

JESUS IN YOU AND SENSIBLE
Patterning After the Healthy Christ
Part 6
Dr. George O. Wood

This now is our sixth Sunday in a series of nine messages of “Patterning our Life after the Healthy Christ.” The chorus I was brought up with: *To be like Jesus, to be like Jesus, all I ask to be like him.* There are moments when we sing that the person of Jesus is so very wonderful that we sing it in a mystical and spiritual and worship and awe sense. I’m trying to put greater concreteness and objectivity to that song as I sing it. There are certain aspects of the Lord that I’m wanting to be like, to sing “To be like him,” and then not, at the same time, pay attention to what he is really like would find myself and yourself coming out on the short end.

Our purpose in sharing this series of messages on “Patterning after the Healthy Christ” is that we might more specifically look at how the Lord wants us to respond to life.

We have said thus far that Jesus did not live life anxiously or in a worried, nervous state. But he lived life at ease and composed and in control. And he wants to live life at ease in us. He did not live depressed and fearful. But he lived cheerfully and joyfully. Jesus did not live quietly and withdrawn. But he lived an active life in a physical sense. He was socially outgoing and assessable to other people. Jesus did not live life inhibited and unresponsive to people. But he lived communicating warmth and expression, responding to life. And when he lives in us he seeks to do the same thing. He did not live indifferently or inconsiderately or insensitively. But he lived sympathetically and kindly and compassionately and caring. He seeks to do that in us.

As we look at Jesus today we see him living in us and sensible. What I’m trying to do by his word “sensible” is strike a balance between living life on the feeling level and living life on the mind level. If we live life simply on the feeling or the subjective level we’re going to be really very turbulent in how we live. If we live life however without feelings at all and simply every thing is rational and our mind is in charge we can be very clinical and dispassionate toward other people.

The Lord wants us to live with a right balance between the feeling and the thinking ends of life. We’re trying to assess whether or not we live life on such a subjective level that our emotions are in control of our life, making us illogical people and self-absorbed. Or whether we live with Christ in us as fair minded and reasonable people with our head on top of our hearts. I admire God’s engineering achievement that he did structurally place the head on top of the heart.

Sometimes there maybe so much conflict or pressure or emotionality in our life that we may fail to function in ways that are best for us. So we take some moments to look at the scripture and what the Lord is saying to us through patterns in the scripture to help us get rid of an impairment of our ability to make right choices.

We look at people for example in scripture like Adam who governed by the emotionality of the moment attached to someone he loved and unwilling to make a right decision of obedience to God. Often an emotional relationship with a person may prevent us from doing God’s will when it’s a clear choice between that relationship and obedience to the Lord.

JESUS IN YOU AND SENSIBLE

Patterning After the Healthy Christ – Part 6

Or Esau of emotionality of “I have a need now and it’s got to be met no matter what the consequences.” Winds up costing him his birthright and his inheritance.

Or Saul whose tremendous insecurity caused his kingdom to come crashing down around his ears and annihilate as well his family’s life.

Or David who let his emotionality in the one stark area of his life where he totally failed God let the emotionality of sexual passion totally obliterate his sound judgment and obedience to God.

Or Joab, David’s general, who because of the fact that he seethes with anger and revenge living on the feeling side of life eventually brought about the annihilation of his life.

Or even Job’s wife who in the incredible circumstances of Job’s adversity finally hung trust in God on the clothesline and said with her feeling level, “Curse God and die.”

How can we live life in a proper balance between our feelings and between a good use of the mind?

We might ask some questions, How sensible am I?

1. Do I sometimes become so emotional as to be unable to think or to act logically? There may be times when it’s all right to be extremely emotional. But often when we become emotional to the sense that it blocks our good judgment that might be just the one time in our life where all the good that has been piling up gets thrown away because we have been carried away by the passion of anger or lust or pride or indignation or some such other thing at that moment. So we want to try to assess that. Am I the kind of person to become so emotional that I throw wisdom and thought aside?
2. Do I tend to analyze and dwell on inner thoughts and feelings? All of us by the way, need to take a little bit of time discovering who we are. But if we tend to stay there, always dwelling upon what we are thinking and feeling we’ll wind up as a very self absorbed kind of an individual. Preoccupation with self. Really non involvement with other people’s life because we are so much needing other people to cheer us up or to somehow pour their life into us that we become unable then to do the very important thing of giving to other people. Do I tend to analyze and dwell on inner thoughts and feelings?
3. Do I tend to be suspicious of other people’s motives and actions? Someone that always keeps at arm’s length until they prove themselves.
4. Am I likely to be jealous? Am I really bothered when someone else gets ahead of me? Or someone else is pretty or someone else is wealthy or spiritual? We say life’s not fair and that ought to be happening to me. We get torn in our spirit about that.
5. Do I find it hard to accept criticism and blame? People have to be very careful around me because if you criticize or blame me one of two things might happen. I might retaliate and lash back because I don’t accept it. Or I might just wilt because I can’t take the criticism or the blame. It’s interesting how we have two different reactions.

