

Topic: Association Breeds Assimilation



He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to Walk Just as He walked.

~1 John 2:6 (NKJV)~

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INTRODUCTION TO THE LESSON

There is an old adage that says “you are what you eat”. When we consider what this really means, we come to the common sense conclusion that it is not to be taken in the literal sense to suggest that you actually become the very item you eat. If you ate a burger and fries, you wouldn’t become a burger and fries. The saying “you are what you eat” means that the food you put in your mouth affects the health of your body. For purpose of our study, we will use the adage “you are what you eat” to support our lesson that, as Christians, the associations we maintain will in large help to shape who we will become in the kingdom.

I have often heard it said that if you desire to attain to a certain height or stature or position in life, you should spend an exceptionally amount of time with people who are at the height or stature or position in life you desire to be. In doing so, you will begin to take on their characteristics, habits and traits. You will begin to assimilate their mindset in achieving their dream. Thus, you will begin to climb the latter of success and soon reach the prize you were striving for. The influence our associates and environment has on our life is not to be underestimated. Being in the midst of positive people will influence us to be positive just as being in the midst of negative people will influence us to think the same.

OUR STUDY

I was sharing with one of the saints how we ought to be as Christians, representing the Spirit of Christ in all we say and seek to do. This is only possible as we associate (or connect our life) with Christ. If we are to be like Christ then we must spend time with Christ and spend time with others who embrace or hold true to the word of God and who walk in intimate relationship with the Savior. The Lord began to speak in my spirit just how critical it is to surround ourselves with the right influences. The journey that you and I as Christians are on is a faith journey with a goal to become more like Christ as we journey through this life.

“Association Breeds Assimilation”. What are we really saying?

To gain a better understanding, let’s break down the words.

Association (root: associate):

- To bring together or into relationship.
- To join or connect together.
- To keep company with.

Breed:

- To produce; give birth to.
- To cause or be the source of; engender; give rise to.

Assimilation (root: Assimilate):

- To take in and incorporate as one's own.
- To absorb or blend together into one.
- To bring into conformity with.

To assimilate is the process of transformation of a person into a dominant influence from within their surroundings. This can develop over time and structuring. The more time we spend in an environment or in a state of mind, the more we are conformed to that environment or state of mind.

God's desire for all who know Him is that they become more like Christ by producing Christ-like character. We do this by growing in our knowledge or by learning all we can about Christ. In order to grow in the knowledge of Christ we must first know who Christ is and what Christ is like. The best way to gain knowledge of someone is to be in the presence of that someone.

Of course, knowledge alone will not produce a Christ-like character. The knowledge we gain from God's word must impact our hearts and convict us of the need to obey what we have learned.

Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV)

- 1. 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.*

In this text, the apostle is appealing to those who have embraced Christ as their personal savior to submit themselves to Christ in willingness to be a living sacrifice or representative of God. He is calling for us to be acceptable unto God in conduct. To do this, we must take our everyday, ordinary life, our going to work, our connecting with our friends and loved ones and place it all before God in how we respond. We cannot allow ourselves to be so connected to the world that we fit into the mold of the world without even thinking. This what Paul meant when we told to be not conformed to this world. We mustn't allow ourselves to be conformed to the world in how we approach life's situations. Instead, we must allow our mind to be transformed or renewed so that we are able to perform what is good and acceptable and perfectly in line with what pleases God. To do this, we must fix our attention on God so that he can begin the work of changing us from the inside out.

Philippians 2:5 (NLT)

- 5. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.*

We must see then that we have the same disposition that was in Jesus: he was ever humble, loving, patient, and laborious; his meat and drink was to do the will of his Father, and to finish his work. To assimilate Christ is to make Him our model and in all respects to frame our lives, as much as possible, in accordance with His great example.

Acts 17:28 (NLT)

^{28.} *For in him we live and move and exist. As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'*

We must have the understanding that all things exist in and under God's will. To be in right relationship with God is to be in a harmonious obedient relationship with the Father, Son and Spirit. This is essential if we are to receive the fullness of the blessing of being like Christ. We must be obediently in tune with God's will for us. While a regular diet of the word of God is essential to us taking on the characteristics or image of Christ in becoming the child of God we were created and destined to be, just as critical or essential is the company we keep.

