationships. Will we be obstinate and tell God the cost is too high? Or will we be like Jesus, Who took a towel and basin and washed the feet of His disciples? Will we say, “God, not my will, but Your will be done”?

Be zealous for God’s affirmation, not men’s applause.

Finally, will we be zealous for God’s affirmation or men’s applause? We’re vying for acclaim. We’re looking for our name in the lights. We want men to applaud us. But when we get to heaven, we’ll either say, “God, You have affirmed what I’ve done,” or, “Man has applauded

what I've done." When we talk about all the things we were applauded for on earth, God will say, "That's not good enough." The Bible says our righteous deeds are like filthy rags before a holy God (Isaiah 64:6). Without a right relationship with Jesus, we will be ushered from the presence of God forever to a place called hell where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Luke 13:22-30).

So in the here and now, instead of fighting for the applause of men, let's do what Jesus did. Let's humble ourselves, so that one day we may hear, as Jesus did, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Let's lower ourselves, so in God's due time He might lift us up. These are four ways we can be like Jesus.

As we approach communion, what are these two truths for? First, for those who are lost, who have never trusted Jesus as their Savior. This passage screams to you, "Turn to Jesus before it's too late." There is a day coming when those who have rejected Jesus every day of their life will fall to their knees before Him and confess that He is Lord. Here's the thing: everyone is going to worship Him. But on that day, it will be too late to acknowledge Him as Lord. If that's you, turn to Jesus and confess Him as Lord while God's mercy is still available. Turn to Him so you might receive from God Himself reconciliation and redemption from your sins.

Second, for those who have trusted Christ as Savior, it is time for us to spend our days praising and thanking Him. We've heard just a small fraction of all God has done for us. Surely that should lead us to put away our worldly lusts and passions, falling all the more in love with Jesus. What is that lust? What is that desire? What is that sin you hold so tightly that is more important or more valuable than the God of the universe Who put on flesh so that He might save you and me from our sins?

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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