

Becoming Like Jesus

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[0 : 00] The scripture reading comes from Matthew chapter 4 and Luke chapter 6. 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 Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zabulon 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.

[1 : 05] And he went throughout all Galilee. 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 caught 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.

And in Luke 6, verse 39, we read, He also told them a parable. Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone, when he is fully trained, will be like his teacher.

Amen. This is the word of God. Amen. Great. Thank you so much, Angeline. Just such a great privilege and pleasure to be with you this morning.

[2 : 18] Let me just pray for us as we dive into God's word together. Father, I just want to thank you that your word is powerful, that you call us to follow you.

And I pray this morning that even as I speak and we listen, Lord, I pray that you'd remove the distractions from our hearts. And I pray that you would open our eyes to see you in a fresh way, and to see in a fresh way what it means to become like you as followers, to have a new goal, to be people who are transformed into your image.

And I pray this in Jesus' wonderful name. Amen. Amen. Great. It's such a privilege to be with you guys this morning. We're continuing, again, in our series looking at what it means to follow Jesus. And if I was to ask you a quick trivia quiz question, what is Watermark's mission statement? I don't know how many of you would be able to answer that.

But our mission statement is all about we're here to make mature disciples of Jesus, who then make more disciples of Jesus and more disciples of Jesus, and fill this city and transform this city to the glory of God with people who are followers, disciples of Jesus.

[3 : 45] And so we're looking at this idea of what does it mean to follow Jesus in everyday life? That following him is not just something which is a Sunday thing, but actually in all of your life, from your social media to your dating choices, your parenting, every aspect of life is shaped by what it means to follow Jesus.

And so last week, Kevin looked at what it means to be a Talmudim, a first century disciple of Jesus. And he showed us that an apprentice in the first century to a rabbi would be someone who has gone through a whole load of education, and they qualify to be a disciple of a rabbi by having passed basically a disciple job interview, where they show their performance.

And he showed us how Jesus was so different, that Jesus didn't require a performance grade to get in, that he chose a random bunch of people out of pure grace.

It was his initiative. And then he showed us that he was not just the normal rabbi like everyone else, he's the king of heaven who is inviting us, not just to follow him as an ordinary teacher, but as the king of heaven who is bringing in the kingdom of heaven.

And he showed us that the goal of a disciple was three things. To be with Jesus, which we looked at last week, to become like Jesus, and to do what Jesus did, what your rabbi does.

[5 : 23] And so he showed us last week, everything that we do comes out of, and everything we're going to carry on in the rest of this series comes out of that sense of abiding with, of being with Jesus in relationship with him.

Everything else is not kind of, we've moved on from that. Everything else flows out of this relationship with Jesus. We don't just do a Bible study or a quiet time in the morning and then forget about Jesus.

The whole of our lives are to be lived in the presence of Jesus. And so we've talked about that last week, and today we're going to move on to what it looks like as a disciple to become like Jesus.

And I'm going to read to you that verse again in a second. Well, that verse which says, Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?

A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone, when he's fully trained, will become like his teacher. Now, Don Whitney, who's an author, he illustrates this principle by saying, imagine if you are a six-year-old kid who has been forced by your mom or your dad to do piano practice.

[6 : 41] And it's death. Like, you're just dying. You hate it. And then suddenly an angel comes down from heaven and whisks you away during your piano practice, takes you away to this incredible concert hall, maybe Asia World Expo, and there is this piano genius, a virtuoso, playing the hardest Mozart piece, his sonata number 18, and it's breathtaking.

It is effortless. It's incredible. And the angel turns to you and says, what do you think? And you go, wow.

And then the angel turns and says, that's you in 20 years' time. Then he turns to your piano and says, but you must practice.

And the angel disappears, and you're left there with your piano. Now, what's just happened? If he remembers who he's going to become like, his day-to-day practice has just got a totally new vision.

He's just got a whole new direction, a whole new goal, which is going to move him into his future.

His practice will not look the same again. And that's what Jesus is saying in this parable.

[8 : 01] He's saying, who you want to become like, the vision that you have of your life, and your teacher, who you want to be like, that is going to change and shape everything that you do in your life.

Everyone, when he's fully trained, will be like his teacher. So what Jesus is doing, he's trying to give us a vision for where he's going, to be like Jesus.

Here's how Paul says the same thing. He says, 2 Corinthians 3 verse 18, he says, and we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed.

That is a present continuous, that's an ongoing process, into the same image of Jesus, from one degree of glory to another. You see what he's saying?

