

On Developing Like Christ

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Luke tells us more about the first thirty years of Jesus' earthly life than the other three who wrote about His life. Even with what Luke tells us, we still know very little, however. For example, the eighteen-year period from age twelve to age 30 in the life of Christ is covered by a summary statement: "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52). While it is only a summary statement, it gives us a candid glimpse into the well-rounded person Jesus of Nazareth was. Since He was perfect, we are urged to "follow in His steps" (1 Pet. 2:21-22; 1 John 2:5-6). It behooves us to examine Luke's description of Jesus' development and to pattern our lives after it.

1. JESUS ADVANCED IN WISDOM. This term speaks of Jesus' mental development. It has to do with insight into the true nature of things and therefore speaks not only of storing up factual data in the mind, but of knowing how to use and apply those facts. Authorities on the human mind believe that most of us use only about ten percent of our brain power. Not Jesus. He appears here as an eager learner. So should we all be.
2. JESUS ADVANCED IN STATURE. While Jesus was growing up mentally, He was also growing up physically. He learned the carpenter's trade (Mark 6:3), which provided opportunity for strenuous exercise. He must have been physically strong to have suffered what He did in His trials and still be able to carry the cross. The Scriptures teach us to properly use our bodies, not abuse them (1 Cor. 3:16-17). Our bodies are to be offered as living sacrifices to God (Rom. 12:1-2).
3. JESUS ADVANCED IN FAVOR WITH GOD. Notice that this precedes, "favor with man." If it means losing the favor of all men to be in God's favor, the committed disciple is willing for it to be so. This advancement indicates that the longer Christ lived, the more pleased God was with Him. Some lives drift further from God with time. Not Jesus' followers.
4. JESUS ADVANCED IN FAVOR WITH MEN. While less important than favor with God, favor with men is still important. Jesus was not a self-righteous grouch! He was at the same time a man of uncompromising principle and one with a warm and winning personality. The real qualities that make human beings most likeable are the direct result of becoming more and more like God. Be friendly, don't be afraid to smile, attract friends for Jesus' sake.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for, and it was published in *The Edifier*, weekly bulletin of Pearl Street Church of Christ, Denton, TX, September 28, 1983, of which I was editor.]

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