



THE BECOMING GREAT SERIES • BOOK 8



# LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF JESUS

---

*Not a religious leader — the model every life was made to follow.*

TIMILEHIN IDOWU

---

THE KINGDOM LIFESTYLE • [thekingdomlifestyle.org](http://thekingdomlifestyle.org)

---

# LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF JESUS

*He was not a religious leader. He was the model of what every  
human life was designed to look like.*

TIMILEHIN IDOWU

# COPYRIGHT

---

© 2026 by Timilehin Idowu. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in

any form or by any means — electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise —

without the prior written permission of the author.

All biblical references are from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise stated.

Published by

Flourish Playhouse

Festac Town, Lagos, Nigeria • First Edition, 2026

Contact the Author

timijos@yahoo.com | medewheidowu@gmail.com | +234 703 055  
5256

# DEDICATION

---

In Honour Of

Pastor Taiwo Odukoya

15 June 1956 – 7 August 2023 Founder, The Fountain of Life Church

• Servant of God • Man Acquainted With Grief

*This book is about the life of a man who needed no defence, who required no posthumous revision, whose character was the same in the room as it was on the platform — a man who built something that outlasted him not because he sought a legacy, but because he genuinely loved the people he served.*

I dedicate this book to Pastor Taiwo Odukoya.

He left a lucrative career as a petroleum engineer to answer a call that cost him everything and rewarded him with something that cannot be measured. From a gathering of fewer than twenty people in 1992, he built The Fountain of Life Church into a ministry of thousands — not by chasing numbers, but by insisting on depth. He planted hospitals for those who could not afford care. He built schools for children who needed a chance. He invested thirty years into the quiet, unglamorous work of developing leaders who would outlast him. He wrote over three hundred publications not to sell books but to give people tools. He served — genuinely, consistently, without the performance that so easily corrupts those who stand at the front of rooms.

He was, in the precise language of Isaiah 53, a man acquainted with grief. On 10 December 2005, the plane carrying his wife — his ministry partner, his closest companion, the co-founder of everything he was building — fell from the sky. Pastor Bimbo Odukoya survived the crash and fought for six hours, and then she was gone. He was forty-nine years old, a widower with three young children, and a church full of people who looked to him to tell them

how to keep going. He kept going. Not with bitterness. Not with performance. With the particular, costly, dignified grief of a man who had understood suffering as a teacher rather than a verdict.

The grief did not end there. In November 2021, his second wife, Pastor Nomthi, who had walked alongside him through the rebuilding years, lost her battle with cancer. A month later, in December 2021, his twin sister — his lifelong companion from birth — died also of cancer. Three profound losses in close succession. And yet, those who knew him in those years report not a man who collapsed, not a man who raged, not a man who questioned God with bitterness — but a man who remained, as he had always been, steady, warm, available, and faithful. In August 2023, at sixty-seven years old, he passed from this earth quietly, in the United States.

In an age when the most powerful ministries have almost all produced, eventually, some form of scandal — some revelation that the private man bore no resemblance to the public one — what is most extraordinary about Pastor Taiwo Odukoya is what is absent.

There is no controversy. There is no hidden chapter. There is no version of him that had to be quietly revised after he died. The man on the platform and the man in the room and the man in the grief were the same man.

That consistency — through thirty years of ministry, through loss that would have broken most, through the enormous weight of being the spiritual father of thousands — is, in the language of this book, the definition of a life lived in the way Jesus described. Not perfect. But

genuine. Not without pain. But without pretence.

*“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if  
you love one another.”*

*(John 13:35)*

He knew what this meant. He showed us.

*And in his memory, in her own honour —*

Pastor Bimbo Odukoya

12 September 1960 – 11 December 2005 Co-Founder, The Fountain  
of Life Church • Voice to a Generation • Still Speaking

She was forty-five years old when she died, still fighting for her life in the wreckage of a plane in Port Harcourt, her last phone call to her husband already made, her last trip of the year already begun. She did not know, boarding that flight, that she was stepping into eternity. But she was ready — not because she was done, but because she had given everything she had, every day she had it, without reservation.

