



WHEN USUAL BECOMES CASUAL

KEY SCRIPTURES: Psalm 119:132, Luke 4:16, Luke 2:41-52, Mark 10:1, Luke 4:42-43, Mark 6:45-46, Luke 5:16, Luke 11:1, John 18:1-5

It's New Year's Eve.

There will be a lot of celebrations tonight, people ringing in the New Year with its empty calendar pages promising fresh starts.

And in the morning, many of those same folks will get started on the resolutions they've made, resolutions to be better. Better at what they eat, or don't. Better at what they do, or don't. Better at what they say, or don't.

They hope to make a new "usual," to have that thing that they are known for because they've repeated it enough times it's become a part of who they are.

I've often foregone the "making resolutions" part of putting a new one-year planner on my desk. If I don't make a resolution, I can't break a resolution. I won't become February's fodder for not hanging in there. I've skipped that part of the New Year tradition because I've know all too well that failure comes when my "usual" becomes nothing more than casual. When it becomes a take-it-or-leave-it, I'll-start-tomorrow kind of thing.

Until this year.

This year, I have made a resolution. My resolution is to be known by the Father as having the same "usual" that Jesus did.

Jesus worshipped the Father and spent time with others who did the same.

- Church was His usual.

Check it out. *"He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom"* (Luke 4:16).

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"...so we can know our value, live with purpose, and make a difference...**In that order.**"



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And do you remember when he lagged behind after a family trip to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover? *"After the feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it...Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions... 'Why were you searching for me?' he asked (his parents). 'Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?'"* (Luke 2:43,44b-46,49).

Jesus taught others how to find their own way to the Father.

- Sharing His good news was His usual.

Everywhere He went, Jesus spread the word. *"Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them"* (Mark 10:1).

And His news was so good that the people begged for more. *"The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them"* (Luke 4:42b).

Jesus spent time with the Father, all by himself.

- Talking to God was His usual.

Jesus knew that prayer was how He stayed ready for life's demands. *"Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray"* (Mark 6:45-46). *"But Jesus often withdrew in lonely places and prayed"* (Luke 5:16).

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Praying was so much His “usual” that the disciples even asked Him to help them make it their “usual.” *“One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray...’”* (Luke 11:1).

Above all, even when the enemy tried to make Him quit because he knew Jesus’ usual, too, Jesus stayed the course. *“When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was an olive grove, and he and his disciples went into it. Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met here with his disciples...Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, ‘Who is it you want?’ ‘Jesus of Nazareth,’ they replied. ‘I am he,’ Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them)”* (John 18:1-2,4-5).

Jesus wouldn’t let the enemy stand in the way.

The enemy knows our “usual,” too. But when our “usual” becomes casual, something unimaginable happens: the enemy shows up and we don’t! Oh, he might wait around for us for a little while, busying himself by staring at our empty seat in church or our unopened Bible on the shelf. But after a while, he will only need to shrug his shoulders and say, “She’s usually here” or “Where is he? Oh well. My work has been done for me.”

Jesus knew the value of making—and keeping—the right resolutions. He knew there were others depending on Him to be obedient in what mattered. He stayed the course and resolved to do and say and be exactly what God had designed for Him.

Jesus kept His resolutions—without fail—because He never let His “usual” become casual.

And I want to do the same.

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