

Being With Jesus

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[0 : 00] Scripture reading comes from Matthew chapter 4. Please follow along on the screen, the bulletin, or your own Bible. In Matthew 4 verse 13 we read, And leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capnum by the sea in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali.

Then in verse 17 we read, From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

While walking by the sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, in the boat with Zebedee, their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

[1 : 26] Amen. This is the word of God. Great. Well, good morning, Watermark. It is wonderful to be with you again.

If you are new to the Watermark family or the church, my name is Kevin, and it is wonderful to be with you this morning and for us to be able to look at the scriptures together.

Thank you, Gary and Kathy, for reading from Matthew chapter 4. The scripture we read this morning, it says this, that when Jesus is walking along the Sea of Galilee, he sees these two brothers, Peter and Andrew, casting the net into the sea for their fishermen, and he says to them, Follow me.

Follow me. One of the most fundamental descriptions of what it means to be a Christian is to be a follower of Jesus.

In fact, right in the beginning, when the church was started, the disciples were not called Christians. They were called followers of Jesus. Some believe that the word Christian, which only came about a couple of decades later, was actually meant to be an insult.

[2 : 34] It was used by those that were mocking these followers of Jesus to say, Hey, you guys are talking about Christ. You are like mini Christ. You are Christians. And so they came up with this word, the Christians, as an insult, an offense to these followers of Jesus.

But in the early days, the disciples were known as followers of Jesus. This morning, I want us to look at this question. What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus?

When we think of followers of Jesus, we might think of people that walk the dusty roads of Jerusalem or Palestine, or those that walked with Jesus on the hilltops of Galilee, or maybe those that listened to Jesus' teaching in the synagogues and the temple courts.

But what does it mean to follow Jesus today in 21st century Hong Kong? What does it look like to be a follower of Jesus? Not just for one hour on a Sunday morning, but as you're riding on the MTR on the way to work, when you're out having a meal with a friend, when you're on your way to work or to school.

And most importantly, what does it mean to be a follower of Jesus when you're at home with your parents, with your spouse, with your children? Maybe if you stay at home on your own, what does it mean to be a follower of Jesus in those times and those moments?

[3 : 55] To answer that question, we're going to go back to the very first century, and we're going to look at what did it mean when Jesus called a bunch of men to follow Him.

We're going to look at what did it mean for them, and then we're going to come back to 21st century Hong Kong and ask the question, what does it mean for us? So that's where we're going today. Now, when Jesus said to these very first disciples, these fishermen, follow me, Jesus wasn't the first or the only man to say, follow me.

In fact, that phrase was a very common phrase. It was something that was used regularly. It was a well-known phrase. Everyone would have known what it meant. And the reason is because this is the way that the culture or society worked in first century Israel.

In first century Israel, children at the age of four or five would go off to school, a school called Beth Sefer, which meant the house of the book.

And they would typically go there for six, seven years. They would learn things like basic writing, reading, basic maths. And at the house of the book, all children from four or five up to the ages of 12 or so would spend a couple of years studying the book.

[5 : 08] And what they mean by the book is the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament, Genesis through to Deuteronomy. And so children would all go to Beth Sefer, the house of the book, and learn how to read, learn how to write, learn basic maths from the book of the law.

But one of the things is that by the time children reach this age of around 12 years old, almost all children would have memorized almost the first five books of the Old Testament, the Torah, learned it off by heart.

By that stage, the age of 12, most of the education was finished. A lot of children would then leave school. Young girls would go and follow their mother, learn how to be a young woman in society. Some of them would go off and get married. The men would join their fathers as apprentices to their fathers, learn the family trade, and would follow their father in the family business.

For the very best and brightest students, those who had really done well or shown great promise, they would be admitted to secondary school called Beth Talmud or Beth Midrash, which means the house of learning.

