

When you think about it, a lot of the reasons for who you are, what you like, and what you do in life were brought about through the influence of other people. For me:

- I became a Dallas Cowboys fan because of my dad.
- I started playing tennis because my friend, Bill, was a tennis player (Bill, “The One Thumbed Wonder” tried to make me into a basketball player as well but, look at me, that didn’t work.)
- I learned to love and enjoy physics because of an awesome professor in college who made it fun.

Most of us like to do something, or we are something, because someone or several people have influenced us in that direction.

### **Live Like Jesus**

**1 John 2:6 Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.**

This is our theme for 2024, to Live Like Jesus. We want to “Love Like Jesus and Live Like Jesus.”

Living Like Jesus will also involve more than acting like Jesus would act and saying what you think Jesus would say. It also involves thinking like Jesus thinks.

**Philippians 2:5 (NCV) In your lives you must think and act like Christ Jesus.**

The NIV says, “... **have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.**”

If other people in our lives have influenced us to be who we are today, do you think this could be true for becoming Christ like as well? Yes, true inward spiritual transformation comes from Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, but would you agree with me that along the way, God has used **other people** to help you be more like Jesus? To be conformed into the image of Christ?

- I fell in love with Jesus and His church because of my parents and their faithful example.
- I was transformed from death to life by Jesus as a result of the preaching of Pastor James Medima.
- I grew in knowledge about Jesus by people in the local church that I grew up in; Sunday School teachers, VBS, camps, choir, and more.
- I was introduced to the Spirit filled life by the teachings and influence of my Uncle Barry Owens.
- I learned to Live Like Jesus at the Youth Group I faithfully attended in High School.
- I learned the joy of ministering to other people from my mentor and friend, the late Bill Godwin.
- I learn to prioritize evangelism, like Jesus did, by one of my seminary professors.

Time limits me from going on and on with fond memories of other friends in my life who changed me.

Today, I want you to stop and think about the people and friends that have spoken into your life, encouraged you, helped you, influenced you, and made you more like Jesus. Transformed into his image.

**Next Step - Write a thank you note to someone who has helped you in your spiritual journey if they are still living or send it to their nearest living relative.**

### **Group Like Jesus**

I believe that in addition to the work of the Holy Spirit, feeding on the Word of God, and Prayer, one of the best things you can do to quickly learn to Live Like Jesus is to develop Godly relationships, Godly acquaintances, and surround yourself with Godly influential people.

Jesus modeled small groups for us. He chose Twelve Disciples to do ministry with.

- Jesus called them disciples because they were learning from him and one another.
- Webster’s dictionary got it right when it said, “A true disciple is not just a student or a learner, but a follower: one who applies what he has learned.”

Jesus also had a smaller group within the group- Peter, James, and John. He was able to spend additional time with them to help them learn the ways of God.

If you want to learn to do anything in life, hang around other people who are doing it well.  
If you want to be transformed into the image of Christ, hang around other people who are being transformed and especially those who are doing it well.

### **Friendship Warning**

As much as I believe in friendships, understand that we need them, and want to encourage you to make friends, I must stop here and share a few dangers of good friendships.

- **Friendships Are Dangerous When They Are Ungodly Friendships.**

Who's Influencing Who? Like Jesus, you can be a friend of a sinner, but you can't let them influence you, you have to influence them. **1 Corinthians 15:33-34 Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." 34 Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.** (This is true for children, teens, and adults!)

***"You can't fly with eagles if you are hanging around buzzards."***

**Ephesians 5:11-12 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.**

Sometimes we not only mention the sinful deeds of others, but we celebrate it, reward it, and even desire to be a part of it. This should not be.

**ILL:** Dr. Mark Rutland was asked, "What is the biggest idol you see in the church today?" My mind went to money, fame, superstar ministers, etc. What do you think he said? He totally shocked me when without a moment's hesitation he said, "Friendships."

- **Friendships Are Dangerous When Your Friends Become Idols.**

An Idol Is Anything or Anyone You Put Above or Before God.

- Friendships are idols when we protect our friendship over being obedient to God.
- Friendships are idols when we form clicks and shut others out.
- Friendships are idols when you would rather spend time with your friends than with Jesus.

As a Pastor I know we can't throw the baby out with the bath water, I know that Godly friendships are what we all need, desire, and were created for.

