



**Daily Devotionals: Love God | January 22, 2023**

***Matthew 28:19-20***

***Effective Discipleship***

**We desire to be mature in our faith by being with Jesus, becoming like Jesus, and doing what Jesus did.**

**Day 1**

After Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus looked at His followers and said, "Go and make disciples of all nations..." (**Matthew 28:19-20**).

As a church, our heart is to have effective discipleship.

Apprenticing under Jesus is so vital for followers of Jesus today because everyday we're being formed and shaped by the world around us. Smart phones, social media, news agencies, advertisers, Netflix, HBO Max – all of these entities are jockeying for your attention and are implicitly shaping your mindset, worldview, character, and habits.

As Jesus followers, we want to make sure the right thing (or the right *person*, rather) is shaping us.

Let's look at **Matthew 4:18-22**.

*<sup>18</sup> As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup> "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." <sup>20</sup> At once they left their nets and followed him.*

*<sup>21</sup> Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, <sup>22</sup> and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.*

Jesus was a 1<sup>st</sup> century "Rabbi" or "Teacher." In fact, many times throughout the gospels he is referred to as such (see **Mark 10:51; Luke 19:39; John 1:35-39, 3:1-4, 6:25**). Rabbis would



teach, interpret the Hebrew Scriptures, and would take certain people “under their wings” to show them how to live a life pleasing to God. These people were called “disciples.”

When Jesus calls these fishermen in **Matthew 4**, he is calling them to disciple under Him. A disciple is a student, learner, follower, or apprentice – kind of like how today one might apprentice under a master welder or how a student fresh out of college might student teach under a more experienced educator.

Put simply, a disciple in the 1<sup>st</sup> century oriented their life around three main goals: (1) being with their Rabbi, (2) becoming like their Rabbi, and (3) doing what their Rabbi did.

### **1. Be with their Rabbi**

Disciples in Jesus’ day weren’t like students in a classroom, showing up a couple times a week for a lecture. They were with their Rabbi 24/7. As Jesus’ disciples today, we want to do the same. Because Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling inside them (**Acts 2:38; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17**), we have the presence of Jesus with us wherever we go.

If Jesus is truly our Rabbi, it follows then that we should *be with Jesus*.

### **2. Become like their Rabbi**

Rabbis in Jesus’ day also wanted to mold their followers into the kinds of people who would naturally do the same kinds of things and live the same kinds of lives that they themselves lived.

Jesus’ call as a Rabbi is the same. His call doesn’t end with just being *with* Him. He also wants to help His disciples **become** the kind of people that would look, live, and love just like Himself. If Jesus is our Rabbi and we are His disciples, this means that we should *become like Jesus*.

### **3. Do what their Rabbi did**

Rabbis in Jesus’ day also expected their disciples to learn to do the kinds of things that they themselves did. Jesus, as a Rabbi, was no different. If Jesus is our Rabbi and we are His disciples, this means that the final goal we should orient our lives around is *doing what Jesus did*.

- Jesus prayed, so we pray.



- Jesus disciplined others, so we disciple others.
- Jesus read the Scriptures, so we read the Scriptures.
- Jesus cared for the sick and the broken, so we do the same.

You get the point...If Jesus is our Rabbi, we should *do what Jesus did*.

We'll dig a little deeper into these three areas over the next three days, but know that our desire as a church is to see our entire congregation **be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what Jesus did.**

### **Questions for reflection:**

- Many Christians see Jesus as their Savior and Lord but not necessarily as their Rabbi. Do you see Jesus as your Rabbi (Teacher)? Why or why not? If yes, what have you learned from Him? If not, how has the reading today challenged your thinking?
- Which of the three aspects to being a disciple (being with Jesus, becoming like Jesus, doing what Jesus did) are you most naturally drawn to? Which do you find hardest? Explain.
- What do each of these three aspects of being a disciple look like for you practically? List some practical ways in the space provided.

BE WITH JESUS:

BECOME LIKE JESUS:

DO WHAT JESUS DID:



## Day 2

This week we've been talking about discipleship to Jesus. And we even narrowed discipleship down into three distinct goals: (1) Being with Jesus; (2) Becoming like Jesus; and (3) Doing what Jesus did. Let's look at that first goal a little more in depth today.

### ***Being with Jesus***

Pastor and author John Mark Comer writes the following:

*"Our primary goal as followers of Jesus is learning to live in a constant state of connection to the Spirit. This is how we are able to be with Jesus, our Rabbi. We must invite him into every moment and learn to always be in two places at once—at home and with Jesus, at work and with Jesus, on your commute and with Jesus. Bring his presence into the routine of your daily life."*

When we talk about "being with Jesus," we're referencing the idea that through the death and resurrection of Jesus, access to God has been achieved for us (**Ephesians 2:18**). And because of that finished work, we don't *just* have access to God, but now we can have a personal, experiential, real, life-giving relationship with the God of the Universe. We're invited into **intimacy** with God.

