

Is Following Jesus as Impossible as Following Superman?

Written by Bill Perkins

Imitating Jesus in prayer might sound as impossible as emulating Superman's flying capabilities. 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, I suspect most people figure they could at least try to imitate Jesus when he operated from his human nature, but no way could they follow his lead when he relied on his divine nature.

A Divine Transformer

Such thinking is based on the belief that Jesus flipped from one nature to the other, like a divine Transformer. While weeping at the grave of Lazarus, he utilized his human nature. When raising Lazarus from the dead, he acted from his divine nature. He taught from his human side, walked on water from his divine side.

I think such a view is inaccurate. At no time during his earthly ministry did Jesus tap into his divine power to know or do anything.^[i] Instead, he always operated out of his humanity. I've heard Bible scholars say Jesus performed miracles to prove he was God. The Bible doesn't tell us that, though.

In fact, in the Old Testament, Moses, Elijah, and Elisha performed miracles; and in the New Testament, Paul and Peter also performed miracles. None of these men claimed to be God, nor did they claim to be the source of their miraculous power. Instead, their miracles validated their claim they spoke for God. And though Jesus did claim to be God (John 10:30-33), he never claimed the power he used 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 powers.

For example, we could choose to relinquish our ability to see by keeping our eyes closed. We'd still possess vision, but we wouldn't be using it. That's what Jesus did with his divine attributes. He chose not to use them while on earth.

The Source of His Strength

Throughout his ministry, Jesus affirmed the source of his strength. In John 5:19-20 "For the Father loves the Son and shows Him everything He does. And He will show Him greater works than these, so you'll marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to anyone He wishes." (NIV).

In John 5:30 "I can do nothing of Myself. As I hear, I judge, and My judgment is righteous, because I don't seek My own will, but the will of My Father who sent Me. "If I testify about Myself, My witness isn't valid." (NIV). In John 14:9, he tells Philip, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (NIV, NLT).

In Matthew 24:36, he shows a human limitation of knowledge when he says he doesn't know the time of his return. Later, he notes that 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 Israelites, 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).^[ii]

The Same Resources Are Yours

This is a poignant truth. Why? Because

the same resources that enabled Jesus to live a life devoted to God are available to you and me. As Jesus abided in the Father, so can we abide in Jesus. The Lord promised this when he said, "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).

We could be men who show God to the world in the same way as Jesus. Yes, Jesus was fully God *and* fully man, but his words and actions flowed from his Father--and so can ours.

Locking arms,

Bill

This is an excerpt from *The Jesus Experiment*, which will be released by Tyndale in October. I'd like to hear your thoughts.