

INTRODUCTION

During their drug-fueled psychedelic phase, the Beatles recorded an album entitled "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" in 1967. One of the songs was entitled "A Day in the Life." John Lennon wrote the first and last verses. Paul McCartney wrote the lyrics for the bridge as he recalled his teenage years in being late to school and daydreaming during class. He wrote: "Woke up, fell out of bed, Dragged a comb across my head. Found my way downstairs and drank a cup, And looking up I noticed I was late. Found my coat and grabbed my hat; Made the bus in seconds flat; Found my way upstairs and had a smoke, And somebody spoke and I went into a dream." The song ended with an E-Major chord played on four pianos simultaneously—the chord was sustained for forty seconds by increasing the recording volume.

If someone followed you around for 24 hours, would it be something you could write about? In our passage today we're going to follow Jesus for twenty-four hours. What He did and said in that day was so significant that they wrote a book about it. You could say the Bible is the all-time best-selling book of history. But millions of Bibles are given away. This past year the Gideons organization placed two Bibles every second in hospitals, hotels, schools or prisons. The Gideons don't want you to steal the towels from the hotel room but they don't mind if you take the Bible. They'll just replace it. The Bible is the widely distributed book of all history. It is estimated that there are 6.1 billion copies of the Bible today.

They all tell the story of Jesus. Let's look at our text and learn about a day in the life of the Lord.

Mark 1:21-35. "They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!' 'Be quiet!' said Jesus sternly. 'Come out of him!' The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, 'What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him.' News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee."

"As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was. Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."

What is life all about? One of my favorite movie lines comes from Billy Crystal who starred in "City Slickers" in 1991. He plays a bored advertising executive who comes to speak at his son's class about what he does for a living. Instead, he launches into his commentary of a dull life:

"Kids, value this time in your life kids, because this is the time in your life when you still have your choices, and it goes by so quickly. When you're a teenager you think you can do anything, and you do. Your twenties are a blur. Your thirties, you raise your family, you make a little money and you think to yourself, "What happened to my twenties?" Your forties, you grow a little pot belly you grow another chin. The music starts to get too loud and one of your old girlfriends from high school becomes a grandmother. Your fifties you have a minor surgery. You'll call it a procedure, but it's a surgery. Your sixties you have a major surgery, the music is still loud but it doesn't matter because you can't hear it anyway. Seventies, you and the wife retire to Fort Lauderdale; you start eating dinner at two, lunch around ten, breakfast the night before. And you spend most of your time wandering around malls looking for the ultimate in soft yogurt and muttering "How come the kids don't call?" By your eighties, you've had a major stroke, and you end up babbling to some Jamaican nurse who your wife can't stand but who you call Mama. Any questions?"

Life is more than just moving through the decades. Jesus came that you might have life and live it to the fullest. Let's follow Him for a day and you'll find four points of connection with Him.

I. IDENTIFY WITH JESUS IN CHURCH

The Bible says, "When the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach." The Jewish Sabbath began on Friday at sunset. That's when families gathered for a Shabbat meal. They attended the synagogue on Saturday morning. So we see that on that Saturday morning, Jesus attended the synagogue. The word synagogue means, "to gather together." The Temple still existed in Jerusalem, and that's where the main worship took place. But there were hundreds of synagogues where Jews could gather to read the Bible and talk about the scriptures.

I've stood many times on the ruins of this synagogue in Capernaum. It was a large building that could have held two or three hundred people. The men and women were separated. The men sat downstairs and the women sat in a balcony.

By this time Jesus already had a reputation as a gifted teacher, so it would have been His custom to stand and read a portion of the Old Testament. Then He would sit and proceed to teach them.

We need to follow Jesus' example. On the Lord's Day, we should gather with God's people to worship and study His Word as well. There are two ways you can recognize a church where Jesus is present.

A. Hearing God's Word is essential

The people were amazed that Jesus spoke with such authority. Most rabbis quoted other rabbis who had quoted other rabbis before them. But Jesus said, "This is what God says." He spoke the very Word of God. At His home synagogue, He had opened the Isaiah scroll about the coming of the Messiah and said, "Today this teaching is fulfilled in your midst." Jesus wasn't just another prophet in a long line of prophets. He was the Messiah. And in every church where Jesus is present, the Bible is always the central focus.