All too often though, people opt to walk through modern life without accessing this relationship. People elect to go through life hurried, spiritually weak, and malnourished instead of drawing from the never empty well that is the Presence of God. Unfortunately, there are many Christians who simply never realize they could have this kind of relationship with God.

Let's look at what "being with Jesus" really requires.

#### **1. It requires us to be with God.**

In **Matthew 6:6**, Jesus says this: "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."



How can you take time and make space where you can go away to be with God? In the rush of modern culture, do you have a room, a space, a secret place where you can be alone with God? Have you made time in your crowded calendar to just spend time with Jesus?

## **2. It requires us to learn to see God in the everyday.**

In *A Testament of Devotion*, Thomas Kelly writes,

“There is a way of ordering our mental life on more than one level at once. On one level we may be thinking, discussing, seeing, calculating, meeting all the demands of external affairs. But deep within, behind the scenes, at a profounder level, we may also be in prayer and adoration, song and worship and a gentle receptiveness to divine breathings. The secular world of today values and cultivates only the first level believing this is where the real business of mankind is done... But we know that the deep level of prayer is the most important thing in the world. It is at this deep level that the real business of life is determined.”

If you read through the gospels, you’ll begin to see that Jesus lived life with an awareness of God’s presence in His own life (**John 5:19; John 14:10-11**). This is what Paul means when he exhorts us to “pray without ceasing” (**1 Thessalonians 5:17**).

Though it may seem odd at first, Christians are able to order our thought life to be on two levels at the same time, in the day to day and at the same time aware of what God is doing—what He’s saying, how He’s leading and directing.

On which level do you operate? Are you caught up in the hum of the everyday? Or are you able to see what God is up to so you can join Him in it?

God wants to nourish your soul. He desires to turn your life from spiritual wasteland to spiritual oasis. He longs to meet with you in the secret place. He wants to be with you in the everyday. This is how we live life *with Jesus* in the modern day. It may take effort, but it’s worth it.

### **Questions for reflection:**

- Would you say you live life “with” God? If yes, what does this look like? If not, how would you describe how you relate to God?



- In Thomas Kelly’s description of ordering our mental life, which level do you feel like you primarily operate on – level 1 (the “thinking, discussing, seeing, calculating, meeting all the demands of external affairs”) or level 2 (the “behind the scenes” awareness of “gentle receptiveness to divine breathings”)? Explain.
- Have you ever experienced Level 2 thinking? When? What was that like for you?
- How might you be able to tangibly practice cultivating Level 2 thinking – a deep awareness of God’s presence and voice in your life?
- How does *being with Jesus* help you cultivate intimacy and love for God?



### Day 3

Yesterday we began looking at a life of discipleship by touching briefly on living life **with Jesus**. Today, we'll dig into the second characteristic of discipleship: **becoming like Jesus**.

#### ***Becoming like Jesus***

**Luke 6:39-40** says, "He [Jesus] also told them this parable: 'Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.'"

This parable is to two audiences: (1) Those who are influencing people to live life apart from God and God's Kingdom; and (2) Those who are *following* (knowingly or not!) these people.

(1) To the influencers, Jesus is saying that if you're not pointing people to follow *Him*, then you're ultimately like the blind leading the blind. And you will eventually lead yourself and others into a pit.

(2) To the followers, Jesus is saying that you need to know who is influencing *you*! Is it someone who knows how life ought to be lived or are you following the blind?

When we talk about ***becoming like Jesus***, we're talking about becoming the kind of person He is – to think like He thinks, to act like He acts, to take on His character, and to live as He lives in the power of the Holy Spirit. In our world, this isn't easy.

Part of making and being disciples means realizing that our culture and our world are doing their best to disciple *us*. As theologian Ronald Rolheiser writes,

"Culture today is so powerful and alluring that it often just swallows us whole. Its beauty, power, and promise generally take away our breath and our perspective. The lure of present salvation – money, sex, creativity, the good life – has for the most part entertained, amused, distracted, and numbed us into a state where we no longer have a perspective beyond that of our culture and its short-range soteriology."

In other words, the world is offering a "salvation" of sorts that falls short of what Jesus offers and we'll buy into it if we're not alert. We don't want to be the kinds of people who have been captivated by our world and swallowed by our culture. This is why Jesus' words here are crucial.



