



(Here is the link to last week's service <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sz1Xr5Ah5E4>)

Mark 8:34-37 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?"

QUESTIONS

- What does it personally look like to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus?
- What do you think it means whoever wants to save their life will lose it and whoever loses their life for me will save it?

A "follower" is the Greek word "talmidim" meaning disciple/follower/student/apprentice.

We do this through teaching, practice, community, and the Holy Spirit

Being a "follower of Jesus" means to re-organize your life around three goals:

1. Be with Jesus
2. Become like Jesus
3. Do what Jesus did

Mark said "Truly being a Christ follower, an apprentice to Jesus, does not work as a hobby... 'I follow Jesus and I do rock climbing'"

QUESTIONS

- What is your reaction to that statement?
- In what ways do you see following Jesus as different to following something else important in your life?

As Christians we know it's not about our what we do (our works) but it is about who we are becoming, how we are preparing and what we are re-presenting.

We can tend to focus a lot on what we are do, and very little on who we are becoming

QUESTIONS

- Do you think about who you are becoming as much as who what you do?
- Who would you like to be in 2/5/10 years?

Mark talked about neuroplasticity, and habits. He said as humans we follow our hearts..., so if we want to make any changes we need to recognise and influence our desires. And we do that by changing our habits.

QUESTIONS

- How aware are you that you are being changed by the habits you have, and what do you personally think has the most influence on your change? Is there anything influencing you that you haven't realised before?
- What good and bad habits do you have? Are there any habits you would like to get rid of?

Mark quoted Dallas Willard who says "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."

It takes *practice*. It's not about *trying*, it's about *training*.

You don't wake up tomorrow and try to run a marathon. You start off by going for a small jog

2 Tim 3:16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

REFLECTION QUESTION (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YgDCMmS2M0g>)

Listen to a song and think about the things we have been talking about. What are you feeling? Challenged? Convicted? Excited? Encouraged? What is one way you could start or progress in your training in righteousness / abiding this week?

Here are 10 simple practical tips (the blueprint for this season):

1. Quiet place in your home
2. Protected time (intentional, diary)
3. Start small (once a week for 10 mins?)
4. First fruit (start of the day)
5. Physical bible (not smart phone... distraction box)
6. Unsure where to start... hit one of the gospels. (Learning about Jesus is life giving!)
7. Pray and listen (don't be the only one to speak, don't always try and feed yourself... wait)
8. Share the journey with others
9. Allow yourself to be challenged, to feel a little uncomfortable, conviction is good
10. Remember, there's no guilt... Pray for more desire (It's not about trying, it's about training)

Jesus said "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me— watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly." (Matt 11:28-30 MSG)

PRAYER

- Spend some time praying for one another. Is there any specific area you struggle with or want to try doing?