

WEEK 1



DAY 1 – APPRENTICESHIP AS A WAY OF LIFE

If you happened to live in the first century and were lucky enough to catch Jesus teaching at a synagogue or countryside, you probably would have understood him in the context of “Rabbi.” Jesus, being an itinerant teacher, would have traveled from place to place with his “yoke” (teaching), stopping at synagogues and public places to teach. He was a brilliant young teacher and would have been accompanied by a band of eager disciples. What’s so special about this depiction of Jesus? Well, understanding Jesus as *Rabbi* carries serious implications pertaining to what it means to be a follower or disciple of Jesus.

Before moving on, consider the word disciple. What does it mean to you? What did it mean to be a disciple of Jesus in the 1st century? What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus in the 21st century? Unfortunately, there are usually some serious misunderstandings concerning the Rabbi/disciple relationship. In 1st-century Palestine, discipleship was the pinnacle of the Jewish education system. Young children participated in a sort of “primary education” consisting of the study of the Torah (the first 5 books of the bible). Many, by age twelve, would have large portions, if not all, of the Torah memorized. Remember, this was an *oral* culture. Stories, scripture, and information were generally communicated person to person.

During the early teenage years, young women would generally get married and begin to have children (yes, we’ve come a long way!) and young men would apprentice under their father or a close relative to learn a trade. They would begin to immerse themselves in the work and lifestyle of the person they were apprenticing under. While many apprenticed under a relative, those demonstrating some aptitude in the Torah would progress, studying and memorizing large portions of the Old Testament. Around age 14 or 15, the best of the best could potentially be invited to apprentice under a Rabbi. An apprenticeship under a Rabbi would have included similar components as any apprenticeship. Learning by immersion would have been essential. If a Rabbi determined an apprentice to be worthy, he would invite them, saying, “come and follow me.”

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DAY 1 – APPRENTICESHIP AS A WAY OF LIFE

If a Rabbi invited a student to follow them, the student would then become an apprentice. The invitation to “come and follow me” would have been quite literally accepted. An apprentice would follow their Rabbi as he lived, traveled, and taught, learning by immersing themselves in their Rabbi’s teaching. As an apprentice, the student had three distinct goals:

1. To **BE** with their Rabbi: Apprenticeship was a 24/7 business. An apprentice would follow their Rabbi wherever he went with the express intent of immersing themselves in the teachings and practices of their master, taking on their “yoke.” A Rabbi’s yoke was the cumulative total of their teaching and way of life; their “school of thought.”
2. To **BECOME** a carbon copy of their Rabbi: In an age of individualism, this strikes us as peculiar. Apprenticeship was the exact opposite. The goal was to mimic even the mannerisms and intonations of your Rabbi, acquiring their teaching and ultimately carrying on their yoke.
3. To **DO** what they did: As was the case with all apprenticeships, the ultimate goal was to do what your teacher did. In the case of a Rabbi/disciple relationship, every apprentice sought to assume their Rabbi’s way of life, doing what they did and teaching what they taught.

BE, BECOME, DO

This phrase will become thematic throughout Deeper. As an apprentice to Jesus, **your goal is to be with Jesus, so we can become like Jesus, so we can do what he did.** Moving forward, there will be practical ways to implement this practice at the end of each reading. There will also be a “daily response” consisting of prompts for reflection and room to record your thoughts. You are encouraged to utilize this section, working through the material with care and intentionality. Remember, the process of immersion doesn’t happen haphazardly, but with purpose and aspiration.

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DAY 2 – BE WITH JESUS

Many times throughout the ministry of Jesus, he simply invited people to “follow him” (Mark 1:16 - 20, 8:34; Luke 18:22). This was, and is, the first step to becoming a disciple. It should go without saying, but to be an apprentice to Jesus requires you to spend time with him. But, how do we pursue Jesus in this way? We don’t live in the 1st century, nor is Jesus here with us in the flesh.