That word transformed is the word metamorphosis. It's the word, it's that process of transformation, when you go from a caterpillar, all the way, changing stage by stage, to become this beautiful butterfly.

[9 : 08] And he's saying, that this is what, some people call spiritual transformation, or sanctification. This is what the goal, of the Christian life is.

Author Dallas Willard, said it like this, spiritual formation, in the Christian tradition, is a process, of being increasingly possessed, and permeated, by the character traits of Jesus, as we walk, in the easy yoke of discipleship, with Jesus as our teacher.

Do you see what he's saying? The goal that Jesus saved you for, was not simply to go to church. It was not simply, just to get into heaven. It's not simply so you read your Bible, and become a nice moral person.

The reason, that Jesus saved you, is so that you, and I, and we as a church, will be conformed, will be transformed, will be metamorphosized, into, the image, of Jesus, that we become, like him.

He is God, we are not. But our character, can look ever more, like his, incredible, all glorious character. And for first century disciples, this was not theory.

[10 : 26] I read about, a, someone who, a group of rabbi, a group of disciples, who in imitating their rabbi, their rabbi had a stoop.

And so, he would walk behind, his disciples would walk behind, and everyone else, would have this stoop, as his disciple. I heard other, there's another story, where, disciples so wanted, to be like their teacher, that they would hide, in the bedroom, of the rabbi, to see how, he made love to his wife, so they knew how to do it.

This is, serious business. You know, I don't know if you've ever seen, that Japanese TV, game show, called Human Tetris. It's, it's very funny.

It's, they have this moving wall, with a hole, cut out in different shapes. And, and there are contestants, and what they have to do, they have to, as the, the wall moves towards them, they have to make, the shape, of the hole, otherwise they get knocked, into the water, a pool of water, behind them.

And this is actually, what Christian discipleship, is. It is human Tetris, of a different time. Jesus, he's not just our saviour, he's our lord, and he's shaping us, so that our lives, begin to bend, and conform, and to flex, into his, cross shaped, life.

[11 : 49] That we look, more like him. That's the goal, of discipleship. But then the question is, if we are meant to, shape and flex, into him, why should we, even do that?

Why should we, follow Jesus? Well firstly, recognize, every one of us, is following someone. You know, Taylor Swift, has 88 million followers, on Twitter.

Justin Bieber, has 113 million, I just found out. What do followers, do? Followers, get shaped, and influenced, by who they follow.

My brother-in-law, is what you might call, a key opinion leader, in food, and restaurants, and staycations. His YouTube channel, has hundreds, thousands of subscribers.

And what do they do? What he recommends, people follow. That's why advertisers, pay him money. But when Jesus says, can a blind man, lead a blind man, will they not, both fall into a pit?

[12 : 55] He's referring, to the religious leaders, the Pharisees. And he's saying, who you follow, really matters. Because, if they are blind, your teacher is blind, you are going to fall, into a pit in your life.

And so the reality, he's saying is, follow someone, who is going to give you, a beautiful future, not someone, who's going to lead you, into a pit. And there's a question, and here's the reality.

You're not autonomous. You are being disciplined. Who is discipling you? Well, if you do nothing about that, let me tell you, here's one thing, that's discipling you, this city, is discipling you.

You know, when I first came to Hong Kong, I didn't, need to feel, any moments of kind of, you know, when you're waiting for the MTR, you're waiting for something. And I was so relaxed, I was fine, and I would laugh, at everybody else, who was just kind of, rushing around, restfully, trying to get into the lift, trying to kind of, all the time on their phone, any spare minute, like, like they were an addict, or something.

And I would laugh at it. I thought, well, that's ridiculous. And then I got sucked in. And two years ago, I suddenly realised, I was just like them.

[14 : 13] I couldn't get into a lift, for 30 seconds, without pulling out my phone, and kind of looking, at a WhatsApp message, that I'd already looked at, like a minute before. And I got FOMO, fear of missing out, if I didn't check, when the notification ding went off.

My heart, had been captured. This city, is discipling, what you love, and what you fear, and to desire, certain things, through your habits.

Your parents, have disciplined you, more than anybody else. They've influenced you, and your responses today, are much, much shaped, by what they, have shaped, in your life.

You don't need to do anything, except wake up tomorrow, and you're already being disciplined, by someone. And conformed, into their image, which is why, James Smith, says this, discipleship, with Jesus, is a way, to curate your heart, to be attentive, to, and intentional, about, what, and who, you love.

