

Greetings. Welcome to session 7 on this series of “Abounding in the Good Works of God.” The most important man who ever lived on this Earth is Jesus Christ. Today we're going to take a deep dive into his personal life.

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet without sin.

The word “empathize” in this verse is a translation from the Greek word *sympatheo*. It means to feel compassion for. We get our English word sympathize from it. We know from this verse that Jesus understands us. He can empathize with the problems we face and the hurt we sometimes go through because he experienced similar adversities in his own life. Some of the movies about Jesus portray him as this almost robot-like creature who was not emotionally challenged. That was not the case! He was tempted in all aspects of his life just like we are. There isn't any hurt and pain that you and I have to endure that Jesus didn't go through himself. Because of this, he can relate to us, and our cries for help.

Hebrews 2:14

Now since the children participate fully in blood and flesh, in a similar way he also himself shared the same so that through death he could make ineffective the one who holds the power of death, that is, the Devil,

Note the words “in a similar way he also himself shared the same.” The up and down experiences of emotion and feeling that all men and women go through in life were also shared by Jesus Christ. He was born like you and I, raised by parents and he had to face difficult challenges throughout his life just like we do.

From Romans 5:12-19 we learn that sin was introduced into the world by a man, Adam, and that everyone since that time has been born into sin as a result of Adam's disobedience. Because a man brought sin into the world, it would require another man to redeem back the sin that had been committed. Jesus Christ is that man.

1 Corinthians 15:21-22

21 For since death came by a man, the resurrection of the dead also came by a man.

22 For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

Before he became an adult, Jesus experienced childhood just like us.

Luke 2:40

And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.

Jesus didn't wake up one day and magically receive wisdom from God. There was a process of learning and growing in wisdom for him just like there is for us. True wisdom comes from fellowshiping with God and from studying his word.

Proverbs 2:6

For Yahweh gives Wisdom, from his mouth comes forth knowledge and discernment.

James 1:5

But if any of you lacks wisdom, ask God for it, who gives to everyone generously and without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

In session 4 we talked about how important the Bible is. In 2 Timothy 3:16 it refers to all scripture as being God-breathed. From an early age, there's evidence that Jesus Christ spent much time studying and memorizing the scriptures. There's a record in Luke Chapter 2 that describes an incident involving Jesus when he was 12 years old. He was walking home from Jerusalem with his parents when they realized he was gone! They went looking for him.

Luke 2:46

And it came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.

Notice that Jesus was listening to them. One of the effective ways we can learn the Word of God is to humbly listen to teachers of the Bible. However, we are not to blindly believe everything they tell us. Even at the age of twelve, Jesus was asking questions about what they were teaching.

Luke 2:47

And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

These top-of-the-line authorities in the scriptures could hardly believe that this twelve-year-old kid could not only quote scriptures to them, but he had a great understanding as to their meaning. Amazingly, at this early age, Jesus was answering questions posed by these high-end scholars.

One thing I noticed when I was spending time in Kenya and Uganda is that many of these people cannot afford to purchase a Bible. One of my goals when I travel to countries such as this is to give Bibles to people in their native language. Studying the scriptures was crucial to the development of Jesus Christ as part of his preparation for his future ministry where he would be challenged beyond comprehension. Knowledge of the scriptures is vital to the spiritual growth and development of every Christian.

Matthew 4:4 says that we are not to live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. In Matthew chapter 4, each time Jesus was tempted by the Devil he responded to those temptations by quoting scripture. This illustrates how important it is that we study the Bible and hide the words from it into our heart.

Another thing Jesus Christ disciplined himself to do was to spend time alone with his Father God in prayer.

Mark 1:32-33

32 And when evening came, after the sun had set, they began to bring to him everyone who was sick and those who were afflicted by demons.

33 And the whole city was gathered together at the door.

Jesus Christ was a busy person! He was constantly being visited by people with physical, emotional and spiritual needs. This verse says that the whole city was at his door! And yet he didn't allow his busy schedule to get in the way of doing what was very important to him, which was spending time alone with his Father.

Mark 1:35

And in the morning, a great while before day, he got up and went out and departed into a solitary place and prayed there.

The disciples of Jesus didn't understand this priority of his.

Mark 1:36-37

*36 And Simon and those who were with him followed after him,
37 and they found him and say to him, "Everyone is looking for you."*

I see a hint of a lecture from his followers. They were implying to Jesus that there was no time to pray. There was too much work to be done! We mustn't allow a busy schedule to interfere with the quiet time that we need to spend with God our Father and with our Lord Jesus Christ in prayer every day. One of the reasons this fellowship time is so important is to allow God to direct our heart as to what we need to be doing each day.

Mark 1:38-39

*38 And he says to them, "Let's go somewhere else, into the nearby towns, so that I can preach there also, for that is why I came."
39 And he went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out demons.*

We have learned from verses 33 and 37 that there was still a great need in the city where Jesus was at this time. Remember that the whole city was at his door? From a five senses point of view, continuing to minister in that same city seemed like the right thing to do. But that was not the direction he received. It was likely during that quiet time with the Father where Jesus learned God's desire, which was to move on to nearby towns. When we listen to God's voice, we make the right decision. When we listen to the voice of the crowd it can lead to wrong decisions.

One of the hardest things we have to deal with in our relationship with God is to realize that our will is not God's will and then to choose to put aside our own plans in order to do what God desires for us to do. Jesus was challenged by this is well.

John 5:30

I am not able to do anything on my own. As I hear, I judge. And my judgment is righteous because I do not seek to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.

