What Would Jesus Do?

WHOM WE LOVE, WE FOLLOW.
INTRODUCTION

To put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:22-24

Do you remember the old TV show called The Newlywed Game? Three sets of couples competed against each other to see who knew their spouses the best. First, all the husbands went backstage and the wives were asked questions about their men. “If your husband got bad news, he would react in what way? A, B, C, or D.” Those who scored the most points won the game.

What if we were asked to guess what Jesus might like, or how He might act? How well do we really know Him? That’s the purpose of this next series. Why is it important? Because whomever it is we know and worship, we’ll emulate. It’s instinctive. No one wants to be like someone they dislike. The better we know Jesus, the easier to stay on the path of sanctification.

Tomorrow, we’ll begin. How did Jesus relate to those who lived with shame? How did He relate to imperfect disciples? How did He function in relationship with His Father, or with His enemy, the devil?

What do you think will be your reaction to Jesus’ interactions with certain people? Will you love Him more, or less, or not care? And how will you and I change as a result of walking alongside Him in review?

Not ironically, this takes us to what it means to be yoked to Christ. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:29

I am praying for us ~ that God will open our eyes to see, believe, and worship. We will be astonished by You, Jesus. And warmed, convicted, inspired, perhaps even stumble. Give us grace for this journey. In Jesus’ name, Amen
I. THE SHAMED

Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.” John 4:10

How did Jesus relate to The Shamed?

So I try to connect with someone who lives with crippling shame? I read the Gospels with wonder when I see that Jesus knew just what to do. He did the will of the Father by removing shame and restoring honor. “I [God] will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.” Zeph. 3:19  Peter, well acquainted with shame after denying Jesus, wrote  “Whoever believes in him [Jesus] will not be put to shame. So the honor is for you who believe.”  I Peter 2:6-7

Jesus built bridges of honor as he related to those who were alienated by shame. He reached out to the woman of Samaria and established honor by crossing two lines of bigotry; gender bias and racial discrimination. His final act of bestowing honor was to ultimately reveal that He was the Messiah, His first public admission.

Jesus built another bridge of honor with the woman caught in adultery. Her accusers cited the Law of Moses. They wanted her stoned. Jesus was silent, curiously writing something in the dirt, giving everyone moments of personal reflection. The accusers went silent and the sound of stones hitting the ground could be heard. Ultimately, he offered the woman mercy and gave her honor that was undeserved. It was reckless mercy to the Pharisees.

Those who suffer most from shame are the ones who are scared to tell us their stories. They have probably experienced bias. They feel unclean, unworthy, and cursed. I cannot tell them about Jesus without treating them without prejudice. I must build a bridge of honor by extending unconditional love. This does not mean tolerance and overlooking evil. It means being like God who loves the sinner but hates their sin. The ones in shame, even undeserved shame, look for confirmations of their unworthiness in the eyes of others. (I did it for years!) And how well I know, from personal experience, that if we come preaching, attempting to fix them with scripture ~ and all with an attitude of being above them, shame is deepened and honor becomes more elusive. Legalism cements shame.
I remember today that, before salvation, I was covered in my own shame and sin. I was unworthy and yet Jesus extended mercy to me. As I see one bent over under the yoke of shame, I am humbled by the memory of my own deliverance. Tragically, the ones most bowed down with shame don’t often come through church doors. They won’t run toward those they fear will further condemn them.

So, who is near me crippled with shame? Time for me to take a step back and let go of unsuccessful methodology. I ask Jesus to give me His heart for that person. I ask Him how I should build a bridge as artfully as He did. I may not even need words. Like Jesus who sat on the edge of the well in Samaria, He just showed up and began a conversation about life, not religion. Both the Samaritan woman and the woman caught in adultery – ultimately lifted their gaze to behold the love of God.

Someone near me, too scared to look at Jesus, just might get the courage if they can see His love in my eyes first. I must always build the bridge of friendship and honor strong enough to support the truth.
II. THE ARROGANT

*God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong. I Cor. 1:27*

How did Jesus relate to The Arrogant?

