

### ***“How to Spend a Day With Jesus [Part One]”***

I want to ask you to do is to choose a hero, someone past or present, that you would love to have spend the day with you...anyone from throughout history or in the present. Whom would you choose? I think I would choose Abraham Lincoln or Nelson Mandela. Now, just imagine your choice spending the entire day with you – a normal day of going to work or whatever. What would you do differently because they are there? What do you do that you wouldn't do because somebody is witnessing it? What would you start doing because of their influence? What wisdom would you seek from them? In what ways would you be forever changed by that one day?

Now let's just imagine that one morning when you awake, there is Jesus sitting beside your bed. After you freak out or mutter something about thinking that heaven would be more impressive than this, Jesus says, "I'm here to spend the entire day with you. I just want to be with you today, whatever you do and where ever you go. No one else will see me or hear me, it's just me and you." How would that day be different?

You might find that it changes your whole attitude. Instead of seeing negatives and obstacles you begin to see opportunities and possibilities. Maybe you find you're just not anxious about anything. Major anxieties don't seem so big, and little nuisances aren't even noticed.

You might find that you relate to people differently because Jesus is always there with every person that you encounter. And you notice the way that Jesus looks at that person you're talking to. You see how much he loves that person. And a funny thing happens. You find yourself looking at that person the way that Jesus does. You find yourself seeing what Jesus sees in that person. You find yourself starting to respond to that person the way that Jesus does—not because you have to, but because you want to.

You find it's very comfortable talking to him, so you visit quite a lot through the day. But you'd probably be just as comfortable when you're not saying anything to each other, you're just together. While you're driving your car, you look over and there's Jesus watching you drive. He looks a little nervous. So you find yourself driving a little more slowly than usual. You're careful about how you greet other drivers.

You find your level of gratitude, and confidence, and wonder, and joy going up, and you don't feel lonely. And you find, not only do you like being with him, you like who you're becoming in his presence. You discover he's very polite. He will not intrude his presence where he's not wanted. And sometimes, the truth is, there are moments when you don't want him around. There are moments when you want to do something or say something you'd rather not have him see. But amazingly, you can talk to him even about this. He understands. And he says, "We can work on this, you and me. We'll work it out."

And you end the day just the way you started it—in your bed, talking to Jesus. You and God look back on this day that you have walked through together. And you talk about what went well. And you talk about where you've got things wrong and you learn.

And then, last thing, just before you go to sleep, you ask him almost like a little kid, "Do you think you could stay with me awhile?" And he says, "Well, my plan is to sit here all night and watch you while you sleep. That's one of my favorite things to do. And tomorrow, if you want, we can do this again."

That was using our imagination, but what if that were reality? I mean, I really think that's what Jesus has in mind. I believe his desire is that we would let him be totally integrated into the everyday things and moments. I think that's what he means, that's what he promises when he says stuff like this:

Matthew 28:20, **"I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20, NIV)**. He said, **"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever" (John 14:16, NIV)**. God says, **"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5, NIV)**.

Jesus believes it is possible, no...Jesus has made it possible for ordinary people, like you and me, to walk with him through each and every day. But this happens one day at a time. So one day at a time I must learn, we must learn together, how to live one ordinary day with Jesus, because if you can spend one day with Jesus, you can spend every day with Jesus.

One of my spiritual heroes, John Ortberg, is the one who got me thinking about this and I want to share some of what I learned from him. So we're going to look at some things we do every day, ordinary things that we can invite Jesus to be part of. So let's start with the beginning of the day. I want to give you a little biblical quiz here. Are you ready? According to the Old Testament, when does the day start? I'll give you a few different options.

**Option number one:** when the alarm clock goes off. Why do we call this an "alarm" clock? Maybe it's because it scares us out of our slumber! It's as if it is saying, "Be alarmed! It's day! Something bad might happen." Why not a "resurrection clock" or a "seize the day clock"? No, it's an "alarm clock." I don't like that. That's option number one. Not the right option. So let's go on.

