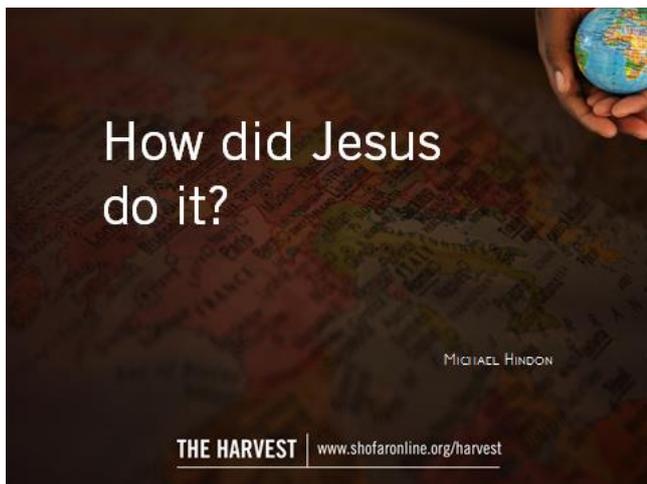


Anton has asked me to include some Afrikaans when I speak, so vandag beplan ek om die hoofpunte in Afrikaans te herhaal soos ons aangaan. Jy is natuurlik ook baie welkom om in jou eie Afrikaanse Bybel die teksverse wat gebruik word op te soek. Die doel van enige bediening in die Kerk is om die gemeente op te bou, so dit help nie dat iemand iets nie verstaan as gevolg van taal nie. So, sodra daar enigiets is wat ek moet vertaal, stop asseblief vir my.



Note:

Please note that when we speak about the Lord, or about God, or about the Father, the Son - Jesus Christ - or the Holy Spirit, we are speaking about our triune God. So when we speak about the will of the Father, Jesus Christ always does His Father's will, and the Holy Spirit shows us what it is and equips us to do it.

Introduction:

We sometimes get caught up in all kinds of condemnation when we find ourselves measuring who we are and what we do against other people and their lives, and what we perceive to be their achievements. We sometimes also find ourselves with unreasonable expectations of ourselves because someone has burdened us with their (human) expectation. A simple, general, example of this might be where a parent expects their child to excel in a certain activity, either because they themselves excelled in it, or because they missed the opportunity to participate in that activity when they were a child. In Church life, you or I might look at another Disciple of Christ's life, and want to achieve what they are achieving because it is more visible, or because it appears to us to have more value, than what we are doing.

Ek en jy kan baie vinnig onder 'n gewig van veroordeeling beland as ons dit wat ander mense sê of doen as maatstaf vir ons eie lewens aanvaar.

Today we are going to have a look at the life of Jesus Christ for some lessons on this aspect of the Christian Disciple's walk with the Lord. In general terms we know that many of the Jewish people to whom Jesus came expected political leadership from Him

- they hoped that He would lead a rebellion against the oppressive Roman government of the time. We also know that when Satan tempted Him, the temptations were designed to distract Him from His purpose on the earth. It is noteworthy, by the way, that each temptation of Satan was designed to cause his victim to focus on Himself - instead of on His Father's will. We can learn something about the nature of temptation from this...

But Jesus stayed the course without wasting time and effort on distractions, and completely fulfilled His purpose perfectly, exactly as the Father wanted Him to do. So what was His secret? How did He do that? What can we learn from how He did it?

Hoe het Jesus dit reggekry om Sy lewe perfek volgens die Vader se wil vir Hom te lei, sonder afleiding? En wat kan ons daaruit leer om vir ons te help?

Kan iemand vir my sê hoe lank het Jesus op die aarde geleef? Hoeveel van daardie jare het Hy in die openbaar bedien? Most of us know that Jesus Christ lived for about 33 years on the earth. He was born to a woman (Mary) in the same way that each one of us was, He grew up and became a man, learning a skill that earned Him a living. He was subject to the same temptations and trials that we are - in fact I am quite sure that the most extreme form of these temptations were His lot.



