

Discipleship Questions

What does it mean to imitate something/someone?

How does Jesus being “Immanuel” make Him deserving of imitation?

How does Jesus sharing in human nature make Him deserving of imitation?

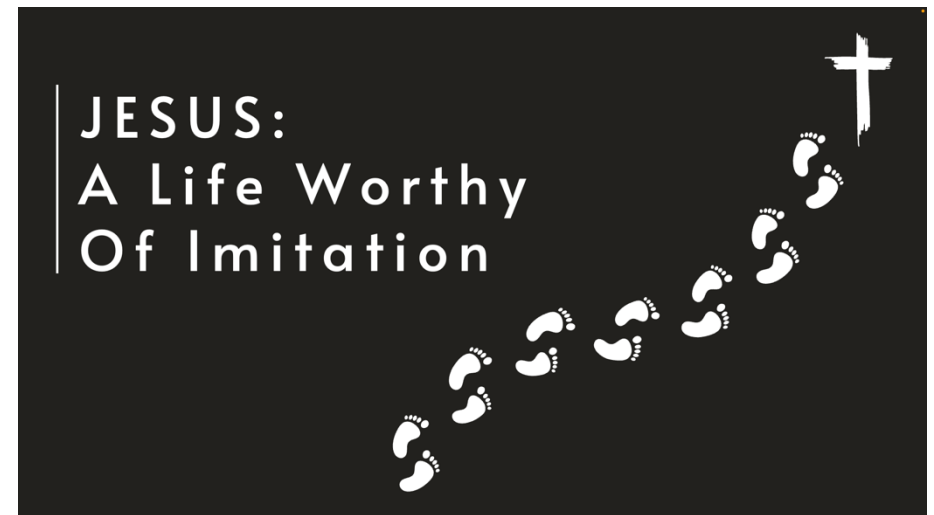
How does Jesus experiencing temptation while on earth make Him deserving of imitation?

How does Jesus’s transfiguration make Him deserving of imitation?

Why is picking the right model important when imitating something/someone?

How is learning involved in discipleship?

How is imitation involved in discipleship?



To “imitate” something or someone is to copy, replicate, or mimic as a model or example. There are imitation purses, sunglasses, clothing, etc. that seek to look indistinguishable from designer brands. Then, people often imitate others. Children imitate parents, young aspiring athletes imitate professional athletes, people imitate various cultural trends (e.g. popular fashion trends, hobbies, beliefs, attitudes), etc. However, not all imitation is positive. If there is a flaw in the model someone attempts to imitate, that same flaw may be reproduced in the imitation. Thankfully, God has left us the perfect Model whose life is worthy of imitation in every respect. This is the Lord Jesus Christ! Consider some reasons why His life is worthy of imitation and what He expects us to do with the model of His life and teachings.

Luke 6:39-40

The concept of discipleship was common in the culture Jesus lived in. Discipleship meant that one would train under a teacher with the intention of becoming like the teacher (similar to an apprenticeship/mentorship). In these situations, the one you choose to learn from and be trained by matters! If, for example, you choose someone who will teach you incorrectly or train you in the wrong ways as your teacher/master, you will follow in their footsteps and make the same mistakes (falling into the same pits they fall into). Many do this with their lives, choosing to follow flawed people to learn from and imitate. However, this passage ought to encourage those who are looking to please God to select Jesus as their Master and become His disciples. For, the outcome of His instruction and training will always result in pleasing God!

Matthew 1:20-25

It is important to recognize who someone really is before choosing to imitate them. Namely, if someone is/was a mere human like you, it should warn you that such a person will always provide a flawed model to imitate (Romans 3:23). However, this is not the case with Jesus! Jesus was not a mere human. Instead, He could properly be called “Immanuel,” meaning “God is with us.” So, Jesus’s earthly life represents far more than the life of a good man, a servant of God, and even a prophet. Instead, His earthly life represents God taking on flesh and living in this created world (Colossians 2:9)! What you see as you read the Scriptures about Jesus’s earthly life, then, represents how God lived in the same world you live in. Patterning your life after Jesus’s, therefore, does not just result in you becoming a better person (by human standards), but in you becoming conformed to the image of God (Ephesians 4:20-24; Romans 8:28-30)!

Hebrews 2:14-18

Although Jesus possessed the nature of being God while He walked the earth, He also shared in human nature (Philippians 2:5-8). If God had not taken on human form, perhaps people would always complain that He could not understand what it is like to try to obey Him in this world. Yet, Jesus’s life on earth ends that suggestion. Jesus knew what it was like to hunger and thirst, feel pain, be abandoned, be tempted to sin, be tired, experience rejection, and even to experience death (of loved ones and Himself).

Hebrews 4:14-16

As a human, Jesus experienced the temptation to sin. So, Jesus did not live on earth in a way that was insulated from fleshly desires. In fact, not only did Jesus experience temptation, but this passage says that Jesus experienced temptation in every way you experience it! Although the world you live in looks different in many respects from the world Jesus lived in (e.g. electricity, transportation, technology), your world is also exactly the same as Jesus’s. While temptation can take many different forms, the sources of temptation are the same at their core (1 John 2:15-17). So, Jesus knows and can sympathize with the weaknesses of the flesh that experiences physical desires (Matthew 4:1-11; 16:21-23). However, despite facing temptations, Jesus never sinned! Therefore, Jesus is the only example who has a proven track record of full obedience to God who can help you overcome the temptations of your flesh and live pleasing to God!

Matthew 17:1-6

After Jesus had been walking the earth, Jesus took Peter, James, and John up this mountain, where they had the extraordinary opportunity to witness Jesus in His glory as being more than a Man (2 Peter 1:16-18). Then, they heard the voice of God, the Father, declare His approval of Jesus and His special relationship with Jesus (as His Beloved Son, possessing the same nature as the Father). This should help you to appreciate the teaching and life of Jesus on this earth as being far superior to any other! For, Jesus had the complete approval of God. So, you must hear what He says as One who possesses all authority (Matthew 7:28-29; 28:18) and see His life as demonstrating pleasing and perfect Oneness with the Father (John 6:38; 10:30)!

1 John 2:3-6

There are two key steps in discipleship. First is to spend time learning from the master. So, you must devote yourself to learning from Jesus to hear all His teachings and ways through the pages of the New Testament (Matthew 11:28-30; John 8:31-32; 1 Corinthians 14:37). Second is to imitate the master. So, Jesus is not just looking for people to become educated in His ways and do some religious things, but to truly follow Him and do the things that He says (Luke 6:46-49; 9:23-26; James 1:22-25). Your study of Jesus’s life, therefore, ought to be focused on becoming like Jesus! Although other people who imitate Jesus can help you see what it means to imitate Jesus’s life (like Paul, 1 Corinthians 11:1), no other person is the perfect model worthy of imitation. Therefore, carefully use the teachings and examples of Jesus contained in Scripture to shape your life in every respect so that you can please God!

Conclusion

You will choose something/someone as the standard to model your life after. However, if you want to use a standard that you can fully trust is pleasing to God, you must choose Jesus! Then, if you desire to please God, you cannot be content to just admire Jesus from a distance or just model some aspects of your life after Him. Instead, you must choose to fully commit as His disciple who will learn His teachings and ways and follow Him by seeking to fully imitate Him!

Discovering God’s Word Bible Study Series

Written by Eric Krieg

Watch video @ WWW.GODSAIDSO.COM/DGW581