

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

I want to start with a question today. How many of you ever took piano lessons? Raise your hands real high, will you? How many of you quit before you could play like Chris plays? That was my guess. What if you had a gift like that? What if one day, Chris had been offered the opportunity to learn how to develop that gift at the feet of a master, and he'd said, "no"?

That would be the chance of a lifetime, wouldn't it? To have a gift like that and have a master of that art come along and say, "I'll take you under my wing. You be my student, you be my apprentice, you be my disciple, and I'll teach you how to master this wonderful art." To say "no" to that would be to say "no" to the chance of a lifetime.

Well, one day, the master of the art of life came, and he said to human beings—ordinary human beings, people like you and me—"It is now possible for you to master the art of life. I want you to become my student, my apprentice, my disciple."

Here's the next question that I want to pose to you. What would you say if someone were to ask you this question: "How can you tell if you're a disciple of Jesus? How do you know?" One of the most popular kind of books or articles in our day is the kind that give little diagnostic check lists to tell you if you fit in certain categories—how to know if you're in good health, how to know if you're financially secure, how to know if you're a good parent. You can just read this little book.

But what I want to know today is what would you say if someone were to pose this question to you: "How do you know if you're a disciple of Jesus?" It's really pretty simple. You see, Jesus says, "Follow me." That's his offer. And that's what a disciple does, is to follow. Here's the cool part: Jesus doesn't give a list of do's and don'ts. He doesn't give a checklist of requirements. He says simply, "Follow me." And the implication is that we follow him closely, not at a distance. When we follow him we are **with** him. And we learn **from** him, and that is the chance of a lifetime. And as Mark talked about last week, you and I have to learn how to do this one day at a time—one ordinary day at a time. Because if you can live with Jesus one day, you can live with him every day.

And last week Mark taught that it's not primarily about doing different things. Primarily, it's about doing the things that we already do, but learning to do them in a different way—learning to do them with Jesus. Taking the ordinary things of our lives and making them holy because we're doing them with Jesus. So I want to pick up where Mark left off last week. I want to look at how to use an ordinary day to seize the best chance you will ever have to be with Jesus. Last week Mark talked about how that affects sleeping, and waking, and washing, and eating and other ordinary things.

Well, there are some major categories we want to look at today. So let's start with the first one now—work. How do you work with Jesus? This is important because the largest block of waking time in most of our lives is spent working. One survey found that outside of genetics, the single most important predictor of how long you're going to live is your work satisfaction. Now that you know that, how many of you think that you might die at any moment?!

Let's take a look at work from a biblical perspective. In the last few centuries, we've come to equate work with getting a paycheck. That's just tragic! Because the result of thinking like that is that many people—people who are retired, or stay-at-home parents, or unemployed folks—are thought of as not working, but it's not true. Sometimes people will ask a mother of young children, "Do you work?" Remember in school when your teacher said, "There is no such thing as a stupid question?" Well, that's a stupid question! You bet that's work!

Work is essential to what it means to be made in the image of God, because God himself works. From a biblical perspective, work is serving God, and caring for his created order, and trying to benefit the lives of other people. Now, that includes your paid employment if you have that. It also includes household chores. If you're a student it will include study and schoolwork. It includes volunteer work. So here's the question. **“If tomorrow Jesus were to show up at work with me would I do anything differently than I did it today?”** Because every day is an opportunity to learn from Jesus, how to do my job like he would do it.

Remember that Jesus did work. He spent most of his adult life working as a carpenter. And when he was working as a carpenter he was doing God's will just as much as when he was working as a teacher. So what do you think Jesus' carpentry work was like? Do you think it was done in a sloppy way? Do you think he had a lot of chairs and benches returned to him because they weren't very well constructed? Do you think he complained a lot on the job about how hard he was having to work?

There's a fundamental statement about work in Scripture, and you might want to put this up someplace where you work. This is from Paul's letter to the Church of Colosse. **"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men" (Colossians 3:23, NIV).**

Whatever you do—that's a very broad category—work at it with all your heart, not just hard, not just with some effort, but with **all** your heart as if you were working for the Lord, not for people. It is the Lord Christ you are serving in your work, whatever you do, paid or not. The Bible says, ultimately, it's the Lord God you're serving.

