


By DR. DANN SPADER

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# THE HUMANITY *of* JESUS



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THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF SONLIFE, we have advocated that Christ not only gave us the message of the Gospels, but He also gave us the method of creating a movement of multiplication.

Understanding Christ's life and ministry is foundational to understanding our life and ministry. You need a strong Christology, or you'll end up with a distorted ecclesiology. The Gospels show us Christ's life and how to grow a healthy Great Commission ministry. Acts shows us how to multiply that ministry. The Epistles show us how to deepen and maintain that ministry long-term.

*"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ," is Paul's conviction (1 Cor. 11:1).*

*"Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps," challenges Peter (1 Pet. 2:21).*

*"Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did," claims John (1 John 2:6).*

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As you intensely study Christ's life you will find that there are 410 commands or imperatives in the Gospels. All but two are recorded in the last eighteen months of Jesus' ministry. During His first two years of ministry, Jesus gives only these commands to His followers:

- To repent (Mark 1:15; Matt. 4:17)
- To follow (John 1:43; Mark 1:17, 2:14; Matt. 4:19)

Why? Jesus knew that before His disciples could do ministry with the right motives, they would have to know who He was. A proper understanding of who Jesus is was foundational to all growth and maturity in the faith. Studying the humanity of Jesus forced me to look at the "real Jesus" of the New Testament in a fresh new way.

Understanding the proper concept of Christ was the theme of one of our Disciplemaking conferences. Christian researcher David Barret said that in 1996 there were 65,571 books written about Jesus. Over 50,000 of these books had "Jesus" in their titles. In 1996 almost 1,500 new "Jesus" books came off the press—that's four a day. Indeed, it is a very broad subject.

This paper will focus on the fact that Jesus was fully God and fully man. Theologians call this the "hypostatic union." I want to address the critical question: *What does it mean to me that Jesus was fully human?*

A few summers ago my family and I went on a vacation to Florida and I pulled a book off my shelf that I had been given years before, *Jesus: An Interview Across Time*, by Jerry Hodges. This book is a fictitious interview across time, looking at the humanity of Jesus. While not fully agreeing with all of the book, I have to admit it caused me to look at Jesus in a new, powerfully fresh way. This caused me to begin over 200+ hours of study into the humanity of Jesus. This paper and the message at our Disciplemaking Conference are the culmination of that study.

The book begins in a fictitious, yet biblically intense, interview with Jesus. Let me paraphrase how the book began as an opening introduction to this study.

*When did You first discover that You were the Messiah?*

Well, I was about ten years old. My mother had already concluded that she would let My Father show me who I was.

*You mean Joseph?*

No, I mean My Father in Heaven. Joseph was My stepfather.

*How did God show You that You were the Messiah? Did He appear to You personally with His angels in full glory?*

Oh no, that would have changed part of His perfect plan! If God would have appeared directly to Me, I wouldn't have been human like you. I would know nothing about studying the Scriptures, trusting Him and living by faith. How could I teach you about faith if I hadn't experienced it Myself? Instead, My Father slowly revealed to Me who I was through His Word. You see, by this time, I had grown to love the Scriptures. Like all Jewish boys, we would go to the synagogue and regularly study the Scripture.

I had a very sensitive spirit and even as a young boy experienced a lot of suffering and rejection. My peers in our small community often made fun of Me saying, "He doesn't know who His father is. . . . He doesn't know who His Father is." Even the adults ridiculed Me, between My home and the synagogues were the town gate, where the businessmen gathered. The local drinking establishment was also there. Occasionally, as I walked to the synagogue, I would hear the snide comments of some of the men gathered at the gate. But the men at what you would call the "bar" were the worst of all. They made up a song about Me where they would guess who My father was and name about five or six despicable

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characters. It became a game each day to add another name to the chorus, which they would sing as I passed by, and finally all of them would laugh. Every day I was forced to think: “I’m a bastard.” That’s who they were telling Me I was.

It got so bad that even My half-brothers became ashamed of Me and harassed Me. James, who later wrote a New Testament book about hypocrisy and the power of the tongue, treated Me quite badly. Jude, My other half-brother, also harassed Me—he too later wrote a book about heretics and those who lack faith.

As a result, I began to study and love the story of Joseph. As a young man, he was betrayed by his brothers and sold into slavery. Joseph helped Me to learn to trust My Father even in tough times. As I studied about David, who at a young age displayed great courage in challenging Goliath, I gained comfort in God’s provision.