Jesus says repeatedly throughout the gospels that He alone is the one who sees clearly (see **John 6:35, 41, 48, 51; 8:12; 10:7, 9; 11:25; 10:11, 14; 14:6; 15:1, 5**).

And because this is our belief, it's our hope that every person who is a part of our church would be actively on a journey of **formation**. Formation is the process of becoming like Jesus. And like Jesus said above, it takes training. We aren't born *naturally* able to look, live, and love like Jesus. It's far from our default.

Here are three ways we can actively pursue formation:

1. Pursue the **Scriptures** – this means that in order to be able to supplant the falsehoods we hold from the world around us, we need to know what the Scriptures teach – about Jesus, about the way of Jesus, about God, and more.
2. Pursue **“training”** – this means that we don't just become like Jesus by acquiring the right knowledge. You don't acquire virtue by learning *about* virtues. You love more by loving others. You grow in patience by practicing patience. You grow in humility by practicing humility.

For centuries, Jesus followers have pursued rhythms like reading Scripture, prayer, fasting, tithing, generosity, simplicity, silence and solitude, etc. as ways to help them become like Him.

We believe that through small, incremental steps, in conjunction with the Holy Spirit, we can utilize these practices to train us to become more like Jesus.

3. Pursue **community** – this means that we need other people to help on the journey. We can't become like Jesus solo. You need a tribe (and your tribe needs you!).

It's through teaching, training, and community in the power of the Holy Spirit that we can make sure we are becoming like Jesus.

### Questions for reflection:

- In what ways do you feel pressured to live, act, think, or feel a certain way by the culture around you (be it culture at large, your family, etc.)?





- Which of the three aspects of becoming like Jesus (teaching, training, and community) do you need more of in your life? Explain.
- What does “becoming like Jesus” look like practically for you?



## Day 4

After looking at **becoming like Jesus** yesterday, today we'll look at the final aspect of discipleship: **doing what Jesus did**.

### *Doing what Jesus did*

When we look at Jesus' life and ministry, we quickly see that He was for something bigger than Himself – Jesus was about seeing justice and peace invade the earth. Jesus embraced **mission** as a core part of His life. Part of apprenticing under Jesus is taking up that same mantle.

In **Matthew 4:23-25** we read,

*Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them. Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.*

Jesus doesn't just talk the talk, he walks the walk. He announced God's Kingdom now being available to all through his healing, exorcisms, and restorative work in Galilee. **Jesus connects sharing the gospel with tangible acts of love.** He preaches the Gospel, but He also brings healing, shalom, justice, and peace to a spiritually, socially, and culturally broken world. **This is the heart of being missional.** This is what it means to **do what Jesus did**.

Jesus' life was characterized by preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (**Mark 1:14-15**) and by loving the broken (as we read in Matthew). As His disciples, we work to do what we see our Rabbi doing. We preach the Gospel and we move into the brokenness around us to give our message weight and confidence.

Pastor Jon Tyson writes,

*“As a result of human sin, systemic evil, and spiritual warfare, our world is broken and far from God. Although God created the world to be good and holy, our world and our city are full of hatred, violence, division, pride, greed, injustice, addiction, pain, disease, and death. Our city desperately needs to be healed, restored, and renewed. Only God can*



*bring about the renewal we long for, and he has chosen to do this through the proclamation of the gospel – ‘the good news of the victory of Jesus’ – and the advancement of His Kingdom through His people.”*

What followers of Jesus have known since the inception of Christianity is that God has called us to join in His mission – to be light in the midst of the darkness. To do that, we are invited to disciple under the One who did it best – Jesus. If we want to be a church that is for the 317, may we be a people who live *with* Jesus, *become* like Jesus, and *do* what Jesus did. All three of these work in conjunction with one another.

As we are WITH Jesus, we become like Him. As we BECOME like Him, we DO what He did. As we DO what He did, we BECOME like Him. As we BECOME like Him, we wind up spending more time WITH Him. It goes on and on and on until Christ returns, and we can fully join Him in glory.

### **Questions for reflection:**

- When you think about “doing” the things that Jesus did, what feelings begin to arise in you?
- If the temptation in “doing what Jesus did” is to swing between sharing the Gospel and doing justice, which extreme do you drift to more easily to? Explain. Why are both required?
- Think over the last month of your life. What has sharing the Gospel with others looked like for you? What has loving your neighbor looked like for you? What has been your motivation in these endeavors? What does looking over the past month reveal?
- In what practical way can you “do what Jesus did” this week?



