



THE CHALLENGE OF CHRISTMAS LIVING LIKE CHRIST

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Introduction: The challenge of Christmas is not in its celebration but in living like Christ. Jesus did not only come to be our Saviour, He equally came as God's perfect Model to show us the right way to live. What a paradise on earth the church would be if only all professing Christians would live like Christ? As Christians, we can emulate Christ in the following areas:

- 1. In His Lowly Birth & Humble Beginning:** Jesus started out quite lowly and humbly in life. Although He could have chosen otherwise, He chose His lowly parents – Joseph and Virgin Mary and to be born in a manger amidst animals in Bethlehem of Judea and not Jerusalem the city centre and then capital of Israel (Luke 2: 1-20; John 15: 16). If you had the opportunity like Christ to choose your parents and place of birth, what would your choices be? Many would have chosen to be born by kings and

presidents in great cities and nations of the world. A lot of us even later choose to spoil our children after giving birth to them. It's like, we still want to make-up for what we missed at childhood.

- 2. In His Knowledge of the Word and Living by It:** Although, He is the personification of the Word of God, Jesus did not do violence to the Word (John 1: 1-5). Instead, He chose to live within the confines and framework of the Word of God and be guided by it. He was always quoting the Word of God and He obeyed it (Matthew 4: 1-11). How much of the Word of God do you know and quote (Matthew 4: 4; Colossians 3: 16)? How do you obey the ones you know also?
- 3. In His Godliness:** Although, no one had seen God before, Jesus ably and adequately represented God, His Father (John 1: 18). The Father also was so satisfied with Him that He said in approval of Christ in Matthew 17: 5 that, *"This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased, hear ye Him!" (KJV)*. Are you Godly or Christ-like? Do men see Christ in the way you live?
- 4. In His Holiness & Purity:** Although Jesus didn't marry yet, He related with women in utmost purity (Matthew 26: 6-13; Matthew 27: 55-56; Mark 15: 40-41; John 4: 6-30). How then can we now justify cases of sexual immorality among brethren and some Gospel ministers many of who are even married? Again, His conscience was pure and His hands were never soiled with the usual sin that is common with business and financial transactions among men. How pure is your heart and how clean are your hands (Psalm 15: 1-5)?
- 5. In His Love:** Jesus is the definition and personification of the love of God (John 13: 34; John 15: 13; Romans 5: 7-8; 1John 4: 7-10, 18-19). Men think that love is lust or lust is love but Jesus helped us to differentiate and separate between the two. We would never have understood love without Christ (1 Corinthians 13: 1-13). His is the giving, forgiving and sacrificial type of love (Matthew 18: 21-22; 1 Peter 4: 8). Our world would definitely be a better place if we all can love like Jesus. This is a tall order and that is

why we should all look forward to heaven – a perfect place of love and not miss out there.

6. In His Openness & Truthfulness: Jesus was totally transparent and had nothing to hide or be ashamed of. He was open to God, open to men and even, open to Satan's scrutiny yet, none found faults with Him (Matthew 3: 16-17; Matthew 17: 5; Matthew 27: 54; Luke 23: 1-4; John 14: 30). As Light and Truth Himself (John 9: 5; John 14: 6), He was ever exposing the secret motives of the hearts of men and revealing hidden things without concealing any. Too many people in the world today have too many cover-ups – are you one of them? What are you hiding? Jesus had already warned that He would yet expose those things you have been hiding all this while when He eventually returns to take home His saints (Luke 12: 2-3).

7. In His Vision & Focus: Jesus knew why He came into the world. His vision was well defined and He faced it squarely with all focus and achieved it at the end of the day (John 4: 34; John 17: 1-4; John 19: 30). While some can't tell their vision, others have vague and blurred visions yet, the Bible says, "*Where there is no vision, the people perish*" (Proverbs 29: 18). Contrary to God's principle in 2 Timothy 2: 4, too many Christians today are too distracted with the affairs of the world. They spend too much of their lifetime to pursue the mundane things of life without eternal value instead of running the race that is set before them with faith and patience as counseled in Scripture (Hebrews 12: 1). Define your vision and be well-focused!