*There are people who say, in response to everything you say, “I know.” It’s a poor relational skill as it kills any desire to have a conversation with them. Their need to know it all drives their behavior in every single relationship. This person is usually very vocal in meetings and controlling within a committee. It doesn’t take long for him/her to get under everyone’s skin. The shy person withdraws and avoids them if possible. The extrovert might fall into the temptation to argue and correct them. Neither response is productive nor is it like Jesus.*

Jesus did not avoid arrogant people nor did He react to them by sinning in His heart. The Pharisees get a bad wrap for collectively being on Jesus’ bad list. Not true. I can forget that Jesus grew up in synagogues and was constantly in the company of Pharisees and Sadducees. When He was twelve, He stayed in the temple to be in their company. And when He was in active ministry for the last three years of His life, He usually went where they were. Many were close-minded but many also believed. *Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, “This man is not from God because He does not keep the Sabbath.” But others were saying, “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” And there was a division among them. John 9:16*

How did Jesus relate to them?

**He exposed their hearts.** The strongest language Jesus ever used was directed against them. He said they were hypocrites not practicing what they preached (Matthew 23:1-5). In their zeal to keep their rules, they were breaking God's law.

**He recited the scriptures.** He didn’t appear to say, “Well, you think this but I think that.” He told them they didn’t know God. *So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, “He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. John 7:28*
He extended an invitation to his enemies to believe. “If anyone, any Pharisee, any chief priest, any officer trying to arrest me, any offended person—if anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.” John 7:37

Do you remember when Jesus looked out over this city and cried, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!” Matt. 23:37

My heart is challenged this morning because I realize that Jesus loved them. Even the spiteful, hateful, and arrogant. He, the great Sower, sowed the seed and knew that there would be a harvest even among some who were out to kill Him.

The apostle Paul, a most Pharisee of the Pharisees was converted. Nicodemus stood up for Jesus before the council and prepared Jesus’ body for burial. Joseph of Arimathea, part of the Sanhedrin, had the guts to ask Pilate for Jesus’ body. And Gamaliel, Paul’s Rabbi and mentor, stood up to the council on behalf of the Apostles.

Jesus loved sinners but condoned only faith. He loved the scriptures and used them to correct error but came to serve even the Pharisees rather than be served. He came to love rather than to be loved.
III. THE ACCUSED

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. Rev. 12:10

How does Jesus relate to The Accused

His enemy, Satan, comes to God to accuse me. He’s relentless. What is the progression of events?

• He tempts me to sin and I buy his idea. I indulge and then he has plenty with which to charge me.

• He reports my sin to God and demands that the sentence of the law for that crime be carried out.

• When Satan comes to accuse me, he meets Jesus, my Priest and Mediator. I picture Jesus dressed like a priest. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. Hebrews 4:14

• How does Jesus respond to the accusations? He cries, “She’s forgiven! She’s justified!”

Satan accuses me in two places; before the throne and to me directly. If I forget that I am forgiven and justified, and forget about that meeting between Satan and Jesus, I’ll be vulnerable in the presence of condemnation. I have to remember that he will mimic the voice of my conscience. He knows that I want to please Jesus and avoid sin. He knows that I take my conscience seriously ~ so how insidious for him to speak to me in a way that sounds like a guilty conscience.

Here are some examples from personal experience.
THE ACCUSED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SATAN’S VOICE ON AN ISSUE</th>
<th>GOD’S VOICE ON AN ISSUE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You should read your Bible more. What kind of Christian are you!</td>
<td>Come home! I really miss you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your prayer life stinks!</td>
<td>I hope you’ll talk with me. I’m the perfect listener and I have so much to tell you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You failed again? God is so disappointed in you.</td>
<td>I paid for your sins; past, present, and future. Today is a clean slate. It’s my gift to you. Live forgiven!</td>
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What is my strategy for overcoming the accusations of Satan? **The blood of the Lamb and the word of my testimony.** I ask God for a hedge of protection, a blood shield, between the accuser and me. Then, I speak up and state my status as God’s child.

*Oh Jesus, I am forgiven, I’ve been bought with the blood of Christ, I am holy in Your eyes. I say to my enemy, ‘Be gone’! Amen*
Follow me. Matthew 4:19

How does Jesus relate to The Disciple? If I am a believer, this question is relevant to me because I am His disciple. How does Jesus think of me in relation to Himself? What can I expect in this sacred relationship? From theological truths about His character to real life interactions in the Gospels, Jesus ~