[6 : 15] And for the next four or five years, from the age of 12, 13, up to 16, 17, the best and the brightest students would go to the synagogue every day. They would have a hired rabbi, a tutor, that would come for the best students of the town, and they would learn the rest of the Old Testament scriptures.

They would study the prophets, the writings, the wisdom, the history books. And by the age of 16, 17, 18, almost all of these students that were considered the best and the brightest of the town, would memorize almost the entire Old Testament scriptures.

They would not only know what it said, but they'd understand the meaning and the depth and the interplay between the various scriptures. And so for many of those students, by the time they get to 17 or so, they know the whole Old Testament, and they would then graduate from Beth Talmud, join the family practice, join the family business as apprentices to their dad.

Some of them would then get married, and life would begin. Now, for some students, for the very best and the brightest of those that had graduated from Beth Talmud, those that the rabbi thought had what it took, had the goods to become a real leader in society, a religious leader, the rabbi would approach them and say, I think you have what it takes to become a religious leader yourself, a rabbi yourself.

And they would encourage them to go and find a rabbi in society, another leader, one who they respected, one that they looked up to, one who they thought that they could emulate and become like.

[7 : 55] And those students, those 16, 17 year old boys would go and find a rabbi that they really respected, and attach themselves to the rabbi, to become his apprentice, his Talmudin, or his disciple.

And so what they'd do is, having looked at all the various rabbis, think, who do I really respect? Who can I become like? They would go to a rabbi and ask if they could be his apprentice, his disciple.

The rabbi would then grill them, give them one of the most intensive job interview processes you can imagine. They'd ask him all sorts of questions. What do you understand about this? What do you think of this rabbi's teaching?

What did Jeremiah say, mean when he said this? What about Moses here? And you'd go through a rigorous job interview process. And if that rabbi thought that you had the goods, if he thought you were good enough to become like him, if he thought that you had the potential to grow to the place

where you could emulate him and become as good as he was, he would turn around and say these famous words, come and follow me.

Come and follow me. And so these apprentices, these Talmudin, these disciples, would then dedicate the next 10 years of their life following in the footsteps of their rabbi leader.

[9 : 20] And their job wasn't just to know what the rabbi knows. A student just wants to know what his teacher knows to pass the exam. An apprentice, a Talmudin, a disciple, wants to learn everything he can.

He would live with his rabbi. He would sleep in the same room as his rabbi. He would eat with him. He would even learn to speak like his rabbi. His mannerisms would be the same as the rabbi. The job of a disciple, of an apprentice, was to become a carbon copy version of your rabbi, of your leader.

And so the essence of what it meant to be a disciple is to be so close to your teacher, to spend so much time with him, learning from him, that ultimately you became like him. And so as a Talmudin, as a disciple, your life revolved around these three things.

To be with your teacher, to become like your teacher, and then ultimately to do the things that your teacher did. And so after years of following your teacher, eventually your teacher might think that you have grown enough where there's no more that you can do to become like him.

You speak like him. You act like him. Your mannerisms are the same as him. There's nothing more that you can do to grow in your emulation of him. Eventually your rabbi would turn to you and commission you and send you out to go and find your own disciples and to train them and disciple them and teach them in the manner in which you had been taught.

[10 : 46] This is what first century discipleship was all about. Now, we don't live in first century Palestine, but what does it mean to be a follower of Jesus in 21st century Hong Kong?

Dallas Willard, who's one of the most brilliant thinkers, Christian thinkers of the last generation, said this, The New Testament defines a disciple as someone who is with Jesus, learning from Jesus how to live their life as if Jesus would live their life, as if he were in their place.

In other words, a disciple of Jesus is someone who's saying if Jesus lived in my life, in my place, in 21st century Hong Kong, if Jesus was doing homeschooling with the kids, if Jesus was on the way to this board meeting, if Jesus was studying or having this conversation or having this relational difficulty with this person, how would Jesus do it?