He's saying, we've got to be intentional, about, what it means, to follow Jesus. But you think, well, why Jesus? Why not Elon Musk, or Li Kao Xing, or your boss?

[15 : 36] Here's why. Anyone else, you follow, will weigh you down, with expectations, you can't live up to. But Jesus wants to free you, from the burdens, that people put on you.

Matthew 23, describes the religious leaders, of the time. Here's what he says about them. These other teachers, he says, they tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and they lay them, on people's shoulders, but they themselves, are not willing, to move them, with their finger.

Do you know what he's saying? He's saying, any other teacher, self-help books, religion, devoid of relationship, with Jesus, Hong Kong culture, this city, what does it do?

It lays expectations, on you. It lays standards, for you to have to live up to. And if you manage, to reach them, you are filled, with self-righteous pride, and if you don't, you get crushed, in shame, in guilt, in just this sense, of burden on your back, that you're a failure, never good enough.

And no one comes, and lifts those burdens, off you. Here's what Jesus says. Come to me, all, all, who are weary, and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

[16:56] Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle, and lowly, and you will find rest, for your souls.

Isn't that an amazing promise? You see, that yoke, was a rabbi's term, actually, for someone's teaching. They talked about the yoke of the law, and things like that.

But, but literally, it was a wooden weight, that you put, on an oxen, to, around their neck, to train them, to plow, a field straight.

And Jesus here says, I have a yoke of training, but it's not a weighty yoke. It's an easy yoke. He's not saying, it's easy for life, as a Christian.

It's not. But he's saying, I don't load you, with all the other burdens, all the other expectations, all the guilt, all the shame, all those other things, that even in religion, even in church, you can feel that, when we're not walking with Jesus.

[18:00] But Jesus says, on the cross, I've taken them. I've taken them. My yoke is easy. My burden is light. Your guilt, your shame, those unmet expectations, that you can't lift by yourself, and you can't carry, your own sinfulness, I lift that off you.

I'm not harsh, and punishing. I'm gentle, and lowly. I'm accessible. I'm with you. And if you're trying to, if you're starting to take those burdens, on your back, those expectations, of all the things that you've got to be, but you know you can't be, that's because you're trying to take another yoke, not mine.

Your training with Jesus, is not about meeting a standard. Jesus has met the standard for you. This yoke is a yoke of grace.

But here's the key thing. Grace is not opposed to effort. It is opposed to earning. Earning is an attitude, where you never feel you've done enough, but effort is an action that you have to do.

Jesus, when calling us to become like him, he's not calling us to try harder, but he's calling us to train.

[19:29] You know, I love my son. When he wasn't walking, I loved him. Now he's walking, I still love him, okay? My love for him is not determined whether he walks or not.

But, I have still spent ages encouraging him how to walk. I've held his hands. I've walked with him step by step. I've encouraged him as he's kind of fallen over again and he's come back up again and we've gone on this journey again and again and again and again and again.

Why? He wasn't earning my love. He already had that. But what was he doing? He was training to become the person he was made to be. Someone who can walk.

Someone who is going to flourish. That as a father who loves his child is what I want. That when God looks at us and he calls us to train is what he wants for us.

He is conforming us into the image of his son because that's where we flourish. That's where we find rest. To be like Jesus.

[20:38] Follow me, he says. That's where we're going. But you know, sometimes I think as Christians, don't we often look at our lust or our lack of self-control or our complaining and all the things that we see that we do wrong and then we look at Jesus' perfect responses and we go, yeah, but that's Jesus, isn't it?

I'm not Jesus. I can't do that. And we just kind of carry on living our own way. And in one sense, it's true. You can't do that now.

But if my son had looked at someone running while he still couldn't walk and said, I can't do that. It's true. He couldn't at that moment. At least not yet.

But with practice, he will. And he is. Jesus says, everyone when he is fully trained becomes like his teacher. That means you can be partially trained.

We're not fully trained yet. But we're in that training process which will continue for the rest of our lives. And he's saying, I'm leading you to become more like me.

[21 : 50] Will you trust me? Some people think that that just should happen miraculously. We say things like, let go and let God. Which is actually terrible theology.

You see, it's like God will do everything for you. No, it's a partnership. If I say to my son, we're just going to lay hands on you and pray that you're going to walk without any effort.

That's a miracle. God does that in our lives. But if that happens every single time, he's going to need a miracle every time he tries to stand up. But God says, no, I want to partner with you.

