

**Campus Church of Christ Jail Ministry**  
**Teacher's Guide**  
**Series 1: Lesson #9**  
**"You Were Created to Become Like Christ", part A**  
(from *The Purpose Driven Life*<sup>1</sup>)

(all **green** text is for the teacher)

**Preparation:**

1. Read the sections for Days 22-23 in *The Purpose Driven Life*.
2. Review the scripture references in the lesson and related passages in your Bible; there are too many to use in the class, so be selective.
3. Read through the teacher's version of the lesson; make notes / changes as desired.
4. Pick up the following from the Jail Ministry Table:
  - attendance/prayer request sheets
  - enough copies of lesson handout for the inmates in your pod (Remember, **don't** staple the pages.)
  - correspondence courses to give out to inmates who desire one
5. Other optional materials to bring:
  - White board marker and eraser
  - Sharpened pencils for inmates to use (be sure to collect all of them before they leave the room)

**Before and as students arrive:**

1. Welcome students and distribute student handouts
2. Make sure that any inmates who don't have a Bible know that they can fill out an inmate request form to get one that is provided to the jail by the church.
3. Pass the attendance roster / prayer request sheets around.
4. Always extend a greeting of encouragement and hope as inmates are arriving.
5. Open the class / lesson with a prayer.

**Focus points for this Lesson:**

(main points to emphasize through the lesson and to summarize in conclusion. If white board and marker are available, as you conclude and summarize each point, write it on the board.)

- We were created to look and become like Jesus
- God's ultimate goal for us is not to be comfortable, but to grow up (by developing a Christ-like character.)
- God doesn't want us to become *a god*, but He does want us to take on His values, His attitudes and His character, *becoming Godly*
- Only the Holy Spirit has the power to make the changes He wants to see in our life.
- To grow up spiritually we must change the way we think in order to change the way that we act.(We have a part and God has a part in changing the way that we act.)
- Christianity is not a religion but a lifestyle.
- Reproducing the character of Jesus in our life is a slow process that will take the rest of our life.

## **“You Were Created to Become like Christ,” Part A**

### **Introduction**

Sometimes when a new baby is born, family and friends will exclaim, “Look! He has his father’s eyes,” or they say, “He looks just like his mother!” If a child doesn’t physically look like her parents, she still may take on the attitudes, values and character of her parents just by being near them.

Sometimes we say to others, “Do as I say, not as I do,” because we realize that we are imperfect human beings and that we would not want our children to follow all our examples. The wonderful thing is that we have a Heavenly Father who wants us to look like Him and to do like Him as well. We do this by learning to think and then to act like Him. One reason we want to look like Father God is so that He will recognize us as His child and invite us in to live with Him in heaven.

We can learn to look, think, and act like Him when we spend time reading and meditating on His word and praying to Him. When we focus on God, and not on ourselves, we can forgive ourselves for not being perfect examples to others. Focusing on God allows us to forgive our family for not being perfect either; we can forgive because we have been forgiven. In realizing these things, we begin to develop the character of Christ.

In this lesson we will learn that it is never *easy*, but it is *possible* for us to begin to look more and more like God as we grow, day by day, toward spiritual maturity. God’s goal is not for us to be comfortable in this life but for us to develop His character. (Character can be defined as the sum of our habits.)

God is not nearly as concerned with where we live, or even with what we do, as He is concerned about what we are on the inside. Our actions come from our thoughts. When we develop a heart (thoughts) like His, we will have great joy in knowing we are pleasing Him. We will also influence others for good. Others will see the changes in our life as we take on more and more of the character of Christ.

Won’t it be great when someday we hear others say, “She’s looking more and more like her Father?” And won’t it be wonderful to get to go live with God forever?

Let’s begin now to explore this lesson that will help us to understand that we are created to become like Christ and also teach us how to do this.

## (Day 22)

### **You Were Created to Become Like Christ**

(You also may want to review the Key Points Summary on the student handout before beginning this discussion.)

From the beginning of time God had plans for you, plans to make you look like his son, Jesus. In **Genesis 1:26** God said, *Let us (God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit) make human beings in our image and likeness.* In all of creation only men and women were said to be made in God's own image! We will explore the meaning of this a little later in the lesson.

#### **How does it make you feel to realize that God loved you enough to create you in His own likeness?**

(Encourage discussion about how this statement gives us dignity and sets us apart from everything else in creation. Lead students to recognize that our self esteem doesn't have to come from who we are, what we look like or how many possessions we have. We are SPECIAL because we are made in His image. Answering this question will provide a basis for the concepts in this lesson.)