**Option number two:** when the alarm clock goes off four times because I know I can hit the snooze four times and still get to work on time. Okay? Lots of you would vote for that one. **Option number three:** when the coffee's ready. Just open up a vein and pump the stuff right in. **Option number four:** at night. It's a very interesting thing that from a Scriptural perspective, the day actually begins at night.

Think back to Genesis, the Creation narrative. Genesis 1:5 says, "And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day." Evening and morning. In Jewish life, when does the Sabbath begin? Sundown. Not sunup, but when the sun goes down.

Eugene Peterson writes that the Bible is trying to help us remember something in this. It's what he calls "The rhythm of grace." And it begins with sleep. Sleep is a way of acknowledging that everything does not depend on me. I go to sleep, God goes to work. Our bodies are resting and healing and crops are growing in the ground. God is causing good things to happen and I'm not doing anything. It's part of the gift of grace. Psalm 3:5 says, **"I lie down and sleep; I awake again, for the Lord sustains me" (Psalm 3:5, NIV)**.

Sleep is a gift from God. But it's a gift that we don't often unwrap. William DeMent is considered a guru on sleep and wrote the book *The Promise of Sleep*. DeMent testified before the U.S. Congress. He said that we live in a world where we have a sleep debt that is more dangerous to our country than the national financial debt. He writes about the accidents that are caused by sleep deprivation. The Exxon/Valdez spill is a real famous one. The potential meltdown of Three Mile Island happened because of sleep deprivation.

It's estimated that 24,000 people die every year in car accidents caused by sleep deprivation. Lack of sleep causes people to be irritable, do sub-par work, be less loving, and generally feeling miserable. Face it, it is hard to live like Jesus if you're sleep deprived! But we put up with it. We accept feeling tired and sleepy as if it were just normal. And sometimes we complain or even brag about how little sleep they get.

So if we're going to spend the day with Jesus, we need to start by letting him renew and restore us through sleep. For some of you, the single most helpful earthly thing you could do is go home and get a really good night's sleep tonight.

So let me give you a few suggestions. First, from some contemporary experts, and then from Scripture. First of all, arrange to get enough sleep. Go to sleep at the same time each night. Just arrange for it. Avoid caffeine, food, or exercise right before you go to bed. Don't watch television late into the night. If you're married, experts suggest you make love each night, just before bedtime. I just made that one up, actually, but hey, why not?

Now, this one is from Scripture. Before you go to sleep at night, resolve any household conflicts. Paul says, "**Be angry, but do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger and do not make room for the devil**" (Ephesians 4:26, NRSV). That's great wisdom, here, on this. Whatever attitude you habitually go to sleep with becomes normal for you. If you go to sleep with unresolved conflict and anger, you are teaching yourself that's normal. If it's anxiety and fear, you're learning that's normal. If it's trust and peace, then that becomes a part of you. The way you go to sleep at night really does set the tone for how you live the next day. Take a few moments at the end of the day, before you go to sleep, to review your day with God. Make peace with the people in your house that you need to.

If a sin comes to mind, confess it and ask forgiveness. If you were blessed, say, "Thanks." If any concerns come up, just give them to God. He's going to be up all night anyhow. So just give them to him and you go to sleep. And end by telling God that you want to spend tomorrow with him. Give God the last word of your day. Now, you can do this! Jesus believes in you. Learning to spend an ordinary day with God is the most important spiritual skill that you can learn. And it is not beyond anybody in this room.

Then, the next thing you'll do is wake up. So how do you wake up with God? As you know, there are two kinds of people in the world. There are people who love to get up in the morning and people who hate people who love to get up in the morning. Whichever kind you are, as close as possible to when you wake up, spend a few moments with God. It doesn't have to be a long time just a minute or two as you wake up.

First, acknowledge your dependence on God. Say, "God, I'm not going to live through this day banking on my own strength and power. I acknowledge my dependence on you." And then tell him about whatever your concerns are for the day. Just kind of walk through the day with him: "There's going to be this meeting," or, "this challenge," or, "I'm concerned about my child in this area today."

