

How do You Live Like Jesus?

a sermon in the series
The Apprentice: An Analysis of What it Means to be a Disciple

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Romans 12:1-2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

We have up to this point examined the possibility to live life as Jesus lived on this earth. It is the command of Scripture that all His children should live as Jesus lived. For example, the text we dealt with two weeks ago,

"He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked." (1 John 2:6)

This states it emphatically: you are to live your life exactly the way Jesus lived His life. Your lifestyle and conduct is to be like His.

"It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!" (Matthew 10:25)

"A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher." (Luke 6:40)

These texts are clear evidence that when Jesus saved you He had every intention that you walk and conduct your life on this side of heaven as He conducted His.

If we are to be faithful disciples of Jesus we must have a new heart with a regenerated spirit and a soul inclined toward obedience. We are given this when we turn to Him in repentance and faith. The spiritual part of our being must be made alive and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. This is what God has done for us. You cannot be a true Christian without a supernatural work of God within the inner person. Something has to be changed on the inside. The heart has to receive transformation. This we know, but that is not all.

We are not just spiritual beings who happen to have a body, or worse, spirits trapped within physical substance. As humans we are whole beings with both spiritual and physical qualities. God never designed man to live without a body. That's why there will be a resurrection of this body. Rather, He intended man to glorify Him not just in spirit, not just in soul, but also in the body. Therefore, the body must be equipped to serve God just as the heart in order for you to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

If you are going to be a mature disciple (which is someone who is discipling others), you are going to have to submit your body as well as your heart to the sanctification process. Here I think is one of the greatest ignorances of modern Christianity among true believers, we have somehow separated the spiritual from the physical and say that all we need to be focused on and interested in is the strengthening and sanctification of the heart. The body? *Well it's incorrigible and you can't do anything about it. It's going to be your worst enemy and you'll always struggle with this old body of sin, why bother.* The Bible does not portray us this way. The Bible says God has done many things for you both in the spiritual and the physical.

What I would like to do is take this text and examine it under three headings, which are really questions:

- I. Why is the Body Necessary to the Discipleship?
- II. Isn't the Body Evil?
- III. How Do We Present the Body?

I. Why is the Body Necessary to Discipleship?

After giving the most amazing doctrinal explanation of the Gospel in the entire Bible, the Apostle Paul turns his attention to our bodies. In chapters 1-11 of the book of Romans he deals with the deep and eternal issues of God's sovereign grace and he presents us with some of the most powerful spiritual truths known to man. But in what seems to be a puzzling twist, Paul seems leaves the spiritual heights and comes down to talk about the mundane physical realm of our existence—"present your bodies a living sacrifice." Why deal with the body? What does it have to do with the spiritual realm and our spiritual progress?

The simple answer—it is necessary. The body is necessary to your spiritual progress. We have discounted and basically ignored the body because it is corrupt and we should never expect anything out of it. By that neglect we have literally hampered and disabled our process of growing in sanctification. Your body is necessary to your growth in grace. And it is precisely here that many of us have spiritually failed because we have never understood the body's role in discipleship.

Most spiritual failure is the result of wanting to do what is right but not willing to sacrifice the kind of lifestyle that makes spiritual progress possible. We want to serve the Lord, we want to grow, we want to be mature disciples that can disciple others but we're not willing to address the mind *and* the body and bring upon them the radical lifestyle that is required. To look like Je-

sus is not normal. It is radical in light of the 21st century. All true believers have good intentions of wanting to live like Jesus, but you have heard the axiom that the road to failure is paved with good intentions. We all have good intentions to grow in grace but we never do. We seem to be stuck in this perpetual spiritual rut. Why? Because while we may have good intentions we do not have follow through. We will not live the life Jesus lived but His life will produce Christ-likeness in this world if you will submit mind and body to Him.

Why is the body necessary to discipleship?

A. The Body is the Vehicle of the Inner Life.

*“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is **your reasonable service.**”*

Reasonable service cannot occur without the body’s involvement. What is inside of us can only be manifested by the deeds of the body. What is on the inside is reflected on the outside.

“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”
(Luke 6:45)

Jesus is stating this principle—whatever is on the inside is going to be declared, shown forth in your demeanor and in your deeds. The actions and behavior of the body display what’s on the inside.

This is the way you are designed as a person. God did not make your body, soul, and spirit without any connection to the other. No, they are the ingredients of the whole personhood. You cannot have a godly heart and it not have some impact on the body and the body also has impact on a godly heart. It goes both ways because you are a whole integrated person.