#### **KEY POINT: You were created to become like Christ.**

From the beginning of creation, God planned that we should learn to look like his son, Jesus. The Bible clearly tells us this fact.

#### **Romans 8:29 (Msg)**

*God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his son. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him.*

#### **Colossians 1:15 (Msg)**

*We look at this Son and see the God who cannot be seen. We look at this Son and see God's original purpose in everything created.*

None of us can understand all it means to have been made in the image of God, but we can say that, like Him:

1. We are spiritual beings. Our spirits are immortal.
2. We are intellectual, being able to reason and think.
3. We are relational, able to give, and to receive, love.
4. We have a moral compass, knowing right from wrong.

Sadly, even though in some areas we are like God, sin has damaged the image so much that we may no longer really look like Him. Our minds may be so polluted that we might not even know *how* to go about looking like Him. That is why Jesus

came to earth, to show and teach us *how* to look like Him. In the following passages, the Bible tells us that Jesus is:

- (1) *the exact representation of His being.* **Heb.1:3 (NIV)**
- (2) *the exact likeness of God...* **II Cor. 4:4 (NLT)**
- (3) *the visible image of the invisible God.* **Col.1:15 (NLT)**

Just as we are pleased when people say our children favor us, so God is pleased when others can say we look like Him! We aren't trying to become *gods*, as some religions teach, we are trying to become *Godly*.

**What does it mean to become Godly?** (responses and discussion. There is no specific answer, but they should recognize that a Godly person takes on God's values, his attitudes and his character. )

Sometimes we think God wants us just to be happy and comfortable. If we think that and fail to realize that God wants us to develop His character, rather than to become comfortable, we may be disappointed. Developing His character will be hard to do. We might, in fact, be uncomfortable at times as we give up our own ways for His. He doesn't want us to be a mindless clone of Him and give up our own personalities. God made each of us unique and special. He just wants to transform our character (our habits), not our personalities.

God wants us to develop the kind of character described in:

1. The Beatitudes (**Matthew 5:1-12**)
2. The Fruit of the Spirit (**Gal. 5: 22-23**)
3. The Love Chapter by Paul(**1 Cor. 13**)
4. Peters' list of a productive Christian life (**2 Peter 1:5-8**)

If we don't remember that one of God's purposes for our lives is to develop our good character, then we will get upset over life, wondering why we are having such a hard time. In truth, life is supposed to be difficult. That is what helps us to mature spiritually. Don't forget that earth is not heaven! We may never have perfect health, a comfortable life, continual happiness, or wealth while we are here. We exist for God's purpose, not our own, and His purpose is to transform us into His likeness while we are on earth. Then we can spend eternity with Him, truly living "happily ever after!" Learning to focus on heaven while living here on earth will make us happier while we are here on earth and excited about the future when all these trials will be over when we get to heaven!

**With the new concept that life is supposed to be difficult, look back and think of a time when something bad happened in your life which actually produced some positive results?** (responses and discussion; Lead them to recognize that some good things can happen even while they are incarcerated.)

**Share ways you think that understanding the fact that “God grows you through trials” can make your future trials easier to bear?** (Responses and discussion. Lead them to understand that, since God’s purpose for them is to grow their character, they will no longer be alone in their struggles; He will be with them and help them.)

We cannot develop the character of Jesus on our own. It would be a great goal, but we simply don’t have the ability to do this on our own. It is the Holy Spirit’s job to make the changes that need to be made in us. **Philippians 2:13 (NLT)** assures us of this. *God is working in you (as the Holy Spirit) giving you the desire to obey Him and the power to do what pleases Him.*

( If time allows now, or as you find the time later, you might want to discuss when and how the Holy Spirit is received.(**Acts 19:5, Acts 2:38, Titus 3:4**) You might also need to clarify their understanding of the Trinity. A good “visual” illustration would be to hold up three separated fingers to represent three candles (do not bring real candles into the jail!). Explain how each one will burn on its own, but, if merged (squeeze all three fingers tightly together), they would burn with only one flame; separated, three flames; together, one. If you remember the tune to the children’s song, “I Love the Father”, you could teach it along with this “candle” illustration:

*I love the Father, (hold up one finger), I love the Holy son, (hold up a second finger), I love the Spirit (hold up third candle), I love the three-in-one(hold all three tightly together) He created me, redeemed and sanctified me, (Sets me apart to make the changes He wants to make in me). Praise Him, praise Him, praise Him, Praise Him, P-r-a-i-s-e.*

Obedience to God unlocks the power of the Holy Spirit. As we make hard choices about how to act, we must step out even in our weakness and fear to do the right thing, not by our own power, but by the power of the Holy Spirit living in us as Christians. He will help us, and our character will become more and more like Jesus. Sometimes He throws a boulder in our path, but sometimes He just nudges us with a “gentle whisper.” (Refer to **1 Kings 19:12**) The boulder should be pretty obvious, but we have to really be paying attention to hear the gentle whispers.