I've had members of Green Acres visit other churches can come back and tell me, "Pastor, nobody even took their Bibles to church there. And the pastor didn't read a Bible. He quoted a couple of verses during his talk, but he never opened his Bible."

It is by design that within sixty seconds of standing up I always say these words, "Open your Bibles ..." Green Acres is a church that is built upon the Word of God. That is true spiritually, but did you know it is also true physically?

Over 15 years ago when we were building this worship center, the construction company drilled dozens of deep holes for the concrete pilings that would provide the stability for the foundation of this building. One day we had a little dedication ceremony in the construction mud. I took my college preaching Bible, a Scofield Reference Bible, and lovingly wrapped inside a couple of plastic bags. We stood near the hole directly beneath this platform and we lowered the Scofield Bible into the hole. Then they filled it in with concrete. So this building is literally built upon the Word of God. And this fellowship is spiritually built upon the Word of God.

B. Seeing God's power is inspiring

That Saturday, something unusual happened at Jesus' church. A man under the control of an evil spirit jumped up and started to shout at Jesus. Can you imagine how that disrupted church? These nice respectable Jewish men and women were accustomed to quiet and reverence in their gatherings. And suddenly a man jumped up and started screaming, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" From the very beginning demons recognized Jesus is the Son of God and they trembled that they would be destroyed.

Jesus commanded the demon to be silent and to leave the man. The man started shaking and with a final scream, the demon departed. The people were astonished that Jesus had authority to command evil spirits.

We'll be talking a great deal about demons during this series because Mark records more demon stories per page than any of the other three gospel writers. Demons are real. There are evil things that happen in our world that can't just be explained by a sinful human nature.

Dr. Paul Tournier was a famous Swiss physician and author who saw the connection between the physical and spiritual in sickness. He wrote: "There are many doctors, who in their struggle against disease, have had, like me, the feeling that they were confronting not something passive, but a clever and resourceful enemy." (*A Doctor's Casebook*)

If you haven't seen the movie, "The Son of God," I encourage you to see it. It is an expansion of the Bible series that was on the History Channel a couple of years ago. But those who see the movie notice that Satan is not seen in the movie. When asked about it, producer Roma Downey responded by saying when the miniseries came out, some people claimed the character portraying Satan looked like President Obama. There was a global media response to the character of Satan. She and her husband, Mark Burnett, had hoped people would be talking about Jesus, but instead they were talking about the character playing Satan. Roma said she thought

that was the real Satan's attempt to draw attention to himself and away from Jesus. So before the movie was released Roma said, "It gives me great pleasure to tell you that the devil is on the cutting room floor. This is now a movie about Jesus and the devil gets no more screen time, no more distractions."

Satan is real. He has a mobilized, demonized army to carry out his plan to kill, steal, and destroy. But Jesus defeated the devil at the cross and we already know the final outcome. We win! Remember that "Greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

II. INVITE JESUS INTO YOUR HOME

What did they do when church was over? They had Sunday lunch; only in this case it was Saturday lunch. The Bible says, "As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew...the fever left her and she began to wait on them."

Peter was married, although we never learn his wife's name. Peter's mother-in-law was sick in bed with a fever and Jesus healed her. Some have said that's why Peter later denied the Lord three times. I'm not one of them.

But the purpose of this visit was to share a meal and to have fellowship around the table. Peter and Andrew invited Jesus into their home. It wasn't a long walk because Capernaum was a small city. The distance from the synagogue to Peter's house was only about 150 feet.

Do you invite Jesus to be the honored guest in your home? I've known some church members who seem to leave Jesus at church when they go home. Six days a week, they have a different attitude and use a different vocabulary. But on Sunday, they dress up and act holy and religious.

Sometimes families can be fussing and fighting with each other in the car on the way to church, and then they pull up and in the parking lot and see another church member and they say, "Oh, good morning! Praise God isn't this a wonderful day? God bless you!" And for an hour or two they wear their Christian mask, but when they get back home they take their Christian mask off along with their Sunday clothes and say, "Whew, I'm glad that's over for another week!"

The Bible has a word for that; it's called hypocrisy. I should know because for several years when I was in high school I was a prime example of a hypocrite. I put on my clip-on tie and attended church on Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday evening. I sang in the choir and everybody thought I was a model Christian. But during the week on the football field or in the halls of the high school I had a different vocabulary and didn't act anything like a Christian. My faith was as phony as my clip-on tie.