And then ask God to identify and remove any fear from you. This is what the psalmist says in Psalm 5:3, "**In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation**" (Ps 5:3, NIV). Do that in the morning. Lay your request before him. And then, last thing, early in the morning, renew your invitation for Jesus to spend the day with you. Renew that invitation, and enter the day with tremendous confidence—not in the spirit of anxiety or fear. Wake up with God. You can do that. Try it tomorrow.

And then comes washing. Some people sing in the shower. I pray in the shower. I go through my day, I ask God to help me reset my agenda and priorities to accomplish more for his kingdom. I ask for God's creativity to help me with a problem or situation, and I ask for his courage to help me be bold.

Cleansing or purification was a real important part of daily life in the world of Scripture, and it wasn't something that they took for granted--often because there was not a lot of water. Cleansing was an important ritual, and it can be for us too.

If the work you do makes you dirty, you know how good it feels to be clean. I remember my very first trip to Nicaragua. It was the dry season and we rode around standing up in the back of a pick-up truck that had cattle bars on it. I had dust caked and clinging to my sweaty body. And the showers at our hotel were not all that great. The water just kind of fell out of the shower head, the temp wasn't steady...but I remember how awesome it felt to take that shower and get clean.

Every time we shower or bathe or wash, it's an opportunity to give thanks for something much more significant. The whole act of baptism developed from allowing the physical act of being washed by water to remind us that we've been cleansed and purified by Christ. Our sin is washed away.

The psalmist says in Psalm 51: **“Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow” (Ps 51:7, NIV).** So tomorrow morning, when you're just washing your face or taking a shower, doing stuff that you always do, just pause for a moment and say, "God, just like this soap and water are cleansing my body, may your Spirit cleanse my mind and my heart of any impurities. All the wrong intentions that I know mislead me, all the destructive desires that I know will get me off the track, any thoughts that would lead me away from love and joy and courage--God please wash them away." And remember you've been cleansed by God. You don't need to live with any kind of guilt or shame or condemnation. And you can enter the day with the knowledge that your soul has been cleansed by God. Try it tomorrow!

You see, this great skill of learning to live an ordinary day with God involves doing things you're probably doing already. Mostly, it means doing things that you already do, but in a different way. You're doing them with God.

Now let's move on to one of my favorite parts of any day.... Eating. Is there anyone here who plans to not eat in the next 24 hours? Well, let's remember that food is a gift from God. Jesus instructed us to pray for daily bread, that God will provide. We did that just a little while ago! So everytime we eat is an opportunity to remember that God has provided for us. So invite Jesus to be with you while you eat.

Now eating with Jesus might affect **what** you eat. Sometimes we're so silly. We'll sit down with a couple of Big Macs, super-sized fries, a chocolate shake, 70 grams of fat, enough cholesterol, salt, grease and sugar to clog every artery. And then, what do we pray? "Bless this food to the nourishment of our bodies." That's not a blessing. That's asking for a miracle!

Now, this doesn't mean you can't have a Big Mac once in a while. It does mean that the human body is a creation of God and it's a temple of the Holy Spirit. And I'm the steward of my body. So I need to be careful about that. Not compulsive, but careful.

Eating with Jesus will also affect **how** you eat. Ecclesiastes 9:7 says, **"Go, eat your bread with enjoyment" (Ecc. 9:7, NRSV).** This is actually a **command** in Scripture. Do you do it? Do you eat with enjoyment? All too often we eat on the run. We don't think about the food let alone God. But God intends that our mealtime should be a time of celebration. "Eat your bread with enjoyment." Be reminded of God's goodness. So tomorrow, make mealtimes an exercise in gratitude. Tomorrow, when you eat, stop. Actually sit down and notice your food. And when you eat, chew. Savor it. Every now and then we give our dog some table scraps. She obviously loves them and greatly prefers

them to her own food, but for the life of me I don't know how she tastes any of it! Whatever it is, it is gone in quick bite and a swallow. Please don't eat like my dog. Thou shalt chew thy food. It's in the commandments, on the tablet Moses dropped. Remember God's goodness to you and thank him. You can do that. Try that with your meals tomorrow. And you'll become a more grateful, joyful person.