*You mean at first You read the Scriptures to find comfort and not to find out about the Messiah?*

As a Jew, there was always talk about the Messiah because we were an oppressed people. I was interested in the coming Messiah and longed for Him, but I didn’t initially see how He particularly related to Me. Then one day I “accidentally” found out who I was.

One night, I had come to my lowest point. I didn’t think I could take the drunkards singing that song about Me one more time. I decided, like in the Old Testament, to put on sackcloth and ashes as a sign of My mourning. However, this just made matters worse. My stepdad, Joseph, encouraged Me to stop.

Then the next day I “coincidentally” was reading the 69th Psalm, which as a Messianic Psalm was an exact description of what had just happened to Me: “shame covers my face. I am a foreigner to my own family, a stranger to my own mother’s children. . . . When I weep and fast, I must endure scorn; when I put on sackcloth, people make sport of me. Those who sit at the gate mock me, and I am the song of drunkards” (Ps. 69:7–8,10–12).

This Messianic Psalm was an exact description of what I had just experienced. I became very curious and began to ask questions. One time, at the age of twelve, I spent three days in the Temple asking questions and listening to the leaders’ answers. I discovered that the Messiah was to be from Galilee—I was from Galilee. He was to be of the tribe of Judah—I was of the tribe of Judah. He was to be of the city of David, Bethlehem—I was born in Bethlehem. It was interesting to Me that the Messiah and I would be born in the same place, from the same tribe and the same neighborhood.

However, a short time later, I came across another prophecy that stated the Messiah would come out of Egypt. That struck Me as strange—an Israelite to be born in Bethlehem and from Galilee—how could He also be from Egypt?

A week later—you’ll see how God, the Master Director, blends in circumstances—My mother was sorting out the contents of an old trunk and there on the floor was a little cloth I had never seen before with an Egyptian design on it. I asked her, “Where’d we get this?” and she said, “In Egypt.” “In Egypt!” I stammered. She told Me that she and My father had not wanted to frighten Me, but just after I was born was a dangerous time for Jewish boys. Herod, the Roman Governor, had heard that the Messiah had been born and was executing all male children two years old and younger. She and Joseph had moved to Egypt to be safe for a couple of years. I began to understand that all the Scriptures were speaking about Me as the Messiah. This is when I began to intensely study them to learn about My Father’s plan for My life.

Throughout this fascinating book, Hodges portrays the God-man, Jesus, who “grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52).

- He portrayed a human Jesus who demonstrated reverent submission (Heb. 5:7).
- He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears (Heb. 5:7).
- He learned obedience from what He suffered (Heb. 5:8).
- He shared in our humanity (Heb. 2:14).
- He was made like us in every way (Heb. 2:17).
- He suffered when He was tempted (Heb. 2:18).
- He became obedient unto death, even death on a cross (Phil. 2:8).

## Jesus Was Fully God

With a strong and deep conviction that Jesus was fully God, I began to look at the fully human aspect of Jesus. But before I go any further, let me quickly establish His deity. Jesus clearly claimed to be equal with His Father. In John 14:9, Jesus said that to see Him was to see the Father. Jesus also claimed to exist prior to His incarnation. John 8:58 states, “Very truly I tell you . . . before Abraham was born, I am.” Some would argue that this statement could be translated, “Before Abraham came into being, I continuously existed” (*Expositors Bible Commentary*). The Jews recognized the phrase “I am” as one referring to the name of God from the Old Testament (Exodus 3:14) and the theistic proclamations in the latter part of Isaiah.

Jesus clearly claimed to be God, received worship as God, and was crucified because of His claims. In John 5:17–18, one of the strongest New Testament passages arguing for His deity, Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.” For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill Him. Not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father, **making Himself equal to God**. This was clearly understood by the Jews as they later came after Him, saying, “you, a mere man, **claim to be God**” (John 10:33).

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Philippians 2:5 restates this by saying, “Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.” Colossians 2:9 clearly says it this way, “**For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.**” Jesus was fully God!

