

Handling Pressure Jesus' Way

Most of us who are engaged in ministry face the life-long struggle with saying “No,” especially out of fear of disappointing people we are called to love and serve. Sometimes, our reasons never quite satisfy. Having to make difficult decisions in the midst of the on-going pressure of pleasing people can take us down a road of loneliness and isolation. We are not alone. Jesus Himself faced these same pressures and expectations, even from His most intimate friends. From the story of the death of His dear friend, Lazarus, and His response to the sisters who were initially disappointed in Jesus’ inactivity, we learn how to handle pressure Jesus’ way (cf. John 11:11).

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I. Introduction and Background (John 11:1-2)

John 11:1-2 “Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.”

- Ministry Survival Principle #1: Jesus developed intimate friendships.

Proverbs 18:24 “A man of many friends (Heb: reah/ acquaintances) comes to ruin but there is a friend (Heb: ahab/one who loves and self-sacrifices) who sticks closer than a brother” (cf. Luke 10; John 11:3, 5, 36, 11)

- Ministry Survival Principle #2: Jesus had a place of rest.

II. Jesus Was Not Pressured By People (John 11:3-6)

John 11:3-6 So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.” But when Jesus heard this, He said, “This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.” Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was.

John 11:21 Martha then said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.

John 11:40 "... if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" cf. John 2:3-4; 7:1-9

III. Jesus Was Not Distracted By Circumstances (John 11:7-11)

John 11:7-11 Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." This He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep."

Eph. 4:16 "...making the most of your time, because the days are evil."

IV. Conclusion:

John 16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have **tribulation** (Greek: thlipsis = a giant rock on the chest), but take courage; I have overcome the world."

A. We can imitate Christ's actions by:

1. developing intimate friendships
2. scheduling periods of rest and relaxation
3. saying "No."

B. We can imitate Christ's attitudes by:

1. refusing to be pressured by people
2. refusing to be distracted by circumstances

"The STEPS of a man are ordered by the Lord but so are the STOPS." (George Mueller)

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you have a circle of intimate "sticky" friends? (cf. Proverbs 18:24)\
2. Do you have a "Bethany"—a place of rest?
3. In what situations in ministry is it most difficult for you to say "No!"?
4. In what ways are you most pressured by people? How can you best deal with them?
5. In what ways are you most distracted by circumstances? How can you best deal with them?