

Jesus, The Pattern and Type for Humanity

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Mother of God Prayer Meeting
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Introduction

The last prayer meeting talk was on aligning our hearts with God's heart (Leslie LaPrise). Before that, John Grabowski and Janice Zimmerman spoke on conscience and life in the Spirit. Tonight a related topic: Jesus as the pattern for our lives. It's all part of putting out into the deep-and the deep is the heart of God!

God's intention: for us to be conformed to Jesus

So often the gospel of Christ is limited-in preaching and in our own minds. It stops at the fact that our sins are forgiven and that we have to live a moral life. There is much, much more!

We can look at Jesus on the cross and ask, *Why did that man have to die?* This is the greatest questioning of a Christian. He died not just to forgive our sins, but to bring us into a depth of union with God that is impossible for us to even understand on our own. (See the Catechism, par. 460.)

God the Father sees all humanity in his beloved, cherished Son. His whole plan is that we would participate in the divine nature by being *conformed* to his Son. *Conform* = take on the form of.

"For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren" ([Rom 8:29](#)).

God's intention is to change us into the likeness of his Son Jesus, who as Man is the pattern for all humanity.

"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from glory to glory; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" ([2 Cor 3:28](#)).

The pattern of fallen humanity

For this to happen the whole principle or **pattern** of our life has to change. We don't naturally live the way Jesus did.

"We are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live *might live no longer for themselves but for him* who for their sake died and was raised" ([2 Cor 5:15](#)).

"Live for themselves"-the natural state of fallen man is to live for himself. The result of the fall, inherited from Adam. To live for yourself is a pattern or principle of doing things. So much of life revolves around self - whether in a grossly selfish way or an apparently noble way (e.g., donating money for a hospital which will be named after you). I look to myself for wisdom, will, strength for means.

This pattern is not always evil in itself, but it falls short of living for God. The Pharisees did all kinds of good, pious things (fasting, almsgiving, etc.), but the motive was all self - which is why Jesus rebuked them so sharply. They didn't believe in anything greater from God, any greater life to be lived. Even the disciples before Pentecost had the self-principle:

- Peter asking, "How many times do I have to forgive my brother? Seven?" ([Mt 18:21](#)).
- James and John: "Lord, do you want us to bid fire come down from heaven and consume them?" ([Lk 9:54](#)).
- Peter: "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.... Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you" ([Mt 26:33-35](#)).

The starting point is all self.

We could never get out of this pattern on our own. "That they would live for him" - this is what Jesus came to do. He takes away not just the sins but the disease behind the sin, replaces it with something entirely new: being alive to God.

The pattern of Jesus' life

What is it to live for God? If we want to know, we have to pray and look at the life of Jesus for the pattern of everything we are to be. Through Christ, God made it possible for every person to participate in divine life.

Outwardly Jesus did many different things:

- He could be harsh to the Pharisees ([Mt 23:27-33](#)), friendly to prostitutes ([Lk 15:1f](#)).
- He cared for the poor ([Lk 14:13](#)), but put off the gentile woman ([Mt 15:22-28](#)).
- He told one man to follow him ([Mt 8:22](#)), and another to go back home ([Mk 5:19](#)).
- He healed one man in very publicly ([Lk 6:6-10](#)), and took another away in private ([Mk 7:33](#)).
- He rebuked the high priest ([Jn 18:20f](#)), but was silent before Pilate ([Mt 27:14](#)).
- He could show power ([Mk 4:39](#)) and total weakness ([Mk 14:33-35](#)).

What unites all these actions? the pattern of living behind it: *he lived for God*. The principle behind everything Jesus did was the will of his Father in heaven.

Jesus lived for God in three ways:

1. *He sought the Father's will*. He earnestly and zealously strove, as man, to find out the will of his Father. He never sought his own will ([Jn 12:49f](#)), even though he was without sin. He spent the whole night in prayer before choosing his disciples. As Son of God, he could have found out instantly, but he wanted to be a model for us!
2. *He embraced the Father's will* - without doubt, fight, or compromise. From the very beginning he suffered internally in rejecting the temptation to choose his human will; he submitted completely to God. The temptations in the desert, the agony in the garden. "I came not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me" ([Jn 6:38](#)). He aligned himself perfectly with his Father's will ([Jn 4:34](#); [14:31](#)). Every choice he made was to let the Spirit freely reign in his humanity. His whole life was one of allowing God to have his way.

3. *He looked to the Father for the power to carry it out* - even though he was fully God ([Jn 5:30](#); [8:42](#); [11:41-43](#); [14:10](#)), so that he could be the pattern for us ([Rom 8:29](#), [Gal 4:19](#)).
4. **Imitating Jesus**
5. "Be a Christian" equals "follow Jesus." Follow means be like, act the same way.
6. Imitating Jesus is not like imitating anyone else. It doesn't necessarily mean washing someone's feet, getting rid of all our possessions, preaching on the street, rebuking religious leaders or anything else. It is more than that. Jesus doesn't just give us an example but lives his life in us. We don't imitate Jesus by mechanically copying his actions, but by allowing the Holy Spirit to form that same pattern in us. (See the Catechism, par. 519-521.)
7. How does God bring it about in us? Through the cross ([Rom 6:6](#)). We have died with him that we might live with him. The cross is the power for death to the old and having it replaced by Christ formed in us. A change in pattern.
8. Let us open our hearts to Jesus and allow him more and more to live his life in us! For each one of us his life will be expressed in the unique and unrepeatable way that he has planned from all eternity. As we take on his pattern, we each become a small and essential part of the indescribably beautiful fabric which is Jesus alive in his Body, the Church.

Questions for Prayer, Study and Small Group Discussion

1. Read [Luke 9:23](#), [Rom 8:29](#), [Gal 4:19](#), [2 Cor 3:16-18](#), and [2 Cor 4:10-11](#). What does it mean for you to be conformed to Christ? How have you experienced God bringing this about in your life?
2. Choose two or three stories about Jesus from the Gospels and spend some time in prayer meditating on each. Most of the Gospel stories do not mention explicitly how Jesus is interiorly relating to the Father, but when we ponder them by the light of the Holy Spirit we can begin to understand. How does each story show Jesus 1) seeking the will of the Father, 2) embracing that will, and 3) relying on the Father to accomplish it?
3. Meditate on Jesus' word in [Jn 4:34](#). What did he mean? Do you ever experience doing the Father's will as your food?
4. Spend some time in prayer gazing at Jesus on the cross. Ask God to teach you: What does Jesus' death have to do with my life?
5. Ask the Lord to show you one specific way that he wants to change your pattern of living so that you no longer live for self but for Him who died for you.