And learning from Jesus to live their life as if Jesus would, living my life in my place. What Dallas Willard is saying is even today, in 21st century Hong Kong, followers of Jesus are those who are to be with Jesus in order to learn how to become like Jesus, in order to learn, what does it mean to do what Jesus did?

Over the next few weeks, we're going to look at these three things. Being with Jesus, becoming like Jesus, doing the things that Jesus did. And today, I want us just to think about the first one.

[12 : 18] What does it mean when Jesus calls us to follow Him to be with Jesus? Now, one last thing before we dive in to what that looks like.

In Matthew chapter 4, when Jesus arrives in Galilee and begins His ministry, in many ways, He's doing this exact thing. He's doing so in line with traditional Jewish practice. He's gaining disciples to come and follow Him, to be with Him, and to become like Him.

And so when Jesus says to Peter and Andrew, follow me, this is exactly what they would have understood Jesus to mean. Jesus wasn't just some random person. This is why they can follow everything.

They can leave everything and follow Him. Jesus wasn't just some stranger walking along the street saying, hey, follow me, and they say, okay, and they leave the family business. They would have understood the context that this was a rabbi calling them to be His disciples.

But there's two distinct, two radical differences between the way Jesus does it and the ordinary practice of His day. The first one is this.

[13 : 19] Look at what Jesus says in verse 17. Gary read it to us earlier. Jesus says, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Jesus comes and He arrives on the scene as a religious leader, a rabbi. He's calling these disciples to follow. But at the same time, He's not just a rabbi. He's not just a religious leader. He's coming as heaven and earth's true king.

He's calling people to follow Him, to join His ranks, not just as a rabbi, not just with some new brand of spiritual teaching. He's coming as one, not just who has come to shake things up.

Jesus Christ comes as heaven and earth's true king and He's inviting all sorts of people, not merely to learn from Him, but to experience life in His kingdom with Jesus as king.

All the other rabbis of the day would have, part of their discipleship would have said, well, you know, let's look at the scripture. Moses says this and Rabbi Hillel says this and Rabbi Akhtar says this, but what do you guys think?

[14 : 22] Jesus says, you've heard that it has said this and this and this, but I say to you, this is what God says. Jesus comes with unique authority because He's not merely a religious leader.

He's heaven and earth's true king. Jesus comes to invite His followers into His kingdom. But notice the second thing. Remember what I said is that who are the kinds of people that were eligible to be disciples, apprentices, of the rabbis?

It was those who were top of the class, those who excelled, those that were A-grade students that had beaten everybody else. It was those who had sought out the very best teachers of their day and had gone through this grueling interview process, past interview process, answered all the questions perfectly, those that the rabbi thought they had the goods, what it took to become their follower.

Having passed this rigorous process, being considered good enough and having what it takes, finally the top of the top, the very best of the best are admitted to be disciples.

or apprentices of the rabbi. It's kind of like the Hong Kong schooling system, right? Anyone, any parent that has high school students, you know what it's like. No place for third, fourth place in the Hong Kong schooling system.

[15 : 41] You're either top of the class or you know one. That's the way it feels. But notice who are the people that Jesus calls to be his disciples? It's the fishermen. Later on, as Alan reminded us, it's the tax collectors.

It's political writers. It's insurrectionists. Those who would never, ever, ever be considered good enough, anywhere near worthy enough, Jesus comes to them and says, hey you, come and follow me.

Jesus doesn't wait for the top of the class to come to him. Jesus goes and finds those that have been overlooked in society, those that nobody else would consider good enough and he says, I want you to come and be with me and follow me.

Being fishermen with their father, it probably meant that Peter and Andrew, James and John were those that maybe they went to Bethsefer Primary School at 12 years old. They probably would have finished their education and joined the ranks of being apprentices to their father, learning the family trade.

Jesus comes to them and none of them engage in this rigorous interview process. None of them send in their applications. Jesus is the one who goes to them and he finds them and he says, I want you to be part of my team.

