

A massive bible reading this morning.

1 Corinthians 11:1 **Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.**

Some of us might read that and go, “Paul had a bit of a self-esteem problem – way too much of it.” .

Seriously though, what would you think of your preacher this morning, if he got up and said, “If you want to know how best to follow Jesus, just imitate me...” You’d reckon he was full-of-himself, wouldn’t you... *... And I’m pretty sure, the ones who would scoff the loudest, would be my wife and my children, because they’re the ones who know me best...* I could never get up here and say, “Be an imitator of me”, because I (more than any of you), am very aware of my own brokenness, selfishness, sinfulness and imperfections...

But if I was to say (as Paul did), **Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ**, well that’s a very different statement. In a very few situations of life, and of being a disciple of Jesus, I do actually get it right sometimes. And to the extent that I **do** imitate Christ, take those few good examples, and apply them wherever you can, in your own life.

Discipleship – being a disciple of Jesus, is all about following Christ. And how we do this practically, we can see it being demonstrated in the lives of other disciples of Jesus, every day of the week. We don’t have to re-invent the wheel. Wherever we see “Christ-likeness” being mimicked in another disciple

of Jesus, we should give God thanks and praise, and then, mimic that ourselves...

Who do **you** imitate? Most of us imitate someone... Who do **you** imitate???

I'm old enough to remember when it first began, to not be "uncommon", to see a young tennis player, get all cranky and throw his racquet down on the ground... Who do you think they were mimicking? John McEnroe. Once this world champion arrived on the scene, with all of his temper-tantrums, it wasn't long before he was being imitated.

I always have to be careful who I mimic. I might find myself admiring the wit of someone like Winston Churchill, and then become like him – using wit to cut people down, and demolish them (just like he did). That's imitating someone in a bad way.

Who do you mimic? Who do you imitate?

When it comes to being a disciple of Jesus, which disciples of Jesus do you imitate?

Many of us, will look to one of the celebrity Christians:

- A Christian music artist; or
- A Christian comedian; or
- A world-renowned preacher; or
- A Christian author; or
- A Christian speaker;

The trouble is, though, a lot of the time, these well-known Christian celebrities are so well-known and so popular, because:

- they tell us what we want to hear; or
- they possess the persona we desire, and would love to have ourselves;
- their self-confidence; their charisma; their communication ability; their artistic flare
- They just seem to have it all-together, and we want to be just like them...

But you know, a lot of the time, when we mimic other Christians, we're not actually imitating Christ-likeness, so much as the personality of our heroes that we crave...

Paul said: **Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.**

You and I are surrounded by disciples of Jesus... Some are more Christ-like than others. And the thing is, often those who are **most** Christ-like, will be the least enviable, the least known and the least popular of the bunch... And do you know why that is? It's because the way of Christ has nothing to do with popularity, and everything to do with the cross. The way of Christ, costs.

For a few chapters now, Paul's been talking about how disciples of Jesus deny themselves for the sake of others.

Those who are like Christ:

- Put themselves last;
- They'll never be rich by worldly standards, because as soon as they begin to accumulate stuff, they give to those who have nothing;
- They'll never be 'head of the pack', because they put others first;
- They're people of grace rather than condemnation;
- They would rather have wrong done to them, than seek retribution;
- They're people who mix with the hurt; and the lonely; and the broken, and so you'll probably never see them in any of the popular circles
- Those who are like Christ, are a people who often suffer, simply because they take up their cross as Christ did...

I started searching my mind, to try and come up with

1. "Who is the most Christ-like person I know?" (I need to give these people an example)
2. What is it about them, that is so Christ-like?

And I couldn't come up with a single one that was "the complete package". Some are very Christ-like in one respect; Others are very Christ-like in another respect...

But you know what??? Most of the ones that my mind turned to, are quite elderly... I think it's because they're nearing the end of their life, and at this stage of life, they've got the perspective that they probably should've had all along... They're not living for themselves any more – they're living for Jesus...

- I think of my grandfather, who when his wife died, saw his empty 3-bedroom home, and he took in 2 troubled teenagers from a state home... In his old age, he should've been able to take things a bit easier, but he gave up his peace; his order; his freedom, to love these 2 troubled lads, that had no one to love them;
- I think of Robyn's 98 year-old grandmother – and the way she lives so simply, and always takes the bottom of the barrel for herself, and gives the best to others;
- I think of a little old lady in Dalby. We young ones called her “Aunty Maisy” – a lady who welcomed as Christ welcomed, and I never heard her criticise anyone...
- And Doug and Lou Carter (also from Dalby). People of hospitality. They were quite well to do. But they didn't care what strata of society **you** came from. Everyone was welcome in their home, because their home was a place for Jesus and His children.
- I think of one of my former ministers (Ron Watson). (A man with many faults). What was Christ-like about him? The way he prayed. His prayer-life, was something to be imitated.
- I think of a lady by the name of “Anne Harley”, and her love for people and her selflessness for Christ.

Were all these people perfect? No, not one of them... That's the way the church is. The Lord continues to transform us and renew us by His Holy Spirit... ... But only if we let Him.

And how does God choose to make us more like Christ? Well one way, is to provide Godly men and women, for us to imitate. We don't imitate everything about them – only that which is like Christ...

If I ever get to the position where I don't think I have that much to learn from other disciples of Jesus,,, then my growth in Christ, is going to stall, and my Christ-likeness will fade (rather than develop)...

God's plan, for us to grow in Christ, is to recognise the Christ-likeness of other disciples of Jesus, and to become imitators of **them**, as they imitate Christ. And you might be surprised, that somebody else, might begin to imitate you, in your Christ-likeness.

We imitate Christ in others, and they imitate Christ in us.

We might just take a few moments to have a bit of a think about these few questions:

1. "Who are the most Christ-like people I know?"
2. What is it about them, that is so Christ-like?
3. How can I imitate their Christ-likeness?