

Fil-Am Community Church
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Key verse: Luke 6:12-13

WHAT WOULD JESUS DO WHEN THE SITUATION IS DIFFICULT?

“One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles.”

Luke 6:12-13 NIV

Many of us have heard of W.W.J.D. And many of us know what it means – “What Would Jesus Do?” It is a phrase that became popular in the 1990’s. It was popularized by Janie Tinklenberg, a youth group leader in Holland, Michigan, who began a grassroots movement among teenagers by encouraging them to remember the phrase. It caught on and spread nationwide and teenagers began to wear bracelets bearing the acronym W.W. J. D. to help them remember the phrase. But do you know where Janie got this phrase from? It is from a book written by Garret Sheldon and Deborah Morris in 1993 entitled “What Would Jesus Do?” The book actually is an updated version of a popular novel written in 1896 by Sheldon’s great-grandfather Charles Sheldon entitled “In His Steps” with a subtitle of “What Would Jesus Do?” In the novel, the main character Rev. Henry Maxwell encounters a homeless man who challenges him to take seriously the imitation of Christ. This leads to many of the novel’s characters asking, “What would Jesus do?” when faced with decisions of some importance.

Now, after WWJD, another acronym came out. FROG. Do you know what it means? Fully Rely on God. That’s supposed to be the answer to WWJD. Well, it didn’t become popular as WWJD.

Anyway, this morning and in the following weeks I want to use the phrase “What would Jesus do?” as we discuss some practical ways of living out our faith in the 21st Century. We’re going to look at different situations in life and different kinds people and see and learn from Jesus on how he would deal with them.

Today, as we begin this series we’re going to look at “What would Jesus do when the situation is difficult?” So, are you ready? Take out your outlines and see what you can jot down as we go through this message this morning.

How do you seek God when you are facing a difficult situation? Every believer will face problems, crisis, difficulties. You will encounter those times when you don’t know what to do. When your faith is tested. When it seems like you’re facing a blank wall or you feel like all doors are closed. And you wonder whether God even cares for you. One thing is true, following Jesus does not mean that you are exempt from suffering. It does not mean that your life will be crisis free. The Bible openly declares this truth, *“Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy.”* (James 1:2 NLT). The Bible does not say **if** you will face trials; it says **when** you face trials. God wants you to know that you will experience these times in your life.

Even Jesus faced a difficulty in life. In fact, he had lots of difficulties which began at the time of his birth! This morning though we’re going to look at one difficult moment he faced. It was the time when he was going to choose twelve of his disciples. When Jesus faced this difficulty, did he rely on his own wisdom? Did he look at the capabilities of each disciple? This is what the Bible tells us in Luke 6:12-13, *“One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles.”*

What did he do? He prayed! And he prayed all night. Because the burden was just too heavy for him to carry. But it was when he consulted his Father in heaven that he gained the wisdom to choose those disciples he would entrust the work of God on earth. Even Judas, the one who betrayed him was chosen. We have to understand that anyone of them could have become a Judas, so to speak.

Jesus chose each of them and each of them had a choice to follow Jesus faithfully or not. In fact, they were all so defective when they were chosen that one denied him, one doubted him, one betrayed him, two wanted to get ahead of the rest, and all were slow in understanding him. In short, they were imperfect. Does that sound familiar? Anyway, we all know what happened afterwards. The apostles were used powerfully by God to turn the world upside down. So, that is what Jesus did when he faced a difficult situation.

Are you in a difficult situation? Are you facing a crisis? Are you carrying such a heavy load and you just want to give in to the tremendous amount of pressure you're feeling? What would Jesus do? Perhaps, we should wear one of those WWJD bracelets to remind ourselves what Jesus would do in our situation.

We're starting this series with a message about prayer because that is where it all begins. Until we recognize the importance of prayer in our lives we will be like a mouse in a maze that hurriedly goes in and out of holes but never finding the cheese that it desires so much.

This morning, I'd like share with you a few principles to learn and apply when we're in the midst of a great turmoil in our lives. Principles that will help you to be drawn to God in prayer.

