

Spiritual Maturity Part 2: Do You Feel Me?

Discussion Guide – September 21, 2025

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Heb. 4:15

For this reason [Jesus] had to be made like [us], fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Hebrews 2:17-18

[Christ], though in God's form, did not
Regard his equality with God
As something he ought to exploit.
Instead, he emptied himself,
And received the form of a slave,
Being born in the likeness of humans.
And then, having human appearance,
He humbled himself, and became
Obedient even to death,
Yes, even the death of the cross.

And so God has greatly exalted him,
And to him in his favor has given
The name which is over all names:
That now at the name of Jesus
Every knee within heaven shall bow—
On earth, too, and under the earth;
And every tongue shall confess
That Jesus, Messiah, is Lord,
To the glory of God, the father. Phil. 2:6-11

Quotes

"If maturity is measured in our capacity to love when it costs something, empathy is the path that will get us there." Pastor Steve

"Empathy is the capacity to enter into the experience of another, to see and feel as they do, and in so doing, to love them as they are." Henri Nouwen

"Christ's entire agenda was to fully and authentically empathize with us—to identify with humanity so completely his divine life would mysteriously heal and transform us. He plumbed the depths of the human condition and raised us up with himself." Brad Jersak

"What we all want is someone who will listen to us, who will hear not only our words but our hearts. To be understood is as close to love as most of us ever get." Philip Yancey

Discussion Questions

1. How does linking empathy to maturity challenge or reshape your own understanding of what it means to be spiritually mature?
2. Hebrews 4:15 and Philippians 2 emphasize that Jesus fully entered into our human experience. What stands out to you about Jesus' empathy? How does this model shape the way we are called to empathize with others in difficult or divisive situations?
3. Have you ever found yourself afraid that showing empathy might mean compromising your convictions? How do you think we can hold both empathy and conviction faithfully?
4. Sometimes religious people rely on "rules" ("The Bible teaches...") to avoid engaging with people's real stories. Why do you think empathy is often resisted in the church? What barriers—personal, cultural, or theological—get in the way of practicing empathy?
5. Which fruit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control) do you think empathy most naturally leads to in your own life?