



MISSION POSSIBLE | WEEK ONE
MARCH 5, 2017



PREPARATION

+ **MONDAY - WEDNESDAY**

Read through Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, and 1 John 2:4-6. Pray that God, through His Spirit, would bring to life the truths of this text.

+ **THURSDAY - SATURDAY**

Many questions have been included, so read through and determine which of those questions will work well to encourage, push, and grow your group in the best way.

+ **DAILY**

As you prepare, pray for the preaching of God's Word this coming week at the corporate church gathering. Pray also for your time in this week's study.



THIS WEEK

+ **KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH**

As believers, our mission in life is to become more and more like Jesus over time.

+ **THEOLOGY APPLIED**

To achieve this mission of Christian maturity, we must look to God, read his Word, and walk in his ways. As believers become more like Christ over time, the world gets a glimpse of Jesus' true nature.



GETTING STARTED

+ Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.

Q: How can you tell when someone is fully devoted to something or someone?

Q: Where do you see people placing a great deal of their focus throughout their day?

Q: How does someone become more and more like a person they admire/follow?

| KNOWING YOUR MISSION

All people want a mission or purpose for their life. They fiercely seek clarity and ferociously cultivate passion for that specific purpose that they know they were made for. If we were honest, we all desire a clear-cut certainty about why we are alive right here, right now, today. For some, this takes the form in specific health goals. For others, it's about relationships and romance. Regardless of what we think our purpose is, we all want one.

Jesus knew his mission with total clarity—to pursue those far from God and redeem them through his gospel work. As his followers, we have a mission too. He did not rescue us and buy our freedom with his death for us to simply sit on the sidelines and do nothing. No. Instead of our culture's constant obsession with becoming more and more attractive, rich, likable, or successful, our clear mission as believers is becoming more and more like Christ, to be “conformed into his image” (Rom 8:29). We chase after Jesus with our eyes fixed on him, becoming more and more like our Savior in the process. The Bible calls this sanctification—the experience of changing over time, of maturing into Christians who are more and more like Jesus in each season of life. For the Christian, that's our mission. That's the whole point. That's God's will for us. Transforming, little by little, into someone who looks more and more like Christ. This is what the Apostle Paul means when he writes to the Colossians to “put on the new self,” or “grow up in Christ.” Christ had a mission—to become like us so we may be rescued. Now we have a mission—to become like him so that he

e Apostle Paul means when he writes to the Colossians to “put on the new self,” or “grow up in Christ.” Christ had a mission—to become like us so we may be rescued. Now we have a mission—to become like him so that he may be glorified. This is sanctification. (1 Thes. 4:3, Eph. 4:13-15, Col. 3:9-10, Romans 8:29).

Q: What are the most common things people run after in your spheres of influence? How can you tell?

Q: How are non-believers impacted when believers embrace their mission to become more and more like Christ?



Understanding the Text

In these three passages, the Bible teaches us various aspects of sanctification. Since becoming like Jesus is our ultimate mission, we must learn God's way of helping us get there. Instead of mustering up our own strategies to achieve Christian maturity, we must trust that God knows how to move his children forward. God has given us a mission to look more like his Son, but he hasn't left us without instructions on how to accomplish it! Consider that we don't just naturally become more like Jesus as we float along on the river of life. We must put our oars in the water and be intentional about it. Through these texts, we learn three vital steps to becoming more like Jesus:

- 1. See His Glory**
- 2. Hear His Word**
- 3. Walk His Ways**



GOING DEEPER

+ This next section will help to show what God's Word says about this week's particular focus. Walk through the Scripture passages, connecting the text to this week's biblical truth.

| SEE HIS GLORY



Read 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

Q: Believers are transformed as they do what, according to verse 17?

Q: Believers are being changed into whose image? (v.18)

Q: Do Christians become like Jesus all at once? If not, in what way are they transformed? (v.18)

In these verses, Paul helps us see something incredibly freeing: Change doesn't start by "doing more." Being conformed into the image of Jesus doesn't start with might. True Christian change—the kind of change that makes us more like Christ internally—starts with sight. The beginning of becoming more like Jesus comes by casting our eyes on him. To become like Him, we behold Him (v.18). Simply put, you can't become like a person you never see. You can't be more Christ-like without knowing, understanding, and seeing what Christ is like! Paul tells us here that we are transformed by "beholding the glory of the Lord." More than anything, God wants us to see him. God is clear: the way to change yourself on the inside is not to look inward, but upward. To become like Christ, it only makes sense to watch him, not ourselves. Beholding yourself just makes you more self-interested. Beholding the glory of Christ makes you more Christ-interested.