The secret to being with Jesus is to abide in his presence. In John Chapter 15, Jesus invites us to “abide in me, as I abide in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me” (John 15:4 NRSV).

According to Jesus, the way you and I abide with Jesus today is through the Holy Spirit. As apprentices to Jesus, it’s imperative we learn to live in a constant state of awareness of and connection to the Holy Spirit. In the 16th Psalm, David paints a picture of what it looks like to continually abide in the presence of God.

“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.

With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest secure.”

(Psalm 16:8 - 9 NRSV)

God is at the center of all things, but often in a quiet, unobtrusive way. He extends an invitation but does not force his presence on us, thus necessitating an active, not passive, pursuit of Jesus and his presence.

We must *continually* orient and re-orient our hearts and minds toward Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, in order to abide with him. Jesus is the true vine (John 15:1), and he calls us to abide in him. Get in the Father’s presence and stay there. Continually root yourself and ground yourself in his presence, turning your attention toward him. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit unless it abides in the vine, so too we will fail to experience the felt presence of God if we do not continually abide in his presence. This is the first and most basic step in apprenticeship; to be with our master.



DAY 2 – BE WITH JESUS

But, how can we abide in the presence of Jesus? To abide in his presence doesn't require our withdrawal from society, but sometimes it requires us to be in two places at once. We have to practice abiding during a busy commute, workday, or Saturday morning soccer game. Dallas Willard touches on this concept in the following excerpt:

"The first and most basic thing we can and must do is to keep God before our minds. This is *the* fundamental secret of caring for our souls. Our part in thus *practicing the presence of God* is to *direct and redirect our minds constantly to Him*. In the early time of our 'practicing' we may well be challenged by our burdensome habits of dwelling on things less than God. But these are habits – not the law of gravity – and can be broken. A new, grace-filled habit will replace the former ones as we take intentional steps toward keeping God before us. Soon our minds will return to God as the needle of a compass constantly returns to the north. If God is the great longing of our souls, He will become the pole star of our inward beings."

– **Dallas Willard** (emphasis added)

There are several key words and concepts here. First, to practice. Yes, it takes practice to abide in the presence of Jesus. Second, it can be challenging. When we focus on Jesus, our minds are often filled with other thoughts. It's quite difficult not to have such thoughts. Acknowledge them and let them pass, re-orienting your attention to Jesus.

John Mark Comer, in his book *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, notes: "...Attention leads to awareness. All the contemplatives agree. The mystics point out that what's missing is awareness. Meaning, in the chronic problem of human beings' felt experience of distance from God, God isn't the culprit. God is omnipresent – there is no place God is not. And no time he isn't present either. *Our awareness of God is the problem*, and it's acute."

– **John Mark Comer** (emphasis added)

Many people indeed live without a sense of God's felt presence, and often we blame God. But, could it be the case WE are the ones who are absent? Could it be the case we haven't given the necessary time and attention to abiding in his presence? It takes practice and a reorientation of our thinking and devotion. After all, we become what we give our time and attention to. What are we regularly giving our time and attention to?



DAY 2 – BE WITH JESUS

As previously mentioned, it takes time, practice and commitment to be with Jesus. Part of the difficulty we face in the 21st century concerns the demands placed on our lives. In other words, we just don't have time. In many ways this is true. We are busier than ever. Let's not diminish or trivialize the reality of how busy and stressful life in the 21st-century can be.

Although it's true we are busy, it's also true we prioritize certain things in life. Practicing the way of Jesus, apprenticeship and his felt presence require us to sometimes intentionally re-organize our lives. This is where some of you will be tempted to jump ship. Don't. Remember, as we orient ourselves toward Jesus, "a new, grace-filled habit will replace the former ones as we take intentional steps toward keeping God before us" (Dallas Willard).