### Was Jesus Fully Human?

At the same time, as you study Scripture, it is easy to establish the truth that Jesus was fully human. Hebrews 2:17 tells us He was like us in all ways. Other passages in the life of Jesus demonstrate this truth. Some of them are:

- He was conceived (Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:31).
- He was born (Matt. 1:25, 2:2; Luke 2:7, 11).
- He partook of our flesh and blood (John 1:14; Heb. 2:14).
- He was circumcised (Luke 2:21).
- He increased in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:52).
- He wept (Luke 19:41; John 11:35).
- He hungered (Matt. 4:2, 21:18).
- He thirsted (John 4:7, 19:28).
- He slept (Matt. 8:24; Mark 4:38).
- He became weary (John 4:6).
- He was a man of sorrows (Isa. 53:3–4; Luke 22:44; John 11:33, 12:27).
- He was beaten (Matt. 26:67; Luke 22:64).
- He endured indignities (Luke 23:11).
- He was scourged (Matt. 27:26; John 19:1).
- He was nailed to the cross (Luke 23:33; Ps. 22:16).
- He died (John 19:30).
- He was pierced in His side (John 19:34).
- He was buried (Matt. 27:59–60; Mark 15:46).
- He was resurrected (Acts 3:15; 2 Tim. 2:8).
- He shared in our humanity, made like us in every way (Heb. 2:14, 17).
- He was made in human likeness (Phil. 2:7).

It is quickly clear as one reads the New Testament that Jesus shared in our humanity and was like us in all ways (except for our sinfulness).

### Why Did Jesus Become Fully Human?

In a quick and yet profound way, Hebrews 2 gives us why Christ needed to be fully human. In Hebrews 1, the emphasis is upon Jesus’ deity, but in Chapter 2 the emphasis shifts to His humanity.

When God became flesh and dwelt among us, becoming flesh was not a handicap or a mark of inferiority, but a conscious choice on God’s part to become that God-man (a second Adam) from Heaven (1 Cor. 15:47). He was God taking on flesh. As a result, Christ became the author and perfecter of our faith. In Hebrews 2, the writer list four results of His humanity.

#### A. His humanity enabled Jesus to regain man’s lost dominion (Heb. 2:5–9).

Man once had dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26–28; Ps. 8:4–6) but lost that dominion as a result of the fall (Heb. 2:8). Jesus, by becoming man and suffering death, was crowned with glory and honor—He regained what man once had and lost. Christ, now at the right hand of God rules over all (Eph. 1:20–22) and we together with Him (Eph. 2:4–6) will reign (Rev. 2:26–27, 3:21).

#### B. His humanity enabled Jesus to bring many sons to glory (Heb. 2:10–13).

By Christ’s suffering and death, Jesus became the author of our salvation (Heb. 2:10). He made us holy through His perfect holiness and is not ashamed to call us brothers in His family. He regained for us the life from above that man had lost.

#### C. His humanity enabled Jesus to disarm Satan and deliver us from the fear of death and purchase salvation for us (Heb. 2:14–16).

By His death and resurrection Jesus “destroyed” the devil (Heb. 2:14)! Satan once *had* the power of death, but no more (Rom. 8:37–39).

#### D. His humanity enabled Jesus to be a sympathetic High Priest (Heb. 2:17–18).

Because Jesus was appointed and sent by God (Heb. 5:1) and made like us in every way, He became a faithful and merciful High Priest (Heb. 2:17). He was tempted in every way, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15), and thus is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and going astray (Heb. 5:2). Because of this we can go before His throne with confidence to receive mercy and find grace to help in our time of need (Heb. 4:16).

### How Did Christ Become Fully Human?

In what is called the Kenosis Passage, Philippians 2:5–11 gives us a glimpse into how this hypostatic union came about. The Greek word “morphe,” which means “nature” or “substance,” is used in verses 6 and 7. Verse 6 refers to the nature of God and verse 7 refers to the nature of man. This Jesus, “being in the very nature [morphe] God did not regard equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing, taking the very nature [morphe] of a servant, being made in human likeness.”

In considering this hypostatic union, Charles Ryrie writes, “This concept of the union of the divine and human natures in one person is probably one of the most difficult concepts to comprehend in theology” (250).

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He concludes that every major theological heresy can in one way or another be traced to a distorted or faulty view of this hypostatic union. This is important!

To understand this issue, we must look back at church history to understand how this doctrine developed. There were five major challenges to the doctrine of Jesus being fully God and fully man.

