

# Yosemite Bible Conference 1996-04 More Like Christ

by William MacDonald

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*William MacDonald's sermon encourages believers to embody the virtues of Christ, emphasizing obedience, contentment, and courage in their lives.*

**Duration:** 40:31

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Luke 15:4-7, John 4:4-26, Acts 4:31, 2 Corinthians 8:9, 1 Timothy 6:6, Revelation 19:6

**Topics:** "Christ Likeness"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker expresses his dislike for Christmas and wishes that people would wake up to the perceived wastefulness of the holiday. He then shares about prayer meetings where young people were inspired to serve the Lord throughout the world. The speaker emphasizes the importance of contentment and how the Lord Jesus exemplified this trait. He also highlights the Lord's passion for souls, demonstrated through his interactions with the woman at the well and the parable of the lost sheep. The speaker encourages believers to have a similar zeal for the will of God and shares examples of individuals like George Verwer and John Wesley who were zealous in their pursuit of God's work. The sermon concludes with a call for believers to strive for increasing conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ and to reflect his virtues and glories in their lives.

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## Transcript

It would be worth living a lifetime just to write that hymn, wouldn't it? What a legacy to leave behind. And that was true of the other songs that we've been singing today. I think some of the landfall has come into my eye.

Would you turn in your Bibles, please, to Revelation chapter 19 and verse 6. Revelation 19 and verse 6. And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters, and as the sound of mighty thundering, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns. Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous act of the saint.

I was impressed this week reading this verse. It says, His wife has made herself ready. Of course, the way, the primary way in which we make ourselves ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb is by being converted, by trusting the Lord Jesus as our Savior.

But there's another sense, and that's what we've been speaking about this week, increasing conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ. Our purpose this week has been to view the glories of the Lord Jesus and have them reproduced in our lives, so that when we all leave the conference, all of those who are believers, will be different. And people will say that.

They'll say, Something different about you. Something about you that makes me think of God. Something about you that makes me think of Jesus.

And while people will be attracted to the Lord through us. So, we've been thinking about some of the virtues, some of the excellencies, some of the glories of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we've tried to use illustrations to see these glories reproduce in us. At the close of the meeting yesterday, we were speaking about how the Lord Jesus was absolutely free from covetousness, and how that should mark his people.

Makes me sad when I think of the Christian world today and the covetousness that goes on. In the publishing industry, for example, what a money-making racket it is on many hands. In the ministry of music, the covetousness.

Most Christian music companies have now been taken over by secular companies. Most Christian music companies are now controlled by secular companies. Why? They found there was money in it, and they just moved in and taken them over.

It would be a wonderful thing if somehow the dollar could be taken out of Christian life and service today. It would be a wonderful thing. Nothing does as much harm to Christian work as money today.

But I want to tell you, if the dollar could be taken out, what is really of God would still be going on tomorrow. May the Lord deliver us from covetousness. Even in our hymn books, there are hymns in our hymn book that we've had to pay for every copy of that book that's printed, have to pay a dollar for the use of that hymn.

Royalties. May the Lord deliver it from us. I sometimes chuckle when I think of an old preacher, and he was so free from covetousness that when he'd be given a check in fellowship, he used it as a bookmark in his Bible.

Most of us haven't reached that stage yet. Obedience. Obedience was one of the things that marked the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He was ever the obedient one. He didn't seek his own will, but the will of his Father who sent him. He emphasized that that's why he came down from heaven.

The volume of the book it is written of me. I delight to do thy will. Oh my God.

He always did those things that pleased the Father. I think that's wonderful. When he heard the call, whom shall I send, and who will go from me, he said, send me.

He promptly answered, here am I, send me. Three times in the garden of Gethsemane, he exchanged his own will for the will of God the Father, and he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. An obedient child really gives great joy to his or her parents, isn't it so? What a joy it is when a parent asks a child to do something, and without whimper, the child just does it.

Well, it pleases the heart of God when he sees people, Christian people, obeying his word. Imagine that, that we can please the heart of God by our prompt obedience. I like to walk along a lake that's near us there, and my friends say that I don't do it just for the walk, but so that I can talk to the dogs that come by on a leash.

I have a great fondness for dogs. We had a dog attending this conference this week. Some of you noticed him.

I have a theory that God put dogs down here in the world to teach us how to worship. Dogs are worshipers. Cats are not.

Cats are kind of supercilious creatures, and they say, well, here I am, you lucky people, and I'll stay here as long as you feed me. But a dog isn't like that. One day I was walking by Lake Chabot, and a lady came along, and of course, you don't talk to a lady.