1. God Cares About Your Problems.

The Lord Jesus, of course, knows about this truth and that's why he always came to his Father in heaven whenever he faced a problem. Remember, he prayed before he fed the 5000 on the mountainside. He prayed before raising Lazarus from

the dead. And he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane before he was betrayed. In fact, he had confidence that God always listens to his prayer. He said before raising Lazarus, “*Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me.*” (John 11:41-42 NIV)

You must understand that God does know about and cares about your problem. 1 Peter 5:7 tells us, “*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*” The Bible says that you are the apple of God’s eye. It means that he cherishes you so much and there’s nothing he wouldn’t do for you because he loves you so much. God wants you to understand that. If you’re here this morning and wondering where God is, let me tell you he never left you. Because, let me repeat, you are the apple of his eye. In Zechariah 2:8b, it says, “*Whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye*”. If you are a child of God, God will protect you from your problem. Now, we should understand that the problem may not go away immediately or our situation may not improve right away, but God will strengthen us and give us his grace as we go through a difficult situation. We should just rely on him and believe that he is able to deliver us.

God cares about your problems. The second principle is

2. God is greater than any problem you might have or face.

When you’re in a crisis, when your situation is truly difficult sometimes it’s hard to believe that God can actually come through for you. Have you ever been through that? I remember a time when I doubted that God can handle the situation I was in. I was so confused that I even said, “Lord, you don’t know what you’re doing”. But, of course, it was only when I looked back that I actually saw that God had full control of my situation.

In the Old Testament, when God promised Abraham and Sarah that they were going to have a child in their old age, Sarah did not believe that. She actually laughed at it and God said to Abraham, “*Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I*

really have a child, now that I am old? ’ Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son. ” (Genesis 18:13-14 NIV) That son, of course, was Isaac who was the father of Jacob who became the father of the Israelite nation.

Jesus says in Matthew 19:26, “*With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.*”

What does that mean for us? It means when you and I face problems, we face them on the principle that not only is my God interested in my problems, but He has already become involved in my problems and is powerful enough to handle them. I need to be reminded that if God is powerful enough to rule the heavens and the earth and nothing or no one can withstand Him, then my problems are no match for Him. God is not weakened or intimidated by my problems. They pose no threat to God.

I am sure there are some of you here today who are thinking, “Pastor, that is OK to think about but you don’t realize how big my problem is.” I don’t have to. God is aware of it. You see the way we pray sometimes indicates whether or not we believe that God is greater than our problems. Do you believe today that God is greater than your problems or do you see Him confused and perplexed by what you are facing? Once you have established the fact that the God you are serving is greater than your problems, then you have your problems close to being solved.

God is greater than any problem you might have or face. The third principle is

3. Praying to God About Your Problem is Your First Response Not Your Last.

There was this pastor of a church who talked to one of his deacons about the dwindling resources of the church. It seems that people are no longer giving and

the church's income has done down dramatically. And so, he invited the deacon to pray with him. The deacon said, "Pastor, has it come down to that?"

What is your first response to a problem? Is it doubt, fear or unbelief? Or is your first response to pray? For many Christians prayer is often the last response to their problem. They say as the deacon said, "Has it come down to that?"

Sadly, many Christians don't pray hardly at all until they find themselves in a problem beyond their control. You see, prayer and seeking the presence of God should become our priority. Now listen closely to what I am about to say. Here is the reason you and I can bring our problems to God and for some reason do not get an answer.

Most of us pray to God on our way to doing something else. Yes, we begin the day in prayer and that is good. It certainly beats not praying at all, but you see, if God is going to solve our problems, then He must be a priority of our lives as well. God needs our attention. He needs our concentration. He needs for us to think the way He thinks. When you receive news that challenges you or you suddenly have to face a problem, what is your first response? Do you dial a friend or do you dial God? Is your first response negative or positive? Is your first response to lose heart or express confidence? Do you honestly believe that the God who lives inside of you will see you through this? What is your first response? The natural response of every Christian who is walking in the Spirit should be total confidence that God can handle any problem which comes your way.

Jesus put God before anything else. He always came to his father. The Bible says, "*But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.*" (Luke 5:16 NIV) That is how Jesus was able to face the daily rigors of life. He drew his strength from prayer. I know the natural response for any person, Christian or not, is to first think of meeting needs in our own strength. This is only natural; however, after

feeling alone for a moment, the power of God should take over to give you great confidence in His presence. “Is there anything too big for my God?” Nothing!

There was a monk who was sitting on a rock by the river. Suddenly, a little boy appeared and asked, “Bro. Lawrence, can you teach me how to pray?”

“Sure, sit by my side,” the monk said gently. When the boy was seated the monk grabbed him by the neck and forced his head into the water.

Naturally, the boy flailed his arms and gasped for air. Then, the monk pulled him out of the water and said, “That’s the first lesson. You must look at prayer as something you desperately need just like air / before you can really pray.”

