

# I CAN DO NOTHING ON MY OWN

John 5:30

“No man is an island.”

English poet John Donne included that phrase in a publication of prose he released in 1624. His statement remains well-known even though nearly four hundred years have passed since its appearance because it simply and memorably expresses humanity’s social nature. While we might acknowledge the phrase’s truth, a tendency nevertheless exists to try and do things on our own. And who can fault us – we live in a culture constantly promoting DIY individualism and rags-to-riches stories of hardworking individuals who succeed against all odds. That tendency to individualism, however, grates against God’s expectation of single-minded devotion to Him.

We are taking time this year to focus on discipleship, on committing ourselves to follow Jesus and learn from him so that we can be more like him. Over the last few weeks, we have considered how we can act like Jesus in our relationships. In this lesson, we will consider Jesus’ relationship with God and how his complete devotion to God offers a model to follow in our relationships with God.

## Jesus and God’s will

- Jesus, in his Sermon on the Mount, told the crowd listening to him that the solution to their anxiety about life’s daily needs centered on “seek[ing] first the kingdom of God and his righteousness”<sup>1</sup> (*Matthew 6:25-33*).
- Jesus, who was fully divine and shared God’s identity (*Colossians 1:19; 2:9*), not only encouraged people to seek God’s will but also dedicated himself to seeking God’s will. Consider some of the things Jesus said about his obedience:
  - Even though he claimed authority, Jesus asserted that his exercise of power was bound to God’s will and that “he could do nothing of his own accord (*John 5:19-30*).
  - Jesus claimed to say and speak only the things given to him by God (*John 12:49-50*).
  - Jesus’ dedication to God’s will went beyond his words to include his actions; he, for example, left heaven and came to earth because God sent him (*John 8:42*).
  - Jesus prayed that God’s will would be accomplished rather than his will despite understanding that God’s will involved his suffering and death on the cross (*Matthew 26:29, 42, 44; cf. Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42*).
- Jesus not only talked about his dedication to God’s will, but he also spoke about the reasons motivating his obedience.
  - Love motivated his desire to obey God’s will (*John 5:19-20; cf. John 14:15*).

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<sup>1</sup> All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.



- Jesus ‘hungered and thirsted’ for God’s will, telling his disciples, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work” (*John 4:31-34*).
- He desired to glorify God’s name (*John 12:27-28*).
- Jesus rejoiced in God’s will and his role in God’s purposes (*Luke 10:21-22*).
- A pattern thus begins to emerge from the above passages:
  - Jesus entirely dedicated himself to pursuing God’s will, not because of what he received for his obedience, but because of God’s worthiness and the goodness of His will (*cf. John 4:34; 12:27-28*).
  - Seeking God’s will resulted in a pattern of living that encompassed every aspect of Jesus’ life. It, for example:
    - Shaped his relationships (*John 3:16-17; Matthew 9:9-13; 12:46-50*).
    - Determined what he said, what he did, and where he went (*John 5:19-30; 8:42*).
    - Took precedent over his own will (*Matthew 26:29, 42, 44*).
  - Jesus’ dedication to God’s will resulted in a lifestyle recognized by – and similar to – other people who also dedicated themselves to God’s will (*John 7:16-18*).

## Applications

Like Jesus, our prayer should be that God’s will be done on earth as in heaven (*Matthew 6:10; 26:29*). But praying that God’s will be done requires us to, also like Jesus, fully dedicate ourselves to seeking God’s will. Consider, therefore, some applications of Jesus’ dedication to God in our lives.

- Like Jesus, obeying God will transform all our relationships (*Matthew 12:50; 10:34-39; Ephesians 2:11-3:10*).
- Like Jesus, our concern should not first be about our jobs, our possessions, or our status in our world. Instead, our first concern should be God’s kingdom and righteousness (*Matthew 6:25-33*).
- Like Jesus, obeying God sometimes creates difficult situations for us (*Matthew 26:29; John 15:18-21*).
- Like Jesus, we need a compelling vision of God’s worthy identity and good purposes that motivates our love for him (*Revelation 4:1-5:14; 1 John 5:3*).

Real humanity is not found in self-sufficiency. Real humanity is not found in a social network. Real humanity is only found in embracing an all-consuming relationship with God, as did Jesus. May God help us all be more like Jesus in our relationships with God.

