



Living into the Life of Jesus: The Formation of Christian Character
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- Addresses five formation gaps
- Helps you discover a formation project to bridge your own formation gap
- Includes formation practices like forgiveness and peacemaking for building real, lifelong relationships
- Tackles the tough topics of money, the marketplace and generosity

Sometimes trying hard to follow Jesus just doesn't work. Then what?

If you'd like to live more like Jesus, this book is for you. But I need to warn you, I don't follow conventional wisdom about how we head in that direction. I think we've wrongly diagnosed the problem and therefore have developed strategies that don't work—which is why many of us are frustrated at the lack of deep life change. We've even given up hope that change is possible. Why do I think this book provides an alternative way?

I've become convinced we've got an inaccurate view about how character formation takes place. If we're going to see any long-term formation results, I suggest we must make four major shifts of perspective: We think Christian formation is mainly about using our willpower to change our external behaviors, whereas Jesus says it's really about changing the flow of our inner heart. We think Christian formation is mainly about following rules, whereas Jesus says it's really about deepening our relationship with him and relying on divine resources that make change possible. We've been persuaded—by frustrating experience—that deep Christian formation is not realistic or possible this side of heaven, whereas Jesus is convinced it is. Finally, we think of Jesus only as our Lord and Savior—which he is—but we ignore and devalue Jesus' impressive human life example. Yet Jesus says it's possible to put “words of mine . . . into practice” (Mt 7:29) and to “learn from me” (Mt 11:29).

In this book I invite you to take a fresh look at Jesus in the Gospels to benefit from what he offers. I've been doing that for the last decade and have seen Jesus bring about important, deep changes in my life—although I've still got a long way to go. I'd like to share a bit of my journey, some liberating insights from Jesus' life and teachings, and some practical steps that may help you as they've helped me.

—Adapted from the preface