Eating with Jesus will also involve the people with whom you eat. You know, throughout human history, eating with somebody has been a very important act of fellowship and community. When you break bread with somebody, there is a kind of bond, a kind of connection. So whom do you need to eat with? Robert Putnam writes, "In the last two decades, we've witnessed one of the most dramatic changes in our society. The loss of a real important tradition of family connectedness—the evening meal." Throughout human history, families gathered around the meal. It has been a centerpiece of their connectedness. And to a large extent, in one century, it's been lost.

Families eat together much less often in our day and when they do, there's a good chance they do it in front of a television. So if you're part of a family, maybe it's time to declare some values, rearrange some priorities. At least be intentional. There's no formula here, but at least be intentional about how often, as a family, you need to be around the table breaking bread. Between two kids involved in ball and a 5<sup>th</sup> grade graduation to go to this week, we have multiple activities every night. And several of those nights will be from 5:30 – 9:30. But it's important to us to eat together and somehow we will find a way to do that at least 4 of the next 5 nights. And we don't eat in front of the TV by choice. You can do this....try it tomorrow!

And if you're single, be intentional about breaking bread will be with friends, with any family you may have nearby or with your small group..

And one other thing about this eating deal, Jesus also said, "We don't live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." So I tell you, without apology, you need every day to feed your mind from the Word of God. Take a thought from Scripture like, "Nothing can separate us from the love of God," and feed on that all day. Let your mind come back to it. Or a thought like, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Let your mind feast on the Word of God. Let your body feed on the food he provides. You can do that. That's not too difficult for anybody in this room.

The last thing for today is interruptions. How well do you handle interruptions in your life? Because they're a part of everybody's ordinary day. We're called to handle the interruptions with God.

Deitrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian hung by the Nazi's two days before his concentration camp was liberated by the allies wrote: "We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God. God will constantly be crossing our paths and canceling our plans by sending us people with claims and requests. We may pass them by, preoccupied with our more important tasks, like the priests who passed by the man who had fallen among thieves."When we do that, we bypass the visible sign of the cross, raised on our path, to show us that not our way but God's way must be done." ]

Tomorrow, in an ordinary day, I'd like to ask you to consider it possible that when the phone rings, or there's a knock at the door, or somebody wants a favor, or you see a person with a flat tire on the side of the road, maybe, just maybe, that's a divine appointment for you.

Now, that doesn't mean anytime anybody interrupts me I have to stop what I'm doing and do whatever they want. Not every interruption is from God. But it does mean I must be

open to the guiding and prompting of the Holy Spirit and not have this white-knuckled clenching grasp on my own agenda all the time.

We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God or we'll walk right past the very one that God is calling us to love.

I was thinking about this, this week. What would Jesus' ministry have looked like if he never allowed himself to be interrupted? If you go through the gospels, you see that the majority of his ministry was interruptions. Many of his greatest miracles, the most unforgettable encounters, are spirit-prompted interruptions. He's on his way somewhere when a blind man wants to be healed or, a sick woman stops him, or a leper calls out to him. He stops for each of them.

This goes on right up to the cross, which looks like the ultimate interruption in his ministry. His disciples think, "Surely that's not going to be allowed to interrupt all the good work that he has to do." But the cross, which looked like the ultimate interruption of his ministry, was, in fact, the greatest work his Father had for him to do. The greatest work that he would ever do looked like an interruption. Jesus sees that these are not really interruptions at all, these are chances to serve.

What this is really about is the adventure of going through your day in partnership with the Holy Spirit. And sometimes that day will go as you planned. But sometimes the Spirit will prompt and lead and interrupt you. And you've got to be open to encourage somebody, or challenge somebody, or give help to a person who needs it, or take somebody out to lunch who is lonely.

Determine that you will listen for the Spirit and be open to his interruptions and be relentlessly obedient when they come.

Now, these are things that you can do. Sleeping and waking, washing and eating and being interrupted, that you can do to spend your ordinary day with God. They are not too hard for you and we are going to learn it together. My challenge to you is that starting now, you open yourself up so that God will be with you, and you will walk with Jesus tomorrow and next day and the day after that! And for today that is the Good News. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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