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The Value of Solitude

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As the October release of my new book, The Jesus Experiment, draws near I want to give you a sneak peek.

It's understandable to think we could no more emulate Jesus than we could copy 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, 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 and 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. However, the Bible doesn't tell us that. 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 rights.

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.

The Source of His Strength

Throughout his ministry, Jesus affirmed the source of his strength. In John 5:19-20, he declares 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 says, “By myself I can do nothing” (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). (from The Jesus Experiment due release this October)

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[i] David Needham, *Birthright*, (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1999), 136.

[ii] Ibid., 136-138.