For example, what we do for others requires the body. How can you employ yourself in service and help of a fellow brother and sister without the body? You can think good thoughts of comfort, pleasure, and help for your brother or sister, but that’s not going to help them. You’ve got to mobilize yourself because your body is the vehicle by which the good heart puts itself into action.

Even prayer and reading the Bible requires the body. *I can pray quietly without my body.* True, you can. But I have discovered that my most effectual praying has occurred when I opened my mouth and uttered words. I find when I pray out loud my body is engaged and there is something about that prayer that has more of a sense of God’s presence. Why? Because my whole person is engaged.

The same is true about reading the Bible. You must have eyes in order to see and if you have no eyes it really requires the body in order to learn braille. Therefore, to do the spiritual acts of prayer and reading requires the body.

What is inside is only reflected through the deeds of the body. So the body is necessary for your discipleship.

However, we look at this body and say it's a difficult thing, with all its weaknesses and corruption, to make it do what I want it to do. This leads to our second question.

II. Isn't the Body Evil?

Many Christians believe that the body is evil. But Paul says that a body presented to God is holy. He says it is "holy, acceptable to God." God considers a Christian's body to be holy. Let me give you some reasons for that statement.

A. The Body is the Creation of God.

God made your body.

"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well." (Psalms 139:14)

It's a marvelous thing, the intricacies of these human bodies. Even though they give us fits and are often plagued with weaknesses and illnesses, they are still quite remarkable.

The genetic scientists are telling us today that your body has the ability to heal itself and has the DNA capability of living to a maximum of 120. I wonder what we would be like if sin hadn't entered into the human race. They say most of us use only 10 percent of the gray matter upstairs, our brains. Ten percent is functional. For some of us it's questionable whether we use all 10 percent. But what would we be like if we used 100 percent? The talents you would see would be unbelievable. God made these bodies and they are a wonderful creation. But not only did He make your body, the Bible tells us that when He did so He placed His likeness in them. The image of deity was stamped into clay and although that image is marred and corrupted by the fall, it's still there nonetheless. You're made in the very image and likeness of God and that makes your body holy.

B. The Body is the Purchased Possession of God.

The Bible says Christ has purchased your body at an extremely high price. Christ not only purchased your souls and has therefore reserved a place in heaven for those souls, but He's also purchased these bodies. He wants your body, soul and spirit to be with Him in heaven.

"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

I do not think God considers it a holy thing to Him or His Son, whose blood purchased us, when we fill these bodies with junk food. I think it's a spiritual issue, not an appetite problem. I think God takes it very seriously when we discredit these bodies and do not give them the proper care they need. *That's not fair, pastor. Why are you saying these things?* Because that's what the text says. Your body doesn't belong to you. You're a steward of it and God will give you a day when you will have to give an account of your stewardship. Do you give it the proper rest, the proper fuel, the proper exercise? Are you doing your best as a steward to take care of the property that Jesus' blood died for?

Normally when we think of Jesus' blood we think of the spiritual aspect and forget about the physical. But there's a physical component as well.

C. A Body Presented is Holy and Leads to Holiness.

Your body is not evil, it's holy, and when you present it to God as the holy vessel it is it will lead you to holiness. *Isn't my body marred with sin and isn't there corruption?* Yes. The body is not perfect. But we often mistake the flesh for the body. The flesh is comprised of the appetites and desires that are grossly perverted and want to be satisfied apart from God's will. But that's not the body itself, only part of it. Your body is holy and considered so by God and when you dedicate that body to God's service it will lead to holiness.

In verses 1-10 of Romans 6, Paul has talked about some of the amazing spiritual truths we talked about a few months ago—we are one with Christ. When Jesus died, you died and thereby the power of sin has been broken in your life which means you don't have to sin. You're no longer under sin's mastery. These are significant truths. They are so lofty that I'm sometimes carried away to a point of sheer amazement. *Could God have really done this for me in Christ? I'm literally seated in heavenly places with Christ.* This is what Paul has said in verses 1-10.

“Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. ¹³ And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”
(Romans 6:11-13)

The Apostle Paul once again pivots from the spiritual to deal with the physical. If I stop there and do not explain that sentence, then I'm doing Paul and you as an injustice. To use terminology that I've used thus far such as pivoting from the spiritual to the physical is truthfully inaccurate. Do you know why it's inaccurate? Because there is no such thing as anything not being spiritual. Everything has spiritual application, especially to the Christian. The point is that these bodies are not just physical but they belong to the spiritual realm. To say that Paul is pivoting from the physical to the spiritual is somewhat misleading but it's the only words I can use to perhaps convey the point.

