



This series is all about practicing the way of Jesus, being a disciple, follower or “talmidim” (in the Greek) which means we are called to be apprentices of Jesus.

Question

- What have you learnt or experienced in the past three weeks relating to the concept of being an apprentice of Jesus?

James 1:22-25 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

Question

- James paradoxically talks about the freedom and blessings that come from hearing and responding to the perfect law. How have you experienced freedom or blessings from obeying God's Word?

Matt talked about the call to be *transformed*, which in Greek is the word “*metamorphóō*” which literally means “a profound change in form from one stage to the next in the life history of an organism, as from the caterpillar to the pupa and from the pupa to the adult butterfly.”

2 Cor 3:18 And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being *transformed* into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Rom 12:1 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be *transformed* by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Question

- Paul contrasts being conformed to the patterns of the world with being transformed by the renewal of our mind, so we grow into the likeness of God's glory. It is not easy to avoid being influenced by the world. In what ways can spiritual formation help you grow in Christlikeness as opposed to the world?

Dallas Willard said “spiritual formation in the Christian tradition is a process of increasingly being possessed and permeated by the character traits (of Jesus) as we walk in the easy yoke of discipleship with Jesus our teacher...”

Questions

- In what ways have you seen transformation in your life? Do you look or act or feel different to the way you used to?
- Notice how Dallas Willard calls spiritual formation a process. In the modern-day context of instant gratification, this steady development of a relationship with Jesus takes time, patience and endurance. How often do you think about character development or spiritual formation (say compared to career development) and how can we focus more on who we are becoming?

Matt said we are all becoming apprentices of something, whether we realise it or not. He called this unintentional spiritual formation, which means we are shaped by three things evolving around our environment: the stories we believe; the habits we have, and the relationships we are in.

Questions

- How aware are you that we are all being influenced by, and transformed into the likeness of something?
- What are the major influences in your life and how are they transforming you? Good and bad?
- Are there any habits you want to kick, stories you no longer want to believe, or unhealthy relationships that need to change?

Matt said that transformation is a joint effort between us and God. Dallas Willard states that “Grace isn’t oppose to effort, its opposed to earning”.

2 Pet 1:5-8 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. ⁸For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Questions

- Remember we are not striving to be saved but striving to grow in our faith. How does this idea of making an effort in our faith sit with you?
- Do you agree or disagree and why?
- Is there any of the characteristics mentioned in 2 Peter that you want to grow in, and what can you do/or are you doing to develop them?

Luke 8:1-15 The Parable of the Sower

After this, Jesus travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, ²and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; ³ Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod’s household; Susanna; and

many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means. ⁴ While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: ⁵ “A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. ⁶ Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown.” When he said this, he called out, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.” ⁹ His disciples asked him what this parable meant. ¹⁰ He said, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, “though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.’ ¹¹ “This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. ¹² Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³ Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. ¹⁴ The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. ¹⁵ But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

Questions

- Have you experienced these different soils in your life?
- How would you describe your soil now?
- What could you do to promote fertile soil in your life?

Matt said that to avoid unintentional spiritual formation, we can adopt intentional spiritual formation, which involves teaching, practice, and community all in the Holy Spirit (we will be unpacking these in more detail in the weeks to come).

Reflection questions

- How are you doing in each of these areas? Are there any areas you are thriving in or struggling in?
- Spend some time praying, asking the Holy Spirit to illuminate ways you can grow or practically respond to this word, so we are doers of the Word and not just hearers only

