

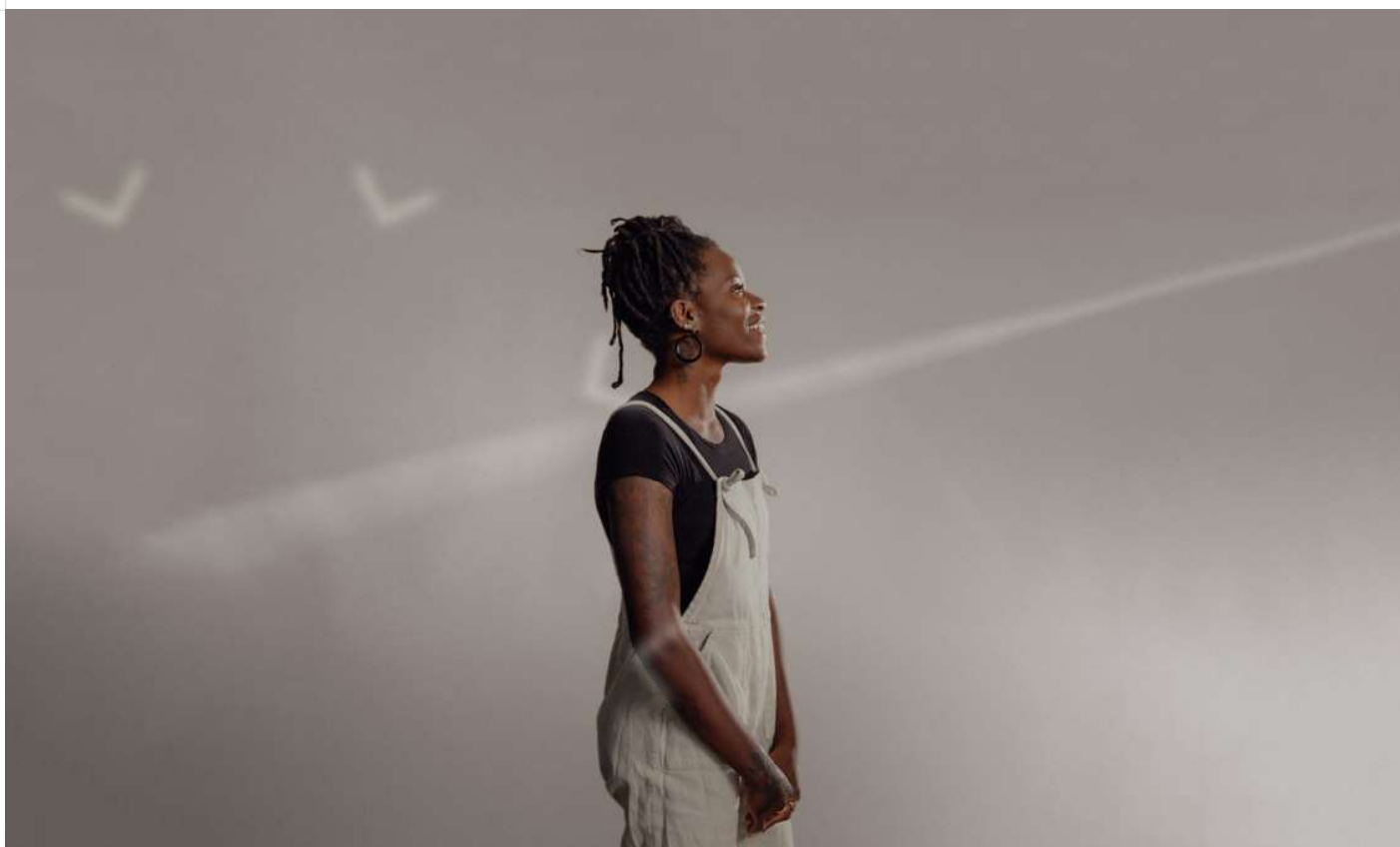


Following Jesus

Session 01

Overview

Who are you following? Everybody is following *somebody*. Put another way: We're all disciples. The question isn't, "Are you a disciple?" but, "*Who or what* are you a disciple of?" In this session, we explore what it means to be a disciple or apprentice of Jesus.



Opening questions

Before we begin our first session, process your thoughts and feelings together as a community as you embark on this Course.

01 What drew you to this Course?

02 What are you looking forward to?

03 Describe in brief your spiritual journey thus far.

Teaching

Scripture

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him.

—Mark 1v16-18

Session summary

- Following Jesus is based on the first-century practice of rabbis and apprentices.
- Today, to follow Jesus means to apprentice under him.
- To apprentice under Jesus is to organize your life around three driving goals:
 - Be with Jesus
 - Become like Jesus
 - Do as he did
- Apprenticing under Jesus means practicing a way of life.
- One of the best ways to begin is through a daily prayer rhythm, where you create a time and place for solitude, silence, and prayer.

Teaching notes

As you watch Session 01 together, feel free to use this page to take notes.

Discussion questions

Pause the video and take some time to process together as a community.

Here are some questions for discussion:

- 01 What are you hoping Jesus will do in you through this Course?

