

JESUS IN YOU AND OUTGOING
Patterning After The Healthy Christ
Part 3
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Our theme today is “Jesus in You and Outgoing.” This is the third week now in the new series that will go through Easter season on patterning yourself after the healthy Christ. To say that the resources that are in Jesus’ life emotionally and temperamentally can be in our lives as well. We ought to take advantage of the resources that he provides us and consciously begin to let his life emerge in us.

What a terrible thing to try to live the Christian life without the resources the Lord has put into our life so that we could really enjoy the Christian life.

A great deal of the Christian life is not simply getting ready for the sweet by and by when everything will be well and comfortable and in heaven. But the Lord means for us to live life richly now. It’s not simply eternal life. It is abundant life. One of the things though that we do as we talk about patterning ourselves after the healthy Christ is as we begin to see what the Lord has to offer for us, we want it all at once. We noted that Jesus wants to be in us and at ease so that we will not be anxious. He wants to be in us and happy so that we will not be despairing people. Today Jesus wants to be in us and outgoing.

It may be that in the Lord’s developing these attributes of his in your life that there will be a time process involved where you begin to move consciously toward becoming what Jesus really has for you. Patience may need to be exercised.

We must find ourselves in the kind of environment where the life of the Son, Jesus, can shine upon our lives. In the presence of other believers and an integration of our life with the word of God and with prayer and with the caring fellowship of other people who support us in the body of Christ, we can let the sunlight of Jesus Christ begin to develop the fruit in our life which will be pleasing to Him and immensely satisfying and enjoyable for us.

Jesus in us and outgoing. This trait may not be developed all at once if you’re a shy person. Maybe we ought to start by just asking the question, the outgoing Jesus – is he in me?

As you read the gospel of John and note Jesus’ beginning of his ministry you’ll find the first thing that Jesus did after he called his disciples was go to a wedding. He took his disciples with him. I think that’s characteristic of Jesus. When you begin to follow him you find yourself with other people. In the case of the disciples they found themselves at a party. Which should be a description of where the Christian life is going. When we follow Jesus we find ourselves in the company of people who are enjoying and celebrating life.

We might ask ourselves to try to get some sort of diagnosis as to where we’re at in reference to shyness or outgoingness some questions I’ve been asking you at the beginning of each of these sermons a series of questions. Today I’d like to ask you six questions. These questions will help you to know in your own heart how much outgoingness you have.

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1. Would you rather stay at home and read or watch television than to go out with friends? Do you find it very easy to kind of curl up around a book or a television and feel very much at home and you really don't want to go out and meet the world or be with anybody?

2. When things are going on around you do you usually take an active part? Or do you see yourself as a passive person, one who may be setting on the outside of the group. Or being in the group and not really saying a whole lot. More things are happening to you and you're not really directly involved in them.

3. Do you have only one or two friends you really like to be with? Maybe in some cases not a friend at all. It's intriguing to watch how the Lord would answer this question. He had close to him three friends – Peter, James and John. He had another circle of friends, which extended to the twelve. He had beyond that another circle of association, which extended to the 70. Beyond that another circle which extended to 120. Beyond that circle which extended to 500 persons who saw him alive after his passion. That's a pretty full relationship of life. To know 500 individuals well enough that you at least know 500 persons by name and know them somewhat in relationship as well. But do you have only 1 or 2 friends that you like to be with?

4. Do you prefer to live a quiet life without getting involved with people outside of your immediate family or friends? Do you find it more comfortable and as a steady habit stay to yourself or those in your household?

5. Do you wait for someone to tell you what to do instead of getting things started yourself? Instead of acting in life you tend to react. If someone tells you to do something, you do it. But basically you're not initiating things.

6. Do you shrink from approaching people you do not know and introducing yourself? You kind of draw back in shyness.

I'd be surprised if anybody here answered yes to all six of those questions. Maybe someone. But usually if a person answered yes to all of those questions they wouldn't in themselves be here this morning. They would be at home. If you answered yes to all six I admire your courage. It says you're already beginning to come out of that shyness.