Through “Single and Married” — her television programme that reached into living rooms, dormitories, kitchens, and the quiet heartbreak of late nights across Nigeria and beyond — Pastor Bimbo gave a generation the language for love, integrity, purpose, and the kind of faith that does not flinch from the hard questions of ordinary life. She received over sixty national and international awards. She carried the Olympic Torch for Nigeria in Athens in 2004. She counselled, she mentored, she wrote, she preached with a fire and a warmth that her children are still carrying, twenty years after she left. Her voice has not diminished. Her words are still healing marriages. Her questions are still finding the right people at the right time.

They built together. They led together. They loved together and they grieved together. And when one of them was taken too soon, the other carried the weight of both until he, too, was called home. What they built

still stands. Their children lead it. Their legacy has no holes in it.

This book is dedicated to them — to him for showing us what it looks like when a man follows Jesus all the way through, and to her for showing us what

it looks like when a woman pours herself completely into what God gave her to do. No reservation. No pretence. No performance. Just the full, costly, beautiful expenditure of a life in the direction of love.

“They were acquainted with grief and they were not diminished by it. They are the proof that the life described in these pages is not a theory. It is possible. It was lived. It is still being lived — in the Fountain they built, in the children they raised, in the voices that are still speaking, in the marriages that were saved, in the leaders who were built, in the thousands who are still walking in the light they kept on.”

To the atheist who is reading this because someone gave it to them and they are too polite to refuse — welcome. You do not have to agree with a single theological conclusion to find that the man described in these pages is the most interesting person you have never fully met.

To the religious person who already thinks they know Jesus — careful. The Jesus in this book may be unfamiliar to you in the best possible way.

To everyone in between — you are exactly who this book was written for.

# AN IMPORTANT NOTE BEFORE WE BEGIN

---

This book is not a religious book.

I need to say that clearly at the start, because the name 'Jesus' has been so thoroughly co-opted by religion — by institutions, by politics, by cultural associations, by centuries of misrepresentation in both directions — that many people hear the name and immediately feel either warm and included or cold and excluded, based entirely on their relationship with the institution rather than with the person.

I am writing about the person.

Jesus of Nazareth was not the founder of Christianity. He was a Jewish carpenter from a town so obscure that when His future disciple Nathanael heard he was from there, the response was: 'Nazareth — can anything good come from there?' (John 1:46). He did not build a church, He did not establish a denomination, He did not write a doctrinal statement or set a dress code or start a political party. He lived the life, He talked to people, He crossed every social boundary available to cross, He made the comfortable uncomfortable and the uncomfortable seen. He died. And He did something nobody else has done, which this book's companion volume addresses in detail.

The lessons of His life are not the exclusive property of Christians; they are not locked behind a membership card or a statement of faith, they are available to every human being who is willing to look at them honestly, because they describe not just how Jesus lived but how human

life, at its fullest and best, was designed to function.

You do not have to believe in His divinity to find His example extraordinary. Though I believe, having examined the evidence, that the extraordinary example and the divinity are inseparable. More on that later.

For now: welcome, whoever you are, wherever you are reading this. He already knows you are here.

# PREFACE

---

## *The Most Studied Life Nobody Has Fully Understood*

---

More books have been written about Jesus of Nazareth than about any other human being in history. More paintings painted. More music composed. More films produced. More institutions built. More wars fought — some in His name, which He would have found appalling. More lives changed. More lives, also, damaged by people claiming to represent Him while doing the precise opposite of what He taught.

He is the most studied, most referenced, most argued about, most worshipped, most rejected, most misrepresented person who has ever lived. Yet, this is the part that should stop you — very few people have actually sat down with the primary record of what He did and what He said and examined it without the filter of what they were told to think about it.