[16 : 54] I want you to be my followers. Friends, you know what this means? Jesus calls those that others would never have considered in a million years to be his followers.

And what this means is that being a follower of Jesus is entirely, absolutely by grace. It's all by grace.

Being a follower of Jesus is all by grace. Right from the beginning, Jesus doesn't pick the biggest or the brightest or the smartest. Jesus doesn't pick those with the credentials. Jesus chooses those that are overlooked, those that are despised, those that dropped out of school.

Jesus chooses those that nobody considers are good enough and he says, I want you to come and follow me. Friends, we live in one of the most performance-orientated societies and cultures in the world where your value and your worth and your identity are all tied to how well you perform but not so with Jesus.

Right from the very beginning, Jesus comes and he says, the way into the kingdom of God is all by grace. It's not by merit. It's not to be earned. It's not for those that are most dedicated, the smartest, the brightest.

[18 : 10] It's by grace. It's all by grace. And if you don't get that, you'll always feel insecure. You'll always feel like you haven't done enough or you're not good enough or you haven't performed well enough.

Friends, every one of us need to realize Jesus calls us into his kingdom but it's all by grace. Now, what does that all mean? It means when Jesus says, come and follow me, he's inviting us in grace to come and learn what life looks like under his ever-present reign as king.

He's inviting us to be with him, to learn with him, to become like him but not just as a sage, as a rabbi. Jesus is inviting us as heaven and earth true king to learn to live our lives as apprentices of Jesus, disciples of Jesus under the rule and the reign of the ever-present rule of King Jesus.

Now, I know that that sounds very philosophical and ethereal and as Hong Kongers we like things that are practical and pragmatic. We like to be told what are the ten steps that I must do to be a follower of Jesus.

Jesus has a lot to say about the way that we should live our lives. In fact, the next three chapters of Matthew's Gospel after this passage that we read is the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Mount is kind of like Jesus' kingdom manifesto.

[19 : 29] It describes what life in the kingdom looks like for followers of Jesus. And as you read the Sermon on the Mount you're going to see that Jesus says that life in the kingdom looks like holiness. It looks like purity.

It looks like compassion. It looks like generosity. But the point that Jesus is making is this. The life of a follower of Jesus is not simply a list of do's and don'ts.

Rather, it is a life that lived in fellowship or maybe followership with Jesus as king. And so this is the big idea for today. If you only get one thing this is it.

When Jesus calls men and women to follow him the very first thing that that means is to come and be with him. To orientate our lives around him.

And out of that relationship to learn to become the kinds of people that he's calling us to be. Jesus is not primarily saying come and do a bunch of things.

[20 : 25] His primary calling is this. Come and be with me. In Mark's gospel when Jesus calls the disciples or the apostles this is what it says.

Mark chapter 3. He appointed the twelve those whom he also named apostles that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach.

The first thing Jesus says to the apostles is come and be with me. In the book of Acts which Luke writes the apostles are arrested in Jerusalem because they do the very thing that Jesus has asked them to do.

They go out and they preach and they're turning the city upside down. They fill in Jerusalem with the message of Jesus. The religious leaders aren't so happy about this so they arrest the apostles and throw them in jail. And Luke records this.

It says when they that's the religious leaders when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and they perceived that they were uneducated common men they were astonished and they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

[21 : 34] Friends, I wonder for how many of us that would be the distinctive defining mark of our lives. For how many people when people think of us the defining mark of our life is not our education it's not how well we've done in our careers it's not where we live or our dresses it's not our natural brilliance or our gifting that the distinctive feature of our lives is that we are those who though ordinary are those who there's a marked consistency we're those who've been with Jesus.