God uses His **word** (the Bible), His **people** and **life circumstances** to mold us into His character. His word tells us the *truth* about what to do, His people give us *support*, and our own *circumstances* provide the environment in which we will practice Christ-likeness. Our peers, our culture and our world will try to make us fit their mold. We must make a decision to let God be the one to mold us!

To do this we must:

1. Let go of our own, old ways (**Ephesians 4:22**)
2. Change the way we think. (**Colossians 3:16**)
3. Change our habits. (**Ephesians 4:24**)

Each one of us is a work in progress. Growing spiritually takes *time* and *participation*. It is hard. It will take the rest of our lives. It is like a seed or a child or building a great building. It takes participation. We can't just sit back, doing nothing and expect Him to "grow us" overnight any more than a child or building could grow itself or grow overnight! We must not get discouraged. God understands how hard it is, and He will help us!

**Questions to consider:**

**In what areas of my life do I need to ask for the Spirit's power to become more like Christ today?** (Stress that each student should think and write down these things privately even if they don't wish to share with each other right now. Those shared aloud can be part of the closing prayer.)

**A year from today how would you like to be more Christ-like?** (Again, this can be shared publically or privately.) Brainstorm the following question:

**What can you do today to move toward that goal?**

(Discussion...Some ideas might include: encouraging others through prayer, spoken words, etc.; having an accountability partner – share your goals with another person and ask them to ask you at regular intervals, "How are you doing in your goal to become more Christ-like?"; praying each day for God to help you have the strength to do what you know you should do.)

**Verse to remember: 2 Cor.3:18b (NLT)**

*As the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like Him and reflect His glory even more.*

**Additional scriptures:**

Genesis 6:9

Psalms 139:13-16

James 3:9

Ephesians 4:22

John 10:10

Colossians 1:27

Ephesians 4:23-24

Ephesians 4:13

Romans 12:2

I John 3:2

## (Day 23)

### **God Wants Us to Grow Up**

God's purpose for us is to develop the characteristics of His son. In the same way that some people grow older in age, but do not grow into mature adults, so do many people grow older in age but don't grow into spiritual maturity. Growing spiritually doesn't happen unless we want to grow, decide to grow, make an effort to grow, and persist in growing. Just as Matthew the Apostle did in **Matthew 9:9**, when Jesus calls us, we must make a decision to follow him. This takes commitment.

**What kinds of commitments have you witnessed in others? Were these good or bad?** (Responses and discussion. Lead responses to include such things as commitment to a child, parent, job, gang, to becoming wealthy, etc.)

Sometimes it is easier to just drift through life, without making commitments, because we are afraid of them. That, in itself, is a commitment to doing nothing. We will become whatever we are committed to and our choices will determine where we will spend eternity! (Maybe we made unwise commitments in the past. Most of us have, but we can keep that in the past and look to the future. God doesn't just *allow* that, He *rejoices* when we want to change from bad to good commitments! My prayer for you is that you will make a commitment to doing what is right, and to God Himself, right away so that you can begin to fulfill God's dream for you. You won't know everything you need to know at first. Even Christ's own apostles did not understand all that their decision to follow Him would mean. The point is that they immediately made a decision to begin their Christian walk.

**Key Point: It is never too late to start growing.**

Peter understood the urgency when he said, *Since everything around us is going to melt away, what holy and godly lives you should be living. 2 Peter 3:11 (NLT)* That puts it into perspective doesn't it?

God has a part, and we have a part in helping us let go of some old habits and create new ones. The Bible says, [**Phil 2:12-13(NIV)**] *Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His purpose.*

This means we should take this very seriously, (with "fear and trembling"), but there are two parts to spiritual growth seen in this verse. "Working out" is our part. When we "work out" a puzzle we have all the pieces, but we still have to work out how to put them together. God give us free will to figure out how to go about working out our own salvation, which we will do with some successes, some failures, some staying the same or growing etc.