I have read the Gospels — Matthew, Mark, Luke, John — several times in no particular order. I read as a pastor. I read as a father. I read as someone who grew up in Nigeria, in a context where religion is everywhere and genuine encounter with Jesus is rarer than the density of churches would suggest. I read them as someone who has been asked, by young people, whether Jesus is relevant to their lives — not their religious lives, their actual lives.

My answer is: more relevant than you know. More relevant than most churches have managed to communicate. More radical, more challenging, more warm, more disruptive, more funny, more tender, more confronting than the stained-glass version most people have inherited.

This book is an attempt to give you the un-stained-glass version. The one who breathes. The one who sits down with people nobody else will sit with. The one who asks questions that expose hypocrisy and restores dignity to people who thought they had none left. The one who models, in 33 years of documented human life, exactly the kind of life He then turned around and said: follow me.

Not: follow my religion. Follow me.

The difference is everything.

— Timilehin Idowu

# CONTENTS

---

|                                                    |    |
|----------------------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction . . . . .                             | 13 |
| Part One — The Man . . . . .                       | 15 |
| Chapter 1 — A Carpenter From Nowhere . . . . .     | 16 |
| Chapter 2 — He Was Not Religious . . . . .         | 19 |
| Part Two — How He Led . . . . .                    | 23 |
| Chapter 3 — The Servant Leader . . . . .           | 24 |
| Chapter 4 — The Twelve . . . . .                   | 28 |
| Part Three — How He Loved . . . . .                | 32 |
| Chapter 5 — The Samaritan Woman . . . . .          | 33 |
| Chapter 6 — Zacchaeus Up a Tree . . . . .          | 37 |
| Part Four — How He Confronted . . . . .            | 40 |
| Chapter 7 — The Woes . . . . .                     | 41 |
| Chapter 8 — The Woman Caught in Adultery . . . . . | 45 |
| Part Five — How He Called Us . . . . .             | 49 |
| Chapter 9 — Follow Me . . . . .                    | 50 |
| Chapter 10 — The Sermon on the Mount . . . . .     | 55 |
| Chapter 11 — The Last Supper . . . . .             | 59 |
| Chapter 12 — Be Like Me . . . . .                  | 62 |
| Conclusion . . . . .                               | 65 |
| The 30-Day Practice: Living the Model . . . . .    | 67 |
| What Comes Next . . . . .                          | 71 |
| About the Author . . . . .                         | 72 |

# INTRODUCTION

---

*The Man Nobody Invented*

---

*If you were going to invent a religious leader, you would not have started here. Nobody constructs a saviour who is born in a stable, works with his hands for thirty years, and dies naked between two criminals. Nobody invents that story.*

Here is a question worth sitting with before we go any further:

If you were going to invent a religious leader, design one from scratch to maximum effect, would you have him born in a stable? To a teenage mother in a region under military occupation? In a town whose name was a cultural punchline? Would you have him spend thirty of his thirty-three years in obscurity, working with his hands? Would you choose twelve disciples who were, by every conventional measure, the wrong people — fishermen, a tax collector who worked for the occupying power, a political radical, and, it turned out, a thief?

Would you have him repeatedly refuse the political power that was offered to him? Would you have him spend his ministry eating with people his culture considered untouchable? Would you give him a message so radical that the religious establishment of his own tradition would eventually arrange his execution?

And would you have him die not as a hero but as a criminal — publicly, humiliatingly, naked on a cross between two actual criminals — three years after his public ministry began?

Nobody invents that story. Nobody constructs that character and calls it a religious programme. The story is too strange, too costly, too counter-intuitive, too consistently at odds with what power looks like, to be a human invention.

What it is, is a life. A specific, historically documented, culturally situated, astonishingly consistent life. And the lessons of that life — the way He led, the way He loved, the way He confronted, the way He restored, the way He

crossed every boundary that human beings build between themselves — are not ancient history.

