

Can you really do what Jesus did?

Written by Bill Perkins

It's understandable to think we could no more emulate Jesus than Superman. We might shadow Clark Kent up a flight of stairs, but we're not going to follow the Man of Steel off a tall building. Likewise, most of us figure we could imitate Jesus when he operated from his human nature, but not his divine. Which means miracles of healing and demon eviction are off limits.

A Divine Transformer

Such thinking is based on the belief that Jesus switched from one nature to the other, like a divine Transformer. While weeping at the grave of Lazarus, he used his human nature. When raising Lazarus from the dead, his divine. He taught from his humanity and healed from his divinity.

Many Bible scholars say Jesus performed miracles to prove he was God. However, the Bible doesn't say that. In fact, in the Old Testament, Moses, Elijah, and Elisha performed miracles, as did Paul and Peter in the New Testament. These men neither claimed to be God nor the source of their miraculous power. Instead, the miracles proved God spoke through them. And though Jesus claimed to be God (John 10:30-33), he never claimed the power to perform miracles came from himself.

He Waived the Use

Paul makes it clear that, although Jesus was fully God, he laid aside all use of his divine attributes when he became a man (see Philippians 2:5-8). Paul doesn't say Jesus laid aside his divinity; only that he laid aside the use of his divine attributes. God cannot cease being God, but he can waive the use of his divine power.

For example, you could choose to relinquish your ability to see by keeping your eyes closed. You'd still possess vision, but you wouldn't be using it. That's what Jesus did with his divine attributes.

The Source of His Strength

Throughout his ministry, Jesus affirmed the source of his strength. In John 5:19-20, he declared his reliance on God the Father: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed" (NIV).

In John 5:30, Jesus said, "By myself I can do nothing" (NIV). In John 14:9, he told Philip, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (NIV, NLT). In Matthew 24:36, he showed a human limitation of knowledge when he said he didn't know the time of his return. Later, he noted he could ask his Father to send twelve legions of angels to his aid, rather than commanding them himself (Matthew 26:53).

After Jesus' death and resurrection, on the Day of Pentecost, Peter spoke of the source of Jesus' power when he said, "Fellow Israelite's, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs, *which God did among you through him*, as you yourselves know" (Acts 2:22, NIV, emphasis added).

The Same God Lives in Believers

This is a poignant truth. Why? Because the God who gave Jesus supernatural power lives in every believers. That's why Jesus promised, "Whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12).