### **Jesus' Method of Feeding People**

**Mark 6:35-37 By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him.**

**"This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. 36 Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."**

**37 But he answered, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"**

**38 "How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see." When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish."**

Jesus Plan to Feed Many People **Mark 6:39 Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass.** Divide the hungry people into small groups in a comfortable setting.

**Mark 6:40-44 So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties.**

**41 Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. 42 They all ate and were satisfied, 43 and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. 44 The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.**

This is why we implemented small groups at Believers Church. We call them Life Groups because we desire to be a life-giving church here at Believers.

People tend to group together based on: 1) Common Interests 2) Felt Needs.

When we group together, Jesus groups with us.

**Matthew 18:20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."**

Where two or three are gathered in my name I am with them. Jesus is saying, "I will show up!"

## How Life Groups Help You Live Like Jesus

### 1. Life Groups Help You Live Like Jesus When You Join One and/or Lead One

Our Life Group System is a Free-Market System which means they don't work at all unless you join one or lead one. I can't make this happen by myself. I need you to make this work. I can't make you attend a Life Group, and I can't force you to make friends. You have to want to do it. Join or lead.

**Join a Life Group: Proverbs 18:24 (NKJV) A man that has friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.** If you want to make friends, it takes effort on your part. Get out there and be friendly to others. You've got to *SIGN UP* and *SHOW UP*. (Say it!)

**Lead a Life Group:** In our Free-Market Life Group System, I can't say, "Hey we need a Life Group on Marriage, Parenting, or Serving," and teach all the groups myself. I can't even assign the Life Groups out to others saying, "Here is my vision, now run with it."

No, our system depends on you being sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and being obedient to start and lead a Life Group yourself based on Common Interest or Felt Needs. If you are interested in a topic, other people are interested in it too! We will train you, approve you, and release you.

Remember Common Interest and Felt Needs are the hooks to get people to join together with others. But when we gather for spiritual transformation, on official Jesus business, Jesus promises to show up (Matt. 18:20), and you will be, encouraged, inspired, taught, cared for, and you begin to Live Like Jesus.

**Next Step – I will attend Next Step Life Group Class this Wednesday, 1-17-23 to discover why and how we do Life Groups at Believers Church. (One of your Four Next Steps).**

### 2. Life Groups Help You Live Like Jesus When You Attend One With Purpose

Don't just listen and agree today, act upon what you hear. Attend a Life Group with an awareness that you are going to become more like Jesus. Make the most out of every opportunity.

#### A. Attend with the purpose of personal change to be more like Jesus.

Not only will you enjoy yourself and make Godly friends, but like those in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church, you will become more like Jesus through:

- **Teaching: They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching... Acts 2:42**
- **Prayer: They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42**
- **Accountability: Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. James 5:16**

#### B. Attend with the purpose of helping others become more like Jesus.

I'm always a little taken back when people say, "I'm not going to join a Life Group or go to mine tonight, because I don't need it, I'm good." I don't think they know how selfish they sound. It's not all about them, it's also about them being there to help, encourage, and build up others, to help others learn to Live Like Jesus.

When it comes to Living Like Jesus, we can help or hinder others.

**Romans 15:2 Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up.**

### **C. Attend with the purpose of helping lost people find Jesus.**

Lost People Matter to God. They matter so much that God allowed Jesus to die to save them from their sins, and someone needs to love them like God does, and let them know this Good News. In fact, along with our salvation came this responsibility and ministry.

**2 Corinthians 5:17-20 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.**

I want us to start inviting people to our Life Groups, and I want us to start thinking about Life Groups that will appeal to lost people or are designed to reach the lost for Christ Jesus.

Everyone wants and desires authentic relationships. **EX:** – Friends / Cheers  
More than they need friends, they really need a relationship with Christ Jesus.  
You have to wonder how anyone can live without Jesus, so let's leverage everything we have at Believers Church, our services, outreaches, fun family events, and yes, our Life Groups to bring people to Christ Jesus.

### **Winter Life Groups Rundown. Manual Pics.**

Life Group will help you Live Like Jesus. IF you just decide that now is the time and get fully invested in Life Groups, it is one of the most powerful tools we have for help each of us Live Like Jesus.

**Next Step – I will Sign Up and Show Up for a Winter Life Group.**