- 02 As you look back on your life, who or what has had the greatest impact on your spiritual journey thus far?

- 03 What do you think is the driving aim of your life? Your top goals and priorities?

- 04 How can we as a community be praying for you?

After the video

Closing prayer

End your time together by praying this liturgy:

God of love, who seeks and pursues us,
teach us how to seek and pursue you too,
that in our learning anew how to pray,
we may give you what you so deeply long for —
all of us enjoying all of you, forever.
Amen.

OPTIONAL

If you'd like to continue your conversation, here are some additional questions for reflection:

- 01 When you envision starting your day with silence, solitude, and prayer, what excites you? What challenges you?
- 02 Think about your week and come up with a plan. When and where will you engage in this practice?

Practice

Developing a daily prayer rhythm

We need more than information for transformation. The practices of Jesus (which we'll learn more about in Session 04) help to get the teachings of Jesus into the muscle memory of our bodies. They turn the *idea* of following Jesus into a *reality* in our daily life.

And one of the best ways to begin to “be with Jesus” is by developing a daily prayer rhythm.

There's no “right” way to do this — you may choose to go on an early morning walk with your dog or curl up under a blanket with a cup of tea or sit cross-legged on the floor and breathe deeply. You may pray the Psalms or let a prayer app guide your meditation. You may do this before the sun rises or as it sets.

Whatever you decide, our exercise for Session 01 is to develop a daily time and place to commune with God through the practices of silence, solitude, and prayer.

Here are a few suggestions for your practice:

01 Find a quiet *place* that is distraction-free.

- This could be a corner in your home or a nearby park. Find somewhere that you can focus and be at peace.

02 Find a quiet *time*.

- For many people, first thing upon waking is the best possible time to do this; but for you, it may be before bed, or while your baby is napping mid-morning, or on a lunch break.
- The general rule is: *Give God your best time of the day.*

03 Come to quiet.

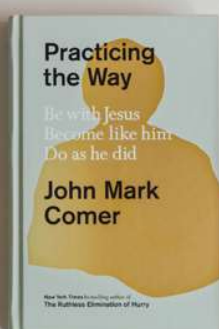
- If at all possible (unless you're using an app such as Lectio 365 or Pray As You Go to guide your prayer time), put your phone away in another room. Start with a few deep breaths ... in and out of your nose, and let your mind and body calm down.
- This may take a few minutes. You're not in a hurry.
- And then...

04 Open your heart to God in prayer.

- Again, there's no "right" way to pray. But you don't have to start from scratch.
- For thousands of years, followers of Jesus have used the Psalms for daily prayer. The Psalms are a collection of poetic prayers found in the middle of the Bible, and they were designed to be *prayed*, not just read.
- You can pray one psalm or pray a few; it's up to you. You can start in Psalm 1 and keep going to pray a selection. If you want to pray one psalm, here are some we suggest you start with: Psalms 1, 23, 37, 40, 42-43, 63, 84, 86, 103, and 139.

This whole exercise can be done in five minutes, or it can easily take up to an hour — again, that's up to you. The key is: Start where you are, not where you feel you "should" be. If two or three minutes is all you can make happen, start *there* and take the next step.

If you didn't get a chance to take the Spiritual Health Reflection before Session 01, please remember to do so before you come back together. Visit practictheway.org and create an account, or follow the QR code, and answer the prompt questions slowly and prayerfully.



This session's reading

For this session, we're reading "Apprentice to Jesus," in *Practicing the Way* by John Mark Comer, pp. 1-31.

Resources to go deeper

If you're interested in learning more about what it means to be an apprentice of Jesus or growing in your practice of prayer, here are some more resources to consider.

Recommended reading

- *The Deeply Formed Life* by our guest, Rich Villodas
- *The Great Omission* by Dallas Willard
- *Walking in the Dust of Rabbi Jesus* by Lois Tverberg
- *Praying like Monks, Living like Fools* by Tyler Staton
- *Time for God* by Jacques Philippe

Recommended listening

- Rich Villodas' teaching series, *The Deeply Formed Life* from New Life Fellowship: link.practictheway.org/course-s1
- The Practicing the Way Vision Series from Bridgetown Church: bridgetown.church/series/practicing-the-way
- Episode 01 of the Practicing the Way podcast: link.practictheway.org/course-s1b

Additional resources

The Prayer Practice from Practicing the Way: practictheway.org/prayer

If you'd like to learn more about the practice of prayer, you can run the Prayer Practice, a four-session experience designed to integrate the practice of prayer into your regular life.



Guest bio

Our guest this session was Rich Villodas, author, speaker, and lead pastor of New Life Fellowship, a large, multiracial church in Queens, New York. To learn more, visit richvillodas.com or read his book, *The Deeply Formed Life*.

Practice reflection

Reflection is a key component in our spiritual formation. Like practice, it allows what we learn to become a part of who we are.

Before your next time together, take five to ten minutes to journal out your answers to the following three questions.

- 01 **What was most challenging about practicing a rhythm of prayer?**
- 02 **What is something you enjoyed about it?**
- 03 **What are you hoping for as you continue this rhythm of prayer?**