I saw an expose last week on city workers in Dallas. There had been complaints by residents of seeing workers doing nothing for long periods of time at tax-payer's expense. A reporter took some cameras and observed. One worker slept in the cab of his truck for three hours before getting out, walking around and taking a lunch break. Several just walked around and visited for a while until they laid down in the back of a truck for nap, and then got up to move the truck into the shade. Finally about 2:00, they got the dozer moving and moved some dirt and mixed and poured a small slab of concrete. By 3:30 they were cleaning up, and by 4:30 all the workers had headed out. The reporter got footage of the whole day and found that in that 8 hour work day, each of the men worked a maximum of 2 hours. On Youtube you can find hundreds of videos of people literally sleeping on the job. Be careful out there! Cameras are everywhere!

If we're working with Jesus we routinely sacrifice our comfort and pleasure for the quality of our work, whether that's making axe handles, or tacos, or the development of the student we're teaching. We do the job well because that is what Jesus would like, and we admire and love him. It's what he would do.

So let me give you some questions that disciples ought to mull over when they think about working with Jesus. How do I treat my coworkers? Do I treat the people that I work with the way that Jesus would? If I'm in a position of authority, do I treat those who report to me the way that Jesus would? Am I truthful with them and fair or do I try to manipulate them? Do I work for their growth and development? Do I try to motivate them in a way that honors them in the way that Jesus would? Do I regularly ask God for help, wisdom and guidance in my work? How am I trying to deal with my own power? Am I unrelentingly honest in my work? Am I careful with expense reports?

Do I reimburse the company I work for, for the personal use of phone or equipment or so on? What are my ethics like? Is my work in line with my sense of how God has gifted and called me? If that's not the case, what steps can I take to move in the right direction? And how can I continue to serve with diligence in the meantime? Those are questions that disciples, you and I, need to wrestle with as we learn to work with Jesus.

Tomorrow, when you go to work, whatever your work is, paid or unpaid, take a moment before you start and just say to yourself, "Here's my chance. Here's my chance to learn from Jesus how to work with him—how to work like him. Here's my chance."

And if a few moments go by and an opportunity comes up and you blow it, and you have a wrong attitude and you're critical, don't beat yourself up. Because in the next moment, there's another chance and then another chance. That's what grace is like. That's a real important part of your day, learning how to work with Jesus.

Then there's another aspect of what will probably take place in your day tomorrow. Probably at some point along the way tomorrow, you'll have some leisure time or some recreational activities. God did not make you to work all the time. The Bible is real clear in the opening chapters of Genesis 1 and 2. Part of his will for you is that you work sometimes, but then there are also times of rest and relaxation, creation, play—times to be renewed. The 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm says this: **The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (Psalm 23:1-3, NIV).** God wants to lead us in times of renewal

and rest. In fact our times of leisure and rest give us the energy, the renewal, the distractions necessary so that we can work with all our hearts.

You see, every moment of free time that you have tomorrow and the next day and the next day, that's also a chance to be with him. Not necessarily to do something that's "real spiritual," but just to be with him. So how do we learn to be with Jesus in recreation and leisure?

Now, this one is interesting to me. I think that we need to be very intentional about it because the default mode in our day, what one sociologist calls the 900-pound gorilla of leisure in our day, is television. Robert Putnam has written a book called *Bowling Alone*. The book is about community and the loss of community. And he documents the role of television and the loss of a sense of community, civic engagement, and so on in our lives.

Putnam writes this: "Dependence on television for entertainment is not merely a significant predictor of the loss of community in somebody's life, it is the single most consistent predictor I have discovered on the basis of quite exhaustive research. Nothing—not low education, not full time work, not long commutes, not poverty, not financial distress—nothing is more broadly or deeply connected with the loss of community and relational disconnection than this dependence on television for entertainment.

"People who rely on TV for entertainment are least likely to volunteer, least likely to stay in touch with friends, least likely to attend church. Television is surely habit forming," he writes, "and, maybe, mildly addictive."

Why do we get so hooked on it? It's a little box. Does it produce such high levels of joy and growth and meaning in our lives? No. Putnam writes this: "It's because television is the cheapest and least demanding way to avert boredom. TV's dominance in our lives reflects not its sublime pleasures, but its minimal costs." So when you think about how you're going to spend recreational activity, leisure time with God, one thing I very strongly encourage you to do is, at least sometimes, unplug. At least limit how much you watch. At our house we have limits.

And I would suggest that you limit the number of televisions in your house. In 1970, 6% of sixth graders had a television in their bedroom. By 1999, 77% of sixth graders have a TV in their own room.