How did Jesus do it?

Hebrews 4:14-16 (NLT):
So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. ¹⁵This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. ¹⁶So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

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So we can take comfort in the truth that Jesus knows All about how hard it is to resist temptation - and that He will gift us with the equipment that we need to withstand it.

It was only in the last approximately 3 years of His life that Jesus emerged into His public ministry upon the occasion of His baptism by John the Baptist by immersion in water at the Jordan River - this was where the Holy Spirit came to rest upon Him - as we read in this passage:

How did Jesus do it?

Mark 1:9-13a (NLT):

One day Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River. ¹⁰As Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens splitting apart and the Holy Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹And a voice from heaven said, "You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy." ¹²The Spirit then compelled Jesus to go into the wilderness, ¹³where he was tempted by Satan for forty days.

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How did Jesus do it?

Mark 1:13b-15 (NLT):

He was out among the wild animals, and angels took care of him. ¹⁴Later on, after John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God's Good News. ¹⁵"The time promised by God has come at last!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!"

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Before He was launched by His Father into His public ministry, the Holy Spirit descended onto Jesus Christ. It is interesting to note (v11) that His Father said that Jesus was, at that point, His dearly loved Son, and that He already brought Him great joy - in other words, before Jesus even began to fulfil His public role on the earth. So His love is for Who Jesus is, not what He does. The same may be said for all other people. In v15 we read how He announced that the time for His public ministry had come - He did not preempt His Father's perfect timing and will.

Die liefde van die Here vir Jesus, en vir ons, is vir wie ons is, nie vir wat ons doen nie. Sy wil en tydsberekening is perfek, ons kan daarin vertrou.

In v13 we read that Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness. Note the parallel with the original temptation of Adam and Eve in the garden:

How did Jesus do it?

Genesis 3:1-2 (NLT):

The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?" ²"Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," the woman replied.

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How did Jesus do it?

Genesis 3:3-5 (NLT):

³"It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.'" ⁴"You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. ⁵"God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil."

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Eve was tempted by the serpent, who was, as we know, Satan.

Eva is deur die slang, wat Satan was, versoek.

For confirmation of the fact that the serpent was in fact Satan, we'll read from Revelation 20:

How did Jesus do it?

Revelation 20:1-3 (NLT):

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven with the key to the bottomless pit and a heavy chain in his hand. ²He seized the dragon - that old serpent, who is the devil, Satan - and bound him in chains for a thousand years. ³The angel threw him into the bottomless pit, which he then shut and locked so Satan could not deceive the nations anymore until the thousand years were finished. Afterward he must be released for a little while.

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Another aside, that we glean from this passage, is the fact that even though Satan will be restrained for 1000 years; people will still follow their own evil desires that result in sin (resulting in separation from God). We'll read more about this later on...

How did Jesus do it?

Genesis 3:8-10 (NLT):

When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees. ⁹Then the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" ¹⁰He replied, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."

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It seems clear from this (and other Scripture references) that Adam and Eve were accustomed to spending time with the Lord, literally face to face. Now we know that no-one who is not holy can be in the presence of the Lord without being destroyed - so they must have been holy before their fall into sin. This is logical, because Adam was created in the image of God - Who is holy. When they fell for the temptation to sin, they were no longer holy, in other words, they had decided to make someone else more important than the Lord - that someone else was themselves. Does this sound familiar? In modern terms, they developed a sense of entitlement - they were persuaded that they should be entitled to be "like God" in Satan's words, knowing good and evil. Incidentally, Satan was lying on more than one level here - not only had the Lord created them in His own image, so they were already "like God", but the Lord does not "know" evil, and never has done. He is perfectly holy - there is NO sin in Him, and never has been. The word used by Satan for "knowing" here is exactly the same word as is used later in Genesis where we are told that Adam "knew" his wife, and Cain was born. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve's rebellion against the Lord resulted in exactly what Satan had said - they did indeed come to know good AND evil, whereas they had only known good before.

