



IMITATING *Jesus' Way* WITH OTHERS

I have been inspired recently by Emily P. Freeman's words when she writes, *"I have a vision of a generation of believers who understand that the goal of life is Jesus and all the ways he wants to offer himself both to us and through us to the world."* Yes, yes, yes!

Beginning with Jesus' earliest words to the men and women who would become his disciples, *"Follow me,"* Christianity has understood itself to be a faith imparted by one to another. For in Jesus we discover not only a worthy model for the journey, but also an intimate invitation to a life together. Jesus reaches out by his Spirit, speaking and sharing his stunning life with us.

I want to invite you through these reflections to ponder Jesus' distinctive way of being with others. He continues by his Spirit to develop his followers in this same way today, life upon life.

Where might Jesus be inviting you to a deeper relational life with himself and with others?

Grace and peace,
Rob Loane

Jesus notices people uniquely.

No matter what stage of life we are in, we have a deep need to be known and noticed.

Everywhere Jesus went, he noticed people. When the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years found her way to the center of the crowd, touched Jesus, and became healed—Jesus asked this absurd question, “Who touched me?” One can almost hear the disciples chuckling to themselves as the crowd pressed in around Jesus. But he pressed on with the question, and the healed woman reluctantly came forward and “told him the whole truth,” and he saw her and blessed her —“*Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease*” (Mark 5:24–34).

Or consider that day when Jesus picked the most unlikely character out of the crowd—“*Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today*” (Luke 19:1–9). Zacchaeus’ highest hope was to get a glimpse of this great rabbi and healer—the one criticized for “being a friend of tax collectors.” Jesus knew that this friendless tax collector needed far more than a glimpse, he needed to be seen and noticed.

Everywhere Jesus went, he noticed people in profound and transforming ways.

Recognizing another person is a powerful gift. When we come alongside others, the Spirit invites us to become living reminders of this startling reality – their story is unique, and it matters deeply to God and to us.



Call them by name.

We often miss or overlook others.

Everyone longs to be “picked out of the crowd” and called by name like Zacchaeus was by Jesus.

Today go meet someone new in your neighborhood or favorite local coffee shop and call them by name.

Jesus creates a welcoming spirit of respect, acceptance, and care.

There is room at this table for you, was the expression of Jesus' whole life and ministry, to both disciple and stranger alike. And this was not simply common courtesy or good manners on display.

Jesus' attention and care toward those who were outsiders to the mainstream of his first-century Jewish religious life distinguished so much of his ministry. Jesus welcomed those who were unwelcomed; he respected those who were not valued, and he cared deeply for those who knew only neglect and fear from their communities. This was the gospel, God's loving and restoring way in the world, in practice.

Moreover, the gospels portray Jesus offering a staggering level of intimacy with his disciples. He made space for his followers to learn and grow, to follow and imitate him. His hospitable way was an essential element in his inviting, challenging, and preparing his followers to serve, lead, and guide others down the road. He never reduced them to mere pawns on his chessboard. Nor were they simply means for his greater purposes. It was not their usefulness that was primary to him; it was their person. He honored them with dignity, treasured their company, and developed them with great affection. They were his friends.

Jesus continues by his Spirit to develop followers in this same way today. As we seek to lead through these complex times, where might we join with Jesus in his hospitable and befriending way with disciples and strangers alike?



Make room at the table.

“This is what I want you to do: I want you to tell someone you love them, and dinner’s at six.... I want you to invest yourself wholly and deeply in friendship, God’s greatest evidence of himself here on earth.”

—Shauna Niequist, *Bread & Wine: A Love Letter to Life Around the Table with Recipes*, pages 256-258

Jesus invites people to greater spiritual depth in every moment and facet of their lives.

One author defines the spiritual life as “a way of referring to one’s life—every moment and facet of it—from God’s perspective.” By this definition, Jesus was very concerned with a deeper spiritual life. And a primary way Jesus invites this depth is through what Stephanie Ford calls “the gift of a good question.”

She writes:

“Jesus was a master of the kind of question that took a conversation deeper. Moreover, he deflected many questions, realizing that the issue behind the seeker’s question needed to be explored, rather than an answer provided.... Jesus’ questions pushed his followers and friends beyond where they had been to honesty before God and themselves that was vulnerable, and risky. Yet he knew that the right question could open the seeker to transformation, a new experience of grace, and greater congruity of life and faith.”

For too many of us, our prevailing impulse in mentoring men and women, young and old, is to give answers when the truer need may be caring inquiry and patient listening.

Jesus’ habit of engaging others by asking good questions is a great example to us who care about helping others develop and deepen in Christ.
(Mark 10:51; Luke 11:40; Luke 20:4; John 1:38)



Make time for spiritual conversations.

The quality of conversations we offer others is tied to the quality of attention provided.

How can we grow in attention that leads us to cultivate more meaningful spiritual conversation?

Three initial thoughts come to mind for those of us who long for better spiritual friendship and conversation.