Are you brave enough to invite Jesus into your home and allow Him to be a part of your family?

I heard Len Sweet speak at a conference in Orlando in January. He said that the greatest tragedy among Christian families is that we've lost the table time. Instead of families sitting down and talking together over a meal, everyone is eating on the run, playing on their devices, or watching television. He said that top universities in American have discovered the greatest predictor of

academic success for students is: "How many times a week do you eat at home with your family?" For students that say 2 or more times a week, those students will be the most successful.

Jewish families have a wonderful tradition at Seder, which is Passover. They set an extra place setting for Elijah. There's silverware, a cup, and a plate, but the chair is empty. They believe the Elijah is going to one day come to announce the Messiah, so they want to have a place for him to sit if he shows up.

That's a brilliant idea. Moms and dads, why don't you set a place for Jesus at your dinner table some night? Pull up an extra chair and put out a plate and glass. But you don't have to wait for Jesus to show up. He's already there if you've invited Him into your home. Just talk to Jesus naturally as you would any other guest of honor.

Jesus wants you to invite Him into your home. We often misquote this verse to someone who wants to receive Jesus, but it is actually about Jesus entering our church and home to fellowship with us. Jesus says, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3:20)

When you invite Jesus into your home and family it really makes a difference. It will make a difference in your marriage. Sometimes statistics can be misleading. I've often said that 72.4% of all statistics are made up on the spot.

But there have been some misleading statistics about divorce among Christian couples. Perhaps you've read that the divorce rate among Christians is the same as it is among non-Christians. That's misleading because it depends on how you define a Christian couple. Many people call themselves Christians, but they seldom attend church or take their faith seriously.

Professor Bradley Wright, a sociologist at the University of Connecticut, dug deeper into this issue. Of those who claim to be Christians but seldom attend church, the divorce rate is roughly 60%. Of those who attend church regularly, 38% have been divorced. In families where prayer and scripture is shared every day, the divorce rate plummets to 19%. Invite Him into your home.

III. INTRODUCE HURTING PEOPLE TO JESUS

The Bible says, "That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed." Sunset on Saturday would have been the end of the Sabbath. Of course, nobody had watches, so the people waited until they could count three stars in the sky to know Shabbat had ended. People had heard about the power of Jesus and they were anxiously waiting for the time when they wouldn't violate the Sabbath by carrying their loved ones to meet Jesus.

Notice there was a difference between those who were sick and those who were demonized. Those were two different categories. Some people see a demon lurking behind every illness. They think every snuffle, hiccup, or illness is the evidence of demonic activity. In college I knew a preacher-boy whom if you hiccupped, he would say, "Demon of hiccups, come out of him!" It didn't work, obviously because I didn't have enough faith he said. The last I heard that guy was

no longer in the ministry. Demons are real, but they aren't the reason for every illness and weakness we face. Jesus healed the sick and cast out demons.

In the last message we talked about Jesus calling Andrew and Peter to follow Jesus and become fishers of men. They weren't strangers to Jesus. They had already met Him. In John's gospel we read that it was Andrew who brought Peter to Jesus for an initial introduction. "Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus." (John 1:40-42) Andrew was always bringing people to Jesus. He was the one who brought the little boy with five loaves and two fish to Jesus. In John 12:20-22, there were some Greeks who asked about Jesus. Andrew took them and introduced them to Jesus.

Andrew wasn't one of the most important disciples. He was content to be in the background and just introduce people to Jesus. Would you be willing to be an Andrew? Have any of you ever heard of Edward Kimball? In 1855 Edward Kimball walked into a men's shoe store in Boston and told a young shoe salesman about Jesus Christ. That shoe salesman gave his heart to Christ. His name was Dwight L. Moody, and he became an evangelist who preached to thousands. Today there is a Moody Bible Institute; Moody Church, and Moody Publishers in Chicago.

Maybe you've never heard of Grady Wilson, but as a teenager, Grady had a friend who was struggling with what to believe. In 1934 Grady took his friend to hear an evangelist from Kentucky named Mordecai Ham. During that meeting, this lanky teenager from North Carolina gave his heart to Jesus. His name was Billy Graham.

Do you have a friend or loved one who is hurting and struggling? I encourage you to bring them to Jesus. You can bring them to Jesus in your prayers. And you can bring them to Jesus by bringing them to the Body of Christ, the church.