I mean, she should introduce, she should start the conversation, but I didn't talk to the dog. So, I greeted her sheltie, and she said to me, the lady said to me, this dog wants only two things. He wants to know what I want him to do, and he wants to do it.

And I said to myself, thank you very much. You've taught me a great spiritual lesson. The dog wanted to know what she wanted him to do.

The dog wanted to do it. I thought, my, that's the way I should be, shouldn't it? With the Lord, I should just be like that. Dogs are worshipers.

Dogs are wonderful examples of faithfulness to us, and I really believe God put them down here to teach us those lessons. Next, the Lord Jesus had a passion for souls. This is seen in his detour through Samaria to talk to that woman by the well.

It's seen in the parable of the lost sheep. He leaves the ninety and nine in the wilderness to go after the one that was lost out there in the desert. Finding it, he lays it on his shoulders and brings it back home, rejoicing.

And we see this passion for souls. I think it's a wonderful thing to see this passion for souls reflected in the lives of God's people. Years ago, there was a real work of the Holy Spirit back, it started in the Chicago area, started with a young fellow named George Verwer.

And George's mind was a computer. It turned everything into souls. I'll give you an example.

One day, he came into my office. He was thin and scrawny, still is. And I saw his eye going around looking at the library.

I had hundreds of books in that library. And he said to me, Mr. McDonald, have you read all those books? And I said, no, I haven't read all those books, George. He thought he'd try again.

He said, do you know what's in all of those books? And I could feel the noose tightening around my neck. And I said, no, George, I don't know what's in all those books. I mean, I had Darby's 34 volumes of his collected writings.

I had never read them. I had never had the intention of reading them. But they did make me look like a scholar.

And then he started to say something, and he just sucked the words back into his mouth. And I said to him, George, if you have something to say to me from the Lord, you say it. He said, Mr. McDonald, when I look at all those books, all I can think of is souls.

What did he mean by that? He meant, look, if there are some of those books you have never read, you don't intend to read them, convert them into cash for the salvation of souls. That's what he meant. I knew what he meant.

I knew it only too well. He was a real disturber of the peace, that fellow. I mean, we were all so comfortable minding our own business, and we would make the mistake of asking him to speak at chapel.

And he'd get up, and he'd say, if I really believed that one cent would buy one track, and one track could be used in the salvation of a soul, I wouldn't spend a nickel on a candy bar. That was in the days where you could get a candy bar for a nickel. I mean, it really created a division in our school.

You were either violently for that sort of thing or violently against it. One day he came into my office. He had a big suitcase.

I think it was in Noah's flood. It was very disreputable looking. And he had an overcoat on that was early salvation army.

And I said, where are you going, George? He said, well, I'm going out to Wheaton to speak to the students. Well, it was sub-zero weather that day. And I said, well, George, I'll take you up to where you can get the bus to Wheaton.

So we piled into my car, and we went up behind Weebolt's department store there. And I was driving around looking for a place to park. And there was no place to park.

I went around the block. There was no place to park. So after I came around the block, I went, I started to go into the parking lot where you'd have to pay to go in.

And he said, don't go in there, Mr. McDonald. I said, why not? He said, you'd have to pay. George, I'm not going to leave you out in the cold standing here in the cold waiting for a bus to take you to Wheaton on a day like this.

He said, go around the block. I said, George, I've already been around the block. He said, go around again.

And you know what he did when I went around again. He prayed all the way around. And when I got back, there was a vacant place right beyond where the bus comes in.

And we waited there for the bus to come in from Wheaton. And he got out of the car. He got the suitcase out of the car.

And then he stuck his head in the door before slamming the door. He stuck his head in the door. And he said, Mr. McDonald, if somebody told me that there were \$5,000 at the end of 10 city blocks, and I could get them by crawling on my hands and knees.

He said, I'd crawl on my hands and knees, and I'd be thinking of souls all the way. And then he left me to my own thoughts. But I want to tell you, dear friends, that's zeal for soul.

Everything in his mind was converted into souls, one for the Lord Jesus Christ. We need more of that today, don't we? We really need more of that today. I could tell you many, many stories of situations like that.

I remember one time at Christmas time, we were having these all-night prayer meetings. We'd begin at 9 o'clock and go till 7 in the morning. And along Oak Park Avenue there, all the Christmas trees were decorated.

All the department stores had the lights in them and everything else. And we were broken up into groups all over the library there at Emmaus praying. And when George prayed, I mean, no matter what group you were in, you heard him pray.

