

imitator

CHOOSING TO FOLLOW GOD

This Book Belongs To

Date



Imitator: Choosing To Follow God, Follow Up Journal
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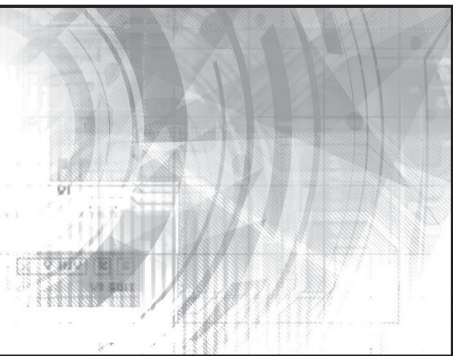
"Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God."

— 3 JOHN 11

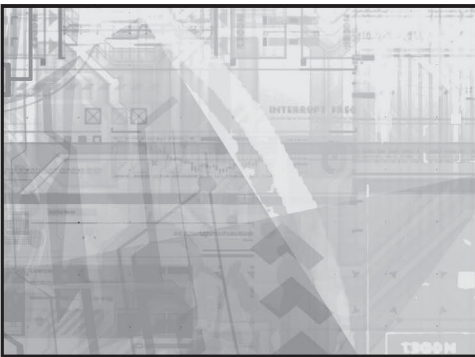
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getting started ...

If you're holding this book right now, there's a good chance you have, at some time in the recent past, spent a fair amount of time studying this idea of being an **imitator**.*

Maybe you did it as part of a Disciple Now weekend, or a weekend retreat.

MAYBE YOU DID IT IN YOUR SMALL GROUP, OR ON WEDNESDAY NIGHTS.

Whatever the case, there was a moment when you reached the last session and you "finished" your look at what it meant to live as a God-imitator.

Or so you thought.

THIS BOOK YOU'RE HOLDING REPRESENTS THE NEXT PHASE OF YOUR JOURNEY TO TRULY LIVE THE LIFE OF AN IMITATOR.

In this book, you're going to take a much deeper look at this concept. And you're going to do it in a way that's a little different. For most of you this means no small group, no leader. Just you, this book, your Bible, and the Holy Spirit as your guide.

The weekend you might have spent studying *Imitator* with your youth group was really only the beginning. This next stage of the journey is where you'll have the chance to own what it means to live as a God-imitator. And that's pretty exciting stuff . . .

LET'S GET STARTED. READ THE NEXT PAGE TO LEARN EXACTLY HOW THIS BOOK WORKS.

**Technically, you don't have to have gone through *Imitator* with your group. But, you'll probably get a lot more out of this book if you have.*

HOW THIS BOOK WORKS

Here are a few things you need to know to put this book to good use.

START WITH THIS ADVICE

Whether you're super-committed and read your Bible each day or struggle to read a few verses a couple of times a week, the key to sticking with this through four weeks is a routine. Try and work through this book at the same time each day, whether that's in the morning, after lunch, or before you go to bed. Block out a time each day to spend in this book, and then commit to sticking to it. **You'll find it's a lot easier to stay consistent that way.**

HAVE YOUR BIBLE OPEN

Resist the urge to ignore the spots where this book will tell you to read a passage of Scripture. This book is only a guide for *the* Book. **The close relationship with God that you want only happens by reading and doing what's in the Bible.** Have it open as you go through this book.

EACH WEEK IS STRUCTURED THE SAME, BUT IS REALLY DIFFERENT

Each week's content follows a pattern. **But, each day is different. And, there are a lot of different kinds of activities.** Some will take 3-5 minutes, some 10-15. Some will ask you to look at two or three passages of Scripture; some will just ask you to think about a concept. The variety will make it easier to stick with and help you learn in different ways that are suited to you.

WHAT IF I MISS A DAY OF READING? OR THREE?