Jesus calls us as followers of Jesus to come and be with Him to live in communion with Him day by day hour by hour. There's a very famous example of this in the 17th century there was a man by the name of Nicholas Hermann he was a Parisian a Frenchman he joined the army as a young man and he fought in a number of battles he was captured as a spy at one stage and released he fought some more battles he got badly injured and so he was dismissed from the French army and he went to go work as a footman a valet a servant in a big aristocrat's house but he wasn't very good at that and so he was dismissed from that after a couple of years and eventually decides I'm going to go work in a monastery and so he signs up in this monastery and he becomes a lay monk which means he's a monk but he's not an ordained monk he can't participate in many of the things and so he's assigned the job as to being cook in the kitchen in the monastery he takes this name Brother Lawrence he's now known famously as Brother Lawrence and so Brother Lawrence is the chef in the monastery but one of the things that Brother Lawrence does is he says maybe I can't preach maybe I can't do other things but one thing I can do is I can live my life consistency in the presence of Jesus he called it practicing the presence of God and so this is what he says this is one of his famous quotes he says the time of business does not differ for me or with me from the time of

prayer in the noise and the clatter of my kitchen while several persons are at the same time calling for different things I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were kneeling before the blessed sacraments my friends as a Catholic monk in the 17th century that's an incredible thing to say you know how highly valid the sacrament was the body and the blood of Jesus the communion was considered to be the actual body and the blood of Jesus and he has this man who says as I'm going about my day to day duties

I'm as aware of the presence of God and the closeness of Jesus as if I'm on my knees in the cathedral at the time of worship when Jesus Christ was on the way to the cross in John's gospel he's giving his disciples one of his final teachings and he's teaching them about the fact that he's going to die on the cross after he's going to ascend to heaven and he says I'm going to leave you but I won't leave you as orphans I'm going to send the Holy Spirit to be with you so John chapter 14 and John chapter 16 are these amazing teachings about the person and the work of the Holy Spirit wonderful wonderful rich teachings but standing in between John 14 and John 16 is this incredible teaching very famous teaching of John chapter 15 look at what Jesus says here Jesus says this remain in me even as I remained in you I'm like a vine and you are like branches whoever remains in me and I am him they will bear much fruit but apart from me you can do nothing if anyone does not remain in me he's like a branch that is thrown away and withers it does but if you remain in me and my words remain in you ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you that's an incredible promise right by this my father is honored is glorified that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples my apprentices my tilmudim as the father has loved me so I have loved you friends just think about that for a second

Jesus the son of God says as the father has loved me so have I loved you with all your failures with all your sin with all your brokenness with all the things that you get wrong as the father has loved me so I have loved you oh my goodness what an incredible promise Jesus remain in my love stay in my love dwell in my love as Christ has told us before don't air be and be in my love dwell there abide there remain there put down your roots live in this place in constant communion in fellowship with me let my love and my grace wash over you day by day Andrew Murray was the great Scottish preacher commenting on this he says this when Jesus said come to me what he meant was come and remain in me

[27 : 01] Jesus did not call you to refresh you for a few short hours after your conversion with the joy of his love and then send you out to wander alone no he destined you for something greater than just a short lived blessedness rather he called us to a short time to be enjoyed only in times a special earnestness or prayer and then pass away that's not what Jesus called us to as if we had to as we return to the ordinary duties of life no friends Jesus called you to abide in him to remain with him where your whole life and every moment of it might be spent with him and in him when Jesus calls us to follow him he means for us to bring our lives to be deeply infused with him like a branch is infused into a tree so that day by day hour by hour as you're at work and at home and as you're going like the ordinary duties of life there in that place we get to experience the closeness and the presence and the wonder of Jesus this is what Jesus meant when he said remain in me come and follow me