They are a mirror. Held up to the present. And what the present sees in them is uncomfortable in the most necessary way.

This book examines that life in twelve themes. Each theme draws on specific encounters, specific teachings, specific moments from the Gospel record and turns the mirror to face the contemporary world. The Lagos boardroom. The Seoul suburb. The London political chamber. The Nairobi slum. The Mumbai classroom. The São Paulo family. The Sydney church that has forgotten what it is for.

He spoke to all of them. He still does. The question is whether we are willing to hear what He actually said.

PART ONE

# THE MAN

---

*Who Jesus Actually Was, Before Anyone Had an Opinion  
About It*

## CHAPTER 1



# A CARPENTER FROM NOWHERE

*Why the Beginning Tells You Everything*

---

*He spent twenty-seven years preparing for three years that changed eternity. Most people would have given up waiting at year five. That is the first lesson.*

Let us start with the resume. Or rather, with what would be on the resume if Jesus of Nazareth were applying for anything in 2026.

Nationality: Jewish. Region: Galilee — broadly regarded by the Jerusalem establishment as provincial, unrefined, slightly suspect. Town: Nazareth — see Nathanael's comment above. Formal education: none on record. Occupation for approximately twenty-seven of thirty years: tekton — the Greek word translated 'carpenter' but more accurately meaning craftsman, builder, someone who worked with their hands in stone and wood. Family background: modest. Father: a craftsman. Mother: a teenager at the time of his birth, which would have come with its own social complications in a culture that did not handle unexplained pregnancies with particular grace.

This is the resume of the man whom billions of people across two thousand years have called Lord. Before any miracle. Before any sermon. Before any disciple. Before any of it: a craftsman from a small town who

spent most of his life doing ordinary work with his hands.

#### NOTICE

Jesus did not begin his public ministry until he was approximately thirty years old. Thirty. In 2026 terms, that is the person who has not yet launched their startup, not yet gone viral, not yet been featured anywhere. The world would not know his name. He had simply been living — faithfully, quietly, preparing in the town everyone had dismissed.

### What the Ordinary Years Are For

We are obsessed, in our age, with early achievement. The Forbes 30 Under 30 list. The teenage entrepreneur. The prodigy. We have constructed a cultural narrative in which the longer it takes you to be publicly remarkable, the less remarkable you probably are.

Jesus did not get that memo. Or rather — He did not need it, because He understood something that our culture has largely forgotten: the years before the platform are the years that build the person. The thirty years in Nazareth were not wasted. They were the formation of the man who could, in three years, change the world in a way that nothing in those three years would have been possible without.

He learned to work with his hands. He learned the language of ordinary people. He learned what exhaustion feels like, what wood splinters feel like, what the satisfaction of completing a thing feels like. He learned the rhythms of a small community — who the gossips were, who the grieving were, who the proud were, who the quietly broken were. He learned patience in the precise proportion that his later ministry required it.

He was, in other words, being made ready. Not in a school or a court or a temple. In the workshop. In the village. In the everyday.

The next time someone tells you that where you are right now — ordinary, unnoticed, working with your hands and your hours in a place that does not feel significant — is a detour from your purpose, remember the resume above. God’s preparation rarely looks like preparation from the outside.

“He spent twenty-seven years preparing for three years that changed eternity. What are you doing with your ordinary years?”

#### Reflection

- » What does your ‘Nazareth season’ look like right now — the ordinary, unnoticed preparation you are currently in?
- » What are you learning in your current season that your future will require?
- » Who in your life are you dismissing because their beginning does not look impressive? What might you be missing?

I will not despise my ordinary years. They are the formation of the person my purpose requires.

