

# NECESSARY CHRISTIANITY



WHAT JESUS SHOWS  
WE MUST BE AND DO

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# I MUST FOCUS

## THE NECESSITY OF FOCUS

The Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously."

And He said to them, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (Luke 2:40-52)

The text before us is familiar. It is the one story we have of Jesus’ childhood. The account is bracketed by a description of Jesus. Luke 2:40 reads, “The Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.” Luke 2:52 says, “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” Here Luke speaks about the ever-evolving human character of Jesus. He describes the aspects of maturity in a human sense in terms of life with God in the world.

It is a progressive life. Jesus *grew* and *increased*. These two words provide a layered understanding of Christian growth and maturity. While the word for *grew* speaks specifically to physical growth, the word for *increased* is more layered. It means to beat forward and to lengthen out by hammering, as a metalsmith forges metal. It refers to growth as a result of being stretched and shaped by applied pressure, with some pain being experienced. The word *grew* speaks to enlargement, while the word *increased* speaks to a process of expansion.

There are many who pray for increase (anointing, God-opportunities, prosperity) but who don't understand that they are asking to be stretched and lengthened in a way that requires pressure and may involve pain. To illustrate, there was a period in my teenage years when I experienced extraordinary physiological growth, gaining five inches of height in a matter of weeks. Those weeks and the period immediately following were some of the most painful weeks of my life. It hurt to walk. It hurt to sit. It even hurt to have anything placed on my knees. I was diagnosed with Osgood-Schlatter disease, an inflammation of the bone at the growth plate about two inches below the kneecap, where the tendon attaches the thigh to the leg. The thigh muscles pull the tendon on the bone whenever the leg is bent or straightened. The tendon rubs against the bone and creates the inflammation. The growth spurt included and produced growth pain. The process of increase included the friction inherent in stretching. Praying for increase includes praying to be stretched and to experience friction. If we can't take the stretching, friction, and inflammation, we shouldn't pray for increase.

Jesus grew and increased. He was made strong in spirit. His life in the Spirit strengthened him. He acquired wisdom. God's grace, delight, and pleasure governed his life. He increased in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and with men. Christian maturity entails continued

strengthening in the Spirit and by the Spirit, growth in wisdom and in grace.

Within the bracket statements concerning Jesus' maturity, we have the story of Jesus in the temple. Luke tells us that Joseph, Mary, and Jesus had gone to Jerusalem to attend the feast of the Passover. Jesus was twelve years of age. He was one year from his bar mitzvah, when he would be recognized as a son of the covenant. He would be recognized as fully responsible to God and for his life with God. At the end of the Passover, Joseph and Mary head home, each of them assuming Jesus is with the other. However, Jesus has lingered in Jerusalem. After a day of journeying, Joseph and Mary discover that Jesus is missing. They search for him. After three days they find Jesus in the temple in Jerusalem talking with the teachers of the law. Mary asks him, "Why have you done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously." Jesus responds, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"

When Mary informs Jesus that she and Joseph have anxiously and frantically searched for him, Jesus responds by asking them why they have searched for him. His absence from them should not have resulted in his being lost to them. They should have known where to look. He raises the question of their having to search for him based on their not knowing what he must be about. "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's

business?” They lost sight of something important. Jesus says, “I must be about My Father’s business.” If they had known he must be about his Father’s business, they would have known where to find him.

### **THE NECESSITY OF OUR EXISTENCE**

Jesus kept in sight that which Mary and Joseph lost sight of. At the age of twelve he had a focus that he maintained. The mature Christian life is one that realizes the necessity of focus and of keeping focus. It is the life that avoids the pull of distraction and forgetfulness. In his statement, Jesus brings things back into focus for Mary and Joseph.