### 1. Ebionism: Denial of the Divinity of Jesus

One of the earliest, and in some ways, simplest of misconceptions about Jesus was a movement known as Ebionism. They denied the divinity of Jesus. Among the new converts to Christianity were a number of Jews. Judaism held to a strong monotheism. Initially, belief in the humanity and deity of Jesus seemed very polytheistic to the new converts. Justyn Martyr (ca. 100–165) spoke of two types of Ebionites, as did Eusebius (ca. 260–340).

### 2. Docetism: Denial of the Humanity of Jesus

Docetism, which denied the humanity of Jesus, was a more formidable threat to early orthodox Christianity. Docetism was the belief that Jesus was not genuinely human, that He merely “seemed” or “appeared” to possess human nature. This teaching arose very early and was probably the object of the Apostles’ rebuttal in 1 John. Gnosticism found its roots in this school of thought. Ignatius early on fought this way of thinking, insisting that Jesus “was really born, and ate, and drank, was really persecuted by Pontius Pilate, was really crucified and died, and really rose from the dead” (Ignatius, Epistle to the Trallians, 9).

### 3. Arianism: Denial of the Full Divinity of Jesus

Soon to follow was Arianism. This doctrine denied the full divinity of Jesus. This problem found its root in understanding of the Trinity. Their conclusion was that Jesus could not have been of the same nature as His Father and thus had to be created by the Father as first born of many creations. Arianism made Jesus more than human, but less than fully God. The Council of Nicea in 325, called by Alexander, condemned Arianism; however, the debate continued for years. Athanasius (ca. 293–373) became the major spokesman against Arianism.

### 4. Apollinarianism: Denial of the Full Humanity of Jesus

On the other side of the spectrum, came Apollinarianism, which denied the full humanity of Jesus. This view held that Christ had just one nature and that nature was predominantly divine. Jesus was not really a man but only appeared to be such. This view was quickly condemned by Orthodoxy at the Council of Rome in A.D. 377 because it undermined the complete effectiveness of Christ’s salvation. The most famous phrase in the refutation of Apollinarianism was that of Gregory of Nazianzus, “What has not been assumed cannot be restored; it is what is united with God that is saved” (Gregory of Nazianzus, Epistles, 101). This view was critical in that if Christ did not assume the whole of human nature, the effectiveness of His redemptive work was undermined.

### 5. Nestorianism: Two Natures and Two Persons

Nestorius complicated this debate by saying that Jesus really had two natures and thus became two separate and distinct persons. Eutychius sought to correct this view by uniting these two natures into one person with a third nature. Both of these views were soundly rejected as a hybrid, neither divine nor human, or as having humanity that was swallowed up or overpowered by divinity. Cyril, on June 7, 431, presented twelve anathemas for these views along with condemning Nestorius.

### Council of Chalcedon: The Orthodox Statement

These challenges were addressed at the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451 with a statement on the deity and humanity of Christ which has stood the test of time. This lengthy response of our church fathers took three basic actions.

1. They reaffirmed the Nicene Creed as expressive of orthodoxy.
2. They rejected both Nestorianism and Eutychinism.
3. Finally, they adopted a statement of their own, which was to be the standard of Christological orthodoxy for many years to come. According to Millard Erickson, in *The Word Became Flesh*, “Thus it not only settled the immediate issues under contention, but also summed up the earlier decisions in one comprehensive statement” (65).

The Chalcedon statement reads:

“We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, one Lord Jesus Christ; the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood: truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [co-essential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the manhood: in all things like unto us without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-Begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably, the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one person [prosopon] and one hypostasis, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and Only-Begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the creed of the holy Fathers has delivered to us” (62–63).

The phrase “two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably” became the defining phrase. In other words, we must attribute to Jesus that He is both fully God and fully man. We must not mingle the human and divine so that we end up with Jesus being neither human nor divine. And, we must not dissect

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Christ so that there are two persons in one being. The phrase “two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably” has stood through the years as the definitive test of orthodoxy from that time until now.

Philip R. Johnson writes, “The fact is that every heresy that has ever surfaced with regard to the Person of Christ either fuses or separates the deity and the humanity of Christ. Chalcedon declared that the two natures can be neither merged nor disconnected. Christ is both God and man. Truly God and truly man.”

Philippians 2 gives us a glimpse of how the Word became flesh and dwelt among us—how God and man were united into this God-man, Jesus.

