

David Short points to Jesus' personal walk with the Father

# IMITATING CHRIST

## in our private life

Having a pattern to follow is not our only need as healthcare workers. Attempts to follow Christ's example inevitably fail unless they are energised by his supernatural power. The Gospels record how constantly and critically Jesus was watched,<sup>1,2</sup> and the same is true of those who profess to follow him. A public life lived to the glory of God must be founded upon a personal and private life lived in communion with God and empowered by the Holy Spirit. When a person's public life crashes, there is invariably found to have been a preceding period of hidden erosion of the foundation. Jesus is an example to us both in the purity of his life – sinless in thought, word and deed – and in the closeness of his walk with the Father.

Jesus' communion with his Father is reflected in his **prayer life**. Luke records that 'Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed'.<sup>3</sup> His Gospel contains no less than 17 references to Jesus' prayer life. He spent time in prayer early in the morning,<sup>4</sup> and at significant life events such as his baptism, which inaugurated his public ministry.<sup>5</sup> He spent a whole night in prayer before choosing his disciples,<sup>6</sup> reminding us of the importance of prayer before making staff appointments. One doctor likened Jesus' prayer life to a discussion with an experienced colleague.<sup>7</sup>

There is no doubt that Jesus also spent time in **meditation on the Word of God**. His mind was saturated with the Scriptures. He used them in his arguments with the religious leaders, to instruct his disciples, in his lonely conflict with Satan in the wilderness, and in his time of suffering on the cross. Additionally, Jesus made a habit of **church attendance**,<sup>8</sup> dull and uninspiring though the synagogue services may sometimes have been.

### Application

Healthcare workers, with their busy lives of service cannot be excused the need to spend time with God – the busier we are, the more we need to *set aside* time for God. As Professor Henry Drummond noted, 'Ten minutes spent in Christ's society every day – aye two minutes if it be face to face and heart to heart – will make the whole of life different.' Starting the day with God is good preparation for keeping in touch with him throughout the busy hours of the day; taking problems and duties to him as they arise. It is not enough to store isolated texts in our memory. We need, like Jesus, a deep and balanced understanding of God's Word,<sup>9</sup> and our knowledge of the Bible must be accompanied by obedience to its teaching. It is meaningless to talk of 'loving Jesus' if we do not seek to obey his words.<sup>10</sup>

Jesus' private life is a powerful example to us. Do we put God first in the day, and practise the presence of God throughout the week? It is a wonderful relief to be able to put aside all non-essential work, and just spend time with God. I try to read a few verses from one of the gospels every day. We may not have time for more than a short daily Bible reading during the working week, but Sunday can be an oasis in the desert.

### Conclusion

We need to keep the example of the Lord Jesus always before us. One used to see bracelets with the initials WWJD: What would Jesus do? It is a good motto. However, we cannot become Christ-like simply by our own efforts in the way that budding musicians polish their performance by continual practice. We need the grace of God and the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. We must also accept the moulding effect of the trials of life. The apostle James says: 'The testing of your faith produces endurance.'<sup>11</sup> He adds: 'Let endurance have its full effect so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.'<sup>12</sup>

In the light of the example of Christ, I challenge myself and my readers to answer the following questions:

- Am I developing the mental and spiritual patterns necessary for discerning the will of God and doing it in life's daily choices?
- Do my personal relationships, my marriage and family values, my study and thinking material, and my recreational habits and choices reflect the goal of pleasing God?
- How would my definition of success differ from that of my colleagues?<sup>13</sup>

We must be able to justify all we do on the ground of serving God and pleasing him. In this, there is a profound element of noble obligation: 'Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all!'

*David Short is Emeritus Professor of Medicine in Aberdeen*

### References

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| 1. Luke 14:1                                                           | 8. Luke 4:16                                                                                       |
| 2. Matthew 12:10                                                       | 9. Matthew 4:7                                                                                     |
| 3. Luke 5:16                                                           | 10. John 14:15                                                                                     |
| 4. Mark 1:35                                                           | 11. James 1:3                                                                                      |
| 5. Luke 3:21                                                           | 12. James 1:4                                                                                      |
| 6. Luke 6:12                                                           | 13. Habecker H. <i>Making Christ your role model in Health Care ministry</i> . Texas: CMDS, 1990:3 |
| 7. Stevens D, Lewis G. <i>Jesus, MD</i> . Michigan: Zondervan, 2001:25 |                                                                                                    |