

**Week 6: March 28**

## **So . . . who do you follow?**

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

John 14:6

When we decide to be a follower of Jesus, we discover more than a set of beliefs. We discover a way of life! Jesus is the way as our model/mentor and as the one who empowers us to live a way of life that resonates truth and engages God and life.

For six weeks, we will look at some life practices, spiritual practices that are as postmodern as they are ancient, practices that form us into people who love, people who are awake to life and awake to God.

These life practices help us live a centered, simple, connected, trusting, giving, and joyful way of life.

### **Joyful Way of Life**

*Shout with joy to the Lord, O earth!  
Worship the Lord with gladness.  
Come before him, singing with joy.  
Acknowledge that the Lord is God!  
He made us, and we are his.  
We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.  
Enter his gates with thanksgiving;  
go into his courts with praise.  
Give thanks to him and bless his name.  
For the Lord is good.  
His unfailing love continues forever,  
and his faithfulness continues to each generation.*

Psalm 100

We encounter bad news and disappointment every day, yet we can choose how we respond. We can choose to complain or look for God in our circumstances. We can choose to be critical or loving, self-protective or self-giving, fearful or prayerful, bitter or grateful.

*"Because we do not pray enough, we see only the human part. We don't see the divine. And we resent it."*

Mother Teresa

Joy does not depend on life going great but on knowing that God is with us no matter what. Instead of viewing life through a lens of scarcity, we can choose to follow Jesus' way. A joyful way of life comes from choosing to be grateful, choosing to worship, and choosing to celebrate God and God's gifts to us.

## **Gratitude**

Practicing gratitude means growing to be more and more aware of the Holy Spirit's promptings in our lives, and noticing God's love, forgiveness, and care. The practice of gratitude is cultivating a grateful attitude and regularly saying "thank you" to God and to others.

*"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."*                      Thessalonians 5:16-18

Living with gratitude means that we:

- notice God's presence and gifts throughout the day.
- see what we do have as quickly as we see what we don't have.
- give and share what we are and have as a way of saying thank you.
- develop the habit of saying "thank you."

*"Sometimes I wonder what I might say if I were to meet you in person, Lord. I think I might say "Thank You Lord" for always being there for me. I know with certainty there were times when you carried me, Lord, when it was through your strength I got through the dark times in my life."*

Sacred Space, [www.sacredspace.ie](http://www.sacredspace.ie)

## **Worship**

What we worship reveals what is important to us. Jesus said, *"Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only."*                      Matthew 4:10

Worship is loving God and valuing God above all else. Both individually and with the worshiping community, we fill our thoughts with the wonder and mystery of God. We give God our full attention and our humble, heartfelt response. We follow God's guidance with loving obedience.

## **Celebration**

Celebration is an attitude and practice that turns our spirit toward worship and thanksgiving. Celebration doesn't rely on happy circumstances or feelings, but on knowing we can trust God who loves us.

Together and individually, we practice celebration as we remember the great salvation story and joyfully live it.

*Come, everyone, and clap your hands for joy!*

*Shout to God with joyful praise!*

*For the Lord Most High is awesome,*

*He is the great King of all the earth.*

Psalm 47:1

## **Life Practice**

1. Who do you know who really celebrates life and God? What attracts you to them?
2. Who is God to you? What name for God best describes your relationship with God right now? What about God moves you to worship?
3. In what ways may you be addicted to criticism, analysis, and negativity? How might thankfulness help?
4. Think of a current difficulty you have. Honestly share with God your thoughts and feelings. Pray that you can see evidence of God's presence in this difficulty? Is there anything you can be thankful for? If you cannot find God in your hardship, spend some time remembering Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-46). Let him be your companion through your difficulty. Listen and watch over the next days for what he wants to tell you.
5. Create a "thank you" scrapbook. Beside photos and memories, write your words and prayers of thanks.

Adapted from Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books, 2005).