

The Discipleship Project-Summer 2017

Series 1: The Oneness of God

A series by Gerald McLean.

Series Big Idea: The Lord our God is one.

Lesson 1.1: The Incarnation

Lesson Big Idea: God became human so humans can become like Him.

FOUNDATION

Scripture Focus: I Timothy 3:16 (PPT)

As Jesus and His disciples were finishing the last few bites of their final dinner together, the mood turned anxious. As Judas solemnly exited the room, the disciples sat stunned and the conversation became tense. The men actively listened as Jesus began to explain what would happen over the next several hours.

Simon Peter erupted in defiance and declared before the group that he would never deny the Lord. Jesus looked into Peter's eyes and predicted His bold follower would in fact deny Him three times before the breaking of dawn.

Fear and worry gripped the room as the last three-and-a-half years of excitement came face-to-face with what seemed like the end. No doubt Jesus knew the fear they were facing and immediately sought to comfort His loyal followers.

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know” (John 14:1–4, NKJV).

Philip, after hearing Christ's words, pleaded with Jesus to show him the Father.

Jesus was not offended or insulted that such a question was asked. But the response of Jesus left no doubt as to His identity. “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” (John 14:9, NKJV). Jesus reiterated, in the clearest possible terms, that He was indeed the Father.

Later, in the same passage, Jesus capitalized on this opportunity by teaching the disciples that He was the express image of the invisible God. “If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (John 14:15–18, KJV). Jesus emphatically told Philip, along with the other assembled disciples, that He was the Comforter, the Spirit of truth. Speaking prophetically, Jesus told the disciples that He would come to them as the Holy Spirit, which happened on the Day of

Pentecost.

FRAME

Jesus spoke openly and plainly about His identity. The following question was posed to Jesus in John 8:19: “Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also” (KJV). **(PPT)** To some this answer may be confusing, but to the one-God-believing Jews, whom Jesus was addressing, the answer was abundantly clear. Jesus was claiming to be the Father. How do we know? Because, in the next verse, those present wanted to lead Jesus away to stone Him. The monotheistic Jews who were present fully understood that Jesus had just claimed to be the Father. In keeping with the Law of Moses, He must be stoned to death for blasphemy.

The discourse in John 8 is underscored with thunderous words when Jesus stated in verse 24, “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (KJV). When Jesus said, “I am he,” He was answering the original question, “Where is your Father?” Jesus linked this revelation to salvation by saying, if you do not believe I am the Father, you are dead in your sins.

In John 10 a similar discussion plays out. Jesus said, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30, KJV). **(PPT)** The reaction of the Jews was immediate. “Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God” (John 10:31–33, KJV). **(PPT)** There it was again: Jesus was claiming to be God manifest in flesh, and the monotheistic Jews would not accept this.

The apostle Paul taught the Corinthian church that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself” (II Corinthians 5:19, KJV). To the Colossian church, he wrote, “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9, KJV). Paul’s teaching on the Godhead can be simply summarized in I Timothy 3:16: “God was manifest in the flesh” (KJV).

- **During His lifetime, how did Jesus underscore that He was God?**

The primary reason for the Incarnation was to redeem fallen humanity. (PPT) (PDG) God had made it clear to Adam from the outset that He would not tolerate disobedience. The punishment for disobeying God was equally clear. It would be met with death. (See Genesis 2:17.) The only remedy for sin was the shedding of blood. (See Hebrews 9:22.)

Although, over the years, barrels of animal blood were offered for the sins of the people in the Old Testament, it was never enough. Animal blood cannot remit sin because the blood of an animal is inferior to the blood of man. Neither can a “righteous” man die

for another man's sins because "there is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10, KJV). (PPT) **"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"** (Romans 3:23, KJV). (PPT)

So God chose to redeem fallen humanity through the Incarnation. He came in flesh so He could shed sinless blood for the remission of our sins. This was God's plan all along. The Lamb of God was "slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). Before Adam was ever created, God planned to manifest Himself in flesh for the purpose of redemption.

The gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (See I Corinthians 15:3–4.) (PPT) It was His atoning death and resurrection that makes salvation possible. However, even though He died for the sins of all humanity, not everyone will be saved. For salvation to come, one must identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The apostle Peter told us how to do that in Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (KJV). (PPT)

When we repent, we die to our sinful way of life and commit ourselves to living like Jesus lived. We are buried with Him in baptism (Romans 6:3–4) (PPT) for the remission of our sins. (See Acts 2:38.) When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we identify with His resurrection. This constitutes the application of the gospel to our lives. You can know the gospel and not apply it to your life. Only when the gospel is applied to our lives can we be saved. It is absolutely essential to repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus, and be filled with the Holy Spirit to be saved.

- **What is the gospel, and how do we identify with the gospel so we can be saved?**

A secondary reason God was manifest in flesh was to give us a blueprint for living an overcoming, victorious life once we are saved. (PPT) (PDG) God became human so humans could become like Him. Jesus modeled how a man can live for God even in the face of temptation, disappointment, and hardship.

- **What are some of the keys to living an overcoming, victorious life?**
- **Which key do you consider to be the most important? Why?**

The writer of the Book of Hebrews expressed it this way, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15–16, KJV). (PPT)

As a man, Jesus experienced the pain and suffering that is common to man. He faced temptation. He knew what it was to be rejected, betrayed, mocked, and abused. He was often misunderstood. As the previous verses cited proclaim, He was touched with the feelings of our infirmities and understood the temptations we face because He

experienced the same challenges. Yet, the Man Christ Jesus never wavered in His devotion and obedience to God.

Jesus expected His disciples to reflect the glory of God by the way they lived. (PPT) (PDG) The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) was a challenge for Christians to live like Christ lived. Jesus did not expect us to live like the world or become assimilated into the common culture. He expected us to be different. The Sermon on the Mount was a clarion call to be different.

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we welcome the Comforter into our lives. But, when we are first saved, the Comforter may seem to function more as a disturber, as God challenges us to become like Him. That is very different from the way we are accustomed to living our lives.

The Sermon on the Mount highlights the discrepancies between the ideal: God’s will for my life, and the preferred: my will for my life. Too many church members want to come to God on their terms. Jesus expects us to come to Him on His terms.

The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–12) teach us that our attitudes must reflect the attitudes of Christ. It sounds easy, but the people of God must seriously consider what Jesus was commanding in this treatise.

John R. W. Stott’s book *Christian Counter-Culture: The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* provides an intense “to do” list derived from the Beatitudes: acknowledge your spiritual bankruptcy; grieve and mourn over your spiritual bankruptcy with godly sorrow; humble yourself before God and man; hunger and thirst after righteousness instead of the things of this world; be merciful and compassionate to the needy; be free of all falsehood; be a peacemaker, not a troublemaker; endure and rejoice in persecution.

This would be an impossible standard to live up to if God had not become human so we could become like Him! The Beatitudes push us to the Cross!

- **What attitudes do you struggle with that are most in conflict with the ideals set forth in the Beatitudes?**
- **How are you working to overcome these deficiencies?**

If you will pursue and adopt these ideal attitudes, then the corresponding promises of the Beatitudes will be yours. You will find comfort, peace, and mercy. You will enjoy the blessings of the kingdom of Heaven even while on earth. You will see God and be filled to overflowing with His Spirit. Great will be your reward in Heaven.

Jesus taught us to forsake outward sin, as well as the secret sins of the heart, that we might reflect the holiness of God. (PPT) (PDG) Jesus placed a greater demand on New Testament Christians than He did on the Old Testament saints. For example, under the Law, the Old Testament saints were instructed, “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13, KJV), and “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14, KJV). An Old Testament saint was allowed to avenge himself, for it was written, “Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot” (Exodus 21:24, KJV).