## CHAPTER 2



# HE WAS NOT RELIGIOUS

*The Most Radical Thing About Jesus Was Who He Annoyed*

---

*The most religious people of his day hated him. Not mildly disliked. Hated. Planned his death. If your version of Jesus makes everyone comfortable, you have a different person.*

If there is one fact about Jesus that gets lost most consistently in the centuries of institutional religion built in his name, it is this one:

The most religious people of his day hated him. Not mildly disliked. Not politely disagreed with. Hated. Planned his death. Called him a blasphemer, a drunkard, a friend of sinners — the last one being, if you think about it, a very strange thing to say as if it were an insult. The Pharisees — the most rigorous, most devout, most publicly observant religious practitioners of his culture — were his most consistent opponents. The chief priests and the teachers of the law, the institutional leadership of his own faith tradition, are the ones who ultimately arranged his execution.

This is not a footnote. This is central to understanding who He was.

Religion, in its institutional form, is a system. It has rules. It has hierarchies. It has insiders and outsiders, the approved and the disapproved, the clean and the unclean. It has, above all, gatekeepers — people whose social and spiritual authority depends on maintaining the system that grants it.

Jesus was a systematic dismantler of gatekeeping. He healed on the Sabbath — the holy day when no work was to be done — not because He did not respect the Sabbath but because He understood that the Sabbath was made for human beings, not the other way around. He touched lepers; people whose illness made them, by law, untouchable and therefore excluded from the community. He spoke to women in public; a social transgression in his context. He ate with tax collectors; people who were, by common agreement, collaborators with the occupying Roman power and therefore traitors to their own people.

#### LIGHT MOMENT

The religious leaders called Jesus ‘a friend of sinners’ as an accusation. He essentially accepted the title. Imagine being given a reputation as the person everyone who is struggling, excluded, or considered a lost cause gravitates toward — and being fine with it. More than fine. Intentional about it.

## The Distinction That Changes Everything

Jesus made a distinction — never stated directly but consistently modelled — between religion and relationship. Religion says: here are the rules, observe them, and you will be acceptable. Relationship says: here is a person, know them, and you will be transformed.

He did not come to add a new religion to the world’s collection. The world already had plenty. He came to restore the original relationship between human beings and the God who made them — a relationship that religion had, with the best of intentions, managed to make very complicated, very expensive, and very exclusive.

The temple had a court of the Gentiles — the outermost courtyard where non- Jewish people could come and pray. By Jesus's time, it had been turned into a marketplace. The one space available to outsiders — the people who were not 'in' the system — had been colonised by commerce. When Jesus drove out the merchants and the money-changers, he was not having a bad day. He was making a theological statement: the house that is supposed to be accessible to all nations has been made into something that benefits the insiders and excludes everyone else.

Sound familiar? Every age has its version of the commercial temple court. Every age has its religious system that manages access to God for the benefit of the system's operators. Jesus's response to it, then and now, is the same: this is not what this was supposed to be.

He was not anti-faith. He was anti-the-corruption-of-faith. He was anti-the-use-of-God's-name-to-maintain-human-power-structures. He was anti-the-exclusion-of-the-outsider-in-the-name-of-holiness.

These are not the positions of someone who wants to abolish religion. They are the positions of someone who loves the genuine article enough to confront its counterfeits.

“He did not come to start a religion. He came to make God accessible. There is an enormous difference. The world has often confused the two.”

### Reflection

- » What is the difference, in your own life, between your religion and your relationship — between what you perform and what you actually know?
- » Who are the people that the religious or social systems around you have excluded? How did Jesus treat equivalent people?
- » In what ways has the institutional church — or any institution claiming His name — built a marketplace in the court of the Gentiles?

I will pursue the relationship, not the religion. I will be a person who makes God accessible, not a gatekeeper who makes Him expensive.