Knowing this, we must ask: Where is Jesus' glory most on display for us to see? The cross, where he took our place, and then the resurrection, where he conquered death for us so that we could live with him forever! In short, Christ is on clearest display in the gospel. The gospel is where the glory of the Lord can be seen at its brightest. And as we keep casting our eyes there, remembering the glory of all he's done for us, something happens to us. We change. We simply cannot stay the same when we take the time to take our eyes off our circumstances, our worries, our obsessions, ourselves, and put them on Christ and his work on our behalf. Looking at a love like that over and over again changes a person little by little. To start our spiritual maturity, all we have to do is see Jesus for who he is and what he's done. Our mission of becoming more like Jesus starts with where we look.

Q: According to the end of verse 18, who is in charge of our sanctification? Who does our gradual change come from?

Q: Explain in your own words what "being conformed into the image of Christ" means.

We can identify anyone's mission in life simply by evaluating where they direct their focus the most. For the Christian, if our highest and most important mission is becoming more like Christ, our eyes should be fixed on Jesus more than any lesser idol. A good test to see our true mission is to evaluate what, where, and to whom we're looking during our daily routines. Is it Christ? The good news is this: even if it's not, we have a great God who tells us it's his job to sanctify us (v. 18). Yes, we definitely need to be casting our eyes in the right place. But as we do, He is the one growing us through his Spirit. He has not left us to perform sanctification on our own. Instead, he is the one powering the whole thing, showing us where to look, and changing us little by little into the image of his Son.

Q: Why should we behold God instead of ourselves if we want to change?

Q: Explain why the gospel is the greatest display of "the glory of the Lord."

| HEAR HIS WORD



Read Luke 24:25-27, 32 and Romans 12:1-2.

Q: Where does Jesus take the disciples to show them about himself and the gospel? (Luke 24:27)

Q: How does a Christian avoid being conformed to the world? (Rom. 12:2)

Q: To be transformed, something in us must be renewed. What is that something? (Rom 12:2)

The question before us is this: how do we practically behold him? Our answer? By looking to God's Word. We have a living, active witness of everything we need to behold Jesus through the Bible. To become like Christ, we need to follow him around for a while in the Scriptures. No one can train under a person they've never observed. As we read the Bible, we get to know this God-man. We see his commands, his values, his methods, his compassion, his authority, his ministry, and his very purpose when we look to the Scriptures. We see the backstory of why he had to come and the future he has planned for all his followers. If we want to behold Christ we must behold the Scriptures. God's Word is where we find everything we know about him! Remember, even Jesus himself took his disciples to the Scriptures to help them behold and understand his own mission and theirs as well.

It's also through the Word that we learn about sanctification itself: God grows and sanctifies us, we don't achieve it by our own strength and willpower (1 Cor. 3:7; John 15:4-6)! Through the Bible we see that God will bring to fruition what he started in us, that he alone matures us, and that His Spirit renews our hearts (Phil. 1:6; 2 Cor. 3:17-18; Titus 3:5). Without hearing his Word, we would know nothing about Jesus or his work of sanctification in us.

Q: How much of Scripture concerns Christ? [Luke 24:27]

Q: What is the disciples' response to beholding Jesus in the Scriptures? [Luke 24:32]

On top of simply reading the Bible to learn more about Jesus, we must also recognize something extraordinary. The Bible doesn't just inform us about Christ, it actually has the power to transform us into a Christ-like person on the inside! We see this with the disciples in Luke 24—engaging Christ through the Word did something to them on the inside, something Romans 12 teaches as the key to becoming more like Jesus: the “renewal of our minds.”

Like everything in this world, our minds are fallen and darkened without God's miraculous intervention (Eph. 4:18-19; Rom. 1:28). When we go to the Word, we bring with us a mind that desperately needs to be transformed. We cannot be different if we do not think differently, and we cannot think differently unless God's Spirit transforms our mind by undoing all our old thought patterns. The Spirit does this through the Word, which imparts light and understanding to fallen minds (Ps. 119:104, 130; Heb. 4:12). We don't just go to the Word to learn about Jesus, we go to the Word to be changed by Jesus. Beholding God through Scripture is a crucial element in our mission to become more like our Savior.

| WALK HIS WAYS



Read Colossians 2:6-7, 3:9-10 and 1 John 2:4-6.

Q: In your own words, what does it mean to “walk in him?” [Col 2:6]

Q: What's the difference in the new self and the old self? [Col 3:9-10]

Q: Explain what happens to “the new self,” according to Col 3:10.