- **Calls me to something for which I’m unqualified.** Four fishermen became evangelists and teachers. One was a tax collector. The calling is always God-sized because no skill set can achieve supernatural results.
- **Builds the relationship on love and promises of faithfulness.** My relationship with Him began with forgiveness, love and acceptance, followed by promises that won’t ever be broken. This love has turned into fuel for my calling and His promises give me boldness.
- **Centers the His teaching on faith-growing and character development.** Each life lesson at the feet of Jesus grows my faith and makes me more like Him. When I’ve mastered one skill, there are always bigger ones to come. The faith tests get more difficult but infinitely more rewarding.
- **Requires of me a good faith effort, not perfection.** As Kevin DeYoung reminded an audience recently, Jesus is aware of my present maturation level and is pleased with my best at whatever stage I am in my journey. He is my encourager, no longer my judge.
- **Extends mercy before I sin.** Jesus told Peter that he would deny him three times. When Peter was visibly shaken, Jesus told him not to be worried and upset but to believe God. There was mercy before the sin. He didn’t tell Peter the specifics of how he would deny him nor did He didn’t show him how to avoid it. I am forgiven in the past, in the present, and in the future. I’m justified and there is abundant mercy.
- **Forgives without reservation.** Jesus forgives no matter how many times I say I’m sorry. I will have times of failure in the relationship. That’s inevitable. But not one sin or mistake will qualify as ‘unforgivable’.
• *Allows testing to reveal our flaws.* Jesus was tested in the wilderness. His disciples are tested, too. It develops in me endurance, discernment, and it equips me with strategy in my use of the scriptures.

• *Is always out front ~ showing me the way home.* I’m in the yoke with Jesus. He’s right there, a little in front, bearing the weight and responsibility for my needs. I am assured that the path we travel together leads me safely home.
When the wine ran out, Jesus’ mother told Him, “They don’t have any wine.” “What has this concern of yours to do with Me, woman?” Jesus asked. “My hour has not yet come.”

How did Jesus relate to His Own Family?

You know what it is to have access to someone else’s ear so that you can plead someone else’s case, right? That is what is happening here. Jesus and His mother were guests at a wedding and the host ran out of wine. Mary knew Jesus could do something and presumed upon His divinity. But Jesus exalts his sonship to His Father above his sonship to his mother. Jesus showed allegiance to God’s will over His mother’s will. He felt it necessary to make the point that no physical relationship on earth controlled him and His family would have no special advantage.

How about James, the half-brother of Jesus? He grew up in the same household yet failed to recognize his brother’s divine nature. Family ties and sibling issues obscured his vision. (Often, what is right under our noses is veiled to us.) I’m sure that as James grew older, he was haunted by a certain conversation he had with Jesus’ as his brother’s public ministry was about to begin. “If you want to be known publicly,” James said, “then go to Jerusalem to the Feast of Booths. Do your works there so that your notoriety grows.” The undertone of slick marketing was not lost on the Son of God. It wasn’t until after Jesus death and resurrection that James’ spiritual eyes were opened.

Jesus had to work against the assumption of His day that His family of origin had an inside track of influence. Recall the time in Luke 11 that a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to Jesus. ‘Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed! But he said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”
Or another time, in Mark 3, the people called out to him while he was speaking in a house: “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.’ And he answered them, ‘Who are my mother and my brothers?’ And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers!’ Followers, not family, have a saving relationship with Jesus.

If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:26 (Hate means preference.) But this is not an easy way to live.

Families struggle with issues of loyalty where faith is concerned. If all are not believers, there’s no friction like kingdom friction. The clash between God’s kingdom and Satan’s kingdom can bring about declared war inside the family unit. The only One who has ultimate rights to my life is the One who created me. My love and loyalty to my family is always trumped by my allegiance to my new Father.
VI. HIS ENEMY

*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 1 John 3:8*

How did Jesus relate to **His enemy**?

Today’s scripture is a thought provoking verse ~ that Jesus came to earth to destroy the works of the devil. Wait, didn’t he come to die to redeem mankind? Yes. But God’s over-arching mission was that the works of the devil might be destroyed through Jesus’ incarnation, through His survival as a toddler under Herod’s murderous rampage, through the crucifixion of the innocent Lamb, and through His resurrection unto glory. Throughout His ministry, Jesus didn’t ignore His enemy. He engaged him by often imposing limits on his freedom. (*“Do this, not that, go here, not there. Be quiet!”*) He engaged him, too, by the relentless deliverance of people from sickness and demon possession.

And, Jesus engaged Satan in the desert ~ ever giving us a template for how to handle temptation. (Luke 4) Jesus looked behind Satan’s smokescreen, identified the real intent, and quoted appropriate scripture.

- **Satan said, “If you are the son of God, turn this stone to bread.”** Behind the smokescreen was ~ *“Prove you are God and fill your stomach now.”* The issue was not hunger but getting Jesus to do something God didn’t tell him to do.