Here the Apostle Paul has talked about the death of Christ being your death, His resurrection your resurrection, and how you are one with Christ. And then He turns in verse 12 and says you've got to get your bodies under reign. You have to rein your bodies in and control them. You can no longer turn them over to the service of sin.

“Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but present your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”

Which means that the body is holy unto God and can be used to further your holiness and glorify God. Look at verse 19.

“I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh...”

Paul is using human terminology because the flesh is strong in its appetites and desires. It does not want to be submissive to the law of God. So he uses terms to get them to see that though they may be weak in their flesh God has done something so radical in the heart that now the heart can rule even the body.

“For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.” (Romans 6:19)

This is totally the opposite of what most Christians think about their bodies. The truth is that your body, as vile and corrupt in their imperfections as they are, can be used to further holiness.

“according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.” (Philippians 1:20)

Paul's prayer was that his body would magnify the Lord as he lived and as he died. This is what I believe Paul is telling us here in Romans 12. Present your bodies so that your bodies now glorify God just like your soul does. How is this possible? Because when God made Adam He intended him to be led by the Spirit of God in his spirit.

We commonly say the Holy Spirit dwells in our spirit and that's true. But God has also given you a new spirit. There's been a transformation. Why? Because God wants to restore what was lost in the Garden. Adam's spirit was to be in charge of his whole personhood. But when sin came something happened to Adam's spirit. It sank and his soul took preeminence. The soul, the will, the emotions, and the intellect took over and eventually the body took precedence over the soul. It's a complete reversal. Instead of being ruled and dominated by our spirits, we're ruled and dominated by the appetites and desires of these fleshly bodies. Because Christ has done this supernatural work of giving you a new heart and new spirit, you have the ability, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to get these bodies under submission and subjection to your spirit. You do not have to be led by your bodies.

“Is your body evil?” No, because Jesus had a human body. Jesus presented His body to God, just like Paul commands us to do.

D. Christ Presented His Body.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that a body was prepared for Jesus to do the will of God. Why did the writer cite Psalm 40:6? God gave Jesus a body so that Jesus could be a true man and walk on this earth and do the Father’s will as a human being in the physical realm. The Bible says also in the book of Hebrews, that with His body, “we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10).

Christ presented His body in life and death. He literally became a living sacrifice that died. We have no problems believing Jesus gave His life for us but Paul and the writer of Hebrews is telling us that before He died Jesus presented His body as a living sacrifice. In those 33 years before He died, Jesus lived with a body offered to God so that God could use Jesus in this world. If Jesus only submitted His Spirit but not His body, it wouldn’t have worked. He is a whole person and His body had to come along.

You and I are to present ourselves and our bodies to God, just like Jesus.

“He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” (1 John 2:6)

You need to do what Christ did. He offered Himself to the Lord everyday not just in His soul but also in His body so that His soul might be seen to the world through the body and thereby glorify God.

Let me turn this message to the more practical. You cannot live like Jesus only some of the time. To live as Christ lived is to live as He did all his life.

I used this illustration a few weeks ago. It’s the illustration of the little boy who wants to play baseball like his favorite professional player. He watches him on TV and thinks in his little mind, *If I can do what he does out there on the field, then I too can be a great baseball player.* So he studies and observes the famous player. Even the way he wears his jersey will be memorized. Some of those guys will have their shirts out or they’ll have their pant legs all the way to the bottom of the ankle or some will have their socks showing to the knee. It doesn’t matter, whatever this professional ball player does, that’s what this little boy is going to do. He will wear his hat at the same angle and when he gets to the plate I guarantee he has learned by imitation how to stand at the plate just exactly like the player.

If the professional crouches in his stance, he’ll crouch. If he stands up straight with the bat tall and high, the little boy will do exactly the same thing, because he believes if in the game he does exactly the same thing as the ball player he can perform like him.

But most often when children imitate their professional hero they never perform like he does. Why? Because they don't realize that it's more than what you do in the game that matters; it's what you do off the field that is also important. You have to eat like he eats. You have to train like he trains. You have to practice like he practices. You have to pretty much imitate his entire life in order to develop whatever talent you might have.