And I can remember him saying, Lord, I hate Christmas. You know I hate Christmas. I wish the trees would fall on the people and wake them up to this enormous waste.

We prayed. I tell you, the place was shaken. That verse in the book of Acts took on new meaning to me where it says, when they prayed, the place was shaken.

And I want to tell you from those prayer meetings, young people have gone out throughout the world and are still serving the Lord throughout the world today because of a man who had a passion for souls. The Lord Jesus was like that. Make us more like that, Lord.

Contentment. The Lord Jesus was the embodiment of Paul's words, godliness with contentment is great gain. That's a great verse.

It's a great verse. If you're godly and if you're content, you have something that money wouldn't buy for you. Isn't it true? You have something that money wouldn't buy for you.

You've got it. Godliness with contentment is great gain. The Lord Jesus was content with his circumstances.

Didn't make any difference whether he was in a carpenter shop in Nazareth or whether he was sleeping out of doors on the Mount of Olives. He was content. And like him, we should be content with the way that God has ordered our lives.

I don't think we should be content with our spiritual progress, our service, or our attainments. We can control these things, but we should be satisfied with what the Lord has given us and what he has withheld. There are certain things in life that just can't be changed.

There's no use praying about them. They just can't be changed. We don't have the power to reorder them, and God isn't going to change those things in our lives.

May include physical handicaps, mental, nervous, or emotional limitations, plain appearance, or a seeming deficit of talents and gifts. A great secret of the Christian life is be content. Peace comes through contentment, and discontent grumbles and complains.

It drowns itself in self-pity and wishes things were different. Contentment comes in accepting what cannot be changed. And that's what the Lord said, even so, father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.

Those are words that should be on our lips all the time. Even so, father, for so it seemed good in your sight. Paul even could boast in his infirmities so that the power of Christ might rest upon him.

This contentment takes all the negative things of life and glories in them. Patience or endurance. Oftentimes the word that's used, patience, in the New Testament means really endurance.

There's a difference between patience and endurance. Job wasn't exactly a patient man, but he had endurance. He grumbled and he complained about what he was going through, but I'll tell you, he stuck it up.

He stuck it up till the end. One man said, I think the crowning glory of our Lord was that he was never impatient once in his whole life. He was not only sinless, as we count sinlessness, but amid the rush of things, with a tired mind and a restless crowd, he was never impatient.

Earlier in the week, I told the story of Dr. Robertson McQuilkin, president of Columbia Bible College and Columbia Seminary, and how that dear man watched his wife sinking into the oblivion of Alzheimer's disease, and how he resigned as president of a college and of a seminary to take care of his wife. His friends said, don't do that. You can hire somebody to take care of your wife.

He said, I took vows when we were married 44 years ago that I would be with her in sickness and in health, and he declined. He left that status and prestige of a college presidency to be with his wife. Well, he tells of the need for patience in dealing with his dear wife, who had the Alzheimer's disease, and one time he says, I completely lost it.

The days when Muriel could still stand and walk, and we had not resorted to diapers, sometimes there were accidents. I was on my knees beside her, trying to clean up the mess. As she stood, confused by the toilet, it would have been easier if she had not been so insistent on helping.

I got more and more frustrated. Suddenly, to make her stand still, I slapped her on the calf, as if that would do any good. It wasn't a hard slap, but she was startled.

I was, too. Never in our 44 years of married life had I ever as much as touched her in anger or in rebuke of any kind. Never.

I was never even tempted to do it. But now, when she needed me most, sobbing, I pled with her to forgive me. No matter that she didn't understand words any better than she could speak them.

So, I turned to the Lord to tell him how very sorry I was. It took me days to get over it. Maybe God bottled those tears to quench the fire that might ignite again someday.

Someday, he might be tempted to do it again. It wasn't long after that that he found himself in the same condition on the floor of the bathroom. Muriel wanted to help.

Hadn't cleaning up messes been done in a long time? I mocked frantically, trying to fend off the interfering hands, and contemplated how best to get a soiled slip over the head that was totally opposed to the idea. At that moment, Chuck Swindoll's voice boomed from the radio in the kitchen. Men, are you at home? Really at home? In the midst of my stinking immersion, I smiled.

Yeah, Chuck, I really am. I tell you, there are circumstances in our life that really call for patience and for endurance. And I think it's a man, it takes a man to tell on himself a situation like that.

I can't tell the respect that I have for Dr. Robertson McCulkin, and for the way he has exhibited Christ during this most trying time in his whole life. Zeal. Was the Lord Jesus a zealous person? He certainly was.

