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JUST LIKE JESUS

MARY fought back the fear rising in her chest. She could feel the muscles in her back tightening uncontrollably. Frightened, she tried to recite the verses she had learned as a child. The contraction subsided, and she rested. There was cause for the fear she felt. Having never known a man, she was about to give birth to a son.

Joseph's deep voice began to hum a familiar melody. It was just like him to hum only the tune so she would have to voice the lyric. Between contractions, she quietly sang along to the song she had written months earlier:

*How my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoiced in God my Savior! For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed.*¹

But Mary's sweet song was driven from her mind with God's promise to Eve, "I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth."²

The final contraction was the worst. The young girl's body stretched between time and eternity. Satan was insistent upon the child's destruction, but the Father's desires would be accomplished precisely on time.³ Mary pushed hard and heard her newborn son's first cry. His tiny lungs inhaled earth's air as a human being. Amidst the chaotic noise of an overcrowded Bethlehem night, she heard her husband's gentle voice, "We will call Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."⁴

Years later, the apostle John would capture this event with nine simple words: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us."⁵



JESUS Christ, although fully God, was born fully human. If you embrace this truth, you will desire to follow his example. If you do not, living *just like* Jesus will seem beyond your reach. You might even wonder if it's possible. After all, you might reason, "He is God and I am not."

Yet, the Scriptures don't let us off the hook so easily. John, who defended both the humanity⁶ and deity⁷ of Jesus, charged us to live just like Jesus. He wrote, "Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked."⁸

When I study the deity of Christ, I am drawn to worship him, but when I study the humanity of Christ, I am inspired to live like him. The first causes me to realize what I am not, but the latter causes me to realize what I should be. When I confuse the two, I no longer see my need to depend fully on the resources Jesus used because I assume he used a resource unavailable to me—his deity.

Several years ago, I had two conversations that confirmed the importance of applying the humanity of Christ to the Christian life. The first was with my ten-year-old daughter; the second was with a man in his forties. Both individuals were different in every way, and both were struggling with different temptations. Yet when I encouraged them to walk just like Jesus, they gave the same answer: *I'm not Jesus. Jesus is God. I am not.* Both overlooked the simple fact that Jesus became man.

Here is a significant, yet forgotten truth behind the incarnation of Christ: Jesus walked where you walk so that you might learn to walk like he walked. Jesus communicates this truth further when he repeatedly uses the phrase "follow me."⁹ Your thoughts, feelings, and choices should be modeled after him. No matter your age, growing well

means learning to walk *just like Jesus*.

Could it be that you, like me, have spent your entire life thinking about the ways you are different from Jesus, when he became fully human to show you the ways you could be like him? Have you emphasized his deity at the expense of his humanity? Have you considered the primary means by which Jesus battled temptation as a man? If his victory over temptation was possible, is yours?

This isn't an abstract theological idea; this is a life-changing truth. If Jesus was fully human as the Bible declares, then he lived out his entire earthly life under the intrinsic limitations of humanity.¹⁰ His victory over temptation was possible through his reliance upon resources that are available to you and me today. Let that thought settle in. Jesus did not reach outside his human limitations when being tempted to sin. Instead, he operated within the confines of his humanity when he battled temptation. That's what it means to be tempted like we are, yet without sin.¹¹

Embracing Jesus' full humanity¹² is one of the most significant "how" factors for living the Christian life. Practically speaking, once you are in Christ, your victory will not come as a result of the latest trend, program, or motivational speaker. Your growth and change will take place only as you learn to avail yourself of the same resources that Jesus depended upon. What are those resources? How did Jesus acquire them, and what do you and I need to do to become proficient in their use?