Just as true as the statement "we are what we eat" is, the truth that association breeds assimilation is just as factual. Who we connect or surround ourselves with can and most times will have an influence on how we view things. If we surround ourselves with faith believers who embrace an unshakable trust that we can do all things through Christ that will soon become our embrace. On the other hand, if we surround ourselves with individuals who lack a victory believing faith that will also be our lack. There is some truth to the statement that we can become a product of our environment.

Since this is the case then our environment must be one that breeds an assimilation of Christ. We must take on the character or bear fruit that resembles our relationship with Christ. We must stay in the presence of God until we look, walk, act, and think like Christ. We must reflect the character of Christ at all times.

Proverbs 3:6 (NLT)

^{6.} *Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.*

We must acknowledge God's presence in our life which means to observe Him and get to know Him in the process of living. The result will be our every decision and choice in life conforming to the will of God as he directs our paths.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT)

^{22.} *But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*

^{23.} *Gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!*

Here Paul introduces us to the Fruit of the Spirit which is a natural product of the Spirit. These are the qualities of the life that has been claimed by Jesus Christ and are led or produce by the Spirit as we endeavor to live in obedience to God.

Ephesians 5:2 (NKJV)

^{2.} *And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*

Christ is our example given unto us by God to be our example. In other words, we are to watch what God does, and then emulate it like children who learn proper behavior from their parents. God has demonstrated his love for you and I. We are to keep company within him and learn a life of love from Him. Observe how Christ loved us (he gave his life for us). His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something from us; no to the contrary, he love so to give everything of himself to us. Now we are to love just like that.

2 Corinthians 8:21 (NLT)

21. We are careful to be honorable before the Lord, but we also want everyone else to see that we are honorable.

We must aim to be honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in all our dealing with one another (in the work place, in the home, in the church, in the market place, etc.)

Assimilating the Character of Christ.

Association with Christ ultimately leads to a life lived in victory; a life empowered to overcome any trial or tribulation. Our main study scripture, 1 John 2:6, tells us that if we abide in Christ then we ought to walk like Christ. To walk like Christ means to also go the way of the cross. It means to experience the victory that comes after the cross through the resurrection of Christ. There is power in being resurrected from the dead. However, suffering and death must precede the resurrection.

Philippians 3:7-10 (NKJV)

- 7. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.*
- 8. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ*
- 9. And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;*
- 10. That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.*

In order for us to assimilate the nature and character of Christ, we must count as loss all we gained apart from Christ. In other words, we must separate ourselves from all associations contrary to His character in order to gain His perspective on this new life you and I have been given. While doing so will lead to a knowledge of Christ in the power of His resurrection, it will also bring with it the blessed fellowship of His suffering being conformed to His death.

Matthew 16:24 (NLT)

24. Then Jesus said to his disciples, If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me.

If we are to follow Jesus and assimilate his life, we are encouraged, or quite frankly instructed, to deny ourselves and pick up our cross. In other words, we must willingly submit the all of who are to the will of the Father. It is no longer about us and how we feel or don't feel or what we think we should and shouldn't do. Following Jesus means everything surrounds a life of obedience and self-denial. He who takes not his cross, and follows after Jesus the Bible says is not worthy of Him (*cf. Matthew 10:38*). There is no option for the child of God who seeks to be like Jesus. The only road that leads to being like Jesus is the road traveled by Jesus.

CONCLUSION

One day you and I accepted Christ and made one of the most important decisions we could ever make. On that day our future radically changed. By accepting Christ you and I assured that we will spend eternity with God in heaven. Inviting Jesus to be the Lord of our life involved us giving our entire life to Him. This decision to totally give our life to Christ is a commitment that not only affects our eternity, but also

drastically affects our life here on earth as well. From that day we invited Christ in our life to now, we submitted ourselves to His presence so that His Spirit could conform us to His image. As we did and continue to do, we assimilate the very character and nature of Christ. And this, my brother and my sister is how our victory is won. Let us therefore continue to pursue after Christ. The lyrics to the gospel song “Chasing After You” says: I’m chasing after you no matter what I have to do cause I need you more and more....I’m praising my way through....just to be closer to you (*song by Bishop Paul S. Morton – Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship Mass Choir*). This should be the sentiments of each of our heart, mind, and spirit. Continue to run the race looking unto Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith.

God’s peace and blessing be upon you....

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