Although the word zeal, I think, is only used once of him in the New Testament. It was in the temple courts, when he went in and found the money changers, and he took the scourge of small courts, and he drove them out, and the disciples watched it. And they remember that it was spoken of him, the zeal of thine house has eaten me up.

The zeal of thine house has eaten me up. It meant that the Lord Jesus was consumed with zeal for the interest of God. He was eaten up in that way.

It's interesting, he was a lamb in his own cause, but he was a lion in God's cause. That's exactly what we should be. But his whole life was marked by an earnest and ardent pursuit of the will of God.

He was zealous in all that he did. When his parents scolded him for lagging behind in Jerusalem, when they thought he should have been the party with them going to Nazareth, he said that he had to be about his father's business. Did you not know that I must be about my father's business? And when the cross loomed before him, he said, I have a baptism to be baptized of, and how am I straightened until it be accomplished? John Wesley was a man of zeal.

He traveled 250,000 miles on horseback, averaging 20 miles a day for 40 years. He preached 40,000 sermons, produced hundreds of books, knew 10 languages. At 83, he was annoyed that he could not write more than 15 hours a day without hurting his eyes.

And at 86, he was ashamed that he could not preach more than twice a day. He complained in his journal that there was an increasing tendency to be in bed until 5 30 in the morning. I put that in one of my books once, that quotation, and I'm sorry I did.

You know why? It's too discouraging. It's too discouraging for most of us. Courageousness.

Was the Lord Jesus courageous? I'll say he was courageous. When the people of Nazareth wanted to throw him over a cliff, he passed through the midst of them with utter fearlessness. I love the poise, the peace that characterized him as he passed through that crowd.

When his disciples were panic-stricken there on the Sea of Galilee in the boat, and he's sleeping in the hinder part of the boat. When his enemies took up stones to throw at him, he went through the crowd with magnificent dignity. His disciples urged him, don't go to Judea.

That's the place where the hostility against you is the keenest. He said, aren't there 12 hours in a day? In other words, I'm immortal till my work is done. Are there not 12 hours in a day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble because he sees the light of the world.

Even in his trial and in his execution, there was no trace of cowardice, whatever, nothing but undaunted courage. And Martin Luther had this. I know if you've read the story of Martin Luther's life, when he was really under siege in a very special way, and he was urged by his friends not to go to Worms because of

the danger there, he said, not go to Worms, he said.

I will go there even if there are as many devils there as there are tiles on the roofs of the building. That's courage. You can expect from me everything save fear or recantation.

I shall not flee, much less recant. And when he was called before the emperor to recant, he said to councils or popes, I cannot defer for they have often heard, my conscience is captive to the word of God. Given a later opportunity to recant, he refused, saying, here I stand.

I can do no other. God help me. You know, I find that situation strongly missing in the evangelical world today.

I find it strongly missing among Christians whom we know today. You say, why do you say that? Well, let me give you some examples. We exalt individual men, and then those men drift away from the great fundamentals of the faith, and we don't speak against it.

There was a man in the assemblies, and he had a reputation for scholarship. He was very wobbly on the inspiration of the scriptures, but don't speak a word against him. He's a scholar in our midst.

William Kelly said there are no men less to be trusted than scholars. Well, what he meant by that is scholarship in itself is not enough. It must be mingled with spirituality.

That's true. It can be very dangerous by itself. I'll give you another example.

William Barclay. William Barclay's books are found in all the Christian bookstores in the United States. William Barclay was a heretic.

He denied every fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. Every one. He denied the deity of Christ.

He said Jesus was petulant when he cursed the fig tree. He denied the miracles of the Lord Jesus. He said he didn't walk on water.

There were stones right under the surface of the water, and it gave the impression that he was walking on water. I stand here and tell you William Barclay denied every doctrine, fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. You'll find his books in every, almost every Christian bookstore in the United States today.

But you won't find Dave Hunt's books there, because Dave has the courage to speak out against that sort of thing. And you won't find my friend Jim McCarthy's book, *The Gospel According to Rome*, there. They might have it out in the back if you call for it, but they will not display it.

The apostasy has already started. The apostasy you read about, and people are more and more disinclined to take a stand and speak out fearlessly about these things. The Lord Jesus was manly.

He was a real man. You know, we have the expression macho today, but I wouldn't apply that to the Lord Jesus. If you want to know what a real man is, see the Lord Jesus.

See him putting on the apron of a slave and getting down and washing his disciples' feet. That's the real man. That's the man that came from heaven.