There are many reasons, responsibilities, demands, and priorities that prevent us from continually abiding in the presence of Jesus. Some responsibilities, such as children, we cannot and would not want to change. However, we can prioritize worship on Sunday morning over a soccer league. Some of these changes are simple, and some more complex. Would you consider a career change to be a better apprentice? Would you consider giving up or decreasing the frequency of a hobby? Reducing or eliminating time on social media? Most would realistically, or at least functionally, answer no. This is a moment of challenge in your apprenticeship to Jesus. How willing are you to re-orient your life around Jesus and discipleship?

Practicing the way of Jesus and apprenticing under him often requires intentional commitment and re-organization of our lives. Sometimes subtly, sometimes more dramatically. Remember this is a process and takes time. Slight, incremental changes are usually the healthiest, but sometimes more significant changes are necessary. Pray about it. Ask God to guide you in your apprenticeship. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal those habits that are unhealthy and ultimately pulling you away from apprenticeship to Jesus and his presence.

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DAY 2 – BE WITH JESUS

The reality is your life is a by-product of your lifestyle. If you want to experience the life of Jesus and abide in his presence, you have to adopt the lifestyle he led. Not only is this how we apprentice under Jesus and abide in his presence, but it's also how we find peace in a society hammered by anxiety, stress, depression, and hurry.

As we reclaim our time and begin to practice the way of Jesus, we will be shaped by this activity. As we begin to abide in his presence, we will naturally exhibit the fruit of the Spirit Paul talked about in Galatians. Contrast this with an attempt to will yourself to bear more spiritual fruit or be more spiritual. Have you ever woken up and decided you would love more, or have more joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5:22 - 23)? You might be able to maintain a facade for a while, but our finite will ultimately break down.

The fruit of the Spirit is the result of abiding in Christ. Paul isn't telling us to accomplish these things by sheer force of will but to rely on the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:25). We walk in and keep step with the Spirit. How does a branch make fruit? By effort? No! It makes fruit by abiding in the vine. So we too must abide in Jesus.

"The general human failing is to want what is right and important, but at the same time not to commit to the kind of life that will produce the action we know to be right and the condition we want to enjoy. This is the feature of human character that explains why the road to hell is paved with good intentions. We intend what is right, but we avoid the life that would make it reality." - Dallas Willard

It's time to adopt a lifestyle of apprenticeship; a lifestyle that will bear the fruit of the spirit and produce the action we know to be right and the life we want to enjoy.

BE with Jesus by mimicking his lifestyle. He was never in a rush. He was unhurried. *Commit to setting aside 10 minutes a day just for quiet.* No phone, no music. Just wait on his presence.

BECOME like Jesus by intentionally reassessing how you spend your time, and, if necessary, begin (keyword: begin. It takes time!) re-orienting your life, sometimes in significant ways. Put pen to paper and make a list.

DO what Jesus did by praying for someone you know who is struggling with anxiety, stress, depression or hurry (either in person or by yourself, but let them know).



DAY 3 – BECOME LIKE JESUS

If our goal is to be with Jesus by immersing ourselves in his life, presence, and teaching, that means we need to change. Unquestionably, it takes time to become like our teacher. You cannot play Brahms' Piano Concerto on the first try. It requires years and years of practice. Similarly, apprenticeship to Jesus is a lifelong process. To be clear, this change isn't a bit of self-help, but a transformative process that occurs through the Holy Spirit.

Paul said it like this: "And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit." (2nd Corinthians 3:18 NRSV). It's likely we would all want to experience this type of change, but perhaps we don't know how to change. We are all being shaped, but what is it that's shaping us?

Often, we give very little thought to spiritual formation. What's shaping us? We can be unintentionally formed. Our habits shape and mold us and are derived from our loves and longings. For example, most of us didn't grow up loving coffee. The first sip was probably quite disgusting. But, over time, a habit formed. Now, missing our morning cup of coffee seems an insurmountable obstacle. What we desire, which is shaped by our habits, has a significant effect on our lives. We should also note the difference between understanding something conceptually and practicing it or forming a habit around it. For example, knowing your bible well doesn't guarantee a rich spiritual life. You can't think your way to Christlikeness, you have to live it.