When Jesus says, “I must be about My Father’s business,” he reveals a consciousness about himself and a divine self-disclosure. He says, “I must be . . .” He does not say, “I might be.” He says, “I *must* be.” There is an awareness of the necessity of his being. It is a matter of must and not might. His being is not arbitrary or accidental. It is neither happenstance nor coincidence. His life is necessary. It is necessary that he be. It is necessary that he exist. It is necessary that he live.

To say “I must be” is to say: *I must keep the necessity of my existence in focus.*

The mature believer in Christ views his or her life from the standpoint of necessity. We understand that we are because it is necessary that we are. Our life is not optional or elective. Our life is necessary. Our life is essential. It is

compulsory. There is an indispensable aspect to our being. We are here because it is necessary that we be here.

By reminding Mary of the necessity of his being, Jesus reminded Mary of her survival. The reason she escaped stoning for being pregnant before marriage was because Jesus must be. The reason they spent time in Egypt during the terror of Herod was because Jesus must be.

The necessity of our being helps explain the survival of our family line. The reason circumstances that could have destroyed our family line prior to our birth did not occur is because we must be. The reason our family story reads the way it does, and the reason certain events occurred, is because we must be. The reason certain sacrifices were made is because we must be. The reason certain threats were circumvented is because we must be. The reason certain attacks were short-circuited is because we must be. The reason the weapon formed against us did not prosper is because we must be.

You are here because you must be here. You exist because your existence is necessary for this time in the history of the world.

### **INTENTIONALITY OF LIFE**

Jesus says, “I must be about.” Jesus raises the issue of the “aboutness” of his life. His being is *about* something. There is an intention to his being. He’s not here just to be here. There is a reason, a purpose, and an intention to his being.



To say “I must be about” is to say: *I must keep the intentionality of my life in focus.*

There is something about Jesus that causes Jesus to be. If we want to understand his being, we have to understand the intention behind, underneath, and within his being. His life is about something. It’s not about nothing. There is rhyme and reason to his life. There is direction and aim to his life. There is a purpose toward which his life is drawn and lived. He must be about.

Necessary Christianity, maturity in Christ, ushers in recognition of the intentionality of life. We must be here because there is something our being here is about. The fact that we are alive and occupying space on earth is because our life is about something. There is an intention to our life and for our life. There is an intention that explains our life. There is an intention that challenges our life. Our being is not for nothing. Our being is for something. There’s a reason we’re here, why we are who we are. There’s a reason we have the talents, gifts, and passions we do. There’s also a reason we have the exposure and education we do. There’s a reason we’ve had the opportunities we’ve had.

There is an aboutness to everything that concerns us. There’s an intention to every aspect of our life, every circumstance that comes our way, every challenge we meet. Our life is about something every second, minute, hour, day, week, month, and year. In every encounter,

our life is about something. In every engagement, our life is about something. In every experience, our life is about something.

Furthermore, to recognize the aboutness of our life is to resist the pull of negation. When challenges come our way, we have a tendency to view life from the standpoint of negation. We look at challenges in terms of their ability to negate us, to cause us to no longer be, to diminish who we are, or even to destroy us. The adversary paints a picture of negation. When we understand that our life is necessary and there is an intention that makes it necessary, we're able to look at any challenge and say that, even in the midst of it, our life is about something. It is the somethingness that will prevail. We will not recede into nothingness. The somethingness of our life demands that we survive. There is something God is doing in us and in what we're about.

This recognition of the intentionality of life not only tells us that our life is about something, it also informs us that our life should be about something. That is to say, we ought to be about something as we live our life. We ought to live every day being about something. There are many people living life about nothing. They're not about anything. They just are, but they aren't living about anything.

Others live about something, but not the something that their lives are intended to be about. Are we about

what our life is about? Are we pursuing our life's intended purpose? Are we involved in what our life was intended to be involved in?

Necessary Christianity realizes there is a purpose for which we've been created. There is an aim and a goal we've been called to pursue. It is that purpose toward which our lives must be aimed.

