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WHAT IF GOD WAS ONE OF US?

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What if God was actually one of us? What if God was as human as us? What if God was not some spiritual force to try to find by doing special things, searching in special places, wearing special clothes or singing special songs? What if God was one of us, right with us and able to be seen and heard in a way that we can see and hear?

On her 1996 album, *Relish*, Joan Osborne sung that hit song, 'One of Us'. The question: "What if God was one of us?" was the catch line that hit a chord among the listening population at the time. It is a good question even now, particularly at Christmas time: What if God was one of us?

If God was one of us, what would that really mean? If God was actually one of us human beings, what would he look like? If you actually got to meet God face-to-face, then would it mean that you would have to believe in all the saints and in heaven and in the bible with all its prophets, and in the Christian church and all its teaching and practices?

If God was one of us then what would you call him? What would be his name and would it be okay with him to call him that name to his face?

Well, at Christmas time Christians around the planet want to say, God is one of us! That's the whole amazing point of celebrating Christmas. That's the whole point of what happened in that stable out the back with its smell of cattle and their cow pads. The young woman and her tradesman husband gave birth to a child in the hay, wrapped the newborn baby up in a few cloths and used a feeding trough for a cot.

This news, that God is one of us, is not what we often hear. Somehow we seem to have this built in view that God is a strange, distant force or reality that we somehow have to try and find by various means. We have to try and find the 'secret' that unlocks the spiritual dimension for us. We have to read the great authors. We have to contemplate the great artists and their work. We have to attend courses on how to "find our true selves" and "the god within". We have to seek and try different kinds of practices that have a spiritual side to reach "God", whoever or whatever "he" or "she" or "that" is.

But this news of God not being a strange, far off and unreachable deity, but a person with real character and real history with humanity who actually comes and seeks us, serves us, finds us, is really quite unbelievable and very very unique in the world of gurus and books on spirituality and self-help. God, the Father, Son and Spirit has come real close to us – not because we found the spiritual key or lived the right morals or did the right spiritual practices, but because we could not find him!

See, this Christmas child, was from a long family line and was the long promised special kid who would one day bring to the world a new beginning; a new closeness between the Creator and his loved creation. He would bridge the huge gap between a very troubled and dark community of human beings and the God of love who brought them into existence. This human child would grow up to claim that he was human and yet divine. He would do miraculous deeds of care and compassion for everyday people – particularly those in great need.

He would speak in stories about everyday things like bread, wine, wheat, weeds, farming, fathers, mothers, sons and daughters and how his new "kingdom" or era or way was beginning and that it would be good for us if we listened and responded in trust.

He would sharply challenge any corruption, oppression or injustice done by those who were called to do better. He even would speak of giving up his own precious life so that human beings would be able to know God up close and personal and trust that God is not out to get them but that God is good to the core.

What if God was one of us? What if God was just a slob like one of us; a stranger on the bus trying to make his way home? What if God knew what it was to be alone – to be lonely, “nobody calling on the phone, except for the Pope maybe, in Rome”, sings Joan Osborne.

With everything we can muster and everything that God has made us to be, the Christian church wants to call out to you today that God is one of us and he knows our loneliness. God knows what it is to be a stranger on a bus. God knows what it is to be a lone with no one bothering to call on the phone.

The innocent human Son of God would eventually cry out, “My God, my God, why have you left me alone?” from the cross of pain he bore for all of our loneliness and wrong. The blood was real. The cry was real. The shame of it all was real and very, very human.

God is one of us and he has a name (or several actually!) He does not mind if we call him his names to his face. His name is Jesus – Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God; Jesus Christ – Messiah, Saviour, Immanuel, which means “God with us”, Prince of Peace, King of all kings and Lord of all other lords of our life.

What if God was one of us? That would be great because then we could know him and know that he really understands us in all our triumphs and losses.

God is one of us. God is Jesus of Nazareth, the very Son of God giving up his life for you and offering to give you his full life of meaning, calling, love and peace this Christmas.