JESUS IN YOU AND SENSIBLE

Patterning After the Healthy Christ – Part 6

6. Am I inclined to carry a grudge? If we're carrying a grudge it's surprising how that can spillover to other areas of our life. We'll talk about that as we come to it in the message today. Anger can so often lead down other trails that we had not even anticipated.

7. Do I frequently make conclusions without looking at all sides of the question? How each of us have this certain sense of personal infallibility. We operate by our hunches, by gut level, by our feelings. Sometimes we're right. But sometimes because we haven't taken the time to assess all that's involved we make some very tragic mistakes.

8. Do I let emotion influence sound judgment? This is true in so many areas. It's certainly true I disciplining of children for example. Your love for a child may be such as to impede sound judgment and the need to exercise discipline. Sound judgment can be affected by so many things in our life.

A yes on all eight or a good number of these questions would suggest a tendency to let inner feelings create a bias in you. There is a distortion in your ability to be logical in appraising reality in real life situations. Perhaps you're overly sensitive or introspective or jealous or suspicious or self-conscious or have a tendency to hold grudges or be easily embarrassed or misinterpret the motives of others.

I think it's instructive to look at these questions in light of Jesus and the passion week. Jesus, do you sometimes get so emotional as to be unable to think or act logically? Think of all the Lord had to do in that final week. The bottom line was to die on the cross and rise again from the dead. How would you feel if you knew by Friday you would be on a cross. Yet all that week he had so much on him. He not only had to die for our sins. He knew he was going to be betrayed by one of his trusted twelve. He knew he was going to be denied by the other eleven. He knew that he was going to have extreme blame and sarcasm and ridicule and hatred placed upon him that week of his life by the opposition. He was going to face all of this. Yet in this week of time he had to get across incredible amounts of teaching to his disciples. He had to act calmly and purposefully. Forty percent of the gospels deal with this last week of the Lord's life. There's significant teaching material out of this last week that we never have from the three-year ministry prior to the last week. Can you see Jesus facing the cross and becoming so wrought up with the emotional trauma of laying down his life that he become incapacitated by his feelings? For our sake and for his he lived a life that was pure and open and wholesome before the Lord. No matter what the emotional circumstance was that was bearing down upon him, there was that sense that Jesus did keep his senses and his wit and his purpose and proceeded to do his task and not become absorbed in his own self and say "I'm going to die this week and every body ought to be involved in my life and sustain me and give me the courage to face it." But instead even in that moment he was pouring out his life into others and being aware of their needs and hurts and the like. A beautiful model and example. I don't believe it's some ivory tower model that's up there and say, "That's the Lord. He can do that but we can't. We're human beings." That's to misunderstand the nature of the in the flesh experience of Jesus that he became fully human to give us a pattern and a model by which we ourselves could govern life.

How can we respond to life on a level that is higher than the level of simply emotional reaction?

I think there's a solid example of this in the Old Testament. I'll take some moments to deal with it in the example of Joseph. As I searched the scripture for a Christ-like example I came across

JESUS IN YOU AND SENSIBLE

Patterning After the Healthy Christ – Part 6

this pattern of Joseph, who if any body in scripture could have had emotionality and subjectiveness and feelings dominate his life so as to really make his life useless it was this man Joseph. Out of his life I see certain questions rising which I think if they're not successful answered can lead to emotional and illogical kinds of actions and behavior and lifestyle.

How do I respond to my childhood? All of us have been kids. We have had different parental kinds of backgrounds. Some of you have had a very wholesome childhood. Others have been filled with hurt and trauma. If you have had a childhood filled with hurt and trauma you have had more to overcome because that emotional damage which has happened to you as a younger person has a tendency to carry over in your actions as an adult.

Joseph certainly could have said, I have a damaged childhood. What other child could say my father has four wives. And these weren't wives in succession. These were four all at once. Can you imagine the confusion in Joseph's family life. Not only that he had ten older brothers who didn't like him. And not only that he wasn't the youngest. He had a younger brother who in the process of being born his own mother died. He might as well asked the question, What kind of a God would have allowed my mother to die in childbirth? What kind of a God would let my father have so many wives and such confusion in his home without immediately striking him and punishing him?

