

Who Is Jesus?

God Became Man

When we've just been dumped, we don't want to talk to someone who has never been in a relationship. When we've just failed our first orgo exam, we don't want to talk to the student who set the curve. When we've lost a close friend or family member, we don't want to hear the words "I know how you feel" from someone who's never lost a loved one. Who do we want to talk to when we have a decision to make or need comfort in the midst of a struggle? For the broken hearted, it's a friend who's recently been given the line "It's not you, it's me" and moved on to find love again. For the disappointed student, it's the older pre-med friend who failed orgo the first time, but just got into medical school. For the one who experienced the brevity of life, it's a friend who witnessed death and learned to live again.

God understood that in order for us to feel His comfort, He needed us to believe Him when He said, "I know how you feel." We've all heard of Christmas, whether you associate the holiday with Santa or Jesus, or both. The holiday reveals how God became man when Jesus was born on this earth so that we would believe His compassion for the trials we face and for the pain we inflict on ourselves.

"Knowing God without knowing our own wretchedness makes for pride. Knowing our own wretchedness without knowing God makes for despair. Knowing Jesus Christ strikes the balance because he shows us both God and our own wretchedness."

— Blaise Pascal, French Physicist and Mathematician

We can identify two causes of our suffering: our bad choices and the circumstances of life beyond our control. As a result of the fact that God became man, we can experience comfort and hope in the midst of both of these problems.

Through Jesus, God in the flesh, we can learn about who we are and who God is. God became man without abdicating his divinity. Jesus was fully human and fully God. The "how" of this question is beyond my capability to answer, maybe Pascal can answer that one, but I can certainly attempt to address the "why."

By becoming man, walking and talking among other men, Jesus was able to reveal a God who brings consolation to those who are hurting. We all make mistakes and bad decisions, and constantly do things we don't want to do. The shame and guilt we feel after doing something wrong can cause us to grieve for a time and usually manifests itself in negative consequences in our lives and in the lives of our loved ones. The fact that God became man means that there is someone to turn to who understands the pain involved in trying to make the right decisions. He doesn't just sympathize with the pain, he suffered temptation to understand it. He came to earth to provide relief from our inability to always do the right thing.

"I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong."
Romans 7:21

Sound familiar? One answer to why God became man to walk on earth was to show that there is a different way to live. This new way involves making right choices, and realizing that when you fail to do so, life goes on and the consequences and guilt of that choice do not have to control or overwhelm you. Jesus provides us with a living example of what it looks like to struggle, but always make the right decision.

"This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin."
Hebrews 1:6

Jesus doesn't just understand our temptations and our pain; He gives us hope to overcome them. As we all know, some of the toughest times of life don't result from our poor choices. Suffering, death, disease, affliction, and oppression abound in everyone's life at some point. But, we can now pray to, talk with, and believe in a God who understands our pain because He felt it himself.

As the time of his death drew near, Jesus suffered depression, anxiety, and stress-human emotions we all feel at various times in our lives. He even cried out to God in distress and felt betrayed by his friends who abandoned and disowned him during his last days on earth.

While we may feel these same emotions for very different reasons, the knowledge that Jesus felt them too through his temptations and suffering brings hope. There is hope in the fact that Jesus truly understands our despair, and even greater hope in knowing that He relates to us not to show pity towards us, but to remind us that the suffering will not kill us, it will make us stronger.

God's humanity, revealed in Jesus, provides a safe reassurance that God isn't distant and unreachable. He knows pain and suffering and therefore has the ability to comfort us in our misery. Not only does Jesus provide us with comfort, His comfort allows us to comfort others. We feel better when we receive encouragement from friends or relatives that have suffered from and overcome the same difficulties we are struggling with at any given moment. Similarly, Jesus provides us with solace because He has suffered like us and therefore can give us tangible relief that gives meaning to the phrase "I know how you feel."

Because of how Jesus can comfort you, you can be the friend who gets dumped, moves on, and consoles the broken-hearted. You can be the student who fails a test and shows your friends that one failure doesn't end your academic career. You can be the friend who suffers loss, finds hope, and motivates a loved one to do the same.

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