Don't give up! Take this at your pace! The goal is for you to grow closer to God and to have a faith-life that's more "real"! If you miss a day or two . . . or four . . . don't throw in the towel. Pick this book back up and start where you left off. **You can do this!** And by doing it, you'll show the world that God makes an incredible difference in the lives of His followers. So, hang in there! You've got this!

WELL, THAT'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW TO GET STARTED! TURN THE PAGE TO READ THE INTRODUCTION TO WEEK 1.

week 1 intro

BEFORE STARTING WEEK 1, READ THIS SHORT INTRODUCTION

Think about the first week of school after summer break.

After some time getting organized, there's that moment where you crack open a math or science book and jump back in to subjects that you've largely (and thankfully) forgotten about over the summer.

Suddenly, your brain finds itself flexing muscles it hasn't flexed in a while.

You can almost feel its "wheels" trying to turn, knocking off a summer's worth of rust, trying to remember how to solve for x and y , or balance an equation. It's a pretty crummy feeling.

This first week, Week 1, may feel kind of similar.

Maybe it's been a while since you went through *Imitator* with your group. Or, maybe it wasn't that long ago, but you've still turned your mind toward other things. After all, you're a teenager which means you're super busy.

The point of Week 1 is to re-introduce you to some of the concepts you studied with your group, while beginning to introduce you to some deeper aspects of being an imitator. So, there will be some old stuff and some new stuff.

Basically, if we're going to continue down this really cool journey of growing closer to God, we'll need to make sure that we start on the right track.

So, let's get started! Turn to page 5 for Week 1, Day 1.

be imitators of
god, therefore,
as dearly loved
children and
live a life of
love, just as
christ loved
us and gave
himself up
for us as
a fragrant
offering and
sacrifice to god.

ephesians 5:1-2

WEEK 7: DAY 7

Today's a quick review of what you should've covered in *Imitator*. Read the following verses, and follow the questions to recall anything you learned, or simply to begin reflecting again on these concepts.

IMITATOR CONCEPT 1

We are called to be imitators of God.

"Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." — Ephesians 5:1-2

Now, answer these questions in the space provided:

- In your own words, what does it mean to you to be an imitator of God?
- What is your motivation for being an imitator? Why should you want to do it?

IMITATOR CONCEPT 2

You'll either imitate God or the world. There's not a third choice!

"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever." — 1 John 2:15-17

Now, answer these questions in the space provided:

- When you think about loving the world, what examples come to mind?

IMITATOR CONCEPT 3

Imitating God must be practically lived out each day of your life.

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. — Colossians 3:1-3

Now, answer these questions in the space provided:

- Describe in your words the difference between “things above” and “earthly things.”
- If you lived each day with your heart and mind on “things above,” list three ways your life would be positively impacted.

IMITATOR CONCEPT 4

The Holy Spirit is the source of our strength and power when it comes to living a God-imitating life.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. — Galatians 5:22-25

Now, answer these questions in the space provided:

- Look at the “fruits of the Spirit” listed above. Circle the ones that are the most prominent in your life.
- Which ones do you struggle with? Put a square around them.
- In the space below, write a few ways you can practically live out one of the “fruits” you struggle with today.

Alright! Now you're back in the flow. You should remember these concepts. It's a good foundation for starting this book. Tomorrow's activity is a lot different, so don't miss it!

week 7: day 2

Today you're going to be asked to track your level of imitation. Or more accurately, to track your level of your awareness of your imitation.

Use this page if you're reading this book BEFORE YOU START your day.

As you go throughout your day, pay attention to those times where you find yourself faced with the choice of imitating the world or imitating God.

Jot down these times in this book. (If you want to throw it in your bag or backpack.) Or take notes on your phone, or write them on your hand. Then, sometime later, record your observations in the section below.

HAVE AN AWESOME DAY! (And don't forget to brush your teeth before you head to school.)

Welcome back! Hope you had a swell day. Now, describe the situation(s) below where you were aware of the tension between choosing to imitate God or the world.

