

Disciplines of a Disciple: The Way of Jesus

No matter what line of work you're in, every now and then, you need some space to retreat, refresh, and recharge. One thing that helps me to do this is to get away and learn something new.

There's a host of research on how learning new skills or habits, or acquiring new interests, increase our synaptic connections in the brain and causes dopamine to skyrocket.

Two years ago, on a pastors retreat in Wyoming, I learned how to flyfish for the first time. I had always wanted to learn how to flyfish, and it was a ton of fun.

A few months ago, Pastor Jimmy and I went back to WY. I couldn't wait to get back out there and get some flyfishing in. I was feeling pretty good about my skill level until I went fly fishing with Jimmy. Over the course of about three days, I caught two fish. Jimmy caught 14.

When I saw what Jimmy was able to do compared to what I was able to, I saw this enormous chasm between my ability and his. It was two completely different experiences.

This idea correlates to what happens to us that are genuinely seeking to follow Jesus. As we study and read about the way of Jesus, we immediately see a gap between the life that Jesus promises and the lives we're actually living. A gap between the intimacy with God that other people have, and what we're personally experiencing.

We see an invitation to abundant life and yet many of us would say that the lives we're living aren't abundant, and there is disparity between the way of Jesus, the invitation of Jesus, and the life we are currently living.

As a pastor, I spend a lot of time getting to know people, and one of the major themes I've paid attention to over the years is how many of us feel a deep chasm between the life we're living and the life that God promises.

Instead of the peace that passes understanding, many of us are carrying a constant sense of anxiety, constant stress, hypervigilance, and we're always in a hurry, running from one activity to the next just trying to keep up with the demands of our work, or our families, or with the school year starting up.

If we're honest, many of us would say that we are not really living the life that we know God promises, but we don't know how to get from where we are now to where God invites us to be.

This is why last year we began talking in depth about the practices of Jesus—the rhythms and ways of Jesus.

Because the truth is,

You're never going to experience the life Jesus promised
if you don't do the things that Jesus did.

Many people want the benefits of the abundant life without having to change anything about the way they're currently living. But if we'll take inventory of the habits, the rhythms of our lives, and measure them against the practices of Jesus, we can gain a clearer picture of where we are and how to get to where Jesus invites us to be.

Maybe you've attended church your whole life and you have no idea what **the abundant life** I'm referring to is. Maybe you've been living under the weight of legalistic, religious self-effort and there is no celebration or joy in your relationship with Jesus. Or maybe you're exploring faith, you're open to Christianity, but you've experienced the scorn, anger, judgment, and condemnation of those who claim to know Jesus.

My invitation to you today is to not base your decision about Jesus on imperfect followers. Instead, base your decision about Jesus on JESUS!

For many of us, as followers of Jesus, we don't have a deep experience of the "easy yoke" that Jesus invites us into. Or we feel it at times, but it doesn't last, and as a result, much of our Christian lives are spent being weighed down by guilt and shame for not being better or accomplishing more than we are. So, for many of us, our experience of the Christian life is that it's not working! There is no JOY, there is no life!

The end result, especially in the Western church, is people are deconstructing and renouncing their faith, but the reason for their abandonment of Jesus rarely (if ever) has anything to do with Jesus, and it has everything to do with a misapplication and misrepresentation of the WAYS of Jesus in the world!

So today, this is the invitation...

Ephesians 4:23-24, "...take on an entirely new way of life—a God-fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside and working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces His character in you."

I want the character of God to be reproduced in me. I want to become a person that is more loving, more patient, more joyful, more at peace. I want to live under the easy yoke of Jesus and He grows in me Christlike character.

The church's greatest witness to the world is not programs, but people.

It's not services, it's not the preaching, it's not music, it's not programs. It's you and me. It's your character. It's who you are and how you live in the world. That is the greatest witness of the gospel. The only way we're going to reach the world with the goodness of God is if we're living in and experiencing the goodness of God. *The only way you're going to live in and experience the goodness of God is by following the way of Jesus.*

- Jesus attracted people that religious people repelled—the sinners, the lost, the broken. They were so nitpicky and legalistic, and so tightly wound by their own rules and regulations and expectations of others, that they completely missed the abundant life God offered.
- But when Jesus came around, they were drawn to Him because He had something they'd never seen before. Not legalism but love.

I want to be like Jesus, and the only way I can become like Jesus is if I live the way that Jesus lived and do the things that Jesus did.

Last year, we spent a few months talking through the practices of Jesus through these 4 categories.

1. **Private Devotion** – Growing in intimacy with Christ.
2. **Biblical Community** – Growing in relationship with others as you follow Christ together.
3. **Missional Living** – Making a spiritual impact in your relationships and community.
4. **Kingdom Stewardship** – Faithfully investing what God has entrusted to you.

PRIVATE DEVOTION

1. SCRIPTURE

- a. John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."
- b. Matthew 4:4, Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

2. SABBATH

- a. Matthew 12:8, "For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."
- b. Luke 4:16, "...as was his custom, He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day..."

3. SOLITUDE

- a. Luke 5:16, "But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places..."
- b. Mark 1:35, "And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, He departed and went out to a desolate place..."

4. FASTING

- a. Matthew 4:2, “And after fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry.”
- b. Matthew 17:20-21, “So Jesus said to them... ‘However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.’”

5. PRAYER

- a. Matthew 22:41, “And [Jesus] knelt down and prayed, saying, ‘Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done.’”
- b. Luke 9:28, “Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.”

When you think about **Biblical Community**, Jesus had his 3, his twelve, the seventy. He lived life with others.

Missional living: Jesus’ whole strategy was to disciple the few in order to reach the many.

Kingdom Stewardship: If ever there was an example of what it looks like to steward your whole life for the Glory of God, it is the life of Jesus.

When we say we’re followers of Jesus, we’re saying that we are people that are practicing the ways of Jesus.

Being a follower of Jesus means your whole life is surrendered to God every day of the week, not just one hour once a week.

One of, if not the greatest, dangers to the church today is the shallow Christian.

“The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people.”

—Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*

Our hope and desire is for this body of believers to become deep people. A body of believers that is deeply formed into the image, the character, and the ways of Christ—that we would be people that go deep with Jesus and experience the life Jesus invites us into.

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