

# The Christ-Centered Life

**Introduction.** The New Testament can be easily divided into two major sections. The first part, from Matthew 1:1 to Acts 1:11, expands the theme of “the kingdom-centered Christ.” The second part, in turn, from Acts 1:12 to Revelation 22:21, develops the theme, “the Christ-centered kingdom.” The two divisions emphasize the supreme truth that the center-point of the New Testament is Christ (Philippians 3:7-11).

With Christ being the unifying center of the New Testament, no one ought to be surprised that the people of the New Covenant are called “Christians” or followers of Christ (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). Neither should anyone be startled at seeing the redemptive invitation of the New Testament as being an invitation to come to Christ and live in Him (Colossians 3:4). God sent Jesus to us to be our Savior; and Jesus, as our Savior, brings us to God. In baptism, we are clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27); and in our daily living, Christ becomes our goal (Philippians 3:7) and leader (Hebrews 2:10).

To the one seeking the way of truth, nothing can be more paramount than the questions “What does it mean to be a follower of Christ and live the Christ-centered life?”; “How can I put on Christ and live in His strength?”; “What does it mean to be a true servant of Christ?” These questions are answered in the New Testament in four significant ways.

## I. *Imitating His Character*

- A. Christ-centeredness means taking on His character by imitating it, imbibing it, and implementing it. Our highest compliment comes when we are told, “You remind me of Christ. You reflect how He lived, thought, and served.”
- B. Paul wanted us to be followers of him, as he was of Christ (1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Philippians 3:17). We are charged to handle suffering the way He did (1 Peter 2:21). His mind is to become ours, as we jettison our minds so that we can replace them with His (Galatians 2:20; Philippians 2:5). His divine, pure love shows up in us in our domestic relationships, as husbands love their wives the way Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25) and as wives submit to their husbands as unto Christ (Ephesians 5:22-23).
- C. The meaning of the word “disciple” is “learner.” Jesus has extended to those who would be His disciples three invitations: (1) “Come and believe in me” (John 8:24); (2) “Come and learn of me” (John 6:44-45); and, (3) “Come and serve with me” (Matthew 25:34-36). The disciple of Christ follows Him, learns from Him, imitates Him, and becomes like Him in character, deportment, and thinking.

## II. ***Internalizing His Creed***

- A. In addition, Christ-centeredness means accepting the creed of Christ. A good definition of faith is accepting what Jesus has said and obeying what He has said. The rabbis talked about the truth, but Jesus said that He was the truth (John 14:6). The Christian believes, lives for, and lays down his life in principle and practice for the truth.
- B. The New Testament is the last will and testament of Jesus (Hebrews 9:15). From Acts to Revelation we see Jesus' divine revelation to us. His revelation is the latest and the last revelation to His followers (Hebrews 1:1-2; Jude 3). Jesus' words and the words of the men whom He equipped through the Spirit and sent out to preach the gospel form our creed of truth. After Jesus went back to heaven and after He had established His church, His followers are described as entering into "this way" (Acts 9:2), "a new and living way" (Hebrews 10:20), and "the way of truth" (2 Peter 2:2).
- C. We have said (and we must continue to say), "We have no creed but His creed; we have no name but His name; and we have no way but His way." Man-made creeds are inadequate, fallible, and worthless. Jesus' creed is divine, infallible, and eternal. It is entirely sufficient for everything we need (2 Timothy 3:17; 2 Peter 1:3).

## III. ***Being His Church***

- A. Also, Christ-centeredness means being His church. Why should anyone be confused about the characteristics of the church? Its founder is Jesus. He built it and owns it. The church contains the ones who have been redeemed by His blood. No concept is more beautiful than the New Testament church. At conversion, He places us in His "one body" (Ephesians 4:5). He has asked His followers to be faithful members of His body on earth (1 Corinthians 12:27). In the church we have His fulness "that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:23).
- B. Our challenge is to be His church! God's solution to the world's problems is for Christians to be Christians and the church of Christ to only be the church of Christ. We do not need to change it. The crying need is for us just to be it!
- C. The church is the most relevant entity on earth. We do not have to make water relevant; we just have to consume it. We do not have to make air relevant; we just have to breathe it. We do not have to make the church relevant; we just have to be it.
- D. The only facts we can know about the church are those that have been revealed by God through the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles and prophets (Romans 3:21-22; Ephesians 3:5). Making a commitment to be the Lord's church is not a matter of being broad-minded or narrow-minded. This commitment should be solely a

question of what God has revealed. At a given time, one's concept of the church may be too broad or it may be too narrow, and the only way for one to determine what His concept should be is to return to what has been revealed.

- E. No one has to be discouraged or misled about the church. Each person has the opportunity to become a member of it (Acts 2:38-39), know that he is a member of it (2 Timothy 1:9), and live as a member of it the way Christ directed us (Ephesians 5:23).

#### IV. ***Fulfilling His Commission***

- A. Likewise, being Christ-centered means taking up and living out Christ's commission. Jesus' mission has an intentional incompleteness to it. He began His ministry by preaching (Matthew 4:17). When He approached the end of His ministry, He was still forecasting the coming of the kingdom (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:4-5). When Jesus blessed His apostles and ascended through the clouds, the kingdom still had not arrived.
  - 1. Jesus no doubt meant for us to see this paradox. He did not come to end something; He came to begin something.
  - 2. His ministry set in place a mission that towers above all other missions. The greatest event of all time was the earthly ministry of Jesus. He began it, and His followers took it up and will carry it forward until the end of time.
- B. The truth of what Jesus wanted to accomplish while He was here fully surfaces in His giving what we call the Great Commission on the mount in Galilee (Matthew 28:18-20). As we listen to this account, we are simply awe-struck by every part of it. It dawns upon us that this was the high summit toward which Jesus' earthly life continually moved. He had come to start a mission He would hand over to His apostles and disciples, and then they would live it out as their mission.
- C. Upon His return to the Father, Jesus would enter into His mediatorial work at the Father's right hand, interceding for His people as their great high priest (Acts 2:33-34; 7:55; Romans 8:34; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22). Every disciple should weigh each word of this commission with love, obedience, and faithfulness. No part can be overlooked, and no implication can be missed. Just as Jesus poured His life and blood into the creation of the gospel, we are to give ourselves unreservedly to spreading it. This, without doubt, is our highest priority. Nothing -- not our businesses, families, or pleasures -- can be permitted to replace it.
- D. Yes, Jesus engaged in truly compassionate, loving benevolence. He healed the sick, cast out demons, and raised the dead; but this was not His mission -- at least, not His ultimate mission. His kind deeds of mercy conveyed the kind of heart He has and the kind of heart His

Father has (Acts 10:38). Also, through their miraculous power, they confirmed His deity (Hebrews 2:3-4). However, His real mission rose above these miracles of compassion and kind deeds of service. His ministry must be interpreted through the words of the Great Commission. Everything Jesus said, did, and taught is colored by what He said to His disciples.

- E. He was sent by God into the world (John 17:18, 21), and He sends us into the world with His mission. We are not part of His plan -- we are His plan. He will convert through the message (James 1:18), but we are His plan to spread the message to every creature (Mark 16:15; Jude 23). Our love for Christ, our commitment to serve in His kingdom, and our regard for the preciousness of His mission in the world constrain us to give our hands and hearts to work of Jesus (Proverbs 11:30).

**Conclusion.** The highest and holiest invitation that anyone has ever received is the divine calling to come and live the Christ-centered life. No greater opportunity or need exists. This life is the salt and light that Jesus described in His sermon on the mount. This life is the only life that extends His mission, fulfills His eternal purpose, and satisfies every human need.