"Working in" is God's part which He does through the Holy Spirit. Remember, we spoke of the Holy Spirit earlier - part of the Trinity that is living in us, prompting us, teaching us? The exciting thing is that He will work *with* us, not just *in* us! Ask Him for help!

To change our lives, we must change the way we think. Everything we do begins first with a thought. Every action we take shows our attitude. Doctors tell us this today, but God said it first: *Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts.* **Proverbs 4:23 (TEV)**

Kind of scary, huh? Actually, our minds are a lot like computers. We input "garbage" (the wrong commands) and garbage comes out! **Can you think of some ways we put garbage into our minds today?** (Allow time for discussion; if needed, lead discussion to include such things as reading inappropriate books and magazines, listening to words in songs that demean a person because of gender or race, etc., using profanity, hanging out with others who say and do ungodly things, watching movies or looking at pictures that God does not approve, etc.)

**What might "come out" of our mouths, or in our lives, because of the garbage we put into our brains?** (Discussion – encourage specific examples if possible)

**Sin begins first with a thought. Does anyone have an example of this you have observed?** (Allow a moment or two. Perhaps someone will suggest that acting out a crime first began with a thought. Be sure to include the display of "attitude". While we may not commit a crime, "garbage out" certainly includes a negative or hateful attitude which is nothing like Jesus attitude. )

The way we *think* decides how we will *feel* and this impacts how we *act*. Changing the way think is hard, but the Bible tells us to . . .*think the same way that Christ Jesus thought.* **Philippians 12:5 (CEV)**

Developing the mind of Christ, "changing our minds" (from our wants to His), being sorry for our past mistakes, and deciding to follow Him, is called *repentance*. **To change the way we think we must:**

(1) Stop thinking *immature* (selfish) thoughts. Infants think only of their own needs. They take; they never give. Remember, Jesus wants us to GROW UP!

### **Romans 8:5 (NCV)**

*Those who live according to their sinful selves think only about things that their sinful selves want.*

(2) The other half of "thinking like Jesus" is to **start** thinking *maturely*. This means to think of others, and Jesus, before we think of ourselves. Remember hearing that saying, "WWJD - What would Jesus do?" (**Show of hands**) It's a good idea to *think* that thought and then try to do it!

Paul said this about spiritual maturity: *When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. 1 Cor.13:11 (NIV)*

Christianity is not a religion, but it is a relationship with God. He is waiting for us to make a decision to follow Him, to become His child and part of His family. He is so anxious to transform us and grow us into a beautiful new being – like the ugly caterpillar that transforms into a beautiful butterfly! If God can transform a lowly caterpillar into a thing of beauty, just think of what He can and wants to do for us. He wants to transform us from the ugly creatures that we have become because of our sinfulness and make us back into what He always intended us to be, His beautiful, precious, children created in His own image.

**Verse to remember: Romans 12:2b (TEV)**

*Let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God---what is good and is pleasing to Him and is perfect.*

**Additional Scriptures:**

I Corinthians 13

I Corinthians 14:20

Romans 8:5

I Corinthians 14:20

Ephesians 4:14a

Ephesians 4:15a

Matthew 9:9

Revelation 2:23

**Conclusion:**

We were created in the image of God. We were created to become like Christ, and this is His purpose for our lives. We can't learn to have the character of Christ alone. Only the Holy Spirit can create this change in us. He comes to help us only after we obey God.

Learning to have the character of Jesus is *not* constant. We may try and fail at times. It is *not* automatic. It *is* intentional. We must decide to allow Him to mold us, rather than allowing the world to shape our character. We must want to grow, decide to grow, make the effort to grow, and never give up. We must change the way that we think before we can change the way that we act. To do this we must fill our minds with the word of God.

Developing spiritual maturity is a long and continuous journey that will take us the rest of our lives. Even though we will be more joyful on earth, after giving our hearts to Him, it will never be "heaven on earth!" This process of transforming into His image will be completed when we get to heaven or when Christ returns,

whichever comes first!. Then He promises we will have eternal happiness living with Him!

### **Closing the lesson / class:**

Close the lesson with a **prayer**

Offer the booklet, "**Am I Saved?**" to any who may want a copy.

Offer **correspondence course packets** to those who desire them.

Let inmates know that **if they desire to be baptized**, they should fill out an inmate request form on which they should indicate that they wish to be baptized by someone from Snellville Church of Christ. Invite them if there is time to stay and talk with you about this after the others leave.

### **References:**

Warren, Rick. ***The Purpose Driven Life***. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

Warren, Rick. ***The Purpose Driven Life Prayer Journal***. Inspirio, 2002.