But Jesus Christ raised the bar for Christians. He taught the spirit of the Law, not just the letter of the Law. The mandate against killing, committing adultery, and taking vengeance on our adversaries was not changed in the New Testament, but Jesus expanded it to include hatred toward a brother or sister. (See Matthew 6:21–26.) Having sexual thoughts about a woman other than your wife would now be likened unto adultery. (See Matthew 5:28.) And now there would be a prohibition on taking vengeance. In fact, we are to do just the opposite by turning the other cheek and going the extra mile when our adversaries come against us. (See Matthew 5:38–42.)

Jesus perfectly modeled this throughout His life and ministry. God became human so humans could be like Him. Jesus taught us how to submit our thought life as well as our actions to the will of God.

- **What hidden sins of the heart have you battled with in the past?**
- **How did you get the victory?**

Jesus taught us that by engaging ourselves in the Christian disciplines of giving, praying, and fasting, we could become more like Him. Jesus did not merely give the command to give, pray, and fast, but giving, praying, and fasting were an integral part of His own life.

It is instructive that when Jesus addressed the disciplines in Matthew 6:1–18, He started with giving. Although the importance of prayer cannot be overstated, Jesus taught on giving before He taught His disciples how to pray.

The underlying principle of giving is based on an “all in” mentality. Jesus taught, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21, KJV). We invest in what we value. If we value the kingdom of God, we will invest in the kingdom of God and in souls. Since prayer is an act of faith, what better way to show your faith than by your works? (See James 2:18.)

“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16, KJV). A giving saint of God is generally a righteous saint of God. The righteous are more inclined to pray and be fervent in prayer because they have already given sacrificially of their time and substance. They want their investment to pay dividends, and the only way for this to happen is through prayer and, ultimately, fasting. In Acts 10:2, Cornelius’ giving was noted before he was recognized as a man of prayer. This is consistent with the order Jesus set forth with the Christian disciplines.

A man or woman who gives and prays will now be spiritually prepared for fasting. Fasting helps us submit to God in all we are and in all we do. Fasting, coupled with prayer, breaks the yoke of selfish desires. It helps us to more clearly see the will of God for our own lives.

God became human so humans can become like Him. (PPT) (PDG) Jesus gave. Jesus prayed. Jesus fasted. To be like Jesus is to give, pray, and fast.

- **Of the disciplines (giving, prayer, and fasting), which do you struggle with the most? Why?**

- **How have you successfully disciplined yourself to be more faithful in giving, prayer, and fasting?**

FINISH

When the apostles made the arrangements for the Passover Feast that immediately preceded the Crucifixion, only Jesus knew that this Passover would be immortalized as the Last Supper. It was quite likely that Jesus' appetite was non-existent that evening as He prepared to face the horrors that awaited Him. Still, Jesus maintained His focus and the apostle John records that on that fateful night, Jesus loved His own unto the end. He released His betrayer and washed the feet of His disciples even when Peter initially resisted.

In the dark of night after the Last Supper, Jesus called His disciples to follow Him into the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. Though Jesus was God manifest in flesh (I Timothy 3:16) and all the fullness of the Godhead resided in Him bodily (Colossians 2:9), Jesus was also fully man. As a man, "Being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44, KJV).

Jesus prayed because, as a man, He did not want to endure the treachery, humiliation, and cruelty that awaited Him. As a man, He simply did not want to face the ordeal of the cross. Yet, it was for this purpose that God manifested Himself in flesh. Jesus then uttered the words, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39, KJV).

God became human so we could be like Him. Jesus not only showed us the way, He was the way (John 14:6). The story of the Incarnation illustrated the lengths to which God was willing to go to redeem fallen humanity. Not only did God make a way for humanity to be redeemed, but by His example as a man, He taught New Testament Christians how to successfully live a victorious and overcoming life.