8. In His Commitment, Dedication, Consecration & Faithfulness: Jesus completely consecrated Himself to God (Hebrews 10: 5-7); He was fully committed and totally dedicated to His mission on earth (John 4: 34; John 9: 4). He was faithful to His Father from start to finish of His ministry. Like a sacrifice, He was completely laid out on God's altar (Romans 12: 1). He gave it all He had – His time, energy, talents, gifts, skill, everything! God also was satisfied with Him and accepted His sacrifice (Philippians 2: 9-11). How is God's work in your hands? How dutiful and dependable are

you? Can it be said of you that you are committed, dedicated, consecrated and faithful (Romans 12: 6-8; 1 Corinthians 4: 1-2)? Is God also satisfied with you (James 4: 17)?

9. In His Selflessness & Self-denial: Jesus was completely selfless (Luke 9: 58). Although, the Lord of all yet, He made Himself of no reputation. He did everything not for personal gains but for our benefit and God's glory (John 17: 4). He denied Himself of many '*good things*' of life that many of us now pursue or run after at feverish pace. He was born in a manger of humble unknown parents. He didn't marry and had no biological children of His own. He had no worldly wealth unlike what is now commonly being preached and practiced. And, to crown it all, He died a violent and bloody death at the prime of His life – all for our sake (Isaiah 53: 1-12). Are you selfless or selfish and to what extent are you taking up your cross daily and denying yourself as you follow Jesus today (Luke 9: 23-36)?

10. In His Sacrifice Service & Labour: Jesus worked so hard as a carpenter from childhood and never shirked any responsibility (Matthew 13: 54-55). In adulthood, he spared nothing travelling on land and sea from one end of Israel to another preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. He healed the sick, cleansed lepers, raised the dead and fed thousands with food. He worked so hard that He was tired and slept off while the ship was caught in a storm during one of His journeys (Mark 4: 35-41). Jesus sacrificed everything He had and held back nothing from us. The right order amongst men is for servants to serve but He ushered in a new order of serving masters (Luke 22: 24-27). Are you a true shepherd of the flock of Christ or a mere hireling, serving only for what you hope to gain (John 10: 10-11; 15; Philippians 3: 17-19)? Are you maintaining the old or new order in ministry? Are you following in His footsteps and serving like Christ (1Peter 2: 21)?

11. In His Humility: Jesus, although God in His very nature did not count equality with God something to be grasped or contend for but humbled Himself to the point of dying on the cross (Philippians 2: 5-8). Today, the world is sinking because of what we now term – '*Human*

Rights' – everyone is questing and grasping for equality in virtually in all aspects of human relations – husbands/wives, parents/children, leaders/followers, masters/servants, etc. Although the Master yet, He washed His disciples' feet (John 13: 2-17). He taught us to allow ourselves to be cheated and never to retaliate (Matthew 43-48; Romans 12: 17-21) but this is very hard for our flesh yet, it is the extent to which we subject ourselves to His laws and Holy Spirit that we can be called spiritual (Romans 8: 5-8). How humble are you (James 4: 6)? Are you truly spiritual or you are really carnal?

12. In His Faith: The Lord Jesus Christ gave us the practical demonstration of the Word of God that, *"it is impossible for us to please God without faith"* (Hebrews 11: 6). It required faith for Him who is God by nature to take on the form of man in the first place. The Son of God became the son of man that He might make us sons of God (John 1: 12). He had to pray and rely on God like any one of us for answers to prayers and miracles throughout His earthly ministry. He prayed and groaned once in the Garden of Gethsemane that the rolls of His sweat were like rolls of blood (Matthew 26: 36-46). Yet, nothing demonstrates the faith of Jesus Christ more than His death. He trusted God that even if He laid down His life as He did on the cross at Calvary, the Father would bring Him back to life again (John 10: 15-18; Luke 23: 46). And because God is a Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11: 6b), He kept His side of the deal and brought back His Son to life (Romans 6: 4). Halleluyah – Jesus is alive!