Verse 6 tells us that Jesus, “who being in the very nature God did not regard equality with God something to be grasped.” Now let me ask you a question: Who is equal to God? The answer to that question can only be what Paul is driving at—only God is equal to God and Jesus was God. But incredibly, we are told in verse 7 that Christ emptied Himself, taking on an aspect like that of a servant! How did God add humanity to His deity? Some would argue that Christ gave up His deity to take on humanity. But that is wrong—Christ didn’t give up His deity—He was fully God and fully man. For Jesus, who was omniscient and omnipresent, something drastic had to happen to become fully human.

Philippians 2:7 tells us what happened, that “he made himself nothing, by taking the very nature of a servant.” God chose to temporarily cloak His deity, to veil it, in order that His humanity could find full expression. By adding humanity, He chose temporarily to restrict the full expression of His deity.

Imagine with me for a moment a king who rules a vast kingdom. This king has everything—servants who wait upon him, a rich wardrobe and vast banquets for every meal. Everything that he desires is brought to him. One day, as he is surveying his kingdom, he observes beggars in the street. He feels pity and wants to help them. The king decides that, to really help these homeless people, he needs to become like them. While still remaining king, retaining every right, authority and all the riches, he takes off his royal garments and puts on the clothes of a beggar. Then he leaves his castle and goes to the streets to live like a beggar. He lives exactly as they live—begging for food and sleeping in the cold streets. People pass by mocking and spitting on him. The king suffers greatly. As king, he can call for his army at any time to retaliate against those people who treat him unjustly. He chooses not to. He cannot do that and fully experience life as a beggar. The homeless can’t call for the royal army to protect them. To fully experience the beggar’s life, he lays aside not his kingdom or kingship, but the use of the rights that are his as king. The king adds a beggar’s life to his royal life.

This is a picture of what the incarnation is all about. Christ, who is eternal God, became flesh and dwelt among us. Though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor. That through Him, we who were poor might become rich.

## What Does It Mean That Jesus Was Fully Human?

Haddon Robinson, in his sermon “The Heresy of Application,” states that most errors in preaching are not made in the exegesis of the text, but in the application of the text to life. With this caution in mind, I want to seek to apply these truths to our lives. I’ve come to four conclusions in studying the hypostatic union.

### Conclusion #1 — Jesus did not dip into His deity to live out His humanity.

If Jesus had used His deity to live out His humanity, He would not have been fully human. He would have been less or more (depending upon your perspective) than human. Instead, He “shared in our humanity” (Heb. 2:14) and “he had to be made like them [his brothers], fully in every way” (Heb. 2:17).

What a profound thought! Jesus, with His sinless nature throughout His earthly life, experienced all of life as we do. He did not utilize His divine power to live out His human life on earth. Jesus was that second Adam, who lived in a world filled by sin, greed, lust, and pride, just like us. And yet He did not sin.

From the first minute of His life, all the way to His last minutes on the cross, Jesus, in reverent submission to His Father, obeyed Him in all aspects! Amazingly, He did this without dipping into His deity to live out that humanity!

To fully understand this is to better understand the temptations of Jesus. In the wilderness, Satan tempted Jesus to use His deity to turn stones into bread to meet His personal needs. Jesus resisted, saying, “man does not live by bread alone.” Peter in Matthew 16 becomes a major stumbling block to Jesus when he suggests Jesus doesn’t need to go to the cross. Jesus then tells His disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Matt 16:24).

At this point, most people began to question this concept and say, “But what about . . . ?” Let’s look at those “what about” issues. I’ve listed three:

#### 1. What about Nathanael?

*“ ‘How do you know me?’ Nathanael asked. Jesus answered ‘I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you’ ” (John 1:48).*

Doesn’t this statement by Jesus prove His divinity? Surely that proved He used His supernatural powers of deity! Not necessarily. Remember that Jesus grew up in the area where Nathanael lived. He could have easily seen Nathanael on several other occasions under the fig tree before Philip called him. Or perhaps the Spirit of God again showed Jesus what He was doing (John 5:20). This was a work of the Spirit, which is also promised to guide us into all truth and to show us what the Father is doing (John 16:13). Or Jesus could have seen him earlier that day sitting under the fig tree. There could be a number of explanations outside of Jesus using His divinity.

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## 2. What about His miracles?

Surely Christ's miracles are proof that Jesus used His deity. Jesus could not have done all of His miracles without using His divine powers, right? Not necessarily. They are proof that He is the Christ sent from His Father (John 10:25) but Jesus in His own words tells us that He did nothing in and of Himself—everything He did was done through His Father and in submission to His Father's desires.