THINK ABOUT THIS:

- Were you able to instantly realize these situations, or did you realize them later?
- Think back on your day. Any other instances you missed?
- Did you feel any tension in the moment you had to choose? Or when you thought back on it? Why do you think this happens?

Being aware of the chances you have to follow God or the world is the first step toward choosing to daily imitate God. **Congrats!** On to Week 1: Day 3. See you there!

Use this page if you're reading this book at the END OF YOUR DAY.

Take a second and think back on your day. Were there times when you found yourself faced with choices to either imitate the world or imitate God?

If you can recall them, jot down these instances in the space below.

THINK BACK ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THESE TIMES.

- Did you realize in these situations that you had a choice to make? Was there a little tension?
- Looking back, do you feel good about the choices you made? Did you choose to imitate God? Or the world? Or a little of both?
- If you did feel any tension in these moments, or if you feel any now thinking back on them, why do you think that's so?

This exercise you just did? It's part of being aware of the chances you have to follow God or the world. And it's the first step toward choosing to imitate God more consistently. **This is a good thing!** You're headed in the right direction.

BTW, you're going to love Week 1: Day 3. Catch you there . . .

week 7: day 3

15 CHRIST IS THE VISIBLE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD. HE EXISTED BEFORE ANYTHING WAS CREATED AND IS SUPREME OVER ALL CREATION, 16 FOR THROUGH HIM GOD CREATED EVERYTHING IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS AND ON EARTH. HE MADE THE THINGS WE CAN SEE AND THE THINGS WE CAN'T SEE— SUCH AS THRONES, KINGDOMS, RULERS, AND AUTHORITIES IN THE UNSEEN WORLD. EVERYTHING WAS CREATED THROUGH HIM AND FOR HIM. 17 HE EXISTED BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE, AND HE HOLDS ALL CREATION TOGETHER. 18 CHRIST IS ALSO THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH, WHICH IS HIS BODY. HE IS THE BEGINNING, SUPREME OVER ALL WHO RISE FROM THE DEAD. SO HE IS FIRST IN EVERYTHING. 19 FOR GOD IN ALL HIS FULLNESS WAS PLEASED TO LIVE IN CHRIST, 20 AND THROUGH HIM GOD RECONCILED EVERYTHING TO HIMSELF.

—COLOSSIANS 1:15-20 (NLT)

Read the verses on page 9, paying close attention to verses 15 and 20.

This passage is from Paul's letter to the Colossian Christ-followers. This passage is a super awesome description of Jesus. Paul didn't spare anything, did he? You may even want to look back at the verses in bold.

In fact, take a second and do that, then read the questions below. If you want, write your answers in the space provided. Or, just think about them.

1. What did Paul say about Christ in verse 15?

2. What did Paul say about Christ in verse 19?

3. If we're called to imitate God, and Paul tells us that Christ is the God we can observe and see, what can we say about the role Christ plays when it comes to being a God-imitator?

4. If you were to consider Jesus and His life as your road-map to living as a God-imitator, how would you go about living this out? How would you know what to imitate? How might you begin to apply Jesus' example to your life?

WEEK 7: DAY 4

When we think about what it means to imitate God, we can look to God's traits or what a lot of people call His "attributes." In this book, we'll examine a few of them in greater detail. Here's the first one . . .

IMITATE THIS

MERCY

READ LUKE 6:36.

The Greek word *eleos* appears a lot in the New Testament. It's commonly translated as the word "mercy," but also includes compassion, kindness, and pity.

So let's make sure we're clear . . .

Luke is telling us that God is merciful. God is filled with mercy, compassion, kindness, and pity. And the Book of Luke isn't the only place we see God described as merciful. He's described as merciful a lot throughout the Bible. Like in Deuteronomy:

"FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD IS A MERCIFUL GOD; HE WILL NOT ABANDON OR DESTROY YOU OR FORGET THE COVENANT WITH YOUR FOREFATHERS, WHICH HE CONFIRMED TO THEM BY OATH." DEUTERONOMY 4:31

Luke says we're called to be merciful, in the same way that God is merciful. So, we're to be full of mercy, compassion, kindness, and pity.