Becoming like Jesus isn't simply a set of ideas, but rather a lifestyle. In the West, we often approach discipleship as a purely intellectual endeavor. Yes, we need to understand, but we also need to immerse ourselves in the lifestyle of Jesus in order to become like him. Without him, we can't. Without us, he won't. We have to partner with God. He has a part. We have a part.



DAY 3 – BECOME LIKE JESUS

There are some core practices we can begin to adopt to become more like Jesus. Think of it as intentional spiritual formation as opposed to the unintentional formation that occurs if we remain passive.

First of all, practice makes perfect. This statement has become self-evident because it's true. To refer back to our concerto example, if an instructor asked a new student to play a complex piece, they would immediately become frustrated and potentially quit. However, if a student practices and practices, over the course of time, this goal is quite attainable. The concerto becomes second nature, not even requiring sheet music to play. A great pianist knows the music at a subconscious level. Similarly, the practices of Jesus do more than simply help us live well (although they accomplish this too), they transform our very nature. These practices alter our loves and longings, synching us with God's design and hope for our lives.

John Mark Comer quipped, "habits eat everything else for breakfast." How true. Becoming like Jesus is *intentional formation*. As we abide in the vine, adopting the lifestyle of Jesus, we begin to know Jesus at a subconscious level. The presence and practices of Jesus become ingrained in the core of our very being, contouring our nature to reflect the yearning of God. This occurs even on a biological level. Habits change and form new neural pathways. Practicing the way of Jesus isn't a "goal" per se; it's not about crossing the finish line. Practicing the way of Jesus is about choosing a lifestyle and incorporating behaviors that make us like Jesus – like the people we hope and want to be.

We have to jettison the achievement mentality so prevalent in the West if we hope to become like Jesus. Becoming like Jesus isn't something to achieve, it's an identity we enter into. As we make decisions, we have to ask ourselves, "how will this contribute to the person I'm becoming?" How will this decision shape me? How are my habits shaping the person I'm becoming?

Becoming like Jesus is a lifestyle and identity, not a goal we achieve. Runners may achieve benchmarks and pianists may master a piece, but their identity always refers back to their pursuit. They were first a runner or pianist. We too need to refer back to our love and pursuit of Jesus. Our first love has to be Jesus.



DAY 3 – BECOME LIKE JESUS

During day 4, we talked about habits. Habits are powerful influences in our lives, often occurring at a subconscious level based on choices, desires, and influences we have experienced. To become like Jesus, we often have to re-orient certain aspects of our lives, consider our deep seated habits, and begin to slowly change. If you have ever tried to change a habit, you know that it's particularly difficult. If we look to the manner that Jesus lived, we can find some assistance.

Although Jesus was a busy itinerant Rabbi, he lived a rhythmic, habitual, unhurried life. A cursory examination of the Gospels reveals that Jesus lived in a very particular manner. Specifically, Jesus incorporated certain practices or rhythms into his daily routine that enabled him to abide in the Father's presence, even in the midst of difficulty and pressure.

These rhythms of life Jesus practiced have come to be known as "spiritual disciplines," which is just another way of saying "what Jesus and his disciples regularly did." In section 3, we will discuss these rhythms and practices in further depth. For now, suffice to consider the lifestyle and habits of Jesus. He often withdrew to spend time in silence and solitude. Jesus prayed, a lot, often withdrawing from the crowds to do so. He knew the scriptures very well. Jesus regularly fasted. And, Jesus lived a simple life unburdened by extravagance or hierarchical power.

What can we glean from his lifestyle? Slow down. Simplify your life down to what really matters, slowly cutting out all of the extra, unnecessary activities and gradually incorporate the practices of Jesus. Remember, if the goal is to apprentice under Jesus, that means change. Not all at once, but a steady migration toward becoming like Jesus.