Let's look at a few of Jesus' own words (*italics mine*):

- "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing *by himself*; he can do only what he sees his Father doing" (John 5:19).
- "*By myself I can do nothing . . . I seek not to please myself but him who sent me*" (John 5:30).
- "*Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father*, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me" (John 6:57).
- "*My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me*" (John 7:16).
- "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that *I do nothing on my own . . . for I always do what pleases him*" (John 8:28–29).
- "The miracles I do *in my Father's name* testify about me" (John 10:25).
- "I have shown you many good works *from the Father*" (John 10:32).
- "*For I did not speak on my own*, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. . . . So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say" (John 12:49–50).
- "*The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.* Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves" (John 14:10–11).
- "Now they know that everything you have given me *comes from you*" (John 17:7).
- "*He could not do any miracles there*, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith" (Mark 6:5–6).

Jesus, as that second Adam, in reverent submission to His Father, became a conduit of the power of His Father flowing through Him, as everything He did was done in acknowledgment of His Father's work. In the same way, we find Jesus saying to us—just as my Father has sent me, so send I you. Just as Jesus modeled total dependence, He then told us in John 15:5 "apart from me you can do nothing."

The Apostles in the Book of Acts followed Christ's example by acknowledging every miracle as coming only from God's working through them.

- "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).
- "Then Peter said, 'Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk' " (Acts 3:6).
- "When Peter saw this, he said to them: 'Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?' " (Acts 3:12).

## 3. What about His knowledge?

Didn't Jesus know all things? He knew things before they happened—doesn't that prove He used His deity to live out His humanity? Not necessarily. Eleven different times in the Gospels it said that Jesus "knew" something that others did not seem to know. On five occasions He "knew" people's thoughts:

- "But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, 'It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons.' Jesus knew their thoughts" (Matt. 12:24–25).
- "Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 'Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?' Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts" (Mark 2:6–8; also see Luke 5:22).
- "The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. But Jesus knew what they were thinking" (Luke 6:7–8).
- "Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven. Jesus knew their thoughts" (Luke 11:16–17).

Do these occurrences mean that He used His divinity to know their thoughts? Couldn't His Father have revealed their thoughts to Him? Perhaps He sensed them in the countenance of their faces or the posture of their bodies. Doesn't Proverbs say that the Lord takes the upright into His confidence (Prov. 3:32)? Amos 3:7 tells us that the "Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants." Surely the Spirit of God can give a discerning edge to know men's hearts.

On three occasions, it says that Jesus "knew all people" (John 2:23–24) or "knew their hypocrisy" (Mark 12:15). Couldn't these statements be made by a mature believer who understands the Scriptural teaching about man?

On three occasions in John 13, it says that Jesus "knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world" (verse 1), He "knew that the Father had put all things under his power" (verse 3), and He "knew who was going to betray him" (verse 11). Could this knowledge not have come through a thorough study of the Scriptures coupled with a personal grasp of His Father's plan?

On the other hand, you find the Scripture telling us that Jesus “grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52). You find Jesus often speaking of His learning. “I . . . speak just what the Father has taught me” (John 8:28).

Jesus shared everything with His followers, saying “for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15). Like any human, Jesus studied the Scriptures, grew in wisdom, and allowed the Spirit to guide Him into all truth. He did not come to live among us already knowing everything He needed to know—He had to grow and learn too.

In Hebrews, we read that Jesus “shared in [our] humanity” (Heb. 2:14) and He “had to be made like [his brothers] in every way,” (Heb. 2:17) “tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin” (Heb. 4:15).

When I meditate on this profound concept, my respect for the Son of Man is greatly deepened. With new insight and profound appreciation, I realize that He learned obedience through His suffering—a suffering that began early in life and went all the way to the cross. So often I have pictured that Christ only suffered when He went to the cross. But when I understand that His obedience throughout life caused suffering for Him, I begin to understand what Paul means when he speaks of the “fellowship of suffering.” He was without sin in a sinful world. That pure conscience and unstained life caused Him to experience deep sorrow and pain as He ministered to people, even as a young child. He obeyed all the way to the cross, even death on the cross. When He cried out, “It is finished,” He had borne every type of mockery, scourging and injustice that sinful man could pour on Him. He suffered when He obeyed (Heb. 2:18) and yet “learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him” (Heb. 5:8–9).