- Learn to begin where people are
- Learn to patiently get below the surface
- Learn to reflect theologically

You can read the full blog post at <https://amentoringway.org/be-encouraged/>

Jesus knows that one can't rush the development of people.

The Gospels paint a picture of Jesus' first disciples as a fellowship of slow learners. And we as readers are invited to join this fellowship and to encounter his gracious and patient way with us.

In particular, the Gospel writers draw attention to Jesus' development of the impetuous and determined Simon Peter. More is offered about his relationship with Jesus than any other person in the Gospels. We encounter a rhythm of affirmation and confrontation, affection and demand in this mentoring relationship (Luke 5:1–11; Matthew 16:13–23; Luke 22:28–62; John 21:1–23).

Peter's ambitions and expectations are reshaped by Jesus' consistent support and challenge. A much older and wiser Peter would tell a suffering church years later, "*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time*" (1 Peter 5:6, italics added). Peter knew firsthand the transformative power of Jesus' patient mentoring in his life.

Jesus knows that one cannot rush the development of people. Projects can be crammed and hurried, but nurturing and challenging people to maturity cannot.

Eugene Peterson reminds us that Jesus' kingdom work is urgent work, but it is also patient work. We have much to unlearn and learn when it comes to embracing both a sense of urgency and a patient way to help others deepen and mature in Christ.



Ask the second questions.

When someone comes to us with a problem, a heartache, a joy, or an unmade decision, what if we made a commitment? Instead of jumping to conclusions, racing to solutions, or crafting a plan on their behalf, what if our first next right thing was simply to ask a question? And when they answer it, what if we asked a second question?

Would we learn something we didn't know before? Would they see something they may have missed? Would it slow us down? Would he feel loved? Would she feel seen? Would God have a little more room to move and speak between us?

From Emily P. Freeman
Podcast 94: Ask the Second Question
<https://emilypfreeman.com/podcast/94/>

Jesus' way with others includes a prayerfulness that weaves itself throughout the gospels.

Jesus' prayerful way weaves itself throughout the whole gospel narrative.

How often does Jesus pause, step back, and take time to be alone in order to draw closer to the Father? The gospels record that Jesus often withdrew to a deserted place to pray (Mark 1:35; 6:31, 45-46; Luke 4:42; 5:16; 6:12; Matthew 26:38-42).

On the night before his death, Jesus tells Peter that he has prayed for him that his faith may not fail (Luke 22:32). And John 17 records Jesus praying at length for his disciples' protection and unity.

Only on one occasion do the Gospels record the disciples asking Jesus to teach them something. Luke records that after Jesus had finished praying they asked him, "Lord, teach us to pray..." (Luke 11:1). This alone underscores the prevalence of prayer in Jesus' life. Jesus taught them this way:

When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.

And do not bring us to the time of trial. (Luke 11:2-4)

This prayer is fundamentally relational and communal. Jesus wanted them to learn and grow together in deep dependency upon God. His confidence in the disciples' well-being rested in the Father's provision.

All of this makes me wonder, if even Jesus needed to pray and embrace dependency upon the Father, how much more do we?



Spend time reflecting over Jesus' prayer.

Prayer is a distinctive feature of Jesus' life and ministry. The Gospels describe at length that he prayed, but they are brief on what he prayed—except John 17.

With only a few hours left to live, Jesus serves his closest followers, eating with them, conversing at length with them, and praying for them.

Set aside an hour and find a quiet place free from distractions. Allow John 17 to lead you into a time of listening, reflecting, and praying.

This kind of reading is a way to deepen friendship and cooperation with God. Allow God's Spirit to go ahead of you. Immerse yourself in Jesus' prayer for you and your community.

Adapted from VP3's A Way of Life Stage 3, Meditating Upon Jesus's Prayer pages 25-26

Celebration is at the heart of Jesus' way of life.

If we'd lived in first-century Israel, we would have noticed that parties followed Jesus wherever he went. After all, there was much to celebrate. The center point of his teaching, "*The kingdom of God is near,*" struck a deep chord in the people. They had been waiting a long time for this great news.

We would also have noted that his parties included all the wrong people—the unclean, the unwell, the unrighteous. By welcoming those who had been unwelcomed for so long, he was announcing the availability of God's kingdom to all. "*We must celebrate and rejoice...*" (Luke 15:32). Celebration—as sincere and godly as it was startling—was at the heart of Jesus' way of life.

But Jesus never put his head in the sand when it came to the heaviness of life. He repeatedly looked out on the crowds and felt compassion for them, because "*they were like sheep without a shepherd*" (Matthew 9:36; Mark 6:34). He knew firsthand the people's pain and despair. Ultimately, he would identify with their suffering through his crucifixion in a way that was incomprehensible and unimaginable.

Nothing brought him greater joy than when the lost were found, when the dead became alive, as in the parable of the lost son in Luke 15. Heaven's joy was extended in these resurrection stories—"*Rejoice with me*" (Luke 15:6, 9, 23, 32). Jesus could celebrate because he knew what God was up to in their midst. He was living out God's compassionate rescuing work in and through his own life, death, and resurrection.





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—Emily P. Freeman

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