Some people may answer all the questions no. That would describe to me a very outgoing person. But before we all commend ourselves if you answered no to all 6 questions, remember sometimes outgoingness can simply be a cover for the loneliness you feel within. There are some people who keep busy because they don't want to face the loneliness of close interpersonal relationships. They are very active with other people and everything may be on a surface relationship.

It would be a real tragedy if the church were made up of people who all answered yes to all of these questions because it would mean that we would be a very shy group of people. If a visitor came to a church where everyone answered yes to all of these questions, can you imagine what they would think? They'd think we were cold. No one introduced themselves, said hi. No one seems to care. They're cold and stuck up. But they'd actually have made a total misdiagnosis.

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Jesus in you and outgoing. It's important for us to be outgoing. It was important for Jesus to be outgoing. Why is outgoingness vital?

For one thing the witnessing responsibilities we have as individual Christians and as a church will never be done unless we are outgoing. The New Testament has a word in the Greek, which is "proclamation." One who is a herald. One who announces a message. The one who brings the message, the witness, must go to someone else. Jesus told the disciples when he was finished with his ministry on earth, "Go therefore and be witnesses in all the nations." Mark says, "They went forth and preached everywhere." Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, so send I you." And Jesus again says in Acts 1:8, "You shall be my witnesses."

It was the Lord's will for the early church as well as it is his will for us now as a church and for us as individuals to be carriers of the message. Which means we need to initiate contact with people. Somehow escape this barrier of shyness and reserve that we can get drawn into.

Think of it this way. We are really the final link in the drama of redemption. We in effect become the last link in the chain because we are the person who completes the work of Christ by telling someone else what all this means, that Jesus has come to offer us abundant life and eternal life. The whose saving significance of Jesus Christ is not known unless that message is declared, witnessed to by others who go out to tell someone.

We have responsibility that the Lord entrusts in us as his witnesses and if no other reason we need to come out of our outgoingness of sharing our faith with other.

But there's also the need to have outgoingness if we're to have fellowship or *koinonia* in the body of Christ for the Lord does not call us to be lonely individuals in relationship to him. But he calls us into a family and he calls us to vital relationships with other believers.

Jesus says in Mark 10 "There is no one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and the gospel who will not receive one hundred fold in this time houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands and persecutions and in the age to come eternal life." Jesus says the person who follows me is going to have a new family. They're going to have a hundred brothers, a hundred sisters, a hundred mothers, a hundred fathers, a hundred children. That in my reckoning about five hundred people that are going to be in your family.

Is your family that large? That's kind of a maximum family in the kingdom of God – a hundred fold, a hundred percent. The Lord I think is calling each of us to that kind of level of relationship. We may have a kind of tier structure like the Lord did. Three – twelve – seventy – a hundred twenty – and on to five hundred. Maybe three hundred eighty people we only know casually but it's the family to which we can really feel a part. In order to really feel a part of that family there is a need for outgoingness on our part.

Acts 1 and 2 describes believers who on the Day of Pentecost are filled with the Spirit and they begin meeting with one another. They not only have a relationship with Jesus Christ and see 3000 people born into the kingdom of God. But they had 120 with the 3000 people then get into a vital fellowship with one another. They share together, eat together, worship together, pray together, confess and bear burdens together. What if in that original group of disciples would

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Jesus had said to them, Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel and then share your faith and share your life with other believers there would have been one of the twelve say, “Lord, you know I’m an extremely shy and retiring person and I think I’d really rather stay home and read the *Galilee Press* everyday rather than doing this which you called me to.”

The whole Christian enterprise, the church collapses when we don’t outgo.

Jesus also notes we need to have an outgoingness because there are items of service, which he has called us to. The New Testament calls this by the name deacon – service. Jesus describing the ministry we would have to others in the body says there will be as to him. He says, “I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me.” All activities which require outgoingness on our part. Giving food, giving drink, welcoming people, visiting people that are in sick or in prison.