Because Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and does NOT know evil, Satan himself had to tempt Him - just as Eve was tempted by Satan because she did not know evil.



How did Jesus do it?

James 1:12-13 (NLT):
God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. ¹³And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else.

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How did Jesus do it?

James 1:14-15 (NLT):
Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. ¹⁵These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.

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With you and I however, it is different. We were born with a sinful nature inherited through our parents from Adam and Eve. That is why James talks about our own desires. And why we so very desperately need to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that He can renew our minds - so that we can have the mind of Christ.

We can see that even in this detail of the temptation by Satan Jesus Christ perfectly fulfilled what was required of Him during His time on the earth.

During the approximately 3 years of Jesus Christ's public ministry, He preached the Gospel (Good News of God) and called and equipped His Disciples - just 12 men, of whom 1 betrayed Him. So the legacy that He left on the earth was 11 men who had watched Him live in response to His Father's leading through the Holy Spirit - men who had seen Him heal and teach and rebuke people, and then die for them. Of course there were other people who had witnessed all of this - but remember that virtually everyone abandoned Jesus at His crucifixion.

A great many people would measure all of that against their own standard for success, and find an enormous shortfall - in human terms. And yet we now know that His life's work perfectly fulfilled His Father's will for Him, and for all of humanity!

But how did He do that?! And how would He have known that He was in fact successful, even though He faced the most ferocious opposition at every level - human and spiritual?

How did Jesus do it?

John 5:19-20 (NLT):

So Jesus explained, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does. ²⁰For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing. In fact, the Father will show him how to do even greater works than healing this man. Then you will truly be astonished.

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This was and is His secret!

OK, so that is how Jesus Christ did it, but how are you and I to live then?

How did Jesus do it?

1 Corinthians 2:1-3 (NLT):

When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters, I didn't use lofty words and impressive wisdom to tell you God's secret plan. ²For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified. ³I came to you in weakness—timid and trembling.

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How did Jesus do it?

1 Corinthians 2:4-5 (NLT):

⁴And my message and my preaching were very plain. Rather than using clever and persuasive speeches, I relied only on the power of the Holy Spirit. ⁵I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom but in the power of God.

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There we are then! We simply rely on and obey the Holy Spirit - in exactly the same way that Jesus relied on and obeyed His Father. He could communicate with His Father because sin had never separated them - we can communicate with the Father through the working of the Holy Spirit because Jesus Christ took the penalty for our sin upon Himself.

How did Jesus do it?

Romans 3:21-23 (NLT):

But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. ²²We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. ²³For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.

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How did Jesus do it?

Romans 3:24-25 (NLT):

²⁴Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. ²⁵For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past,

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How did Jesus do it?

Romans 3:26 (NLT):

²⁶for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he declares sinners to be right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.

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So surely you and I can now make peace with the fact that we owe a debt of life to the Lord that is beyond price? We can NEVER repay His gracious kindness towards us! It is a completely undeserved act of love on His part. Surely then, in intense gratitude for this, we should see how best to live in a way that will bless Him? And bring Him joy? And perfectly fulfil His purpose in making us?

So what would that look like?

How did Jesus do it?

Matthew 5:13-14 (ESV):

"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. ¹⁴"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

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How did Jesus do it?

Matthew 5:15-16 (ESV):

Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

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Every Disciple of Christ IS salt and light - but are we effective? Do we hide the light? Or do we shine for Jesus? What does that mean anyway? How do we "let our light shine before others"?

How did Jesus do it?

Mark 8:34-36 (NLT):
Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. ³⁵If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it. ³⁶And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?"

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How did Jesus do it?

Mark 8:37-38 (NLT):
Is anything worth more than your soul? ³⁸If anyone is ashamed of me and my message in these adulterous and sinful days, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

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Lay down your life, take up your Cross (place of death = love)

Simplicity itself - our cross is where we die to our selfish wants and look to Jesus for His desires so that we can live for Him. Jesus Christ's greatest manifestation of His love for you and I was the fact that He submitted to the Cross. Can we do any less for Him? And for the people whom He loves - whether they are aware of it or not?