I think Joseph could have raised a lot of questions. He did not have the ideal adolescence. The only thing he had going for him was a father who made him a coat of many colors. And I sometimes wonder if Jacob was dispensing a little guilt in that by giving a child something to wear but maybe not giving him the attention he needed. Joseph certainly could have looked at life and said, I am what my family has made me and if you had been brought up in the kind of family background I was brought up in you would be as crippled emotionally as I.

One of the great things we believe when we come to Christ is that because of him we do not have to let our life be lived and ordered by the past agenda. But we can let our lives be lived by our hope and promise in Christ. That he really comes through on the delivery of his promise that if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. The old passes away and he new comes.

Joseph let his future govern his life. He dreamed a dream, Genesis 37. I believe as we apply this in the Christian sense there is that dimension to the Christian life in which because of Christ we're able to dream a dream and that he can make life totally different than it was. And he does.

One of the things that we must do is come to grips with those hurts of childhood and be able to lay them aside. To be able to experience healing in them and restoration. The healing hand of the Lord and maybe on occasion the healing hands and healing prayers of other believers with whom we have confidence to share in that certain things have happened to us. That we don't want sympathy but we want more than sympathy. We want someone to pray for us that the Lord will cause us to successfully deal with that and lay it aside.

If we deal successfully with hurt in childhood we go on in Joseph's life to find another cause of emotionality that can spring in is when the bad breaks come to us in life. How do we respond to bad breaks?

JESUS IN YOU AND SENSIBLE

Patterning After the Healthy Christ – Part 6

Joseph had bad breaks. He gets thrown into a pit. They were going to kill him. Finally he gets sold to a trader caravan going to Egypt. Rejection and loneliness are his. It is one thing to think that nobody cares for us. It's another thing to realize that everybody really does hate you. Joseph wasn't just on a subjective level. He was on an objective level: nobody really does care for me.

How do we respond when we have really been bumped? Joseph could have responded with a retaliatory spirit. "I'm going to devote my life with getting even with them!" The only thing that anger does is it eventually eats us up. It's like acid. Only we never get a chance to pour it on the other person. It just stays within us and it eats the test tube of our life completely away. That kind of emotionality will keep us away from the clear-headed judgment that the Lord wants us to live life with.

Did Joseph respond to his bad breaks with bitterness? I'm going to go through the rest of life saying bitter things about God and the way he takes care of his own and the way my brothers have taken care of me. Did he simply say I'll go through life with defeat resignation and not ever dream again or not aspire or never get up off the canvas where I've been decked?

It's surprising to me when you look at Joseph when somebody has had the kind of experiences he's had it's not surprising to think of them committing suicide. Why go on living? When one has been plucked up from his home what does one have to live for anyway.

Of course the suicidal moment is the moment of extreme emotionality. It's the moment of extreme feeling level where in contemplating suicide or even in carry in gout a suicide threat we have abandoned at that moment all levels of rationality and simply been swayed by hatred toward self and disappointment and depression and self pity in life.

Joseph though in his moment of bad breaks, learns to develop a deep depend and reliance upon the Lord. This is shown to us so eloquently in Genesis 39 where after he has found a place to work in Egypt and he's been promoted in a household the wife of the man who he's working for attempts to lure him into sexual immorality. Here is where Joseph if he had had anger in his life would have fallen. Remember I mentioned earlier about anger is an emotion that spills over into other arenas. Because Joseph, as an angry person, would say "I've had my bad breaks in life. It's about time I started enjoying myself. It's about time that I had some fulfillment. It's about time that I do what I want to do and I take control." As a result of that anger seething against his parents or his brothers he could have in turn traded for an illicit relationship with another human being.

How many romantic liaisons in marriages have been formed as a result of anger coming out of a childhood experience? And out of that anger comes an inability to walk in a way that is right before God. And the anger expresses itself in quit an unexpected way – in lust and illicit romance.

But Joseph sensed that the Lord had something else for him so he says to Potipher's wife "I cannot do this wrong against my master and against my God." In the midst of that bad break the bottom line was still service to the Lord. We're going to walk with him and trust him.

JESUS IN YOU AND SENSIBLE

Patterning After the Healthy Christ – Part 6

I think to avoid being invaded by this terrible emotionality that could come to life and get us off track we have to be able to respond to the bad breaks of life by saying, Thou he slay me, yet will I trust him. I will go on walking with God and I will use the healing resources of Jesus to help me recover from this.

