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Jesus the Pattern

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:28-29)

As I write this, my twin brother, Bruce, has just died. Of pancreatic cancer. And during the last few hours, fighting for every breath, trying to get the words out, he spoke three words that have been reverberating in my heart since:

What's...(breath)... my...(breath)...pattern?

Bruce was a mechanical engineer. Patterns were important in his work. Years ago he made me a potter's wheel. For this he used another potter's wheel as a pattern, carefully measuring distances. Because he had a pattern to follow, he was able to build a good wheel. A potter's wheel built by guesswork and good intentions would not have been useful to me at all. But this one is. I still use it today. It was built from a good pattern.

Now Bruce was facing death and he was scrambling for a pattern to die by. My last words to Bruce were: "Call on the name of Jesus." Look to Jesus. Look at Jesus.

Jesus is a pattern; He intended it so. He said, "Learn from me, for I am..." All the things Jesus is, that is what we can learn for ourselves. God sent Him to us so we could see how to live successfully: a pattern to die by and, even better, a pattern to live by. He offered Himself as an example, so that we would follow in His steps. To all of us, He says what He said at first to the few: "Come, follow me." Me. Not the Bible. Not the Church. Me.

The Incarnation was a great sacrifice. The magnificent Son of God had to agonize his way down into lowliness, becoming a pathetically weak human, in every way like us except without sin. It was humbling, demeaning, difficult and painful. And permanent. He is a man forever now, never to return to whatever form He had prior to His Incarnation. There were many reasons for this self-humbling humanization, but one of them is this: He became a pattern, The Pattern. The Second Adam. A model of redeemed humanity. Of new people.

Today there is a movement of sorts, the WWJD thing: "When in doubt, just ask, *What Would Jesus Do?*?" This is a lite version of the approach of earlier Christians like Thomas à Kempis, who wrote *The Imitation of Christ*, and Charles Sheldon, author of *In His Steps*. These Christian classics helped people rediscover Jesus the Pattern.

Jn 13:15

Mt 4:19

Mk 2:14

Phil 2:5-11

Heb 2:14-18

I Cor 15:45

As the Book of Hebrews did: "...Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith..."

Heb 12:1-2

And if you will do this, looking to Jesus, learning of Him, there is one thing you will notice about Him if you have your eyes open at all: Jesus was a man of prayer.

Heb 5:7-8

The Prayer Pattern

Mk 1:35-39

Here is Jesus, starting His ministry, staying at Peter's house at Capernaum. First thing that happens: Jesus gets up a long while before dawn and goes out to a lonely place to pray.

Lk 5:15-16

Lk 6:12

Mt 14:23

Lk 22:39

Read on in any gospel. This prayerfulness continued throughout His life right up to the end: Gethsemane. Whenever Jesus was in Jerusalem He would seek out the olive garden because it was the closest thing He could find to a prayer closet.

Lk 22:39-46

Look further: Even on the last night of His life, He was still concerned to teach, train and model out the life of prayer for the others.

Lk 22:40

Though He was struggling as never before with His own issues, even on that night He wanted them to learn the power and protection of a vibrant prayer life. "Pray, so that you won't fall into temptation" on this the most important night of your lives. Jesus brought them there to the Garden not just so they could support Him, but so that they could learn from Him how to withstand the enemy of their souls. He wanted them to be strong. And so to learn prayer.

Lk 22:46

And on that same day, He prayed for us, too, God's newly appointed High Priest praying for His priests (and so this is called the High Priestly prayer of Jesus) "that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them." Jesus wanted one thing above all else, that we would have the same vibrant, intimate love-connection with the Father that He enjoyed. And if this love-connection was so important to Jesus, shouldn't it be important to us?

Jn 17:26

I Jn 1:3

Reflect:

Evaluate your life. Does your daily life reflect this strong connectedness to God? Do you hunger for this as Jesus did? Do you pray for this as Jesus prays it for you?

Further Reading:

The Imitation of Christ, Thomas a Kempis

In His Steps, Charles Sheldon