

Fresh Start

By Jerry Bader

The Reflection That Counts

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To be human is to want to look good. Billions are spent and earned each year in America by those who want to weigh less, look younger or just be more beautiful. Three years ago, I lost 85 pounds and I was convinced it would be the key to happiness. Yes, I looked and felt better; but I was still spiritually empty. I would learn that the emptiness came from trying to use food to fill a God-shaped hole in my heart. And once I filled that hole by accepting Jesus Christ as my Savior, I was far less concerned with the reflection in the mirror than I was with others seeing Christ reflected in me. Because as Christ followers, we are, by definition, called upon to follow in the ways of Christ. That means even a total stranger should be able to see the Christ in us (even if they don't recognize It for what It is).

Christ followers often read that as a mandate to spread the Word through preaching and teaching, and we are called upon to do that. But it also means striving to act like Jesus in every deed, great and small. *Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God* - Ephesians 5:1-2 (NIV).

Recently, I was reminded of how powerful Christ's reflection can be. I was part of a church group that serves food once a week in the summer at a local park. One night when we were packing up, a person in our group shared with us how three of the people we served that night had wronged her; badly. None of us in the group had a clue. She treated them in the same gracious manner she treated everyone else we served. She told us: "I can't come here saying I love God and hate them." What she didn't know, until I told her later, was that I had been struggling mightily with forgiveness issues at the time. Christ's reflection in her shone on me in a way of which she was unaware. *Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful* - Luke 6:36 (NIV). Her "walk in the way of love" poured God's blessings out on me, not just those we had served. It's impossible to ever know the impact you have when you reflect Christ.

Tapping the brake and letting that person in during your morning commute might make their day (or maybe even save their life, or yours). Taking five minutes to hear a co-worker's problem won't take much out of your day but could mean a lot to them. Or that random act of kindness of paying the bill for the person behind you in the drive-through might be the moment where they truly see Christ reflected in your act. *But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do* - 1 Peter 1:15 (NIV).

Shedding pounds and (the appearance of) shedding years may make you feel good. But remember what we are told to shed as Christ-followers: *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.* Ephesians 4:22-24 (NIV)

Accepting Christ as your Savior is a one-time occurrence. Striving each day to be more and more like Him is a lifetime commitment.

Changing what you see in the mirror may please you and impress your friends. But it will never impress God. *Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.* Matthew 5:48 (NIV) Striving each day to reflect the perfection of the Father; reflecting Christ in all you do, will create a reflection pleasing to God that no worldly mirror can produce.