

Christlikeness--A Perspective from New Testament Times

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The Body of Christ--as individuals, as groups, and as a collective whole--must embody godly attributes in order to reflect Christlikeness (2 Corinthians 3:18) to the watching, waiting world.

First and foremost among these attributes is love (1 Corinthians 13:13), by which all men will know that we are His disciples (John 13:35).

Desiring to better demonstrate God's love led the Stuttgart, Germany, OCF Bible study group to explore the characteristics of His people as mentioned in the Bible.

The primary basis of our scriptural exploration consisted of a weekly Bible study in the New Testament book of Acts. Several questions guided our search: What are the attributes that characterized the early Church? What made them effective for Christ? What spiritual disciplines did they regularly follow?

Addressing these questions brought to light a number of characteristics of Christians during the New Testament period. Notwithstanding their dependency on Christ and the working of the Holy Spirit, we believe the following list answers the above questions.

Additionally, while not an exclusive list, we believe it to represent general attributes that God's people--who are the Church (1 Corinthians 6:19)--should still genuinely, yet intentionally exhibit today. We believe they are traits that should be true of us as individual disciples, as well as true of groups of Christians--whether in a denominational church, a chapel, or in a Bible study setting.

Finally, these qualities form a foundation of God's standards by which we can evaluate and challenge ourselves and our "Churches."

Biblically based Churches:

1. Have Christ as Lord.

Spending time with Jesus Acts 4:13

God's authority in our lives Acts 4:19-20

Submission Ephesians 5:21, Romans 13

Our lives as living sacrifices Romans 12:1-2

2. Are grounded in the Truth.

The Truth is a Person John 14:6

The Truth sets us free John 8:32, Galatians 5:1

Verify teachers' messages Acts 17:11

A weapon in spiritual battles Ephesians 6:17, Hebrews 4:12

Useful for teaching 2 Timothy 3:16-17

3. Pray.

Pray with others Acts 2:42, Hebrews 10:24-25

Pray confidently Mark 11:24

Pray specifically James 4:2

Pray continually, thankfully Philippians 4:6

Pray persistently Luke 18:1-8

4. Obediently pursue God-revealed vision.

Without vision-no restraint Proverbs 29:18

Obedience in action Acts 8:26-40

Walk by faith, not by sight 2 Corinthians 4:18, 5:7

The one who loves Jesus obeys John 14:15, 21

5. Are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Empowers the Christian life Acts 1:8, Philippians 2:13

The Holy Spirit is a Counselor John 14:15-31, 16:5-15

6. Have Christians with teachable hearts.

Eagerness to learn Acts 2:42

A man after God's own heart Acts 13:22

A broken and contrite spirit Psalm 51:17 7. Display the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is- Galatians 5:22-23

The fruit in action and its results Acts 2:42-47

8. Are unified in Christ.

Enjoy each other's company Acts 2:44

Unity comes as we follow Christ Romans 15:5-6

9. Love God, one another, and the unbelievers around them.

Love God and your neighbor Mark 12:30-31

Love: the world's identification John 13:35

Love defined by actions 1 Corinthians 13

10. Serve each other.

Meet each other's needs Acts 2:44-45

Service: Christ's standard Mark 10:43-45

11. Evangelize the lost.

The Great Commission Matthew 28:18-20

Parable of the Lost Sheep Matthew 18:10-14

Carry Jesus' name everywhere Acts 1:8; Chapters 7-8; 9:15

Answers concerning our hope 1 Peter 3:15

Sharing Christ helps us grow Philemon 1:6

12. Grow in maturity.

Growth of the early church Acts 2:41-42

Qualities Christians need 2 Peter 1:5-9

These attributes on these pages are those that Jesus and the early believers demonstrated and passed on as they purposefully invested in others' lives.

These spiritual characteristics are part of what Paul exhorted Timothy to pass on to reliable men who would be qualified to teach others (2 Timothy 2:2). They are also traits that should identify us as Christians--"Little Christs."

We encourage you to pray over and study the attributes, possibly exploring one Church attribute and its biblical basis each day for approximately two weeks. Then, prayerfully consider how your "Church" measures up and if God would have you or your group make any changes.