We know we must behold Jesus in order to become like him, and we know that in order to behold him, we must go to His Word. The last element of sanctification is this: walking out what we find in the Scriptures. It's one thing to read the Bible, it's another thing entirely to obey it. Jesus refers to this difference as hearing versus doing, and those that obey Jesus instead of simply hearing him are those truly included in God's family (Matt. 23: 3-4, Luke 6:46-49). Jesus obeyed the Scriptures and so to become like him, we must do the same. In fact, John tells us that walking out the Word perfects the love of God in us over time. He also writes that whoever does not live out the Word doesn't belong to Jesus in the first place (1 John 2:4-6). This means that we treat people, handle money, use time, acquire possessions, fix problems, embrace hardship, and live as family the way Jesus did. If we really love him and want to be like him, we will keep his ways and his word (John 14:23).

Another way the Bible describes this truth is to “put on the new self.” The more we “put on” the ways of Christ, the better we represent him to the world. In a very real sense, we “wear” Christ to the culture around us. When the world looks at our lives and our actions, they either witness an accurate picture of him or not. Instead of conforming into the image, or the “suit” of the world, may we step into the image of Christ instead. After we're welcomed into God's family, we put off the old mold—the ways of the world—and we put on a better mold—the ways of Christ. Over time, as we walk according to Jesus' ways, we achieve our mission of becoming more like him.

Q: What are practical ways you can “put on” Christ this week in your spheres of influence?

Q: In what areas of your life are you still walking in the ways of the old self?

Being conformed into Christ's image is a lifelong journey. Sanctification does not happen overnight. God purposefully changes us over the course of our entire lives, and sometimes it can be hard. However, God promises to finish the sanctifying work he started in us when we first became believers. He's right here, changing us as we go. He's the God who transforms people and he's doing it right now, in and through you.

Here at Oakwood, as we choose to see his glory, hear from his Word, and walk in his ways, we will see our lives transform more and more into the likeness of Jesus every day. Just as Jesus completed his mission, he will empower us to complete ours. With these tools God has given us to grow, we can trust that this mission of ours is within our grasp, but only through his power.

Q: Share a time you saw personal growth in becoming more like Jesus.

Q: Summarize how Seeing His Glory, Hearing His Word, and Walking His Ways help us become more like Jesus. How are the three steps connected?



NEXT STEPS

+ *Connect the truths from God's Word to your daily life. Process how what you've learned this week will impact the way you live beyond today and into the future.*

Q: What are the things you "behold" most throughout your day? How does this compare with how often you cast your eyes on Christ? What does that say about your ultimate mission in life?

Q: Sanctification is a wonderful mission for us. What from the Scripture passages has taught you the most about becoming more like Jesus?

Q: What are some practical ways you can Hear His Word and Walk His Ways this week?



PRAY

+ Use these prayer points to connect your time in prayer to this week's focus.

- *God, help me behold you more than I behold other passions of mine.*
- *God, make the mission of my heart to become more like you.*
- *God, speak to me clearly through your Word and use it to make me more like Christ.*
- *God, show me the areas I'm not walking in your ways.*



COMMENTARY

+ Use these commentary resources to help explain the passages and facilitate discussion.

2 Corinthians 3:17 - “Freedom” that the Spirit gives here is likely the general freedoms that a Christian experiences in their new life in Christ; that is, freedom from condemnation, guilt, sin, death, the old covenant, blindness to the gospel. It also implies freedom to access the presence of God.

2 Corinthians 3:18 - The “image” we are being transformed into through the Spirit is the image of God that was marred in the Fall through mankind’s rebellion and disobedience. Man and woman were made in God’s image, but that got distorted in the Fall and is in need of redeeming. The “image” of God includes all the ways in which humans are like God, such as their moral character, their true knowledge, their many God-given abilities, their creativity, and their dominion over creation. Though these things make humans like God, we still must depend on him as Creator and Giver of the image.

Luke 24:27 - “Moses and all the Prophets” means the entire Old Testament. This is also confirmed and summarized as “all the Scriptures” in context immediately afterward. Here Jesus is not just pointing to explicit prophecies about himself, but the entire historical trajectory building up to his life, death, and resurrection.

Colossians 3:9-10 - Given the tense of the words “put off” and “put on” in their original language, Paul is likely suggesting that this is an event that has already taken place. A Christian’s old self has already died, and the new life now lives. The identity has been changed for the believer upon conversion. It remains now for believers to simply bring their behavior in line with their new identity.

1 John 2:4-6 - Keeping commandments does not earn us salvation or right standing with God. Only faith in Christ’s gospel work does that. However, keeping God’s Word and walking in Jesus’ ways are evidences that one has been born again.

**All commentary resourcing for Lesson 1 was provided by the ESV Study Bible Commentary Notes and the NIV Compact Bible Commentary.*