## **Conclusion #2 – The resources that Jesus had available to Him are the resources available to you and me.**

What resources did Jesus have available to him? I would like to suggest four:

### **1. The Spirit of God**

Jesus was:

- conceived by the Spirit (Luke 1:35)
- anointed by the Spirit (Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38; Isa. 11:1–2)
- filled with the Spirit (Luke 4:1, 14; John 3:34)
- sealed by the Spirit (John 6:27)
- led by the Spirit (Luke 4:1)
- filled with joy through the Spirit (Luke 10:21)
- able to perform miracles by the power of the Spirit (Matt. 12:28; Luke 4:14–15, 18)
- raised by the Spirit (Rom. 8:11)

If the Living Son of God, in all His greatness, chose not to live without the constant help of the Spirit for even one moment, how can we do any less?

### **2. Prayer**

Over forty times in Scripture you find that Jesus “often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (Luke 5:16). It was in forty days of prayer and fasting that Jesus began His ministry (Luke 4:1–11) and while praying He ended His ministry (Luke 23:46–47). It was while He was praying that the Spirit came upon Him (Luke 3:21–22). It was after a season of prayer that Jesus walked on the water (Matt. 14:23–25), chose His twelve apostles (Luke 6:12–13), showed compassion on a woman caught in adultery (John 8:1–10), and faced the horror of the cross (Matt. 26:36–46).

For Jesus, prayer was a source of strength to resist temptation (Matt. 26:41) and a time to listen to His Father’s words (John 12:49–50).

### **3. The Written Word of God**

On over ninety occasions, it is recorded that Jesus quoted the Old Testament Scriptures—referring to seventy different Old Testament chapters. He knew the Scriptures, studied them and used them in the everyday events of life. The Word took center stage in Jesus’ life and ministry.

In John 13, it is reiterated that Jesus “knew” that the time had come, that the Father had put all things under His power, and who was going to betray Him. Why? Because He studied the Scriptures. Jesus knew the events before Him because He clearly studied and knew that the Scriptures must be fulfilled (Matt. 26:54, 56; Mark 14:27; Luke 22:37; John 19:24, 28).

Jesus communicated this depth of understanding later on the Emmaus road when “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Luke 24:27). With His disciples later, Jesus reiterated this truth: “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44).

Jesus’ rebuke to the Pharisees was in regard to their lack of knowledge of His Word. In Matthew 12:3, Jesus said to the Pharisees, “Haven’t you read what David did.” In verse 5, Jesus continued, “Or haven’t you read in the Law.” In Matthew 19:4, Jesus said, “Haven’t you read . . . that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female.” In Matthew 21:13, Jesus stated boldly, “It is written . . . My house will be called a house of prayer.” In verse 42, Jesus said, “Have you never read” and then in Matthew 22:29, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.”

### **4. Friends and Family**

Even though Christ’s brothers were not initially supportive, Jesus gained strength from His family. Mary and Joseph were obviously a source of strength when Jesus was younger and even up until His crucifixion on the cross, Jesus was concerned for Mary’s care.

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Jesus' twelve disciples were a source of great joy and sorrow at times. But in Jesus' own words they moved from just followers (John 1:43), to servants (John 13:16), to friends (John 15:15) and then brethren (John 20:17). Hebrews 2:11 tells us that He is not ashamed to call us all His brothers.

Every aspect of Jesus' ministry was relational. To Jesus, relationships were not a strategy; they were part of being fully human. Just as God the Father is in community in the Trinity, so God the Son established a community of brethren. In that fellowship of community, Jesus drew strength from those relationships (Matt. 26:36–38) and then told us not to “give up meeting together” and to “encourage one another” (Heb. 10:24–25). The early church in Acts clearly understood this resource (Acts 2:42).

Bruce Ware, Professor of New Testament at Trinity Seminary, says, “So many people minimize the obedience of Christ by saying ‘Of course He obeyed, He was God and had God's nature in Him; He had no choice.’ Scripture does not allow us to draw this conclusion. It presents Christ as a man who faced every temptation and succeeded, not because He relied on His divine nature, but because He relied upon the Word, prayer and the Spirit. And He succeeded all the way to the cross—even to death on the cross.”

When I think about this truth, my love is intensified. I thank God the Son for what He did and thank God the Father for what He has provided. The beauty of Christ's life is that He modeled how to live life—one lived in total dependence upon the Father. Many people conclude that we are to do what Jesus did. In a more profound way, I believe we are to live how Jesus lived. He did not model what to do as much as He modeled how to do it.

