



KNOWING GOD

THE JESUS JOURNEY

The first year of Jesus' teaching career was an outgrowth of his early years of personal preparation. He prepared his team in the same manner he prepared himself. Anyone who followed him could quickly assess that he was fully committed to knowing and following God the Father. There were no short cuts in Jesus' personal development, and there was none in his team's development. Their first nine months together were quite uneventful. He had called them to "come and see" and very little else is recorded in Scripture. What is recorded came from the relationally-driven disciple named John (Chapters 1-3). During these months there were no crowds. No road shows. No "success stories." No large feats. No compelling promises. No momentum. There was, however, an ongoing curiosity to discover and know the God who was leading Jesus day by day.

John and the early disciples watched as Jesus reacted and communicated in ways that reflected an intimate knowledge of God. John later quotes Jesus publicly declaring to the crowds what he privately modeled for John: "I can do nothing (of eternal value) unless the Father shows me."¹ This is the life that Lifework leaders are expected to live – to know God by following Jesus' life and leadership.

In the Gospel of Mark, we find a unique story that is full of insights regarding how Jesus managed his priority of knowing God during a demanding 24-hour period.² Most likely Mark's cousin Peter conveyed this gospel to Mark. As we know from Mark's gospel, Peter was accustomed to the results oriented and demanding schedule of the fishing industry, a pace that may have shaped his narration of Jesus' ministry.

This story opens with Jesus participating in a customary religious activity – he was in the local synagogue using his gift of teaching. It is crucial that Christian leaders commit to a church where they can invest their gifts and receive the gifts of others. To know God is to know that He loves the local church. He designed us for a weekly rhythm of work and worship. Jesus knew that corporate worship refuels our spiritual tanks and helps us avoid leading on "empty."

As Jesus taught that morning, the people were amazed because he spoke with authority. This was an authority based on his own personal interaction with his father and Scripture not just someone else's synopsis of scripture. He had read it, owned it, and was applying it. His story aligned with Scripture. When leaders take on the personal responsibility to learn and apply life lessons from Scripture, they gain authority. Even when leading at home, children will especially recognize it. Authority comes from "the inside-out." It comes from a growing personal relationship with God and His Word.

That day, however, had just begun. After the demands of public speaking (and confronting a demon-possessed man) he demonstrated further evidence of knowing God. He modeled selflessness. Instead of an after-church crash on a couch, he went to the home of Peter's mother-in-law, where he called on the divine power necessary to heal her. By late afternoon that day, Jesus was facing the challenge of working late with the demands of his team and the town bringing very "needy" people to him. It was an amazing day filled with demonstrations of "going the extra mile!" Yet it wasn't until the next morning that something



KNOWING GOD

THE JESUS JOURNEY

◀ extraordinary occurred. It was Jesus' key characteristic that few notice unless they follow him closely. He was extraordinary in the midst of exhaustion. Serving on fumes is not possible for long unless you have a deep well of grace and love that is replenished by your relationship with God.

While it was still dark, Mark writes, Jesus got up early and went to a solitary place to spend time experiencing God. His exhaustion cried out for experiences where God provided ongoing strength and joy, and as a result, Jesus used spiritual disciplines to cultivate his relationship with his Father. The spiritual disciplines that Jesus and other Biblical leaders modeled for their followers were prayer, worship, sacrificial giving, Bible study, and meditation. These disciplines were not used to measure their relationship with God but were the tools that these leaders used to develop an intimacy with God and a fitness for service. Good leaders depend on the spiritual disciplines to glean the wisdom to make godly decisions, and to be focused on their relationship with God. There is no doubt that spiritual disciplines can prepare all of us for transformation just as calisthenics prepares us for sports.³

This daily discipline of checking in with God prepares us for facing adversity, and for facing our demanding teammates who may, despite good intentions, steer us off course. There is no doubt that Jesus' leadership team was excited about the momentum that they were experiencing ("Everyone is looking for you"), and they were ready to leverage it! Yet while the momentum was growing he demonstrated the propensity to make very wise decisions that were full of self-discipline and spiritual discernment. Leaders

who invest their time into their personal relationship with God are enabled by God's spirit (a "counselor") to discern God's will. The decision Jesus made in this story was to leave for another place. Jesus had the capacity to say "no" to a good thing (healing) in order to say "yes" to the best thing (teaching). Because he had developed the spiritual discipline of seeking God's heart and mind on daily matters, he was able to discern where the narrow outline of God's path departed from the broad road of popular opinion, and to follow his Father with conviction.

How well do you know God? Draw close to him each day no matter how crowded your schedule may be, and enjoy the amazing invitation and call that God extends to you to follow Him and know Him intimately. ●

/ 1) John 5:19; John 6-9 / 2) Mark 1:21-39

/ 3) John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted*, p. 9