**Wasted Years?**

Had you ever stopped to ponder the fact that Jesus came to this earth and lived among us for about 33 years, yet He spent only the last 3 ½ years publicly preaching and healing? While it is true that the work He did during His ministry changed the world forever, what were the first 30 years for?

The Holy Spirit chose to reveal very little detail about Jesus’ life before He began teaching publicly, but we know enough to say with confidence that everything about His life was according to the Father’s plan and was in our best interest. What did Jesus accomplish during His first 30 years?

**Jesus grew up like we did.** Luke 2:52 tells us that “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” There are aspects of combining a divine spirit with a human body that is beyond our comprehension, but Jesus subjected Himself to having to develop intellectually, physically, spiritually and socially. It was important for Him to experience the same challenges we face as we struggled to make it to adulthood. Any young person who says, “Life is hard”, Jesus can reply, “I know what you’re going through.”

**Jesus experienced work life.** A life of work means fulfilling obligations, year in, year out, dealing with both honorable folks and unreasonable jerks. Work means weariness, soreness and minor injuries. When a bread-winner says, “making a living is hard”, Jesus can reply, “I know just how you feel.”

**Jesus suffered illness, grief and loss, just like the rest of us.** When Jesus encountered the suffering and hunger and grief of the people around Him, the compassion He felt was no doubt magnified by His own past experiences. Jesus endured decades of daily life in a world ravaged by the effects of sin. When any among us says, “living in this world is full of sorrow, grief and pain”, Jesus can reply, “I can truly sympathize; I’ve been there.”

**The life experiences of Jesus had a purpose.** Hebrews 4:14-16 says, “We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

This passage teaches two important principles: 1) Our advocate with the Father knows how we feel. When we pray to God with broken hearts over sin or suffering, Jesus can relate to our problems and temptations. We can bow before the throne of God with the confidence that Jesus will intercede for us if we are sincere. 2) Jesus endured all the temptations of this life and, through it all, demonstrated what perfect submission to the Father’s will looks like. What a blessing it is to be able to look to His perfect example, strive to walk in the light as He is in the light and to appeal to the redemptive power of His sacrifice when we fail Him. I guess the first 30 years of His life were pretty important after all.

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