

ON THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ.

Ephesians 5:1–2

These are the words of Christ: “If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness” (John 8:12). They teach us how thoroughly we must imitate his life and character if we desire true understanding and freedom from our own deceptive hearts and minds. And so, may we earnestly study and meditate on the life of Jesus Christ.

Christ’s teachings surpass all of the great holy writers of the past. If we have his Spirit, we find spiritual nourishment. Unfortunately there are many people who frequently hear the words of Christ but have little desire to follow them and so do not have the mind of Christ.

What does it profit us to engage in deep discussions about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit if we lack humility and are displeasing to God? Truly, deep and profound words do not make a person holy and upright, but a good life is what makes us dear to God. I would rather experience sorrow for my ungodly thoughts and actions than simply be skillful in defining “repentance.” If we know the whole Bible and the teachings of all the philosophers, what does all this benefit us without the love and grace of God? It is completely futile unless we love God and serve only him. This is the highest wisdom: to put earthly values behind us and to reach forward to the heavenly kingdom.

It is futile to strive for earthly things and to trust in riches that will perish. It is futile to desire honors and lift up ourselves. It is futile to be ruled by the desires of our physical body, for this will only bring misery in the end. It is futile to desire a long life and to care little for a good life. It is futile to concentrate on the here and now and not look forward to the things which are eternal. It is futile to love temporary things and not strive toward eternal joy.

Always keep this saying in mind: “The eye is not satisfied with visible things. Neither is the ear content with hearing.” And so, let us strive to turn our hearts from the love of things that are visible and concentrate on the things that are invisible. If we are controlled by our own physical desires, we will corrupt our conscience and destroy the grace of God. *Book 1 Chapter 1*