IV. IMITATE JESUS IN PRAYER

So we're at the 24-hour mark because now, it's a before sunrise on the day after the Sabbath. The Bible says, "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."

Some people think the way you get to heaven is to just imitate the life of Jesus. But we can't imitate every part of Jesus' life. He was sinless. We can't imitate that. But there is one area of His life that we should try to replicate—His prayer life.

The disciples heard Jesus preach, but never said, "Lord teach us to preach." They saw Him heal, but they never asked, "Lord, teach us to heal." The one thing they did ask was, "Lord, teach us to pray."

Jesus led a busy life. The key word in Mark's gospel is "immediately" which appears over 40 times. He was always in action. And yet, though He was busy redeeming the world, Jesus saw the value of setting aside a time to be alone with His Father in prayer. There are seventeen

different accounts of Jesus praying in the four gospels. And he often sought solitude for His prayers. We read, "Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone." (Matthew 14:22-23)

The best way to start your day is by spending time alone with God. 90% of your personal, spiritual, and relational problems would see amazing improvement if you devoted the first twenty or thirty minutes of your day alone with God.

Of course you can pray anywhere and at any time. You can pray while you're driving in your car, just be sure not to close your eyes. You can pray while you're exercising, or working. But there is great value in getting alone with God and doing nothing except communing with Him in His Word and in prayer.

All religions pray, but in most religions, there's no intimacy. It's just religious duty. Devout Muslim men kneel and pray five times a day. But their prayers are simply memorized recitations that they repeat over and over again.

For those of us who know Jesus, prayer is a conversation with our Creator. We speak to Him in prayer and He speaks to us in His Word.

I have used this as a model for my life and ministry since I was in college. I have tried to maintain a consistent quiet time with God in prayer in the morning. There's nothing wrong with having your quiet time at night before you go to bed, but at the end of the day you may find yourself looking back at the mistakes you made. It's like studying for a test after you've taken it!

I mentioned last Sunday that I went out to the shore of the Sea of Galilee a couple of weeks ago and had my quiet time there. I had a strong sense that Jesus had walked on that particular part of the shore. It was an awesome experience. I really sensed His presence there. But just this week, I went into my study one morning and opened God's Word, and spent time in prayer. And do you know? I felt the exact same presence of Jesus there with me that I did in Israel. Because your quiet time isn't about a place, it's about a person—and that person is Jesus.

CONCLUSION

Years ago, The Imperials recorded a song about the important of having a morning quiet time. The lyrics were from a poem written by Ralph Cushman entitled "The Secret." I still love the words: "I met God in the morning, When my day was at its best, And His presence came like sunrise, Like a glory in my breast. All day long His presence lingered; All day long He stayed with me; And we sailed in perfect calmness, O'er a very troubled sea. Other ships were blown and battered, Other ships were sore distressed, But the winds that seemed to drive them, Brought to us a peace and rest. Then I thought of other mornings, With a keen remorse of mind, When I too had loosed the moorings, With His presence left behind. So I think I know the secret, Learned from many a troubled way; You must seek Him in the morning, If you want Him through the day."

Are you following Jesus? Then you'll be identifying with Him in church; inviting Him into your home; introducing hurting people to Him; and imitating Him in prayer.

OUTLINE

I. IDENTIFY WITH JESUS IN CHURCH

"When the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach."

- A. Hearing God's Word is essential
- B. Seeing God's power is inspiring

II. INVITE JESUS INTO YOUR HOME

"As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew...the fever left her and she began to wait on them."

III. INTRODUCE HURTING PEOPLE TO JESUS

"That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed."

"Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus." *John 1:40-42*

IV. IMITATE JESUS IN PRAYER

"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."

"Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone." *Matthew 14:22-23*

— MESSAGE DISCLAIMER —

These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations and/or use material that is not under copyright. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material stimulate your own Spirit-driven preparation—*it is never intended as a substitute for your own study of Scripture.*

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, it is good scholarship (not to mention the right thing to do) to cite the source. If you are teaching, you may simply preface your remarks by saying something like: **“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”** This simple citation also applies to any work you may publish, too, as I routinely publish my material in books that are protected by copyright.

This careful effort on your part may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you. I trust you will find that additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners.

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



*David O. Dykes, Pastor
Green Acres Baptist Church
Tyler, Texas*