Whoo! That was a tough lesson. But I think it really drove the point to the boy. And I hope we get the point too. And I hope we’re not neglecting our prayer life. Prayer must be a regular and constant part of our lives. So much so that when faced with a situation that is difficult, the first thing we do is pray instead of feeling guilty, feeling helpless, blaming others, even blaming God.

Prayer should be your first response not your last. The fourth principle is

4. Ask Others to Pray With You.

We know that God answers our prayers individually. We all know that by experience. But we also know that when we ask others to pray for us or with us, the effectiveness of our prayers seem to multiply much more. I can’t explain that. But I know God encourages us to pray with others. Jesus says in Matthew 18:19-20, *“Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”* In the book of Acts, we read the disciples always gathered together to pray when they were faced with a difficult situation and God intervened. Like when Peter was bound in prison and right at the same time that many disciples were praying for him in the evening, an angel appeared and released the chains from his hands and he made his way out of the prison.

But why would God want us to pray with other Christians? Maybe it is this: God does not want us to live like islands isolated to ourselves. You see, He has made us part of a great family. Therefore, as family he wants us to act like one. Meaning, we share each other's burdens, we care for one another, we encourage one another. Because in heaven, that's what we're going to do the rest of eternity.

We will be loving and caring for one another aside from the fact that we'll be worshipping God together. This is training here on earth. We're being trained to worship God through prayer together.

That is why every now and then you receive an email from Tita Tina or myself asking for a prayer request from all of you for this and that. We may not be gathered in one room but to God they are all said as one. And we would like to pray for you. We have a small band of people who pray every Wednesday night at Kuya Elvin and Ate Bebutte's place. They are a faithful couple. They are always there. Tita Nelly and Kuya July come too. Some drop by as well every now and then like Andrew and Rhoda and Barry and Laura and Norma and Ray. And I pray with them by Skype. Because I'm in Richmond during the week. And sometimes I joke with Kuya Elvin, "Where do we pray this time, Kuya Elvin? Your place or mine?"

But, as I said, we want to pray for you. You can always give us your prayer request by filling out that small prayer request form included in the bulletin. And, it'll be better too if we enlarge the band of pray-ers. Even just once a month, come and join us in our prayer meeting at Kuya Elvin's place. 7:30 PM till 8:30 PM. Or if you're more adventurous, you can come to Richmond.

Folks, there is power in praying together with others. We've seen how our prayers were answered in the life of Ate Cindy's sister-in-law Babes, who just recovered from cancer. I showed you her pictures one time. And then we know that many prayed also for our brother here, Ellison, who recovered also from a life-

threatening disease. I was going to ask him for some pictures but he is here, live in person. And you know also how my 80-year old dad recovered from colon cancer after we prayed. Now, some prayers are answered, some are not. I can't explain that as well. But I know that God is sovereign and he has a reason for everything he does.

At the hour of Jesus' greatest need and difficulty, he asked three of his disciples to pray with him. He knew that his time to die has come but still he wished others to pray with him. At that point, I believe Jesus was just like any ordinary man, wishing the comfort of his best friends. At the same time helping them to realize that there are troubles and temptations ahead and they need to ask God for strength. They prayed together although his disciples couldn't keep up with him but in the end, God's purpose prevailed. Which leads us to our last point

5. God's Solution Usually Requires An Act of Faith.

Let's be honest. Most of us want God to solve the problem without requiring anything of us. God's solution often times requires an act of faith on our part because God's solution is usually beyond human reasoning. If we are going to express faith, it implies a risk on our part. Listen. No risk, no growth. God wants us living by faith. He wants us trusting Him.

Could it be that God has already given you a solution to your problem and you don't like step one? You have wanted to short cut God's solution. If God gives you a solution, are you willing to follow it? Are you willing to be obedient to God no matter what He requires. There is no problem God is unwilling to solve if you will be obedient to Him. Yes, sometimes it will require risks. Other times it will not make sense. It may demand discipline on your part. Are you willing to give God His way in your life or are you so self-centered that you are willing to risk it all. That is what it boils down to.

Before I close, let me share with you this story of a guy who was in a very difficult situation. He had a problem big-time. He is actually a Muslim Jihadist who was confronted with the truth of the Bible. He presented his problem to God with much anguish because it meant life and death for him. As you know, Muslims who leave their religion can be killed by their fellow muslims. God answered him in an amazing way and it was up to him to step out in faith.

VIDEO