

# Mentored To Mentor: Linking to the Example of Christ

*“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”*

*1 Cor. 11:1*

At this moment there is a wooden toy that lies idle in our toy box at home. The toy is simple and unassuming. It's a puzzle of sorts. A simple objective – align the wooden disks. Yet this puzzle will max out your coordination and certainly your patience. For the majority of its existence, it laid motionless and of interest to no one. That is until one child picked it up and began to play. In that moment, the toy went from being ignored to being adored; from being discarded to being chosen; from being of no interest to being the obsession of not just one of my children, but their brothers and sisters also.

This phenomenon is not unique to my children. It is held in common with all humanity. We want what other people want. A European literature scholar Prof. Rene Girard coined this human axiom as “mimetic desire”. Put simply, our desires mimic the desires of others. You don't have to look too far for examples. Fashion, advertising and trends all do more of the same.

Mimetic desire enters the biblical narrative early. In the third chapter of *Genesis*, Eve is enticed to eat the forbidden fruit. Like the wooden toy lying harmlessly in the toy box, the fruit was presumably one of many in the garden. But when the serpent showed interest, Eve's desire for the fruit was awoken.

While all of us can likely give examples of times mimetic desire has gotten us into trouble, there is tremendous good news in this human behavior. Desire can very often be formed from without us. This is good news for the person who asks, why am I this way? Why do I desire this bad thing? Why do I want that unhealthy choice? Why am I tantalized by unwholesome lifestyle choices? Yes, our heart by nature is “*corrupt according to the deceitful lusts*” (*Eph. 4:22*); however, much of our desire has also come by examining the examples from the “outside.” Others want that bad thing, are making those unhealthy choices and are exemplifying unwholesome lifestyle choices. Our desire can be awakened by theirs.

Where's the good news in this? Jesus came to live among us. *Emmanuel* means “*God with us*” (*Matt. 1:23*). He came to secure salvation. He came to preach the kingdom. He came to heal the sick and mend the brokenhearted. But He also came to be our example. He came to show us the way. He came for us to form our desires after him. He came to win back “Eve's” affections. And He did.

Peter, James, John, Andrew, Matthew and the other seven followed Christ's every move. They walked with Him. They talked with Him. They sat under His teaching. Their desires were challenged, deconstructed and formed up again by His example. And when He parted from their midst, He instructed them to go and make more disciples. They were to be an example of Him to others and to pass on this discipleship pattern to the church.

*“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” Paul (1 Cor 11:1)*

It's hard to comprehend the unbreakable link of examples between us and Christ, but one does exist. Imagine for a moment the handful of individuals who have exemplified Christ to you. Now imagine the individuals that influenced your influencers. Do this again a third time. Now a fourth. Pretty soon we realize there is an unbreakable relationship link between us and Christ Himself. And herein lies the sober responsibility as well as the exciting opportunity offered to each of us – linking-up to this lineage of example.

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Avoiding the terrors of mimetic desire gone badly is not only a function of avoiding bad examples. It is more importantly a linking-up with Christ and His perfect example that, by following so closely to His example, His desires become ours. This is one reason we go to church. Believers attend church to put themselves near to the example of Christ by placing themselves near to Christ's lineage of example: His brothers and sisters. The lineage of relationships helps us directly link to the person of Christ. This is also one reason why mentoring and discipleship relationships can be so powerful in our lives as we intentionally follow believers whose actions point back to the example of Christ. Their lives, thru the very real and tangible struggles, joys, and mundane interactions, is what linking-up looks like.

Think through a few practical ways that you, through your relationships, can encourage others to link-up with Christ's lineage of example:

- Connect with a brother or sister from whom you can learn.
- Be an example from whom others can learn.
- Exemplify Christ-like desire for others to see.
- Spend time in the Gospels individually or with a small group, refreshing yourself in the example of Christ.
- Embrace the opportunity of example as you hold yourself accountable in action and behavior to Christ's life.

*(1 Peter 2:21)*