How do I respond for not being rewarded for doing what is right? Joseph is true and moral. He promptly gets thrown into prison for his righteousness. Does he respond with doubt? Or self pity? No, instead he responds with renewed trust in the Lord.

I think in this Easter week when we look at the resurrection of Jesus Christ we have to realize again that that's the bedrock of our faith. That whether or not we feel good about something or whether or not everything good happens to us, the fact still remains and is Jesus has risen from the dead. And because he has risen from the dead I can with his help face anything. And realize that even if everything isn't evened up in my lifetime the Lord is sovereign over the earth and he will take care of me and he will do justice. It's hard not to be rewarded for doing what is right.

Joseph had an additional temptation of emotionality and that was he had success. How do we respond to success? If Joseph had been living with a great deal of anger in his life and somehow had managed with that anger to climb to the top what is a person like who has climbed to the top and has a great deal of anger in their life? They're intolerable toward other people. They're out for revenge. They're out to stamp other people down. They're out for retaliation. Joseph could have retaliated against the butler. Or his brothers. "I'm successful now and I'm going to get you."

Instead he responds with deep humility in his life and says "You meant it for evil but God meant it for good." Again, tremendous bedrock level of confidence of God in his life.

When we look at Joseph we see the model of a person in scripture that had everything hurled at them. Yet the Lord was with them because they had purposed in their heart to walk with the Lord. I believe that's the key to letting life be lived on a level that is far deeper than simply responding to your feelings, especially the feelings in your life which are hurtful and angry. To turn to the Lord and give him your life and trust that you don't need to control your life. You don't need to be in charge of every decision. Some decisions the Lord can make for you. He can create a dam in your life and turn the course of your life in the direction maybe that's different than you perceive. Ultimately he will bring you to your goal. But your confidence and trust is in him. Not in yourself.

Don't respond to hurt or to anger in life.

I wish I could use illustrations of this but I won't and shouldn't. But there are moments when as a pastor and as a friend of people when you want to be able to say "If you would just lay aside the hurt and anger that's been building up in your life and all the blame toward other people and all the blame toward God in stead of letting it drag you down to the pit of despair and hopelessness and ruin. What steps can we take so that Jesus may be in me and I may be sensible having the right balance between this level of subjectivity and objectivity? I think we need to know where we are at. That involves a level of recognition. Maybe asking these 8 questions at the beginning is a way to help us see where we're at. Sometimes it's possible we may not see ourselves at all. I found it very helpful in life to talk to other people about what is going on

JESUS IN YOU AND SENSIBLE

Patterning After the Healthy Christ – Part 6

inside me because sometimes a person whom I trust in a spiritual way has even more insight into me than I have into myself. And to recognize if we are reacting strongly to life in an emotional sense. Maybe we ought to have someone we trust.

There ought too if we find ourselves acting out of old hurts and old wrongs that we bring to the Lord that confession of our need and our hurt and ask him to take care of it.

I think we need to go a level past a recognition and confession to come to a level of planning. If we really take the Lord at his word that we can ask of him anything in his name and he will give it to us, I think that involves us being allowed as persons to present to the Lord things we would like to do for him, for his kingdom, for his work. That it's o k to have dreams and plans. Someone has said, if you don't aim at anything you're going to hit it every time. One of the things that can happen is we can get used to a life that is being directed by other people and by events and we're really not in control. So it's not surprising that we act emotionally to things that come along. Because we haven't really been planning or ordering the future.

I think of the Lord's life as a classic example of this. From the beginning of his ministry his purpose is to lay down his life for his people, to lay down his life for the forgiveness of our sins. To atone for our sins. He has basically three years of ministry and then his purpose must come to pass. I think in regard to that since Jesus had a plan from day one it might be all right for me as well to lay down some plans for my life that I can begin living by so that I can be more objective. It's all right to plan. Maybe you won't be able to plan out every day of your life to the total end of what you want. But maybe you ought to start right now with saying; Lord if you give me three more years to live what can I accomplish in the next three years? What would you want for me to do in the next three years?

There are many things that you may have wanted to do and it hasn't been done. You know from the tug in your heart what the Lord's will is often, what has the Lord uniquely called you to do? It's surprising how time gets by us because we don't make plans to do something. We're going to read our Bible through for example but somehow year in, year out we never quite get around to it. We're going to have a time of personal devotion or a time of daily prayer and somehow year in and year out we never quite get to it. We're going to accomplish this specific goal but we drift and we're governed in many cases by our passivity and our lack of emotional and intellectual ability that is able to set a goal and stick to it. Even making a goal to determine in your life to be more like Jesus Christ, rather than drifting. And say, Lord throw open the doors of spiritual potential in my life so I can increasingly be like Jesus. Begin to develop and flow off that.