- **Satan said, “I’ll give you all this authority and its glory.”** Behind the smokescreen was ~ *“Waiting is hard and I’ll give you kingly rule early if you worship me.”* Satan’s desire for worship was what originally caused him to defect from his place in heaven.

- **Satan said, “Throw yourself down and see if angels will take care of you.”** Behind the smokescreen ~ *“Let’s just see if God takes care of you.”* This time it was Satan who quoted scripture, *“For He shall give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.” Psalm 91:11* Jesus was savvy and quoted Deut. 6:16 back at him. *“You shall not test the Lord your God.”* What did that mean? ‘Testing the Lord your God’ means to doubt God’s care and goodness.
There are numerous ways for me to deal with my enemy as well. When I obey God, trust God, step out in faith, and when I believe His Word over my own instincts, all of these destroy the works of the devil. In intercessory warfare, when I rise up to use my authority in scripture, limits are placed on Satan’s activity once again. And when I ask God for the spiritual eyesight to see behind the smokescreen of each temptation so that I can quote appropriate scripture back at him, his works are destroyed.

*The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son.*

*I John 5:10*
The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son.  I John 5:10

How did Jesus relate to His Father? He taught each of us how to live as a child of God. He was a Son; I am a daughter. If I want to know what God is like and how to live in relationship to Him, I watch Jesus. This is what it looked like.

• Jesus was completely submissive to His Father. He waited for the timing of His call into ministry. He made no autonomous decisions. The Son is able to do nothing of His own accord; but the Son is able to do only what He sees His Father doing. Jn. 5:19 So, Jesus surprises me in His choices. He chose only one man to heal at the at pool of Bethesda though many wanted it. The rich young ruler went away from Him sad but Jesus didn’t go after him. Jesus made no wasted steps.

• Jesus was one with His Father. I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. John 17:20 This concept is repeated over and over again in John 17 – his long last heartfelt desire expressed in prayer. It must be MORE than important. What does it mean to be ONE with Jesus, as He is ONE with His Father?

I remember flying from New England to Atlanta some time ago. It was turbulent, too hard to read and even music didn’t appeal. I finally closed my eyes and said, “Lord, teach me something powerful that I do not know.” I began to pray into that – and God gave me this picture. I saw the Spirit of God move into my being – like He did when I was 7 yrs. old. His Spirit moved inside. Then He let me see myself in Him – like a puzzle piece that He clicked in place inside His heart. I could see the edges of me, as a puzzle piece, begin to get fuzzy…like the edges were dissolving and soon, I was no longer definable. I had melted into Jesus. This is what is to think, and act, and feel – as one.
Jesus destiny of the cross never eroded His trust in His Father.

Did Jesus have memory of His intimacy with the Father? Did He remember the Garden and the fall? Did he feel the urgency of the ages in needing to redeem mankind? Or did God subject his mind/memory to finite time just as we live? I’m inclined to think that way. Whatever Jesus seemed to know about history, about Abraham and about the Torah, He knew from studying.

*Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.*

*Hebrews 5:8*  He probably did not have all the details about his coming crucifixion. He knew He was born for this purpose, He trusted, He obeyed – and the seeming cruelty of God’s path for Him didn’t cause Jesus to stumble in relationship with His Father. Can you imagine how He felt when He studied Isaiah 53 and other prophetic passages? He thought, “*This is talking about me. This will happen to me.*”

*I have pined to know the future, at times. I think that it would benefit, that I could prepare for what’s coming. You have not given me that but I am equipped with everything I need. You surround me with Your promises and they are sure.*  
*In Jesus’ name, Amen*
You’ve probably said, “If only Jesus would come and tell me what to do!” I have. I reason that if I just knew what it was, I could easily go do it. I said that just last week to my husband.

“What would Jesus do?” has become a Christian idiom. Rubber bracelets were made to wear on our wrist, ever a reminder to consider Him before making decisions. The good news is ~ in so many instances ~ we do know what He did. We see him with the shamed. He restored their honor. We see Him with the disciples. He was a patient teacher. We see Him with His family. He made them accountable to God. We see Him with His enemy. He discerned the smokescreen because Satan is a liar. In many of these interactions, a character trait of Jesus was revealed, or a pattern of behavior established. We can ask God for wisdom to interpret it for our particular situations. He promises He’ll answer. He gives liberally.

Christine

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