

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JESUS AND YOU

John 3:31-36

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Sometimes the best way to learn about something is to compare it to something different. For example, we can better understand the church by comparing it to a business.
 - i. The church is owned by God. A business is owned by a person.
 - ii. The church exists to glorify God. A business exists for profit.
 - iii. The church defines success by faithfulness. A business defines success by dollars.
 - iv. The church has members. A business has customers.
 - v. In a church, God is always right. In a business, the customer is always right.
 - vi. In a church, God is king. In a business, the customer is king.
 - vii. A business strives to beat the competition. The church works with other churches to win souls and make disciples.
 - viii. A business sells its product; the church gives its product away for free.
 - ix. Christians are commanded to participate in church, but they can choose whether or not to patronize a business.
2. As another example, let's compare the Bible and a Harry Potter novel.
 - i. The Bible is true. Harry Potter is fiction.
 - ii. The Bible must be studied diligently. Harry Potter may or may not be read.
 - iii. The Bible is priceless. Harry Potter is worth about \$15.
 - iv. The Bible was inspired by God. Harry Potter was inspired by J. K. Rowling.
 - v. The Bible must be obeyed. Harry Potter has no authority over us.
 - vi. Parents must teach the Bible to their children. Parents may or may not encourage their children to read Harry Potter.
 - vii. The Bible contains the keys to a good life and eternal life. Harry Potter may or may not provide a few hours of amusement.
 - viii. The Bible is for everyone. Harry Potter is for kids, and adult fans of fantasy.
3. In the same way, we can better understand Jesus and how we should relate to Him by comparing Him to us.
4. It's been said that wisdom is the ability to tell the difference. The key to treating things appropriately depends on your ability to tell the difference. For example, if you can't tell the difference between a man and a woman, then you won't be able to treat a woman right. If you can't tell the difference between dating and marriage, then you're not going to have a proper appreciation for marriage. If you can't tell the difference between your spouse and your buddies, then you're going to have a tough marriage.

5. In the same way, if you can't tell the difference between Jesus and you, then you will struggle in your walk with Him. But the more you are able to see how you and Jesus are different, the better you will be able to love and serve Him.
6. That's what we're going to see in our passage today. Jesus and His disciples were beginning to baptize more people than John, and He was attracting bigger crowds, so John's disciples were envious. They got worried and complained to John. In response, John explains the difference between him and Jesus. If they understood the difference, not only would they not be envious, but they too would leave John and follow Jesus.

II. TEXT: John 3:31-36

1. 31 The one who comes from above is above all. The one who is from the earth is earthly and speaks in earthly terms. The one who comes from heaven is above all. 32 He testifies to what he has seen and heard, and yet no one accepts his testimony. 33 The one who has accepted his testimony has affirmed that God is true. 34 For the one whom God sent speaks God's words, since he gives the Spirit without measure. 35 The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hands. 36 The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who rejects the Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him.

III. FIVE WAYS JESUS IS DIFFERENT FROM YOU

1. Jesus is from above, and we are from the earth.

- i. **John 3:31** "The one who comes from above is above all. The one who is from the earth is earthly and speaks in earthly terms. The one who comes from heaven is above all."
- ii. Jesus is "from above" and "from heaven."
- iii. This speaks of Christ's deity. He came to earth and became fully human. But He existed eternally before that as God. **John 1:1-3** "1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created."
- iv. Jesus is from above. We are from earth. Jesus is God. We are His creation.
- v. Since Jesus is God and we are not, then we exist for Jesus, and not the other way around.
- vi. Many people think the opposite. They imagine that Jesus exists to serve them, and help them, and protect them, and to make them happy. Jesus is their buddy. Jesus is their copilot. Don't misunderstand me. Jesus loves you. He promises to care for you. But He doesn't exist for your purposes; you exist for His. If Jesus is your copilot, then swap seats!
- vii. We exist for Jesus for several reasons:
 1. To glorify Him. To reflect His character in all we do so that others may see His goodness.