Some took him for John the Baptist, and some for Elijah, who were certainly real men as well. The Lord Jesus was thoughtful, and we ought to be thoughtful too. It's amazing to me.

If the Lord Jesus was here, he would know everything that you were all thinking, but he never needlessly exposed anybody. I think that's lovely. That knowledge would be very dangerous for you or for me.

I would be very mad if I knew what you were thinking all day long, or if you knew what I was thinking all day long. Very bad. The Lord Jesus never needlessly exposed anyone.

Their lives were an open book to him, but he was gracious too. He did expose the sin of the woman of Samaria by the Spirit. The man you're living with now is not your husband, and I'll tell you, she'll be eternally grateful that he said that, won't she? If you went and talked to her today, say, aren't you angry with Jesus for doing that? No.

She'd say, I'm so glad he did it, and that's why I went into the village and said, come see a man who told me all things that ever I did. Never the needless fishing up of wrongs of the past. Never the unnecessary unveiling of shame.

He respected a person's right to privacy, and so should we. Now, he was capable of indignation, as you know. Love can be firm, and love can be indignant as well.

Remember how he confronted the Pharisees, and the Sadducees, and the scribes, and he spoke very firmly to them. I like the story of Dr. Donald Gray Barnhouse. He was at a big convention in New York, and some liberals had got up and spoken very caustically about evangelical missionaries on the field.

They had just come back from the mission field, and they had just criticized evangelical missionaries as inferior people who were doing an inferior work. And Dr. Barnhouse got up and asked, how could these liberals, who were not stalwart defenders of the great doctrines of scripture, bring an adequate picture of what Christ is doing through missionaries in the foreign field? Their report had no more value, he said, than the report of a group of colorblind men who might be sent to study the paintings in the Louvre. Colorblind men sent this to study art, artwork.

Before he spoke the next evening, he received a little letter from the headquarters there, and they reprimanded him for his outspokenness. And this letter said, some of the listeners were deeply hurt when you spoke so harshly of Christian men by saying that they were colorblind in their report on the missionaries. We hope that tonight you will display more of the spirit of the master, they said to him.

And Barnhouse got up and spoke again. He was not a man to tangle with, really. He was equal to the occasion.

He got up and said, I want to ask the friends who wrote the letter and asked me to display the spirit of the master. What phase of the spirit of the master do they want me to display? Do they wish me to say that these men are hypocrite generations of vipers, that their graveyards clean outside and full of dead men's bones within? Am I to say that they're like filthy cups with the outside clean? Is that the spirit of the master? Yes, that is the spirit of the master, just as much as the fact that he was loving and kind and went about doing good. And Barnhouse was right.

That was the spirit of the master too. And when he saw those things, he spoke out clearly against them. I'd say we've lost that capacity today.

We would make very poor martyrs today. We're too dry. We have no convictions.

We're not willing to stand and be counted for the truth of the word of God. And men who have become sacred cows in the evangelical world, we applaud them, even if they're disloyal to the gospel. I cannot help but think today of the accord now between evangelicals and the Catholic church.

And they say, well, they believe in the deity of Christ and they believe in the Bible. Yeah, but they don't believe in the gospel. They're enemies of the cross of Christ, those leaders in that church.

They're enemies. They preach a different gospel, a gospel of works and not of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But I want to tell you, I want to stand here today and tell you the church is drunk with the blood of the saints.

And it's a church that's under the condemnation of God. Galatians chapter one, Paul said, if any man comes to you and preach any of the gospel that I have preached to you, let him be accursed. You and I live in a day when the evangelicals are becoming chummy with that.

And when they're saying that the Pope is a great evangelist, God help us. The Lord Jesus became poor that he might enrich others. Here, the golden text, of course, is in 2 Corinthians chapter eight, verse nine.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, though he was rich, yet for your sake, he became poor that you through his poverty might be rich. Too often we eulogize this verse about the marvelous grace of Jesus, but Paul didn't mean it that way. He meant it as an example for us that we were to impoverish ourselves that others might be made rich.

If the Lord impoverished himself to enrich us, how much more should we impoverish ourselves to enrich others with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ? Our time is up. I'm going to stop there. We'll go on, Lord willing, tomorrow morning with some final thoughts about the wonderful Lord Jesus and how he can be reflected in our lives.

Shall we pray? Father, we've been dealing with some serious issues today. We just pray, Lord, that you will seal the truth home to our hearts. And if anything that has been said that has not been true, we pray that it might be quickly forgotten.

But Lord, help us to be men and women of God who are willing to stand for the truth of the word of God. We pray in his precious name. Amen.

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