Listen closely. You cannot hope to be like Jesus if you wait until temptation to try. You cannot wait until you're challenged to think, *Now what did Jesus do here?* That's why the W.W.J.D movement was wrong. Remember that movement a few years ago? When you were tempted you were supposed to stop and ask yourself, "What would Jesus do?" The problem is that just knowing what He would do is not enough. You've got to have the ability to do it. That means if you're going to do what Jesus did, you're going to have to live off the field like He did.

Let me give you an example. The Bible tells us that for 40 days and 40 nights Jesus was tempted and one of those temptations was, "If You're the Son of God, turn these stones into bread." And Jesus answered quickly, "You shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Do you know why He knew that was the answer to that temptation and challenge from the enemy? Because all of His life up to that point had been spent memorizing Scripture. He meditated on Scripture. He knew it. He learned it. Oh, yes, Jesus *learned* Scripture.

Our biggest problem in identifying with Jesus is that all we see is His deity. We get lost in His deity—*this was God in the flesh!* And that He was. But He was also a man. The best explanation of the incarnation is this: He was fully God as if not a man and fully man as if not a God. Jesus was a man just like you in every respect except without sin. He got hungry, He got tired, He had to sleep, He bled when He was cut, and He could feel wounds emotionally. He was a man as well as God. And when Jesus memorized Scripture He didn't do it as God. He faced Satan in that wilderness and Satan said, "If You're the Son of God, turn this stone into bread," He didn't out of His deity remember the text He gave Moses. He remembered it as a man learning Scripture from His childhood up.

What do we do? We're tempted and we think, "Oh, I know there is a Scripture that deals with this and the pastor talked about it on Sunday, but what is that verse?" And by that time it's too late. We've not prepared for the challenge. You've not trained for the test because you're refusing to see that your body and your mind has to be as much employed in the Christian life as your heart.

Jesus did whatever was needed in order to glorify God in His body. He was God in flesh, but as a man He disciplined Himself and did what was necessary to assist His humanity to submit to God. He did whatever it took to present His body to God. You and I must do the same.

How did He do that? That's what we're going to be dealing with in this series from now on. Jesus practiced spiritual disciplines. We see that word as a terrible and dreaded word—*discipline*.

Brothers, sisters, I don't want to be harsh but I do want to jolt some people today. You're going to have to get up and start understanding that God is not going to do everything for you. He will not live the Christian life for you. He will live in you and through you, but He won't do it for you. If you and I don't listen to Romans 12:1 and present our bodies as a living sacrifice, we are always going to *want* to do good and please God but we won't have the tools to do it. Why? Because our bodies have not been taught, trained, and disciplined to do His will.

Jesus practiced spiritual disciplines. For example, He practiced solitude. He got away from people and noise and got alone and got before the Lord. He of course practiced prayer, meditation, Scripture memorization and fasting. Spiritual disciplines are not optional for a disciple because a disciple is supposed to be just like Jesus, and if these are the things Jesus did you better do them, otherwise cease calling yourself a follower of Christ. You're fooling yourself.

III. How Do We Present the Body?

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:1-2)

A. Good Intentions Alone Are Not Enough.

As you know, you can't just intend to be good and do what is right. You need something more than that.

Remember Peter? Remember what Jesus said to Peter on the day of the arrest and His betrayal? "Peter, I want you to know Satan has desired to sift thee as wheat, but I've prayed for you that your faith may not fail."

"Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And so said all the disciples." (Matthew 26:35)

He had good intentions. I believe Peter. I believe he meant it. I know he meant it. He had every intention to die with Christ that very day if it was required of him, but there was a problem. Do you know what Peter's problem was? He had not gotten his mind and body under control yet.

Do you remember right before the Garden of Gethsemane? What did Jesus tell Peter, James and John to do? "Watch with Me and pray that you do not enter into temptation." And what did Jesus, three times, find Peter and his comrades doing? Sleeping not praying. We teach to bow your heads and close your eyes, well, his eyes may have been closed and his head may have been bowed, but his head was not engaged in prayer. Jesus said, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."

Here He is referring to the body and its appetites. “Peter, if you would pray with Me for one hour I guarantee you that you will not fall.” That’s what He was saying. Peter would have overcome but he didn’t pray and he let his body rule.

Good intentions are not enough. You can want to obey God and please Him, but you have to do more than that.

B. The Body Must Be Brought Into Submission.

All you have to do is look at how untrained your flesh is and how it works against you. Does it not? Remember what Paul said in Romans 7? “For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.” What was happening to this man of Romans 7? He at that moment was not bringing his body into submission to the Spirit of God. The same is true for all of us. You’ve got to get your body and your brain subdued and you do so through the power of the Holy Spirit. And I have very good news—it can happen. This idea that the flesh cannot be brought under the Spirit is false.