Let's take a few minutes to think about these, and to see just where you might see this in your life.

OK, SO LET'S THINK ABOUT HOW YOU CAN IMITATE GOD BY BEING SOMEONE WHO IS MERCIFUL.

You know that showing mercy means to be compassionate, kind, and to have pity for someone. How aware are you of people in your life who need compassion or kindness? Could you write down three people's names?

Considering one or each of these folks, what are a few practical ways you could show them compassion? (Maybe compassion is kind of a churchy word . . . What if you thought of some ways you could just be nice to them?)

What does the word *pity* mean to you? What's an example of how you have had "pity" on someone?

How would you say you're doing in the showing mercy department? Is it something you do often? For instance, are you compassionate toward those who are needy? Describe where you are in terms of how you actively live out mercy.

Take a moment and wrap this up by telling God that you want to be more like Him when it comes to showing mercy to others. Pray to God, and ask the Holy Spirit to make you more aware of the needs of those around you and to give you the strength to be a God-imitator and meet their needs.

week 7: day 5

Read this quote. Then, take some time to reflect on it.

"IDENTIFICATION WITH THE WORLD AND ITS NEEDS IS ONE THING; IMITATION OF THE WORLD AND ITS FOOLISHNESS IS QUITE ANOTHER."*
— WARREN WIERSBE

Thoughts to consider:

- What do you think it means to identify with the world and its problems? Think of your friends at school, or the people on your team or squad.
- Why is this important as a Christ-follower?
- What do you think Wiersbe means by the world's foolishness? That might sound like an outdated way of talking about it, but you see the "foolishness" of the world all around you, don't you?
- Why is it so easy to imitate the world sometimes?
- How can this quote help you be more of a God-imitator today?



week 7: day 6

ANOTHER SIDE OF THE CALL

The call to imitate God is found throughout the Bible. Let's see how the call is reflected in the following passage:

BE PERFECT, THEREFORE, AS YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER IS PERFECT.
MATTHEW 5:48

So, let's just make sure we're on the same page. Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:1-2 that we're called to be imitators of God, just like children who love their dad and are loved by their dad. That's the call!

Now, let's look at Jesus' words here from Matthew. First things first: Is Jesus telling you that you have to be perfect? Well, actually, He is. At least, that's the goal. Quick explanation:

God is perfect. All of the Bible pretty much confirms this. And as children of God (which is what you are if you believe in Christ), we're to be like our Father. We're to live perfect lives. Is this possible? No. Of course not. Think of the best person you know. Not even he or she is perfect. But, we're to strive to live perfectly out of our huge love for God and out of a desire to show others how awesome it is to have God in our lives.

We're made perfect in God's eyes because on the cross, Jesus paid the penalty our **sins earned for us**. So, we don't have to earn God's love by trying to be perfect. Jesus took care of that for us. But we do have to live as though perfection is possible.

Why? Because we're called to imitate God. And God is perfect.

week 7: day 7

REVIEW AND REFLECT

Take a second and thumb back through the pages of the last week. Think of one or two things you've learned that you can put to work in your life. Say a prayer. Sing a song. Enjoy the blessings God has given you. And be thankful for His hand in your life.


week 7: wrapping up

WEEK 1 IS IN THE BOOKS!

Well, what do you think?
far? Did you remember
learned from before?
new? Hopefully, you feel
grasp on what it means to

now, get ready to go

YOU'RE READY RIGHT? WELL



Have you enjoyed it so
some of what you'd
Did you learn something
like you have a good
be an imitator.

deeper. get ready to

THEN, LET'S GET MOVING!