- a. **1 Corinthians 10:31** “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.”
 - b. **James MacDonald** says that glorifying God means “displaying the superiority of life lived in God.”
 - c. The **Westminster Catechism** written in the 1600s says, “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”
2. To serve Him. To share the gospel with the lost, and to share His love with the needy.
- a. **Acts 1:8** “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses”
 - b. **Matthew 23:11** “The greatest among you will be your servant.”
 - c. **Martin Luther King Jr.** “If you want to be important — wonderful. If you want to be recognized — wonderful. If you want to be great — wonderful. But recognize that he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. That’s a new definition of greatness. ... By giving that definition of greatness, it means that everybody can be great ... You don’t have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don’t have to know [Einstein’s] theory of relativity to serve. You don’t have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love. And you can be that servant.”
 - d. Jesus wants to use you for His purposes. He doesn’t need your ability, just your availability. Pastor Rick Warren teaches six steps to making yourself available for God’s use:
 - i. Review every area of your life. Get away with a Bible, a piece of paper, and a pen, and ask God to let you know what’s coming between you and him.
 - ii. Repent of every sin. Tell God what you did was a sin and you won’t do it anymore.
 - iii. Make restitution. As you make your list, notice the sins that have impacted other people. Maybe you’ve hurt someone or mistreated him. If the person is still alive, make it right – as soon as possible. Don’t just apologize either. If you’ve stolen from the person, give back what you’ve taken. If you’ve cheated somebody, repay him.
 - iv. Receive God’s forgiveness. The Bible says you can go boldly to the throne of God and receive grace and

mercy. God won't reject you or scold you. He'll give you his grace. That's a promise from his Word.

- v. Reveal your faults to a friend. If you don't come clean with another person, you'll still be forgiven. But coming clean to another person is part of the process God uses to heal us emotionally.
 - vi. Repeat these steps regularly. Confession is like a bath. If you don't take one regularly, you'll start to stink. Make confession a regular habit in your life.
3. To worship Him. To praise and thank Him for His goodness and greatness.
- a. **Psalm 30:4** "Sing to the Lord, you his faithful ones, and praise his holy name."
 - b. You were created to worship. You will worship something. You will value something high enough to build your life around it. What will you worship? The creation, or the creator? Whatever you worship will be your master. The only freedom we have in life is the freedom to choose our master. Who will your master be? Alcohol? Drugs? Sexual pleasure? Food? Money? Or will it be almighty God who loves you more than you can imagine?
- viii. **Mark Driscoll** "You can't live free until you realize that there's only one God, and you're not Him. You're not the center of the universe. You're miserable because you're worshipping yourself; you were made to worship and glorify Him. When you make yourself the center, you make yourself miserable. God doesn't say, 'Most important thing, you. Everything else will orbit around that. You sit on the throne, I'll be the butler, you make your requests, and we'll call that prayer.' God demands to be the top of our priorities and the center of our lives. God is not going to be a part of your life; He wants to be God over every area of your life."

2. Jesus is above all, and we are under His authority.

- i. **John 3:31** "The one who comes from above is above all. The one who is from the earth is earthly and speaks in earthly terms. The one who comes from heaven is above all."
- ii. Twice John says that Jesus is "above all."
- iii. Jesus is above all in authority. **Matthew 28:18** Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth."
- iv. Since Jesus is above all, with all authority, then we must submit to Him.
- v. Many people struggle with this. Even many who call themselves Christians. They don't want to do Christ's will; they want to do their own. They only want to submit to Christ when it is convenient, and comfortable, and cheap,

and cool. But Jesus is above all, and therefore we must submit to Him when it is inconvenient, and uncomfortable, and costly, and uncool.