Jesus calls his followers to be with him to remain in him Dallas Willard said this are we disciples of Jesus or merely Christians by some modern notion of what that means Christians do devotions that's good but do we live a life of devotion Christians pray that's good we most certainly should pray but do we know how to have a life of prayer friends Jesus calls us to come and live with him to be with him when Claire and I first got married living in Cape Town South Africa there was a very clever system where the health insurance and the life insurance company that we were signed up to said that if you attend the gym a certain number of times each month they would pay 90% of your gym fees your subscription fees and also your health and life insurance premiums would drop and it's a clever business model because they say if we can keep you healthy and fit that'll be cheaper for us than paying your medical bills and so they want to encourage everyone to go to the gym regularly and as everybody pretty quickly worked out in the first year you go to gym you do your five or six or eight times a month in the gym but after a while you start getting a little lazy and you don't go that often and so everyone in the last few days of the month drives up the gym walks into the gym taps the membership card and walks out again and the next day would drive up the gym taps the membership card and walks out again just to go and to maintain their membership friends

Jesus doesn't call us Christianity is not about going and tapping your membership card to maintain your membership Jesus calls us to live a life of walking with him day by day when Jesus calls people from first century fishermen to 17th century soldiers to 21st century Hong Kongers to follow him Jesus is not asking us to add him to our really busy schedule of life Jesus is not asking to be an addendum to squeeze him into our lives he's calling us to a life of constant communion with him to live aware of his presence to be secure in his grace to be anchored in his love to center our lives around who he is and so what that means is whether you're leading worship at our family worship service like Alan led us so well this morning whether you're serving food to families that don't have much food in a part of Hong Kong whether you're on the MTR on the way to work or you're doing classes online at HKU or some university friends whether you're playing basketball with friends in the neighborhood or whether you're going to a board meeting or whether you're reading documents in your legal chambers friends whether you're pitching for new business or asking for seed capital whether you're changing your children's diapers at night friends whether you're catching up with a friend in a coffee shop or you're visiting family over new year's reunion meals friends whether you're having dinner with your family or you're tucking your children in at night in that very place Jesus wants us to be walking with him to be aware of his presence to be drawing on his grace to be anchored in his love Jesus wants us to know that those places are no less sacred no less important no less an opportunity to encounter his grace and to experience the reality of Christ in our lives than whether we're in CG or prayer meeting or some regular activity because for Jesus when he said follow me he designed that all of life to be lived quorum Deo in the very presence of God listen to how King David put it David said this is Psalm 16 I have set the Lord always before me when I'm on the MTR when I'm at school when I'm with my children when I'm on a date I've set the Lord always before me God is at my right hand

I will not be shaken my heart is glad my whole being rejoices my flesh dwells secure you God make known to me the paths of life in your presence there is fullness of joy at your right hand are pleasures forevermore friends for so many people not understanding that the call of Jesus to come and be his follower is a call to be with him to remain in him to remain in his love means that for many people being a follower of Jesus gets reduced to religious duties attending church on Sunday reading our bible once or twice a week friends for many people following Jesus gets reduced to tapping our membership card once a week in order to retain our membership but friends that's about as far away from following Jesus as any other pagan religion you can call that uber uber religion you can call it anything you want but don't call it christianity don't call it the gospel because that has got nothing to do with following

[33 : 32] Jesus new testament christianity knows nothing of once a week going and tapping our membership card to retain our membership new testament christianity is a life that's orientated around the beauty and the wonder of who Jesus is living remaining in him abiding with him following him walking with him Jesus never called anyone to simply tap their membership card he called us to be with him to follow him and so even the last couple of weeks as we've looked at stuff like gospel orthodoxy all that stuff if that's just a theory is nothing if it doesn't lead us to relationship with christ our justification is not so that we can pass some theology exam justification by grace alone is that we can walk with christ and know him adoption doesn't just mean yes i know that i'm god's son it means we get to experience the reality of god's love in our life redemption means that we get to be redeemed out of our old life and walk with jesus in the reality of life 24 7 7 days a week friends gospel orthodoxy is nothing if it doesn't lead you to loving and trusting and obeying and walking with jesus that's what christianity is about that's what the god is the gospel and what he said is that justification is true but it's going to lead us to relationship with jesus the gospel is not just a theory it's a person it's the person of the lord jesus christ it's the person of jesus who's full of grace and full of love the one who made the starry hosts and everything calling us to walk with him friends are you walking with jesus are you walking with jesus friends if your christianity is simply a matter of going through the motions you might not be a follower of jesus at all jesus didn't call us to go through the motions he called us to come and be with him to be with him now as we come to a close what does that actually mean so what does this actually mean for our lives what should we do one of us two very simple things very very simple the first one is this seek to center your life on jesus intentionally when we read the gospels one of the things that's amazing to see is that jesus christ god's own son the second person of the trinity constantly withdrew himself from the ordinary duties of life to spend time and pray and that's an incredible thing you'd think if jesus is god why does he need to pray but jesus regularly withdrew from the busyness of life to times of silence solitude sabbath to spend time