I'm going to take the weight of the yoke so you don't have to earn my love. You've got it. It's a light yoke. And I'm giving my spirit in you to empower you.

You just need to walk with me, to be with me, as Kevin was saying last week. And I'm going to lead you there. I'm going to lead you there. And I know often in my life, I've wanted to change.

[22 : 51] Don't we want to change? I've wanted to change. But I've just not known how to change. And so here's what I want to spend the rest of our time looking at.

We've talked about what it means that the goal is to be like Jesus. It's by grace. But let's see, how do we get chained by Jesus? I've got four things here, how Jesus trains us.

The first is through his word. You know, the world around is discipling us to believe a certain story about life, a vision of the good life.

You know, what's the Hong Kong story? It's like life is a competition. You, your value is based on how you perform in this competition. So, for you to be a success, for you to be worth anything, what have you got to do?

Well, you've got to get in the best schools, you've got to study hard, you've got to get the best jobs, you've got to get promotion, you've got to then buy a flat, get married, buy a bigger flat, earn enough money so that you can retire early, so that then your kids can get into the best schools, can study hard, can get the best jobs, and it just goes on and on and on and on and on, and that's the cycle.

[24 : 08] And anyone who's not in that race, or anyone who's like a loser down in last place, they're just, they're just a loser, a failure. And we can look down on them.

So just get working, get harder. How much does that burden us? Parents, students, workers, the poor, how much do we feel the heaviness of that yoke?

And yet that's a vision that many of us, all of us are saturated with every single day as we go out into Hong Kong. Jesus comes and he says, learn from me.

I want to give you a new story. I want you to see who I am. And this is why teaching and scripture is so important. It's why Sundays are so important to get your mind.

Here's what Romans says, don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed. So the renewal of your mind, there's the same metamorphosis word. Your mind needs to get changed and transformed by God's word as you're reading scripture, as you're listening to sermons, as you're discussing it together.

[25 : 24] God's word, worship music, needs to flood your heart so you have a new and a better story, a new and a better goal, a new and a better teacher to have your eyes fixed upon.

And this is not just about getting information, it's about getting a new set of lenses and desires and loves to shape you in all of life.

You know, when Etienne was five months old, Fiona downloaded an app for baby activities. And before you could get on the app, there was this survey to fill in. And at the end of it, suddenly it pulled up all these statistics.

And it said, your baby is 19th percentile, 19% percentile for communication, 14% for movement.

And by this I'm going, oh my goodness, 12% for brain development.

And I'm going, he's going to be a failure for all of his life. 49% for something else, I don't know. And I went, at least he's normal in that one. And then suddenly, I stopped.

[26 : 31] And I thought, that's ridiculous. My son's life is in God's hands. He loves us. He cares for us. He's got our future in his hands.

Why am I so worried about this little stupid thing at five months old? But isn't that exactly what social media, what the rest of Hong Kong does to us every single day and how we respond?

But scripture is what will recalibrate you to see life through a different lens. And it gets you out of that performance insanity that we're just soaked in.

But many Christians in Hong Kong, we think transformation is about just information. And so we think more Bible knowledge equals more godliness.

That's why we do tons of courses. We do whether it's BSF or Bible story course or Bible studies. We listen to famous preachers. And it's all great stuff we need to learn.

[27 : 34] We're all about the Bible here at Watermark. But I think many of us, our view of how we learn Jesus is shaped more by the city's view of education rather than Jesus' view of discipleship.

Because, you know, you could study this passage about come to me and I will give you rest. You could listen to sermons about it and listen all year and you never actually experience the rest that Jesus wants to give you.

Do you know why? Because you're not learning to be with Jesus as you're reading. You're just doing it for information. He wants you to listen to this sermon.

He wants you to read scripture saying, God, I want you to speak to me. I want to know you. And it's not just you're not learning to be with Jesus, but actually there are habits in our life which directly counter everything we're reading and start to shape us so they offset everything that God is trying to form us into.

Which is why learning scripture is not enough. It's important. But we also need the second thing, which is we need to practice his godly habits. Do you know your, this is what James Smith says.

[28 : 52] Your deepest desire is the one manifested by your daily life and habits. Just stop there for a minute. Just think about that. Your deepest desire is the one manifested by your daily life and habits.

This is because our action, our doing, bubbles up from our loves which are habits we've acquired through the practices we're immersed in. And here's what he says.

I might be learning to love a goal that I'm not even aware of and that nonetheless governs my life in unconscious ways. This is what Jesus, you know, the Bible says, sow to the spirit.