As you consider this, think about the words of Eugene Peterson: "I mark out the times for prayer, for reading, for leisure, for the silence and solitude out of which creative work can issue. I find that when these central needs are met, there is plenty of time for everything else."



DAY 3 – BECOME LIKE JESUS

Becoming like Jesus is a path toward union through action. When we believe and begin to be active in our pursuit of Jesus, authentic spiritual formation occurs.

Becoming like Jesus requires us to enter into a daily relationship that begins with on-going conversations and progress into intimate communion. Gary Moon communicates this principle in the following manner: “We need nothing less than a total transfusion of his will, thoughts, emotions, behavior, and social interactions, until we can say with the apostle Paul, “For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21).”

Here’s the thing: If we just emphasize forgiveness of sins (atonement) and neglect a lifelong journey to union with Jesus, we are not living out the biblical picture of spiritual formation and maturation in Christ. Intellectual assent and belief are only the beginning of spiritual formation.

Fortunately, Jesus desires desperately to have a relationship with us. His desire is for us to be with him and become like him in thought and action. So, let’s take the next step: raw honesty. Let’s be honest about what stage of apprenticeship we are in. Where are you at in your stage of discipleship? Hint: there are no “official” stages.

A quick self-assessment can help you gauge where you are in your stage of apprenticeship. If you are at the beginning, that’s fine. Do some real introspection, asking questions concerning where you spend your time, how you feel about your relationship with Jesus, how often you practice the rhythms or disciplines Jesus and his disciples practiced, and if you have blatant or egregious sin present in your life.

BE with Jesus by identifying occurrences (arriving at a location, getting a coffee or gas) that can help serve as reminders to orient your thoughts toward Jesus (e.g. when you arrive at work, you take a moment and pray or recite a scripture passage).

BECOME like Jesus taking time today for quiet. Spend this time away from people, phones and other distractions. Take at least 10 minutes to quietly reflect.

DO what he did by spending time in prayer daily (if it’s helpful, build this practice into your schedule or calendar).

DAILY RESPONSE



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- Have you ever successfully changed a bad habit? What did it take to accomplish this?
- What “unnecessary” activities could you potentially cut from your life?
- Where are you at in your apprenticeship to Jesus?
- Who are you becoming? Every day we become someone. If you look to the future, who do you see yourself becoming based on your current trajectory?

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DAY 4 – DO WHAT JESUS DID

It may sound a bit odd to say we are attempting to do what Jesus did. We are not God incarnate, right? Yet, Jesus was also fully human, and, Jesus very explicitly taught his followers to do what he did. For example, the great commission very clearly instructs his disciples concerning the continuity of his ministry.

“And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

(Matthew 28:28 - 30)

We (disciples of Jesus) are to carry on doing what he did. In Matthew chapter 5, Jesus relates how his followers should be “salt and light.”

“You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled underfoot.” You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

– Matthew 5:13 - 16 NRSV

In John’s Gospel (John 14:12 - 14), Jesus gives a very clear statement concerning expectations:

“Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.” (John 14:12 - 14).

There should be no doubt Jesus very much so expected us to carry on doing what he did!



DAY 4 – DO WHAT JESUS DID

If we considered discipleship as a progression, it could be broken down as follows: (1) I do, you watch (2) I do, you help (3) you do, I help (4) you do, I watch. As previously mentioned, one of the goals of apprenticeship is to do what Jesus did. If you are an apprentice to Jesus your goal is to grow and mature, over time, into the kind of person who can continue the work of Jesus.

This may be a paradigm shift in thinking, but the goal of discipleship isn't simply about "getting to heaven" after we die but more about how to live in the Kingdom before we die. Jesus talked a lot about the kingdom of God and how we are to be participants in bringing that kingdom to fruition. We are not passive observers and our faith is far more than simply acquiring biblical or theological knowledge.

With the previous in mind, it's important to examine your stage of discipleship and also to consider your stage in life.