with his father and pray friends if Jesus needed to withdraw to spend time and pray you better believe you and I do as well look at some of these scriptures Mark chapter one after busy day of ministry says this rising very early in the morning while it was still dark he departed and went out to a desolate place and there he spent time and pray after busy day of ministering healing a bunch of people even more the report about him went abroad and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of the infirmities the crowds are gathering around

Jesus pressing him there's so much stuff to do there's not enough hours in the day so what does Jesus do he would withdraw to a desert place and spend time in prayer Luke 6 says the same thing he says in those days he went out to the mountain to pray all night he continues in prayer to God the father and when the day comes he then calls his disciples and he chooses from them twelve that he names apostles before Jesus called the apostles he spends all night in prayer friends can I ask you are you spending your day are you starting off your day in God's words seeking his face and in prayer are you starting out the day reflecting meditating reading God's word but most importantly are you encountering God in his word friends are you coming to a passage and saying God what are you saying to me here what does this teach me about who Jesus is what does this teach me about God's profound love for me in the gospel how does this secure me anchor me in his love friends if we want to follow

Jesus we have to intentionally seek our times when we set aside portions of the day to see Christ's face and to be with him second thing is this seek to center your life on Jesus in all of life there's intentionality certain times of the day early in the morning is the best set aside 15 minutes half an hour to seek God's face and center your life on him but then at the same time live all of life in the presence of Jesus throughout the gospel Jesus is constantly getting in trouble with religious leaders because he doesn't behave like the regular rabbis and they always saying where do you get this authority from how can you say those things and Jesus often says this he says I only do what my father has told me to do I speak not my own authority but I only say what the father has asked me yes lord and then speak Jesus doesn't he is not mechanical or robotic about it

Jesus out of the overflow of his relationship with the father he lives all of his life just saying what the father wants Jesus is living all of his life in relationship with God and out of that overflow he says the things that the father wants him to do in the letter to Thessalonians the apostle Paul says this rejoice always pray without ceasing give thanks in all circumstances friends rejoice always when you are on the MTR line when you are on the bus pray without ceasing when you are waiting for a meeting to begin when you are waiting to board a plane when you are putting your kids to bed at night when you are going for a run pray without ceasing Jesus invites us to live next slide Jeremy this thing here and these things here are going to absolutely kill your communion with Jesus friends when you are on the MTR

I know the temptation to pull out the phone to check Instagram to message someone to check my email friends these things are designed to make sure that we never have silence solitude and Sabbath but Jesus calls us to live a life where we constantly not just constant communion with everyone else but communion with him Jesus invites us to rejoice always pray without ceasing give thanks in all circumstances what did this look like for you and I to live our lives not only walking with Jesus at certain times of the day but throughout lives I want to end with two very brief stories as a staff team we've been recently reading a book called gospel fluency by Jeff van der stelt and he tells this amazing story in that book one day he was flying somewhere he was leaving Seattle to go to fly to another part of the US and every time he boards a plane he just prays a simple prayer says Jesus I give you the next few hours if you want me to just rest if you want me to work or you want me to have a conversation with the person next dressed very prim and proper and she seemed very pleasant and so he says to her are you leaving home or are you coming back home on this flight and she replies and says well both