### **RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**

Jesus says, "I must be about My Father's . . ." To say this is to say: *To understand my purpose, I must keep my relationship with God in focus.*

Jesus finds the locus of intention for his life in a particular place. It is found in the context of his relationship with God the Father, who is the reason he exists in the world. God the Father is the reason he was born to Mary and Joseph. The intention of his being comes from God the Father. The intention for his being comes from God the Father. The aim of his earthly life is in God the Father. The direction toward which his life is lived is God the Father. He finds his reason for being through his relationship with God the Father.

Likewise, we discover what our lives are about through our relationship with God. We discover the true meaning and value of our life through the relationship we have with God. God is the reason we live and he is the person for whom we live.

God is the only way I can explain my continued existence. He is the reason I wake up in the morning. He is the reason I continue to breathe in and breathe out. In fact, it is in God I live, move, and have my being. He is the reason I'm still alive. He is the one for whom I live. My purpose is found in him. The rhyme and rhythm of my life is revealed by him. It is through him that I come to understand how the disparate pieces of my life fit together and see how the dots of my life are connected. It is through God that I come to understand the intentionality of my trials. I come to understand that "tribulation produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint" (Romans 5:3-5). It's through God that I face affliction with intentionality, knowing that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). It was through his relationship with God that Joseph found purpose and intentionality in his brothers' actions and was able to say, "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive" (Genesis 50:20).

Purpose is found in and through a relationship with God.

## **PURSUE YOUR CALLING**

Jesus says, “I must be about My Father’s business.” In saying this, Jesus is emphasizing: *I must keep the calling that I am to pursue in focus.*

Mary says, “Son, why have you done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.” Jesus responds, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” While Mary speaks of herself and Joseph, Jesus speaks of himself and God, of the necessity God has laid upon him. There is a necessity God has required of him. There is a necessity God has declared about him. It is that necessity about which he must direct his life. There is a calling upon him that he must pursue. There is business to which he must attend. It is his Father’s business. He’s not in the temple talking about a roofing contract or a furniture commission. That would have been talking about Joseph’s business as a carpenter. He’s there talking about the Scriptures, the Law and the Prophets. That’s God the Father’s business. There is a claim that God the Father has on Jesus’ life that Jesus must pursue.

Jesus doesn’t want Mary to be confused. The necessity of his life is not found in the carpentry business. The reason for his being in the world and the reason toward which his life is aimed is not construction. The reason for his life, the necessity of his life, lies not in his occupation but in his vocation. He must be about the Father’s

business and calling. He must be about what the Father has declared and demanded from his life. He must be about what the Father is laying upon his life.

Necessary Christianity is a maturity in Christ that knows the difference between occupation and vocation. It knows the difference between making a living and living the life God has called us to. While our life includes our occupation, it's more than our occupation. We are called to a vocation. We have a charge to keep. We live life knowing that the Father has some business for us to attend to. There's an assignment for our life, a calling on our life. God has requirements for our life. He has made a declaration about our life. We must be about our Father's business. We must be about the claim God has made on us. We must be found faithful in the stewardship with which we have been entrusted.

Jesus said, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" It's as though he was saying, "If you had remembered that I must be about my Father's business, you would have known where to find me. You would have known where to look for me. You would have known where I was. If you had remembered that I must be about my Father's business, you would have known to look for me in my Father's house first rather than last. You would have known that I'd be where the Father wanted me to be."

When we are about the Father's business, we are found where the Father is. We are found where the Father

assigns us and where the Father has called us. There are some places where we must be found when we're about the Father's business. We must be found in the Father's house worshiping him and giving him glory. We must be found in the Father's house learning about him. We must be found in the midst of the fellowship of the saints of God. We must be found in the field being a witness for the Lord. We must be found on our knees praying to God. We must be found with our delight in the law of the Lord and on his law meditating day and night. When we live a necessary life, people should know where they can find us. They should know that they can find us pursuing the call of God.

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