To be outgoing is vital I think we could all agree, to the work of the Lord. And it’s vital to our own emotional and temperamental healthiness.

What are some of the barriers that are in our life that keeps us from being the outgoing person the Lord would have us be? Or perhaps keep the outgoing Jesus from expressing himself in our personality?

The last two Sundays we’ve looked at anxiety and depression. Certainly these could be barriers to outgoingness if we tend to be very nervous and uptight and very sad and depressed about life. It’s very difficult to be the kind of outgoing person the Lord would want. What are additional things that can keep us from being outgoing?

One of them is a poor self-concept.

Jesus teaches this, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Many people have pointed out that you really can’t begin loving your neighbor until you love yourself. Because the love you’re called to for your neighbor is the love you have for yourself. Therefore Jesus is saying you don’t love another person better or worse than you love yourself. It’s important to love yourself.

If other people haven’t loved you or have given to you a very bad perception of who you are maybe who you are in Christ, how can you be outgoing when you really see yourself as a miserable and poor and nothing to offer kind of person. Sometimes people dump on us, don’t they and get us to believe things about ourselves that God really doesn’t believe about us. I think of Jacob in the Old Testament when he is born he is given a name that means “surplanter.” If we would translate that into the vernacular it would become something like “cheat.” Jacob has become a beautiful name because it’s become associated now with God who declares himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But Jacob must have struggled with that nomenclature applied to his life. He still struggled with it later in his life when he wrestles with the angel of the Lord all night long. Then he begs the angel of the Lord “Please don’t leave me until you’ve given me a blessing. I will not let you go until you bless me.” The angel says, “All right, I’ll bless you!” And the angel blessed him by giving him a new name. His name was Israel, which means “a prince.” The Lord gave him a whole new concept of who he was.

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I believe Jesus does this when we come to him. Often we have a poor self-concept that comes from people dumping on us. We desperately need to see in the mirror of another person's eyes our goodness and beauty and dignity as a human being and Jesus allows us to have that as we come to him.

We need to develop a response to the witches of life which tell us of our ugliness. I think James Dobson has put it so well when he describes the act that there are so many children that are born into our culture and we have stress on bright children and beautiful children. Woe to you if you're not one of the bright kids and one of the beautiful kids. So many persons in our society really grew up feeling left out because they're not bright and beautiful. And people dump on them because they are this way.

When there have been people in life who have come down heavy on us and have said things about us which have demoralized us and caved us in we should let it say, "That's his/her problem for having that kind of a perspective. But I don't need to accept that. I don't need to make that my problem, my way of looking at it."

We must come to know the Lord and trust in what he has for us. I think added to this low level of self esteem is our feelings of inferiority, which keep us from going out to another person. We feel so very inadequate. We feel like we don't have anything to offer. We're less worthy and less capable and the like. Out of that comes shyness and embarrassment and unwillingness to get up before a group and unwillingness and unreadiness to relate to people. If the Lord through intervention and other people in the body of Christ who began to have faith in me and draw me out I would to this day still be walled up in my own island of privacy. I find it a very easy thing to retreat into islands of privacy. I think sometimes persons who suffer from inferiority complexes are mistaken for having superiority complexes.

Paul had to deal with Timothy along these lines. Timothy had this spirit of inferiority. The Lord said to him through Paul, "God has not given us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self control." The Lord doesn't want us to wallow the rest of our life in inferiority complexes. It's really a sad and despairing thing in life to think that one can be so overridden with inferiority that they can say, "I have nothing to offer. I'm not competent. I can't ever meet people on their terms or be a blessing in the Lord's work."

Another barrier I think to our outgoingness is perhaps on occasion and unreadiness to be vulnerable. Maybe we've been betrayed or misunderstood or criticized.