Because what you sow, you'll reap. How easy is it to get into habits? Bad ones, really easy.

Good ones, really hard. Sin is a bad habit hardwired into our hearts. Good godliness is a good habit that the spirit is wanting to work and change our hearts to desire and practice inside.

[30 : 03] My son will not let us brush his teeth. He hates it. He shuts his mouth. He turns his head away. But I can guarantee if he's anything like me in 20 years' time, if he goes one day without brushing his teeth, he's going to go, man, there's something wrong.

I just don't like this. How do you get from hating something to loving it? One of the key ways is you just practice it.

Your habits, your desires just get shaped by these habits so your responses become automatic. I don't even think about brushing my teeth now.

But the habits you have today are forming your future. This is what scripture's saying. What you reap is what you sow is what you reap. What the first thing, just think, when the first thing you do in the morning and the last thing you do at night is look at your phone, don't think that isn't shaping you, it is.

Don't think, if you have nothing to do for four minutes without, and you have to reach for your phone and mindlessly look through Facebook or YouTube or something, you're going to enjoy rest with God in the present.

[31 : 18] Don't think you will. That habit is countering everything Jesus wants to do in you. Our culture's discipling us into restless mediocrity where we struggle to relate to anyone else when Jesus wants to bring us into flourishing.

What if we as a church started a gospel rebellion against our restless culture? What if the first thing that you did in the morning was to train yourself to say, thank you, Father, that I'm a dearly loved child of God today.

Today's your day. I am living for you. I need your grace. What if the last thing you did every day was to look back over your day and say, God, search my heart.

Show me where there is any sin and you confess it and you thank God for his grace. What if you made scripture a daily habit?

You set a time, you set a place, 15 minutes every single day in God's word. That is going to shape your life. That is going to metamorphosize you.

[32 : 27] Here's what's going to happen. Let me just kind of flesh this out. Let's say you've got a habit of grumbling and complaining. When life goes wrong, you just get miserable and grumpy.

Anyone like that? Okay. And you read Hebrews 12 that says, Jesus, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross.

and you go, Jesus, in the hardest situation, what is he? He's got this joy that is sustaining him through this most agony.

And there's this new vision of how we can live life. And what we go is, oh, well, that was just Jesus, right? I can't do that. Because we've forgotten that Jesus gave his spirit in us to make us like him. And then we read in James 1 where it says, consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters. Whenever you face trials of many kinds because this is testing your faith and it's growing you mature and we read that and we hate that verse, don't we?

[33 : 34] Because we realize that that's commanding us not to be grumpy all the time but actually to rejoice and we go, yeah, I know that but I can't do it. And Jesus says, yes, not yet.

But you will if you let me train you. And so you go, you grit your teeth and you go, okay, I'm going to be joyful today. Good luck. That's going to last about five minutes.

Because Jesus' yoke is not a self-reliant yoke. It's a yoke of dependent prayer. God, that's where I want to be but I'm not there right now.

Change my heart. Forgive me. Make me new, Lord. I need you. Spirit, fill me. What are you doing? That's a new habit of the heart of Jesus' reliance not self-reliance. And so you fill your soul with Jesus. You put other scriptures about joy and thankfulness on your screensaver.

[34 : 36] You listen and read Christian biographies or videos of joyful believers who are just imitating Jesus. You start praising God when you don't feel like it. You keep praying for God to change you through that process.

And then God gives you opportunities to get grumpy. That annoying colleague. Your kid's just playing up.

Everything going wrong. And you go, okay, this is an opportunity for Jesus to change me. And you thank God and it works for a few minutes. And then something else hits you and then you just spiral down into complaining and you go, oh, there you go, it didn't work.

And you give up. That's just like people who go to the gym once and then afterwards they look in the mirror and they look at themselves and what do they see?

Nothing. No change. So they go for maybe two weeks, three times a week, look in the mirror, what do they see? Nothing. But do that for six months, for nine months, for a year, what will you see?

[35 : 48] Change. Change. You see, spiritual transformation is this partnership with the Spirit of God, getting in His Word, allowing Him to bring us to our knees, requiring Him filling our soul with Jesus in whatever way we can in the long haul, not just the short term.

But what helps you to not give up? What helps us to persevere in this? Well, we need training partners. That's Christian community that's coming around us.

How much easier is it to go to the gym if you've got somebody to go with? This is why community is such a big value for us as a church. Because you know who you hang around with shapes who you become and what you love.