Have you ever thought about the significance of this verse? Jesus had to suppress his own desires and what he wanted to do with his life so that the

Father's will could be accomplished. It's a natural, human emotion to want to do what *we* want to do. How many times have you heard someone say, "Don't tell me what to do!"? It must have been difficult at times for Jesus to relinquish his own desires and will in order to carry out the plan that his Father had laid before him.

Mark 14:32-33

32 And they come to a place that was named Gethsemane, and he says to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray."

33 And he takes with him Peter and James and John and began to be greatly distressed and troubled.

This word "distressed" comes from the Greek word *ekthambeo* and it means to be struck with terror! The word "troubled" is a translation from *ademoneo* and it means to be full of heaviness. Jesus had a heavy heart. He was filled with terror. Why? Because he knew from the prophecies recorded in the Old Testament scriptures that he was going to have to go through a tremendous amount of torture. Like you and I, he was human, and it terrified him.

Mark 14:34

And he says to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death. Stay here and watch."

Jesus was filled with exceeding sorrow. The prophecies from the Old Testament said that he would be violently punished and then be put to death. Not only did he not want to have to deal with all the pain, he didn't want to die! He loved life!

Notice that Jesus told his disciples to stay here and watch. He didn't ask them to go to sleep, did he?

Mark 14:35-36

35 And he went forward a little and fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible, the hour would pass away from him.

36 And he said, "Abba (Father), all things are possible to you; remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not what I want but what you want."

This incident at Gethsemane is also recorded in Matthew chapter 26 and in Luke chapter 22. It is the only recorded time where Jesus was so perplexed

by what God was asking him to do, he was asking the Father if there was any way this request could be bypassed. I almost get tears in my eyes when I think about what Jesus was going through here. After this intense prayer, Jesus went to check on his disciples.

Mark 14:37-38

37 And he comes and finds them sleeping, and says to Simon Peter, “Are you sleeping? Were you not strong enough to watch one hour?”

38 Watch and pray in order that you do not enter into temptation; indeed, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Jesus was likely frustrated by their lack of commitment during this crucial time in his life. He goes back and he prays to the Father.

Mark 14:39-40

39 And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words.

40 And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him.

After finishing that second prayer, Jesus had still not gotten the answer that he was looking for from his Father regarding a possible way to avoid his future torture and death sentence. He goes back to his disciples and again finds them sleeping. The loneliness that Jesus must have felt. His disciples didn't understand the significance about what was to take place. Only he and the Father knew and understood.

If you are a dedicated servant of our Lord Jesus Christ, there will be times when he is directing you to do something and there may not be anyone else there to stand with you. Even your closest friends and acquaintances may not understand or appreciate what you are about to do. This is because God is speaking to you and not to them. It's your ministry and not theirs. Many may think that you're being foolish or misled. Others may call you crazy. During those moments, we have to draw our strength and courage to move on from God. He is the one who has called us and he is the one who will prosper us as we obey what he is directing us to do. We must listen to the voice of God rather than the voice of the crowd.

Mark 14:41

And he comes the third time and says to them, "Sleep on now, and take your rest, it is enough—the hour has come. Look!, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Jesus made the same request in prayer to his Father for a third time. He was pleading. Was there any possible way for his Father's will to be carried out without him having to be tortured and crucified? After this third time, Jesus is now convinced there is no other way. He is now ready to submit himself to God's plan and allow himself to get arrested. Where is the support from his closest disciples as Jesus now comes to grips with the horrible reality that his fate is upon him? It appears the disciples were more interested in sleep than they were of supporting what he was going through.

Romans 10:9 tells us that when we confess Jesus as our Lord and believe that God raised him from the dead, we receive eternal life. How can it be that simple and easy? Shouldn't we have to work for our salvation?

Ephesians 2:8

For by grace you have been saved through trust, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God,

Salvation is a gift we received freely from God. We do not have to work for it. But that does not mean that a price was not paid. Jesus Christ paid a heavy price to make our salvation possible! Matthew 27:26-31 describes some of the punishment Jesus endured for us. In Isaiah, the result of the beatings Jesus endured were described this way.

Isaiah 52:14

Just as many were astonished at you (his appearance was marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men),

Jesus was beaten so badly that it is doubtful that you would have been able to recognize him anymore. And this all occurred *before* he would get nailed to a cross! When you think of your salvation as being free, don't forget that for one person in this world, it wasn't free. An extremely heavy price was paid.

Romans 8:32

He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up in place of us all, how will he not also, in addition to him, freely give us everything else?

Do you realize how much God loves you? He stood by and watched his only begotten Son go through tremendous punishment and torture. He continued to stand by while Jesus was being nailed to a cross. Would you allow your son to go through something like this, for the sins that someone else had committed?

1 John 4:9

This is how the love of God was revealed among us: that God has sent his only begotten Son into the world so that we could live through him.

This is the real Jesus Christ. Not the lovey-dovey guy who always walked around smiling and saying, “Bless you” to everyone. The real Jesus had to deal with negative circumstances. He was tempted in every way that a human could be tempted in. He fought tooth-and-nail to carry out the will of his Father God, even during the darkest circumstances. Ladies and gentlemen, our God is more than worthy of our trust, our love and our obedience. And Jesus Christ is the man I want to commit in service to as my lord for the rest of my life. How about you?

In the next session we will learn about the authority and privileges we inherited by faith in Jesus Christ at the time of our salvation. Until then remember that God our Father loves you, Jesus Christ loves you, so do I.

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