Jesus was all these things. He was betrayed and misunderstood and criticized. That can produce, "I risked myself once and I was hurt so I don't want to expose my feelings and my life again because I don't want to go through that trauma." So we conveniently wear a mask. The mask is always smiling but on the inside something else may be happening. But we feel comfortable with that.

The Lord is saying to us as a part of outgoingness is a willingness to be vulnerable and to let our lives really be shared and exposed to one another.

Sometimes a lack of outgoingness can occur simply because we're preoccupied by our own personal pursuits. We're so wrapped up in our own world and our own dreams that we forget to

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really offer our lives to God and ask God, “What dreams do you have for my life?” We can be so busy pursuing our own ideas that we neglect what the Lord has for us. Far more important than our view of ourselves is what the Lord wants us to do. What are his plans for our life? We can be blocked from experiencing his outgoingness because we simply elevated our dreams and plans ahead of his.

Prayer is not coming to God and saying, “God, how can you be of use to me today? How can I put you to work to further my dreams?” But real prayer is coming to the Lord and saying, “Lord, how can I be of use to you today?” Starting with the right kind of foundation makes our lives available to the Lord as he may want to use them.

As we begin to look at the barriers, that in itself is a way of beginning to tear down the barriers to recognize what is there that may really be inhibiting us from a relationship that allows us to be a witness in a meaningful way and allows us to be a service to others.

How do we take steps in becoming an outgoing person?

One is to begin following Jesus. That’s based upon the gospel of Mark 1:17 where a group of people – fishermen – Jesus appears before them and says to them “Follow Me and I will make you to become fishers of men.” It’s so striking that the Lord says if you follow me I’m going to put you in relationship with people. In fact the Lord is saying in this figure of fishers of men, I’m going to give you responsibility even for people.

When we follow the Lord, as we begin to get into the gospels and see how Jesus related to people, we see how comfortable he was with persons, we need to recognize what his life dwelling within us we can be comfortable as well with people.

I think one reason why the Lord could be so comfortable with people is he had a deep love for people. He didn’t have to take time to decide whether or not he was going to love someone. He saw every human being as potential person to be loved. I really believe Jesus loved everybody that he met. He didn’t put someone on trial saying I’ll wait to get to know you better before I can extend my love. Or I’ll give you trial period and if you prove worthy then I’ll love you.

These are some of the things that we need to develop in our outgoingness, to have that instant perception of being able to have the love of Jesus in our heart as we touch other people. I believe the Lord from the first moment he comes in contact with Simon, his love reaches out to him. When the woman was taken in adultery the Lord, I don’t believe looked at her and said, I’m not sure I can trust you enough to love you. I’ll keep you on a conditional basis and if you prove worthy at some point, then I’ll extend my gracious love to you. But from day one his love toward her is immediate and strong. The same thing for the rich young ruler. Sometimes maybe a person is on a lower level of income will find it difficult to love somebody who is well off. The Lord didn’t find this young man’s wealth any barrier to his loving him. Even though he was rich, he loved him. In fact when the rich young man refused to follow him, Jesus was grieved because he had such a love for this young man that went away.

To really consciously seek that indwelling love of Christ that causes us to meet a brother or a sister and begin to realize from the heart as we meet them Jesus loves you and so do I. As we begin to practice that presence of Christ in our meetings with people it’s remarkable the kinds of

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changes that take place. As we begin to follow Jesus we find his love dwelling in us as we approach other people.

I think another thing about being an outgoing person is that we need to take one step at a time and not get stuck at one particular level but keep progressing.

In the book of Acts Jesus will send the disciples out to all the world and give them the commission that says, “You be my witnesses in Judea and Samaria and the uttermost part of the world.” But in Mark 6 when he has sent the disciples out for the very first time he gave them three restrictions. He said, “I don’t want you to go to Gentiles and Samaritans. I don’t want you to take stuff with you. And third, I don’t want you to get into arguments with people – you share your testimony and if somebody refuses to accept it move on.”