Make your non-believing family or friends your primary community and unless you are really alert, their loves, their desires rub off on you. Guaranteed.

So if you are not in Christian community right now during COVID, if you're just doing this by yourself, let me tell you, you are being disciplined by everyone else, but Jesus has probably got a whole lot of stuff he wants you to grow in, but you won't be hearing him because you need community in that.

[37 : 09] You know, what community does, it exposes and encourages you. When I'm feeling restless, burdened, and someone shares how Jesus and his word is filling them with joy in the midst of tough circumstances, do you know what that does?

It exposes me again and goes, hey, I'm not there, but I want to be like that. And it shows you you come back to God again and go, God, forgive me.

And it just encourages you, it spurs you on as Hebrews tells us. It's like, let's keep gathering, Hebrews says, so that we urge each other, spur each other on to love and good deeds.

And you go, Jesus, I want that, change me. And there is just this new vital hope. That's why we're starting something called Transformation Groups, TGs, which are two to four people who meet a couple of times a month.

And the goal of that is that they're going to encourage us and expose us to help pursue Christ-likeness together. And if you are not in a community group, because in community groups we're going to be doing this, if you're not in one of those, but you know you need to be in a TG, then like, let me know or let Kevin know or one of the staff, because we want to just gather you together with one of those because this is so crucial for your health and the health of those around you and the health of the church.

[38 : 38] So we get God's word, learning Jesus, and that reshapes us, it reshapes our desires, that we desire him more. We learn new habits in community.

The final thing is Jesus trains us through the hard knocks of life. You know what 1 Peter tells us? It's through trials and testing that we get refined like gold.

You know, nothing in life that's worthwhile ever happens without pain. We're about to give birth to our second child. That's painful. If you get a master's, that's painful.

If you're a great athlete, there's a pain in training that you have to go through. But how does the yoke be easy in your life? It's not that the pain is not real.

It's not that there's not real effort involved. But as Jesus is using those trials, the challenges that you may go through to sculpt you to become more like Jesus, your eyes, if your eyes are fixed on that prize, I want to be like Jesus, then anything that happens to you is a place to rejoice because Jesus is going to use that to make you more like him.

[39 : 57] and we do that together in community. Hong Kong's story tells you live for comfort, avoid suffering. That's why we get so grumpy at hardship. But if you see this pain as an opportunity to be trained by him, to become more like him, in God's word, in community, man, you're going to see Jesus displayed more and more and more in our lives.

I heard a podcast of a man recently who'd just been struggling with cancer for quite a while. It's just a really tough situation. But he said this, and I'll paraphrase him.

I wouldn't trade this for anything else because I've discovered Jesus in a new way. I've learned to rejoice in a new way. I realized how shallow my life was before.

I always used to sing Jesus enough for me, but I actually thought that him and something else was enough. That really Jesus wasn't totally enough. But he said, now, when everything is stripped away, now I know that it's true.

Jesus says, follow me. Be with me. Get in my word. Learn new habits. Be in Christian community. And you'll walk through life, and there'll be ups and there'll be downs.

[41 : 16] But as you rely on my spirit to change you, we, and as a church, will look more and more like Jesus. The question for us is, do you want that?

Do you want to follow Jesus? Because this is where he's leading us. This is the call. And this is the journey that we're on together.

Let me pray. Father, I know there are some, some of us who, you know, we look at Jesus, and we, it's, your character seems so far off.

And we look at our lives, and we see the areas where we struggle. And we, we almost give up the goal that you have called us to, to be conformed, to be transformed into your image.

Because we often think it all relies on ourselves. Or we're more captivated by other stories. Or we've built so many habits in our lives that we have failed to see that actually those are shaping us away from you rather than drawing us to you.

[42 : 45] Lord, I pray, change us as a church. Open our eyes to see that you are the great shepherd. You are a great rabbi, a great king. You're the one who is leading us. Not to just wait and sit and wait for heaven, but you today want to begin and want to continue this transformation work.

I pray as a community, we will be more centered on that goal than any other goal. Lord, I pray that we would earning more money, getting a great job, getting a spouse, having kids, having all the other things would be way down the list of goals compared to that goal in our lives, Lord.

I pray reorient us to see that you are the place of flourishing, that you want to give us rest in our souls. And Lord, let us walk with you together today with effort, with struggling, but knowing that you're the one who has already gone before us.

You're the one who suffered for us. You died for us so that you could make us like you. Work this in us, I pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.