### Conclusion #3 — Jesus is my model for life and ministry.

Ian Thomas used to always say that Jesus “became Man as God intended man to be.” As the last Adam, Jesus did what Adam failed to do: “he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on the cross” (Phil 2:8)! Jesus fully obeyed and became that “life-giving spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45). Jesus did what Adam failed to do—obeyed fully. He was man as God intended man to be.

As a result, we often compare Jesus to ourselves, when in reality Jesus was more like Adam before he sinned than He was like us. While Jesus was sinless, and we will never be sinless this side of glory, we should sin less. Because Jesus was what Adam failed to be, therefore Jesus was fully justified when He said, “do what I have done” and “walk as I have walked.” In His humanity, Jesus showed us how to live as humans: fully dependent, fully obedient, fully reliant upon the Word of God, Spirit of God and prayer. Jesus was man as God intended man to be; therefore, He is my model for life and ministry. Jesus was sinless while we are sinful. But as we mature, we should sin less. When in doubt, don't ask WWJD (What Would Jesus Do), but first study to see WDJD (What Did Jesus Do). Jesus showed us how to live in a sin-soaked world and He did it perfectly.

This is why I never tire of studying not only what Jesus did, but how Jesus did what He did. He is my model for life and ministry. We should not just study the message of Jesus (which is a lifelong process), but we need to study His methods and the model of His life. We still need to follow the real Jesus who was fully human and showed us how to live life. It is no accident that the Gospel of John starts with “Follow me” (John 1:43) and ends with “You must follow me” (John 21:22).

### Conclusion #4 — We underestimate what God wants to do through us.

On two occasions, Jesus marveled at the great faith of two people—the Canaanite woman and the centurion (Matt. 8:10, 15:28). But on seven different occasions, Jesus rebuked His disciples for their lack of faith (Matt. 6:30, 8:26, 13:58, 14:31, 16:8, 17:20; Mark 16:14). He challenged them, saying, “Are you so dull?” (Mark 7:18).

Throughout the life of Christ, you find Jesus challenging His disciples to trust Him for every issue in life. Listen to these verses:

- “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matt. 10:37–38).
- “ ‘Have faith in God,’ Jesus answered. ‘Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, “Go, throw yourself into the sea,” and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours’ ” (Mark 11:22–24).

And then, in the context of Jesus telling us how everything He did was done through His Father living in Him, Jesus says: “Very truly I tell you, 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. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it” (John 14:12–13).

And then a little while later, Jesus reiterates: “Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete” (John 16:23–24).

In Matthew 17:14–21, a man brings his demon-possessed son to Jesus. The man said that he had asked the disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not. Jesus, with grief in His heart said (probably to His disciples directly), “You unbelieving and perverse generation . . . how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.” Then the disciples asked Jesus, “Why couldn't we drive it out?” He replied: “Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”

I personally believe that the greatest grief we bring to the heart of Jesus is our lack of dependence upon Him in all areas of life. We were created not to be independent but dependent. Sin

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is independence—the opposite of dependence upon the Father. Scripture says that: “without faith it is impossible to please God” and “everything that does not come from faith is sin” (Heb. 11:6; Rom. 14:23). These are strong statements. In His last message to His disciples, on six occasions Jesus told them to just ask! Now, what are you depending upon God for in your life? As I study Christ’s life and listen to His words, my own faith and dependence upon the Father is challenged.

## SUMMARY

### What Does It Mean for Jesus to Be Fully Human?

Jesus did not dip into His deity to live out His humanity. In reverent submission, as a sinless human (the second Adam), He obeyed all the way to the cross. He acknowledged His Father as the source of all that He did. My respect is deepened!

The resources that were available to Jesus are the resources available to you and me. Through the Word, prayer, the Spirit and fellowship Jesus lived that perfect life. Jesus leaned upon the resources made available to Him by His Father. My love is intensified!

We tend to underestimate what God wants to do through us. Over and over Jesus marvelled at their lack of faith. Six times in His last message to His disciples He told them to just ask. My faith is stretched!

Perhaps Proverbs 3:5–6 best sums up my picture of true humanity as modeled by Christ: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding [resources]; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” He is our model for life and ministry!

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“Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”

John 16:23-24