In the book of Acts, certainly they’re going to Gentiles and Samaritans. They’re taking stuff with them and they’re arguing with people in the good sense. That is they’re presenting a reason for their faith. They’re not just sharing their testimony. They’re proving that Jesus is the Christ from the scripture.

Why the difference between Acts and the gospels? In Mark 6 he limits them in terms of what they’re doing. There’s very good reasons for that because when they first are sent out they’re not confident enough to witness to Gentiles and Samaritans. All they can think about is burning down Samaritan villages. That’s not a very good, healthy witness. They needed to develop some faith by not taking anything with them. And they don’t know enough to argue with anybody. They don’t know enough of Jesus. That will come later.

So start at the level you’re at. This is the way the Lord takes us too in terms of our outgoingness. You’ve got to start somewhere. In repeatedly doing it, it becomes more natural. Part of outgoingness is taking the next level, taking a step at a time and not trying to be everything all at once.

Look at the level of outgoingness that you’re on and then ask yourself, Am I stuck on that plateau? Pray about it and ask the Lord to lead you to people, both older friends and people you don’t know. Maybe the Lord is saying, go beyond that level and do something else – radical hospitality. Jesus pronounced the blessing on when we invite the poor and the blind, the people who are handicapped, the people who don’t have anything into our circles. There are levels in which we can grow. Take a step at a time.

Then I think a last thing, and this must be said about our outgoingness, we must rely upon the power of the Holy Spirit. This is not just something we can dream up and undergird ourselves psychologically to do. There’s a real sense the Holy Spirit goes far beyond our human energies to plan and to maintain and to be outgoing. It’s the power of the Holy Spirit that comes upon the early church and sends them into the world and makes them so vastly successful in their outgoingness. The Spirit has changed their lives. The Spirit has given them a new freedom to relate to people.

I look at the 120 on the Day of Pentecost and then that day there were 3000 added to the church. Out of the 120 we know what one of them did when he received the Spirit and that was Peter. He got up and preached. What did the other 119 do? I kind of think the other 119 were people

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who then provided the kind of life leadership that the 3000 could be absorbed into the Christian faith. Somebody needed to teach them how to pray, how to relate to one another in a personal way. How to come to know the word and know the Lord and know the disciplines of the Christian life. If each of these 119 had taken about 28 other people and begun to assume responsibility for them then that takes power. If the Lord all of a sudden said, I'm going to put 28 new Christian sin your life that have just given their life to the Lord, and you're responsible for them, would you need the power of the Holy Spirit? Oh, yes! We need the power of the Holy Spirit.

I believe the Spirit of God can touch us if we will come to Him in a renewed heartfelt dependence upon him. He asks us to strip away the barriers, which lock us in the imprisonment of our quiet isolation and bring us to other people even as Jesus came for others.

Our gracious heavenly Father, we give you thanks today for the gift of your Son Jesus who came out of the ivory palaces into a world of woe. Thank you, Lord, for coming. Thank you for reaching to where we are. Thank you for your friendliness and the way you touch our lives and the joy with which you've come into our experience. Thank you for knowing our name. Thank you for caring about us, really loving us from the depth of your being. Thank you for making us feel at home in your presence. Thank you for your graciousness in forgiving our past and not holding it against us. You are our friend and Lord and we praise you

Lord, each of us have needs in our own life to increase that level of outgoingness. We can only do this with your presence living in us and the blessing of your Holy Spirit upon our lives. I pray, Lord, that you'll make us outgoing in your name. That our witness will not be something that is confined to a Sunday morning experience. That our fellowship with the body would be more than just a casual meeting now and then. And that our service will be more than simply the contribution of our income. But that on a deeper level we will go out in your name to serve you and our brothers and sisters in the world. Come upon us Spirit of God that we might do your will and help us by your Spirit to be all the things you've called us to be. It's in Jesus' name. Amen.