I’ve heard people say, “You know, the flesh is always going to be the flesh”—that’s a true statement—“and it can never do what it needs to do,” that’s a false statement. It may not want to do it, but it can if you dominate it.

“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶ Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; ²⁷ but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.” (1 Corinthians 9:24-27 NASB)

In verse 25, “exercises self-control,” means self-denial and practicing abstinence. Paul says *in all things* he practices discipline and abstinence. In other words, he deprives himself because he doesn’t want the body to become gratified, having its every desire satisfied. The moment the body and its appetites get their way the flesh gets stronger in its desires and the next thing you have is a tiger out of the cage controlling you. You have to starve the tiger in order to weaken him. Therefore, Paul said he practiced self-discipline and did not let his body control him in anything. Rather he controlled his body.

For example, have you ever skipped one meal just to tell your body that it cannot rule you? When those hunger pains come, the growling begins, and you feel sick to your stomach, what do you normally do? You eat. You go to the refrigerator, to the cupboards, and find something to eat. Our Lord practiced fasting and fasting often so that He would not have a body raging in its appetites and thereby He kept His appetite under control. This is what Paul is saying here. In verse 27 the words “discipline my body” is a word that meant to strike the face under the eyes until they were black and blue. Paul is serious here. He is saying I am beating, pummeling my face with

my fists. He wasn't literally doing that, but he was using that as an analogy. Instead of beating the air, I'm beating the body to make it my slave. Pay attention to that word *slave*. Paul is not playing around. Your body is to work for you, not against you.

Most of us are so undisciplined that we let the body dictate what we do and when and how we do it. So, how do you present your body as a living sacrifice? You present your body to God by gaining control over it and guiding it into the will of God instead of it controlling and guiding you.

Are you content with merely being saved? Or do you want to live the life of Christ in joyful gratitude that Jesus loved you, His enemy, and made you His friend? My next question then is what about the command to love everyone including your enemies? How are you doing with that command? How are you doing with loving your enemies? Let's suppose some drug dealers moved in next door to you. What would you do? Would you see how fast you could build a fence or would you reach out to them as we know Christ would?

What if you had a old grumpy man for a neighbor and anytime the kids' ball rolled over into his yard he came out yelling? What are you going to do with him? You say, "I'm supposed to turn the other cheek and I'll do that." No you won't. Not in that moment when that old man is yelling and cursing your kids. There is something that will rage up in this body and you will feel it. You will want to defend and protect those kids so you'll want to retaliate. If you've not learned to control, not just your emotions, but also the body in the same way, you will not in the crucible, in the heat of the test, perform as Christ. You've got to start doing off the field what Jesus did so you can do what He did when He was in the game.

The Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 5:1, "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children." To the Romans he said, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Romans 13:14). Those of us who have truly been regenerated have received the heart of Christ and His Spirit. We have been joined with Him with the biblical assurance that "he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him" (1 Corinthians 6:17).

But what we are lacking is the one thing that only we can provide and that is our bodies presented to the Lord with a decided will to develop daily habits in these bodies, the same habits Jesus had when He was here on this earth. This is what I think Paul has in mind when he says, "put on the Lord Jesus" and "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." The question is will you now offer to God your reasonable service by giving Him your body and making it submit to you and forcing upon yourself daily habits? If you want to grow, you must. There's no other way.

I believe in the God who is in you. There's not a person listening here that's not too old to start. The saying, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks" is not true. Don't believe that. You're never too old. If you're really His child, you've got the power of heaven in you and that power can do exceedingly, abundantly above all that you ask or think. The question is, are you willing to get drastic? *Drastic measures. Sounds too radical to me, you say.* I ask you, how radical was Jesus to

dismiss Himself of all the comforts and glories of paradise and come and submit Himself to the most devastating humiliation anyone has ever endured in the death of the cross, hanging naked before the whole world in shame with your sins placed upon Him? Do you dare tell me that didn't cost Him drastically? All He asks is that you bring your body into submission to Him that He might be glorified in you, and you dare say that's too much to require? Blasphemy! That's an insult to the Spirit of grace!

What is my life? What's it worth in the end? We're like grass in the field. We grow in the morning and by the afternoon we're cut down. What is your life? Jesus has saved your life; don't take it out of His hands by trying to save your lifestyle. Give it to Him. Trust Him and you too will live the same kind of life Jesus lived on this earth. Amen.