



grow. pray. study.

February 5, 2023, *If Jesus Had an iPhone*

Prayer and Worship

MONDAY 2.6.23 Luke 4:16, 6:12, 11:1

We end our “What the Tech?” study by asking “what if Jesus had an iPhone?” (No, we won’t exclude Android phones.) “We’ll consider five simple practices that Jesus’ followers have always pursued as they sought to walk with him. Jesus himself modeled these practices for us.” * The first one leads us to personal prayer and community worship. Prayer and praise can happen daily, not just one day a week. [Psalm 96:2](#), long before modern gratitude research, called us to thank God “every single day.”

- Why do you believe Jesus prayed at all, and “normally” went to the synagogue? Couldn’t he just have said, “I’m the son of God—I can handle this on my own”? If you had been one of the first disciples, what difference, if any, do you imagine you would have noticed in Jesus after he had been praying that would have made you ask, “Teach us to pray”?
- If Jesus had an iPhone, he might well have used one or more apps to remind him to pray, to express gratitude to God, to locate a synagogue when he was in a new town. Your tech tools give you the chance to do that. You can search app stores for items like “prayer reminder app,” “prayer journal,” “gratitude journal,” and the like. (*Adam may develop a list of suggestions, in which case we’ll link to it.*)

Prayer: O God, like the sun you always shine your love and mercy into my life, on good, ordinary and even bad days. Help me learn, and use tech tools well, to keep my focus on you every day. Amen.

* Hamilton, Adam. *The Walk*. Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition.

Study and Scripture

TUESDAY 2.7.23 Luke 4:17-21, 23:44-46, Matthew 27:45-46

In the Nazareth synagogue, Jesus found and read [Isaiah 61:1-2](#) (with no help from a tablet or smartphone Bible). He stunned his hearers by saying, in effect, “Isaiah’s text was about me.” The Scriptures shaped Jesus’ sense of mission to shift the world’s priorities to spiritual and social good news, healing and freedom. In extreme pain and suffering on the cross, he drew on the Hebrew texts woven into his mind and heart, quoting [Psalm 22:1 and 31:5](#) to link him to God in that dark hour.

- Jesus upset many of his hearers in Nazareth by saying God’s kingdom was present, not just future. Luke 4:21 in *The Message* said, “You’ve just heard Scripture make history. It came true just now in this place.” * Are you waiting for God to change the world “someday”? How are you making yourself available NOW for God to change your life—and through you, the lives of others? How can electronic versions of the Bible help you saturate your mind with the messages?
- Psalm 22 was a classic “lament.” These hymns honestly voiced the psalmist’s pain and fear, while holding onto trust and faith in God’s goodness (cf. [Psalm 22:22-31](#)). There is evidence that first-century Jewish parents used Psalm 31:5 as a bedtime prayer for their children. Jesus’ mother may have heard her crucified son repeat the prayer she had taught him. How can you use your tech tools to help you put your life fully in God’s hands every day, not only at times of great pain?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you never let the needs of the poor, the prisoners, the blind, or the oppressed overwhelm you. Through the words of the Bible, grow in me a patient resolve to channel your power to make this world a better place. Amen.

* From Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message*. NavPress, 1993-2002.

Serve

WEDNESDAY 2.8.23 Matthew 20:25-28, Luke 7:11-15; 37-44, 47

Jesus consistently served people with care and without condescension. He told his disciples that he (God in human flesh!) didn’t come to be served, but to serve. He showed that when he stopped in his tracks to help a grieving, widowed mother in Nain. There’s no hint in the text that he knew the woman, just that he saw her need. And while the Pharisee Simon saw only the past of the woman who entered his house, Jesus focused on how forgiveness and acceptance could make her future better.

- Jesus said: “Those who rule the Gentiles show off their authority over them and their high-ranking officials order them around.” Sound obvious? Not really. Jesus went on, “That’s not the way it will be with you. Whoever wants to be great among you will be your servant” Where you have power (parent, boss, teacher, pastor, public office, etc.), how can you use it to serve others? How can you use tech tools, not to “order others around,” but to remind you to serve and help them?
- In Luke 7:44, Jesus asked Simon a telling question: “Do you see this woman?” “Simon only saw sin, but Jesus saw the woman and her lavish display of humility, nurture, generosity and love.” * He saw a beloved child of God, cause for a party in heaven (see [Luke 15](#)). How did Jesus’ pointed contrast in verses 41-47 show the spiritual hollowness of Simon’s pious front, fed by his belief in male superiority? How can tech help you to see people, not just titles or negative comments?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I want to let your love’s transforming power increasingly motivate me to live a servant life. Teach me how to treat others as you treat me. Amen.

* Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, “Portrait” note on “Woman Who Washed Jesus’ Feet” in *The CEB Women’s Bible*. Nashville: Common English Bible, 2016, p. 1301.

Give

THURSDAY 2.9.23 Matthew 6:19-24, Luke 12:13-21

We have to choose what we value most even in hobbies (e.g. if a band you love has a concert on the same night your favorite team has a big game, which do you go to?). Jesus focused on the biggest choice all of us have to make in life. What is our ultimate, governing loyalty? Jesus taught that “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also,” and added, “You cannot serve God and wealth.” In a pointed parable in Luke 12, he said, “One’s life isn’t determined by one’s possessions.”

- Scholar Craig Keener wrote that “Mammon” (the word translated “wealth” in verse 24) was “an Aramaic word for possessions or money, and Jesus seems to be personifying it as an idol.” * Tech makes it easy to check our retirement or investment accounts daily, or even hourly. How close does that kind of obsessive behavior come to making wealth an idol today? What does it mean, in practical terms, for you to choose to serve God rather than wealth?
- In Luke 12, Jesus spoke of “those who hoard things for themselves and aren’t rich toward God.” His wry story said the things for which we work (and maybe fight) so hard do us no good when life ends. What is the tech version of building bigger barns? Does your love for wealth ever make it hard for you (like the rich man in the parable) to consider giving generously to help others? What helps you plan wisely for needs without letting the stuff you think you “own” actually “own” you?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you are Lord of my life, and I want to “collect treasures” in heaven. As I make concrete, everyday choices of how to spend my time, energy and money, increase my capacity to live out your values. Amen.

* Craig S. Keener, comment on Matthew 6:24 in *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.

Share/Bear Witness

FRIDAY 2.10.23 Mark 1:16-20, Acts 1:6-8

Jesus began calling people to follow him right away. He made it plain that he was calling them to join in inviting others to follow him. (The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah said God would send fishermen to bring back his exiled people—cf. [Jeremiah 16:14-16](#).) The risen Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would give his followers power to bear witness to God’s work in the world. We need the mighty wind that is the Holy Spirit (cf. [John 3:7-8](#)) to empower us to be storytellers of God’s great love.

- What do you think made Jesus and his invitation so compelling that, when he called, these four men would promptly leave the security and familiarity of their family fishing business to follow him? Have you thought and prayed at all about how you could use today’s tech tools to offer a compelling invitation to those you can influence to follow Jesus? In what ways, in person or electronically, can you share Jesus’ story with others as a God-powered messenger?
- The “end of the earth” Jesus touched on in Acts 1 could be anywhere—your office, health club, favorite restaurant—or your computer. Where are the one or two places or situations, online or offline, where you can most effectively share your faith story with others? In calling fishermen (not locked-in religious experts), Jesus found people more open to his radical ideas about what it meant to be the Messiah. How could tech reach people who may be more open to Jesus’ story?

Prayer: God, give me chances to share your story with others. Show me where you are already at work around me so I can join in your work. Help me remember that my power comes from the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Use your smartphone (and other tech) like Jesus

SATURDAY 2.11.23 Mark 12:28-31, Philippians 4:8-9

Scholar William Barclay noted that rabbis in Jesus' day held two differing ideas. Some believed "there were lighter and weightier matters of the law...great principles which were all-important to grasp." Others "held that every smallest principle was equally binding." * Jesus wasn't unsure about that—he said some principles are central, far more vital than others. Loving God and loving your neighbor, Jesus said, are the greatest commandments, defining expressions of God's will. The apostle Paul's words in Philippians 4 came, not from some peaceful meadow or Sunday School room, but from a chilly, damp Roman prison cell. Writing about joy and peace in that grim setting, Paul knew that what we choose to focus on can weaken or strengthen our relationship with God and other people.

- Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6's sweeping words: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your mind, and with all your strength." Didn't leave much out, did it? Then, from Leviticus 19 he added, "You will love your neighbor as yourself." How can those two great commandments form the foundation from which to make all life choices, including your use of technology? Jesus said all the truths we know about what God wants "depend" on those two commands. How would you explain to someone what makes these two commands so basic? Can you recall any belief you held that led you to be unloving, maybe even without realizing it? Paul linked our ability to live in God's peace with the mental "diet" we choose. The Greek phrase rendered "focus your thoughts" "means more than 'keep in mind' or 'think about.' It is rather... reflect carefully upon them so that they may shape your conduct. These good qualities... need to be transformed into action." ** How might applying Philippians 4:8 change your tech choices?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, teach me how to think your thoughts. Guide me into a thought life obsessed, not with fear, anger or ugliness, but with all the is excellent and admirable. Amen.

* William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of Mark (Revised Edition)*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1976, p. 294.

** I-Jin Loh and Eugene A. Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Philippians*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1977, p. 134.