Maybe you need to go for a day or a weekend, or even a week, of no TV—a media fast. Jesus talked in the Bible talks about different kinds of fasting. I think in our day, if Jesus were around, he would talk about the need to fast from media sometimes. And instead ask, "What are the activities that God uses to breathe life into you, to recreate and renew your spirit?" What are the activities that produce gratitude and joy and strength and renewal in you when you engage them?

Every summer I go on my annual canoe trip with my dad and brother. We've floated the Current, the Niangua, the North Fork of the White. This year back to the Niangua. It is always awesome to be there! To be out in nature, gathered around a campfire with my dad and brother in the evening, floating down a river in the midst of some of the most beautiful scenery. Watching the turtles, and birds, and fish and occasional snake. Swimming in that cold, clear water. It is awesome I can't wait for our trip this year. Is it productive time? Probably not in any measurable way. Is it strategic time? No. But it is a time of relationship building and beauty. And God delights in it.

God has made me to do certain things. And some of those things may not look real strategic, but I experience the goodness and delight of God in them, and I am renewed in my soul.

So what does God use to renew you and breathe life into you? I have one friend who loves to ride motorcycles. He'll go out and ride a motorcycle all day long and that just renews him. Maybe it's cooking. Maybe your deal is eating and you need to find someone whose deal is cooking and get a spiritual friendship going.

I don't know what it is, but tomorrow, you'll have some free time in an ordinary day. And when that happens, I want you to just stop for a moment and say, "Here's my chance to be with Jesus—to do something that will breathe life into my spirit."

And maybe you'll stop and pray. Maybe it'll involve reading Scripture. Maybe it will involve just relaxing and watching something on television with Jesus right there. Maybe it will involve some activity or pastime that you love. But I want you to stop and say, "Here's my chance. I want to be a disciple in this moment." That's

what disciples do. Again, this isn't about carving out slots of time to do something new. It's taking what you are already doing and inviting Jesus to be there and in the process make that ordinary time, holy.

Then there's another real basic category for ordinary days and I'll give it this title: Lifestyle Choices. We make choices about the way that we'll spend money, spend time, what the pace of our life will be, how much debt we live in, how many commitments we'll make, how much pressure we'll be under, and these have an enormous impact on whether we're able to get closer to God or whether we're moving farther away.

The Apostle Paul has one of the most important commandments about spiritual life and growth in the New Testament. Philip's translation puts it this way: **"Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold" (Romans 12:2, Phillips)**. Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold. How is the world likely to do that for you? For the most part, I think, the world will say things like this: "Move faster." And we do. And it cuts us off from prayer, makes us more anxious, increasingly angry, unable to love. If Satan can't make you defy God with outright sin, he may just settle for making you real busy. Now, I think all of us wrestle with this.

So what's the pace of life at which you can live and still be intimately connected with God—still be able to effectively love people—be able to live with joy? You're going to have to arrange your life around that. No one's going to do that for you. One of the primary ways that this world is going to try to squeeze you into its mold is by causing you to live at a pace of life that chokes off the intimacy of your relationship with God. And it increasingly distorts your ability to love other people and causes you to live with a chronic sense of anxiety and fatigue and tells you it's normal. It's not normal! It's insane. And it is not God's desire for his children. But you're going to have to get quite intentional about this.

If you're going to say "yes" to Jesus, then you're going to have to say "no" to some other things. So what do you need to say "no" to? Maybe it's debt. Maybe it's time commitments. But your lifestyle choices, the basic patterns of the way that you arrange your days, those are very important to your life as a disciple of Jesus.

You see, this is the chance of a lifetime for you to spend every day with Jesus. Psalm 90 says, **"Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (Psalm 90:12, NIV)**.

I want to end where Mark started last week. With an exercise in imagination. Once again, imagine that as you wake up tomorrow, there is God, sitting next to your bed, except this time, it's not a shock, you expected him to be there, you would have been surprised if he wasn't. You slept well knowing that he was watching over you and that while you rested and healed, he worked and took on your concerns. You closed your eyes with your last words spoken to him and you open them saying, "This is the day that you have made, Lord, I will rejoice and be glad. Because once again I want to spend this day with you. In my sleeping and waking. In my washing and eating. In the interruptions of my day, be with me. Be with me at work, Lord, help my work to be holy, and let my leisure time become holy, and the relationships I develop, let them also become holy because you are in each of these with me."

As you wake you say, "Lord, let's do this day together, you and me." And God smiles and says, "You bet, I could think of no way I'd rather spend it than with you." 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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