[41 : 42] I guess he says oh what do you mean she says I live in Seattle but my family was moving to this new part of the country we were meant to live there and she says I'm going to what is supposed to be my new home my husband and my boys are waiting for me there but it's a complicated story and Jeff says he sits in the seat and just quietly prays his prayers his Holy Spirit helped me to listen well he says oh I'm sorry to hear that and she says yeah well it's a long story my family moved ahead of me but I had to stay behind in Seattle for an extra year and in that year things happened I developed another relationship and I ended up having an affair and my husband was so angry he determined to destroy my life and so he has absolutely destroyed my reputation on

Facebook and she says I'm going out to Seattle to see my boys and sign the divorce papers and then I guess I'm coming back alone and

Jeff just listens and the whole time he's just praying and eventually after about an hour this lady says to him wow you're a really nice guy you've been listening to me going on and on about my life and I haven't asked you any questions who are you and Jeff turns to her and says this he says I explained to her who I was but most importantly who I knew I let her know that I know and I love Jesus and that Jesus knows her and loves her too and that Jesus cared for her and was listening to her story sitting in the airplane all it took was a man just to say Jesus I'm here I'm available Holy Spirit help me to listen well and in that moment has an encounter with God and ministers to this lady who needed him but more than that needed Jesus a few weeks ago I was sitting in a coffee shop just down the road having coffee with another pastor a new friend of mine and we're talking about church planting and churches in Hong Kong and exciting stuff that could be happening into the future and the whole time

I'm talking to my friend I'm aware of this lady that's sitting next to me I'm talking with Seth but the whole time I'm just aware of her and I'm busy praying I'm talking with Seth but quietly I'm praying I'm saying God what are you saying what's going on why have you brought this person to my attention at the end of time with my conversation with Seth I say hey great to see you let's catch up soon I'm going to stay here for a few more minutes and I stay behind and I turn to this lady and I say hey I know this is unusual my name is Kevin I just want you to know that I am a follower of Jesus and I really feel like Jesus wants you to know that he knows about you he loves you and he wants you to come to know him and the lady was a little confused at a simple time of sitting in a coffee shop in 21st century Hong Kong miss all the buildings and the bustle and the activity of our city there he was able to encounter

Christ and to be an agent of his grace friends Jesus 2000 years ago came to some disciples walk in the sea of Galilee and he said come and follow me come and be with me come and learn from friends even today Jesus looks us in the eye and he says to 21st century Hong Kong come and follow me come and be with me come and abide with me come and remain in my love and let me teach you what it means to be my disciple let's pray let's pray Lord Jesus Christ we confess God that so often we reduce our discipleship of you our followership of to a bunch of rules and regulations to 10 steps a couple of programs things that we need to do in order to tick a box or feel like we've done what we needed

Christ this morning you ask us to come to you to be with you God want you remind us of that and you Holy Spirit come and draw us close God I want to pray especially maybe just for those of us who feel unworthy who feel like we're not good enough Christ want you remind us that it's all by grace God I want you help us as watermark to be a church that walks deeply with you in in the day to day to day realities in the trenches of life whether we are at work at university at home with the family when we on the bus or at our computer to be those that are centering orientating our lives around you Christ to pray maybe especially for those that are not followers of Jesus maybe for 10 years we've gone to church we've ticked the box we've never encountered you in a life transforming real way

[46 : 58] Jesus I pray this morning would you speak into us call us to follow you God I want you open our eyes to see for who you are help us to repent of our sin to confess our need for you and to come and to follow you Jesus we pray come and have your way God I pray that even this week as we go into the city of Hong Kong as we go about our lives won't we go not just as Christians in a modern sense but as followers of Jesus not just those who would tick the box of Christianity on a census form but those who are walking closely with you aware of your spirit and your grace anchored in your love those who are remaining in you pray come and help us God we pray these things in your gracious and your powerful name Amen