- vi. **Francis Chan** “According to Jesus, far from having no cost, following Him will cost you everything. Far from promising a better life, He warned of intense suffering.... The call to follow Christ is the call to joyfully endure suffering in this life for the promise of eternal blessing in the next.”
- vii. Francis Schaeffer was one of the most influential Christian leaders in the twentieth century. He was raised in a non-Christian home. He was saved in high school and shortly after that he surrendered to the ministry. His dad was furious, and forbade him, and told he would not pay his way in college. His father slammed the door in his face. But Francis Schaeffer was resolved to follow Christ no matter what. A few days later his father came back and told him that he had had a change of heart, and that he would support him through college. Schaeffer said that that decision to follow Christ no matter the cost was the foundation for his future ministry, and the foundation for his dad’s future decision to follow Christ.
- viii. Many Christians seem to think that Christ’s commands are suggestions. You can take ‘em or leave ‘em. They aren’t suggestions, they are obligations.
- ix. In a large company, different managers are put in charge of different aspects of the company. This guy is the vice president of sales. This guy is the vice president of operations. This guy is the vice president of customer service. This guy is the vice president of marketing. This guy is the vice president of human resources. This guy is the vice president of vendor relations. This guy is the vice president of research and development. This guy is the vice president of safety. Each manager has their own sphere of authority. Many Christians treat Jesus like a manager; as if He is the vice president over one or two areas of their lives. They are willing to obey Christ with some parts of their life, but not all the parts. They’ll obey His commands on sex, but not His commands about cursing and dirty language; they’ll obey His commands on murder, but not tithing; they’ll obey His commands about honesty, but not forgiveness. But Jesus is not just the VP; He is the President. He is not just over one or two areas of your life; He is over all; above all.

3. Jesus speaks God’s Word, and we believe Him.

- i. **John 3:32-34** “32 He testifies to what he has seen and heard, and yet no one accepts his testimony. 33 The one who has accepted his testimony has affirmed that God is true. 34 For the one whom God sent speaks God’s words, since he gives the Spirit without measure.”
- ii. John is saying that Jesus speaks God’s word. He speaks authoritatively for God.
- iii. There are several reasons why we should believe Jesus:

1. He speaks from personal experience. “32 He testifies to what he has seen and heard.” When tell you about God, I’m just telling you what the Bible says. Jesus can speak about God with authority because He is from above; He was with God in the beginning. He was in heaven with God. He heard God’s first. He saw God’s face. He was in God’s presence.
2. He speaks God’s words. “34 For the one whom God sent speaks God’s words.” My job is to try to explain God’s word. But Jesus speaks God’s word. That is, since He is God, every word out of His mouth is God’s word.
3. He has the Spirit without measure. Look at the rest of verse 34. “... since he gives the Spirit without measure.” In the Old Testament the Spirit of God would come upon the prophets to inspire them to speak and write His words. But this inspiration was limited. Not every word they spoke or wrote was inspired. But God gave Jesus the Spirit without measure, so that every word He ever spoke, every word ever written, was the word of God.
- iv. Since Jesus speaks God’s word, then we must listen and obey.
- v. Many people think that they can decide who God is, and what He is like, and what He condemns and condones. “I don’t think God would ever send people to hell.” “I don’t think God cares what religion we are, as long as we are good.” “I don’t think God condemns homosexuality; love is love.” But we don’t get to decide who God is or what He is like. We don’t speak God’s word. Jesus does. We listen and obey. We learn who God is from the life and teachings of Jesus.
- vi. Do you know what it is called when you make up your own version of God? Idolatry. **Alistair Begg** wrote, “The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of God.” You have created a god of your own imagination, and that’s who you worship. That’s not the true God. The true God is who Jesus revealed Him to be, and that’s who we must worship alone.

4. Jesus owns it all, and we are His stewards.

- i. **John 3:35** “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hands.”
- ii. The Father has given everything to Jesus. Jesus owns it all. And therefore we are His stewards (money managers).
- iii. This is not a difficult concept to understand. Who owns your cash? Jesus. Who owns your material possessions? Jesus. Who owns your house? Jesus. Who owns your toys? Jesus. Who owns your car? Jesus. Who owns your business? Jesus. Who owns your talents? Jesus. Who owns your time? Jesus. Who owns your stocks? Jesus. Who owns your camp? Jesus.

