

Living into the Life of Jesus

Klaus Issler (2012)
Intervarsity Press

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While “living more like Jesus” is the theme of Klaus Issler’s book, he is really calling us to examine our Christian character. What are the processes for the formation of Christian character? What divine resources are available? And how do we spiritually fill those gaps in our lives?

To effectively work on Christian formation, we need to work on the flow of our hearts rather than merely the behavior. Perhaps we have also fallen into the legalistic perspective, making sure we follow all the rules. However, Issler suggests peering deeper into the gaps of our lives. Do we tend to dismiss those ideas we don’t understand? Do we create a discrepancy between our professed beliefs and how we actually live? In doing so, how long has it been since we checked into our emotions? How often are we distracted from the things of the heart and fail to make time for self-examination? We often become disconnected and forget to “press the pause button of life. Yet, as a result, that distressed gap forces us to work through the turbulence in the hour of struggle.

To decrease the gaps, Issler reminds us of five resources which we need to access regularly and also which support the character formation journey: God’s unconditional love, empowerment by the Holy Spirit, reality-checks from Scripture (with a meditative approach), and that of abiding in the Holy Spirit. We must follow Jesus daily in our gaps as “we are individuals who flourish best in community” (p. 181). As such, Jesus’ life and teachings move us toward forgiveness for one another, and peace-making in conflict, as well as developing closer friendships to build community. The words *confession* and *candor* represent transparent self-disclosure and freedom to speak the truth, respectively.

The last gap mentioned by Issler in our character formation relates to our attitudes about money. He suggests three exemplary practices from Jesus’ life — doing our work well, trusting in God’s provision while wisely using

money on loan from God, and giving generously. He also indicates that “almost 50% of Jesus’ parables have a ‘business setting’” (p. 190), two builders, unjust manager, field of treasure, unforgiven debt, and the talents, just to name a few.

In conclusion, character formation requires our participation empowered by God the Holy Spirit. We must align our worldview beliefs with reality as it really is. The Spirit longs for us to develop a growing intimacy with God. The result becomes a life resembling how Jesus might live our lives, with our respective gifts and abilities, as we learn to take time for the formation of Christian character and live into the life of Jesus.

Living into the Life of Jesus provides a good resource for Biblical integration. For example, the text fits well for courses such as Introduction to Business or Business as Mission. These courses lend themselves well to not only look at business from a Biblical basis but also to remind students the importance of their personal character formations. The text could also be used as an accessory for personal finance, particularly with one chapter discussing the emphasis on money and work.

Other books written by Issler (or in conjunction with other authors) include *The Lost Virtue of Happiness: Discovering the Disciplines of the Good Life*; *Wasting Time With God: A Christian Spirituality of Friendship With God*; *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introductory Christology*; *How We Learn: A Christian Teacher’s Guide to Education Psychology*; and *What Does it Take to be Human?*