

Duplicated Disciples

Copy Christ and His Followers

Buyer beware — our supermarkets are full of foods that pretend to be something they're not. Tofurkey, Beyond Burgers, and vegan cheese aren't usually the crave-able options we'd hoped for. These imitation foods don't leave a good taste in your mouth, but what about being an imitation follower of Jesus?

We want to think we're original and unique, unlike anyone else. But, in truth, we all imitate someone. We all have role models, people who influence us and shape who we are. And that's not a bad thing! Let's talk about the word "*imitate*" (μιμέομαι | mimeomai) — to copy, mimic, emulate, model, or follow. Let's talk about how we're all **Copied Christians, Duplicated Disciples** this morning!

The Big Idea: We all imitate someone. Choose your role models carefully as others look to you.

You Choose the Original

"Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God" (3 John 11).

We all have a choice about who we'll let shape and mold us. It's totally within our control who we act like. And this is mainly a problem with our young people. The more time they spend surrounded by the world in their formative years, is it any surprise they struggle to stay close to God as they grow up? But no matter our age, our friends and influences aren't forced on us. We all have a choice.

So, who do you allow to shape your heart and mind?

Quality Matters

We've probably all stood at a copy machine making copies. You know what happens when you make a copy of a copy of a copy of a copy — eventually, the quality gets worse and worse! The quality of the source matters!

"Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:13-16).

Our standard, the ultimate and perfect original, is God! When we start with his standard, we give ourselves the best chance at quality. And it sometimes seems unattainable, as Jesus said, "*You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*" (Matt. 5:48). This word "perfect" isn't talking about absolute sinless perfection, but about being whole and complete. It's about matching up with the FULL quality of God. It's about a holistic connection between our hearts, minds, and actions. It's about loving God AND loving our neighbor. But what happens when we imitate something of lower quality?

"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves" (Matt. 23:13-15).

The religious leaders of Jesus' day were active in evangelism and talked a good game, but those who listened to them got even further from God than they were. As Jesus said, *"For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matt. 5:20). The quality of those we imitate matters!

Think about your role model. Are they striving for perfection like God? Because someone talks a good game, are they sincerely practicing what they preach? Remember, you choose who you imitate! Are you choosing quality?

Who do you become when you imitate someone of lower quality?

What Kind of Original Am I?

"Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1).

But flipping the table a bit, you also influence others. What's the quality of your example? Could you, like Paul, tell people to imitate you? Thinking of the song, "The World's Bible" — We're all examples for the world! What do they see when they look at you? Sometimes, we're uncomfortable letting people see our righteousness with some false or misplaced humility. But Paul thought differently: *"Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. ... Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers"* (1 Tim. 4:12-16).

You can't change or make others do anything, but you can teach and lead by example. Maybe the most significant area for this is parenting. Whether I like it or not, I'm like my mom and dad, and Ashlyn is so much like her mom and me. Are we giving our little ones a solid example to imitate? While I'm sure there are exceptions, it's rare to find a child exceeding the righteousness of their parents. What do I need to become a better example?

What do you need to change to be a better role model?

Conclusion

We all imitate someone, but who will it be? It's your choice! Remember that the quality of our role models matters! And will others be able to imitate you?