How did Jesus do it?

Matthew 28:16-18 (NLT):
Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them doubted! ¹⁸Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth."

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How did Jesus do it?

Matthew 28:19-20 (NLT):
¹⁹Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

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You and I, as Disciples of Jesus Christ, are required to be and to make Disciples - people who are faithful followers of Jesus Christ - not Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, or Pastor Teachers. Neither should we to raise anyone up with a label defined by their primary gifting. What we should do is to teach them the truth of Scripture and about how to relate to the Lord through the Holy Spirit - so that He can show them their role.

Let's have a look at why I say this:

How did Jesus do it?

1 Corinthians 12:27-28 (NLT):
All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it. ²⁸Here are some of the parts God has appointed for the church: first are apostles, second are prophets, third are teachers, then those who do miracles, those who have the gift of healing, those who can help others, those who have the gift of leadership, those who speak in unknown languages.

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How did Jesus do it?

1 Corinthians 12:29-31 (NLT):
²⁹Are we all apostles? Are we all prophets? Are we all teachers? Do we all have the power to do miracles? ³⁰Do we all have the gift of healing? Do we all have the ability to speak in unknown languages? Do we all have the ability to interpret unknown languages? Of course not! ³¹So you should earnestly desire the most helpful gifts.

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These appointments are all made by the Lord! Anyone trying to fill any of these positions in their own strength will be heading for disaster!

How did Jesus do it?

1 Peter 4:10-11 (NLT):
God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. ¹¹Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.

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See here again how it is the Lord that gives the gifts to us so that we can serve other people (an act of love!) to the glory of God. When we submit to the Lord's gifting and the supply of strength and energy that He pours out into us, we will best please Him, and fulfil our purpose.

How did Jesus do it?

Galatians 2:20 (NLT):

My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

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Isn't this a summary of what we have studied this morning? We take up our cross - die to our own selfish wants - and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit - Christ living in me.

So can you agree with me that our lives as Disciples of Christ are to be lived as a continuum? In other words, we do not strive for a particular role in the Church, or a critical or significant event, or series of events, in our lives, that we might think will make us acceptable before the Father in Heaven. Rather, we live the whole of our lives in responsiveness to the principles laid down in the Scriptures, and under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

We do not try to appear holy, or try to appear to operate in a particular area of gifting. We do not even try to operate in our given area of gifting outside the leading of the Holy Spirit! It is here that we will find true rest in the Lord - no futile striving.

My and your love for the Lord will be manifestly obvious to the people around us as we love them. And yes, they might sometimes not like how we love them - for instance we might need to rebuke them for the sake of the rest of the congregation - but they will still know that we love the Lord.

Om mee af te sluit:

How do we do it?

- Carefully and faithfully follow the Lord's lead through the Holy Spirit.
- Discern (examine carefully against what Scripture teaches us) every thought that we have about what we do.
- Live as obedient, loving followers of Jesus Christ.

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Dit is nodig dat ons sorg dat ons versigtig die Vader se leiding deur die Heilige Gees volg, en dat ons elke besluit wat ons neem moet oorweeg teen die standaard van die Skrif.

Conclusion:

Now it seems to me, in the light of this short study, that we need to be very sure that we carefully and faithfully follow the Lord's lead through the Holy Spirit if we are to fulfil the purpose for which He created us. This applies to you and I as individuals, but also to every local Church. It means that we need to discern (examine carefully against what Scripture teaches us) every thought that we have about what we do. In this way we will avoid being trapped into thinking that we have to perform in a certain way to be acceptable to the Lord - instead of realising that we simply live as obedient, loving followers... My love for the Lord is evidenced by my love for people.

Doesn't that take the pressure off?! Can there possibly be any safer way to live?