I think as we plan we'll find a certain kind of amenability that when we set a goal and begin moving toward it the Lord, through the power of the Holy Spirit, has this marvelous ability to correct our course so that it goes just in the right direction he wants. You can't guide a bicycle that's standing still, someone has said. You get the bicycle moving and then the Lord can direct its course. It's been said, "Blessed are the flexible for they shall not be broken." Great truth to that.

There comes a moment of evaluation when you have established a purpose and you turn around and you say, Where did I come in that goal? You hold yourself responsible for having made a decision, an analysis of your life.

JESUS IN YOU AND SENSIBLE

Patterning After the Healthy Christ – Part 6

It's striking in looking at Jesus to see what he does. At the beginning of his ministry in Samaria after he talked with the woman at the well he tells the disciple, My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. That's a clear enunciation of a goal. Jesus is not just drifting toward the cross. He is purposefully going there. He says this is the will of my Father, that I might finish his work. So for three years he plods on.

He finally comes to that moment, the evening before the cross. He says to the Lord in his high priestly prayer, John 17, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do." Completing the work you gave me to do.

Do I know what work the Lord has given me to do so that I would know to be able to say whether or not I've completed it? Complete the work you gave me to do what work is the Lord giving you to do?

You say, That question bounces off me like a rubber ball. That's ok. That should begin to awaken a consciousness in you to begin seeking the Lord and ask him specifically what work he has given you to do. By work I'm not talking about doing something in a foreign mission field somewhere though it could include that. It might be your work as a parent. It might be your work in a vocation. It's what is related to you specifically. Jesus is able to say, I completed my work. When he's dying on the cross, John 19, "Later knowing that all is now completed so that the scripture might be fulfilled Jesus said, "I thirst." When he had received the drink Jesus said, "It is finished."

What a wonderful thing to be able to come to the end of one's earthly existence and say at the close of that, "It is finished." I have completed my work." What a wonderful thing to attain to goals. This can only be done where there is purpose behind our life. We have laid aside the potentiality of the hurt and the anger and the emotions of unbridled love and really submitted our will and our heart to God. The cross is no emotional thing to embrace. We embrace it now emotionally because it's emotionally meant for us. But Jesus had to set his will to go to the cross. If he had depended upon his feelings to get to the cross I don't think he would have ever felt his way there. The feelings led him away from the cross. Release this cup from me, he prayed. That's his feeling showing through. But in the next breath his submission to God, "Nevertheless, not what I will but thy will be done.

The Lord is really asking each of us if we're willing to pray to be like Jesus. If we're willing to pray from the standpoint of being like him and being sensible. Of getting that rational part of our being, that will part of our being in control. Dealing with the emotions which are wrong and letting our life be governed by the freeing power of Christ.

Our Lord, in this moment of prayer we come to you and I can just see before me a sheet of paper. In the left column is I write down the dreams I have as a person made in your image. What goals I would aspire to. The column on the right is a blank column for evaluation, which will be filled in at some later date with you. Lord, there may be friends here who are very troubled in their life right at this moment. They have been deeply hurt in life. Hurt by a family or hurt in the body of Christ when they were faithfully serving you and an injury of spirit has occurred to them. Since that time they've been really unable to settle down and find a purpose. Instead there's a tremendous layer of resignation and defeat and hurt and

JESUS IN YOU AND SENSIBLE
Patterning After the Healthy Christ – Part 6

anger and grief. You're calling us today Lord to trust you anew, to believe that in this week there is resurrection. That the old lies in the grave because of you. You take our sins and our needs and our hurts and absorb them into your life and we die with you. When you come out of the grave in triumphant life we come out with you too. Raised in newness of life. Lord, each of us have been uniquely and marvelously created by you. Created in your image. When that image has been shattered because of sin, you've come in redemption to remake the image so that we can walk in your steps, so that we can think your thoughts, so that we can do your deeds. All of us are called Lord Jesus to that high privilege of being sons and daughters of you. Lord, order our life, direct our life, heal us that we might be useful to you and well within ourselves. Guide the decisions which we make, Lord, that the decisions aren't made out of haste or out of guilt or out of pressure or out of some buried conflict of the past. But that when we make decisions that effect us and other people we make them with a clean slate within bringing them before you and asking for your judgment and your discernment. Having the confidence when we make them that we make them from the right motivation with a pure and a clean heart. And because they're made in that way you will honor and bless and enrich them through the commitments, which we make. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you're in us anew to make us after you. Through Jesus our Lord. Amen.