

Empty before God

He emptied Himself—that's how Paul describes Jesus' preparation for ministry. As He came to earth, He emptied himself of the power, privilege, and glory that were uniquely His. He began His ministry here by going into the wilderness for 40 days of fasting and temptation. The first act of His public life was to humble himself and line up with the sinners for baptism.

Jesus emptied Himself. When He spoke or acted, it was only by His Father's will and through His Father's direct provision. He became transparent. When we looked at Him, we saw only the Father—His authority, His tenderness, His wisdom, the very loveliness of His character.

Jesus laid aside His own will:

“By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.” (John 5:30, NIV).

In this emptying, Jesus made himself totally dependent. All that He was, all that He did, was by faith in His Father. He made Himself an open vessel, holy and yielded. Thus His weakness was His great strength. His helplessness was His constant sufficiency. The Father's words in 2 Corinthians 12:7 are fully embodied in Christ:

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (NIV)

As we begin to grasp this truth, hope and excitement rise in us. If Jesus' life was total dependence, if all that He was, He was by faith, then the horizons of our lives and ministries are formed by the beauty of Christ himself. Our lives can speak of God's greatness and glory. They can make His love a reality to people all around us. But this is possible only as we empty ourselves and depend constantly and completely on the Father.

If emptying was Jesus' preparation for ministry, it shouldn't surprise us that emptying is essential for us. We shouldn't feel persecuted when experiences in life and ministry wring out of us every last trace of self-sufficiency, ambition, and personal agenda.

Emptying involves pain, humiliation, frustration, failure, defeat, dead ends, despair, and giving up on dreams we thought were absolutely central. Emptying involves more of Christ and less of everything else.

*Right now, Lord, this moment,
by Your power and at Your call,
I release to You all my drives,
all my ideas, all my ways.
I lay them down, Lord, and put them aside.*

*I turn away from them.
Flush them out of my heart, I pray.
I will accept anything You send into my life
to separate me from lesser things.*

*From this point on,
I only want to move at Your call and at Your word,
relying on Your power alone.
Ambitions, ministries, hopes, dreams,
I release them.
My only desire is You
and to follow You as Your lowly servant.
I love You, Lord.
I seek You alone.*

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