- iv. This means you are not an owner, you are a steward. You are a money manager. This puts you in a tricky position. It means that you have the ability to misuse God's stuff, but not the authority. Many people confuse the two.
- v. When Joseph was a slave in Egypt, his master was a man named Potiphar. Potiphar placed everything under the care of Joseph. Joseph was the household steward. This gave Joseph the ability to waste, and steal, and mismanage Potiphar's possessions. But that doesn't mean that Joseph had the authority to do so. Joseph was just a steward. His job was to manage Potiphar's money in a way that pleased Potiphar.
- vi. In the same way, God has made you a steward over His money and possessions. This means that you have the ability to steal it, waste it, and mismanage it. But you don't have the authority to do that. That would be sinful, and God will hold you accountable. Your responsibility is to manage God's money in a way that pleases Him.
- vii. One of the clearest commands in the Bible is the command to tithe – to bring the first ten percent of your income and give it to God through your church. **Malachi 3:10** "Bring the full tenth into the storehouse so that there may be food in my house. Test me in this way," says the LORD of Armies. "See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure." God even promises abundant blessings to us, just for managing His money in a way that pleases Him. Yet many Christians are disobedient.
 1. Some Christians don't give a dime to the church. They give more to Starbucks every month than to church. They tip their waiter every month more than they give God.
 2. Some Christians give, but they don't give a tithe. They don't give a full ten percent. But God says, "Bring the full tenth." They want God's full blessings on their finances, but they don't want to bring the full tenth to God.
 3. Some Christians give a tithe, but God has been calling them to give more. Tithing has been called the training wheels of generosity; the training wheels of stewardship. It's the starting place, not the finish line. But many Christians are like adults who are still using training wheels. They haven't grown. They haven't progressed. I'm inspired by those Christians like J. C. Penny, who kept giving more and more until they eventually became reverse tithers. They give 90% to God, and live on the last 10%.
 4. Some Christians not only neglect to tithe, but they gain money by stealing and cheating, and then they spend their money on sinful pleasures.

- viii. How you spend your money is a test of our faithfulness to Jesus. A biographer was asked why he was writing another biography on the Duke of Wellington. He said, "I have an advantage over earlier biographers. I found an old account ledger on how the Duke spent his money. It was a far better clue to what he thought was really important than reading all of his letters or speeches." If someone got a hold of your financial records, what would they find is really important to you?

5. Jesus is the way to eternal life, and we must trust in Him.

- i. **John 3:36** "The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who rejects the Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him."
- ii. God created us for a relationship with Him. But our sins have separated us from God. Now we are under the wrath of God – the settled anger of God against us that will be poured out on the day of Judgment when God sends us to hell for all eternity. But God loves us so much, that He sent Jesus to the world to die on the cross for our sins. He was punished in our place, and He rose again on the third day. Now, God offers to forgive us and to give us eternal life if we will simply believe, or trust in Jesus Christ.
- iii. Many people think that they can earn their way to heaven. They think they can get to heaven by being good. All they have to do is be good enough. When you ask them, "Why should God let you into heaven?" they answer, "Because I'm a good person." Are you really? The Bible says you are a sinner under the wrath of God.
- iv. **William Barclay** It is a basic truth of Christianity that no man who thinks himself good is really good, least of all the man who thinks himself better than other people.
- v. You're not a good person. You're a sinner. And you can't save yourself. But you can be saved. You just have to believe or trust in Jesus Christ.
- vi. What does it mean to believe in Jesus?
 - 1. Trust in Jesus as Savior, and not yourself.
 - 2. Trust in Jesus as Lord, and not yourself.

IV. CONCLUSION

- 1. On the day that Jesus was crucified, the Roman governor of Judea, made an offer to the Jews. His custom was to release a prisoner in honor of the Passover. He gave the Jewish people an opportunity to release Jesus. He said, "Choose which man you want to set free. Jesus or Barabbas." Barabbas was robber, a revolutionary, a rebel, an insurrectionist, a murderer. The people answered, "Barabbas." Pilate asked, "What should I do with Jesus Christ?" They shouted, "Crucify him!" The Jews made the greatest mistake in history that day. They failed to tell the difference between Jesus and Barabbas. Don't make the same mistake. You must see the difference between Jesus and you. He is God, and you are His creation. Turn from your sins and trust in Him for eternal life today.