The reality is that some of you have just started following Jesus, while others have been following Jesus for quite some time. Some may have attended church their entire lives but feel like they are "young" disciples. That's perfectly okay. Wherever you are in your stage of discipleship, be comfortable with it and don't jump ahead. There is no magic formula or test to determine where you are in your stage of discipleship.

Another consideration is your stage of life. If you are single without considerable commitments, your apprenticeship may look different when contrasted with the busy mom of three with a part-time job. Your season of life may be quite different from the person sitting next to you during group sessions. that's okay. Own your stage of life! Jesus was a male, itinerant Rabbi in the 1st century. Everyone reading this can confidently say that is not their context! What is your context and how will you live out an apprenticeship to Jesus in the midst of it?

BE with Jesus by taking 10 minutes of quiet, today, just to wait on Jesus.

BECOME like Jesus by committing to carry out the great commission in your context.

DO what Jesus did by spending time with people who are far from God in your community and your context. Have a conversation today with one person who is far from God.



DAY 5 – DO WHAT JESUS DID

Doing what Jesus did may require us to re-orient our thinking. That's not a bad thing. It's growth, and we all need to do some introspection from time to time. For some, and this may even be you, salvation has, unfortunately, become "transactional." We accept Christ so we can "go to heaven," subsequently subordinating everything that happens in-between. A.W. Tozer put it this way:

"The whole transaction of religious conversion has been made mechanical... Christ may be "received" without any special love for him in the soul of the receiver."
– A.W. Tozer

It may sting a bit to admit, but this is some of us. It's unlikely anyone came to Christ intending to have a mechanical, uninterested relationship. It just kind of happened by default. There are a variety of complex reasons why this may occur. However, the good news is God never intended for our faith to simply be mechanical or transactional.

In John's Gospel, Jesus relates how the enemy would deprive of us abundant life and living. A mechanical, transaction-based relationship with God is one of the ways he does this. Jesus said it this way:

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."
– John 10:10 NRSV

Do you feel like you are missing something? Perhaps what's missing is that vibrant sense of living in community with the trinity daily. This is exactly what Jesus did, and if we are going to do what Jesus did, we have to move past viewing or functionally acting out our relationship with God as something purely mechanical. As the trinity lived in community since eternity past, so too are we called to a vibrant relationship with God.



DAY 5 – DO WHAT JESUS DID

The reality is our faith is something dynamic. It's not carried out in a vacuum, nor is it something to be stored in a bank vault. If we want to experience the life of Jesus, we have to adopt the lifestyle of Jesus. Despite what many would have you believe, there is no sacred/secular split. Our faith should permeate the entirety of our lives.

As we move forward with Deeper, there are a few things you should remember about being with Jesus, so we can become like Jesus, so we can do what Jesus did. First, the power of practicing the way of Jesus in community shouldn't be neglected. Jesus often withdrew to spend time in solitude with the father, but he lived the majority of his life with people. He had close friends, disciples, acquaintances and regularly sat down at the table with people who were far from God. We need to do the same! We need to be plugged into a dynamic community of faith and begin to spend time with people who are far from God in our community.

Second, we need to learn to live in the moment. Much of what we have discussed thus far concerns forming rhythms, but we also have to learn to live our faith moment by moment. You almost certainly will never "schedule" time to disciple someone. It occurs in the context of our day-to-day lives. Many of these things will seem like interruptions in our lives. We need to learn to embrace them. Jesus met people exactly where they were, right in the middle of their frenzied lives. It's in the midst of every day life that we begin to redeem people and demonstrate what it means to be salt and light in the midst hurting and broken people.

BE with Jesus by reading John 10:1 - 19. Sit and reflect on his words and the implications for our daily living.

BECOME like Jesus by making a concrete plan to become part of a community of faith, if you are not. If you are, commit to attending and serving.

DO what Jesus did by inviting someone you know who is far from God to lunch, coffee, or, if you feel like they are up for it, church.

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