## Day 5

This entire week we've been talking about being disciples of Jesus. And over the last three days, we've talked about how that looks like being with Jesus, becoming like Jesus, and doing what Jesus did.

For today, we want for you to intentionally create some space in your life to be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what Jesus did.

We call this kind of thing a "Rule of Life."

The word "rule" has all kinds of weird connotations in our culture, but as one author writes, "The Latin word we translate 'rule' was originally the word for TRELLIS in a vineyard. In the same way a vine needs a trellis to lift off the ground, so it can bear the maximum amount of fruit and keep free of predators and diseases, we need a rule as a kind of support structure to organize our life around 'abiding in the vine' as Jesus imagined."

Most of the time, as we go through life, our rhythms change and take shape without us even realizing it. Life has a way of just *happening* to us. We don't want that to be our case. We want to become like Jesus, *intentionally*.

So, today we want to create a simple "rule of life" for this season. A Rule of Life is a set of practices and relational rhythms that help us create space so we can connect with Jesus in meaningful ways.

It's kind of like a budget, but instead of managing your finances, it's for being with Jesus, becoming like Jesus, and doing what Jesus did. Just like creating a budget helps you put your money where you want it to, a Rule of Life helps you put your time and attention where you want it to.

As you get started, here are a few things to keep in mind from our friends at [Practicingtheway.org](http://Practicingtheway.org):

**1. Start Small:** Be realistic! It's tempting to want to put ALL you can on your sheet on Day 1, but start where you are, not where you feel you ought to be. The key is to move forward at a deliberate, yet unhurried pace.



**2. Be Specific:** Commit to small practices that are more practical and embodied instead of vague and idealistic. For example: “I will do sabbath on Sundays.” rather than “I want to be more relaxed.”

**3. Work With Your Personality, Not Against It:** If you’re an introvert, mark intentional time for purposeful silence and reflection. If you’re more extroverted, make a plan to partner with friends for specific group practices. Make your Rule of Life work for you, not against you.

**4. Balance Structure and Spontaneity:** Know your internal starting point. If you find yourself drawn to an overly structured approach, remember the Spirit often meets us with unscheduled interruptions. If you are resistant to planning, how might you find more internal balance with set rhythms? Again, start small.

**5. Change Is Inevitable:** A Rule of Life is a work in progress. Make time to occasionally reflect on what this is teaching you. We encourage you to be curious and willing to experiment to discover what works and what needs adjusting. The goal, above all, is to be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what Jesus did.

## **Rule of Life**

**Goal:** The goal of crafting a rule of life is to help you be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what Jesus did. Use the space below to craft daily and weekly rhythms to help you do just that.

Answer the questions below to help you craft your Rule of Life:

1. When and where do you feel closest to God? What practices naturally draw you towards Him?

Here are some practices we’ve found helpful over the years:

- Start the day by reading Scripture (a Psalm and a portion of one of the gospels is a great way to start!)
- Pray before every meal
- Take a walk outside



- Get some kind of physical exercise (there are all kinds of free online tools for this, especially for kids!)
- Drink water—it's just good for your body and your brain!
- Keep your phone on the charger until you've spent time with Jesus
- Limit screen time and news intake—set time limits and manage when you'll be on your phone
- Limit escapist behaviors—alcohol, television, sugar, staying up late, caffeine intake
- Get 8 hours of sleep
- Create something (bake, color, draw, build, write, film a video)
- Clean something (especially that closet that's been on your list forever!)
- Play a board or card game—especially a new one!
- Make a gratitude list every day (maybe even put these somewhere where everyone in your house can see them and add to them)
- Read a good book
- Call someone who isn't in your house right now and check on them
- End each day in prayer
- Attend church weekly
- Buy one person's lunch or coffee
- Practice Sabbath

2. What daily rhythms do you need to help you be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what Jesus did? Think about time in Scripture, prayer, silence and solitude, etc – all of these are common spiritual practices we can pursue to help us be better disciples of Jesus.

3. What weekly rhythms do you need to be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what Jesus did? Think about rhythms like going to church on Sundays, Sabbath, tithing, attending life group, taking communion, having someone over for dinner – all of these are common spiritual practices we can pursue to help us be better disciples of Jesus.



4. Now, think about what it would look like for you to incorporate these daily and weekly practices into your ideal week. After you incorporate those practices into your days and week, fill in the rest of your week with the other normal rhythms that you are committed to in this season.

5. Lastly, schedule a time to review your Rule of Life. As the days pass, so do our needs. Feel free to adjust your Rule of Life as needed. This isn't meant to be burdensome. Rather, this is meant to help you intentionally be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what Jesus did!