PART TWO

# HOW HE LED

---

*The Leadership Model the World Has Never Fully Adopted*

## CHAPTER 3



# THE SERVANT LEADER

*He Washed Their Feet — and Then Explained What He Was  
Doing*

---

*On the night before the crucifixion, the highest-status person in the room got on his knees and washed the feet of the people who would scatter before morning. That is not a metaphor. That is the model.*

It is the night before the crucifixion. The most important meal in human history is about to happen. Twelve men and their teacher in an upper room in Jerusalem. The city is full of Passover pilgrims, and the religious leadership is plotting. Tomorrow, everything changes.

And Jesus, knowing all of this — John tells us specifically that he knew exactly what was coming — gets up from the table, wraps a towel around his waist, pours water into a basin, and begins washing his disciples' feet.

In first-century Jewish culture, foot-washing was a task performed by the lowest-status household servant. Not just a servant — the lowest one. Guests' feet were dirty from the roads, from sandals, from the realities of walking in a world without pavements. Somebody had to wash them. That somebody was not the host, not the honoured guest, not anyone with any status at all.

Jesus was by this point acknowledged by His disciples as their teacher, their Rabbi, their Lord. He had fed thousands, He had raised the dead, He had walked on water. He was, by every measure available to those twelve men, the highest-status person in that room.

And He was on his knees, washing their feet.

### CONTEMPORARY MIRROR

The CEO who makes the coffee. The president who carries someone's bags. The pastor who sits with the person everyone else has written off. The teacher who stays late for the student nobody else believes in. These are not anomalies. They are the model. They are what Jesus said greatness actually looks like from the inside.

## The Inversion of Every Power Structure

When Peter objected — 'You shall never wash my feet' — Jesus said something that landed like a theological earthquake: 'Unless I wash you, you

have no part with me.' It was not an offer; it was the framework. The servant relationship was not optional; it was, and is still, the structure of how His community was and is supposed to function.

And then He spelled it out, so nobody could miss the point:

*Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.*

*Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.*

(John 13:14–16)

He set an example — not a suggestion, not an aspiration for the especially holy. An example. The word in the original Greek is hypodeigma — a pattern given to be copied.

Two thousand years later, every human organisation — corporate, governmental, ecclesiastical, family — still struggles with the same fundamental failure of leadership: the equation of authority with privilege rather than with responsibility. The person at the top expects to be served; the person at the bottom expects to serve. Jesus stood that equation on its head and said: the person with the most authority carries the most responsibility to serve.

This is not a radical new idea — it was demonstrated once, definitively, in an upper room in Jerusalem. The world has been arguing about whether to adopt it ever since.

The organisations that have come closest to genuinely adopting it — and the leaders who have absorbed it most fully — are the ones history remembers as having made the most enduring difference. Not because servant leadership produces better PR. Because it produces better outcomes: people who are genuinely served by their leaders do not need to be managed. They are inspired.

“The greatest among you will be your servant. This is not idealism. It is the operating system of genuine greatness. He demonstrated it on a Thursday evening before most of the world was watching.”

### Reflection

- » In the leadership roles you carry — parent, teacher, manager, older sibling, community member — are you leading from above or from below? Are you serving or expecting to be served?
- » What would it mean, concretely, for you to ‘wash feet’ in your current context?
- » Who is the person in your world that nobody else is currently stooping to serve? What stops you?

I will lead from below. Authority is a responsibility to serve,  
not a privilege to be served.

## CHAPTER 4



# THE TWELVE

*What Jesus's Choice of Disciples Says About How He Saw People*

---

*He chose the wrong people by every conventional measure. History suggests He knew exactly what He was doing.*

If you were selecting the team that would carry your message to the world after you were gone — the team that would become the foundation of the most influential movement in human history — whom would you choose?

Credentials? Connections? Track record? Theological education? Social standing? Network?

Jesus chose fishermen. Tax collectors. Political radicals. Doubters. Men of no particular social standing, minimal formal education, and — as the record shows with remarkable honesty — a fairly consistent pattern of not understanding what He was talking about even after He explained it several times.

He chose Peter, who would deny knowing Him three times in the same night. He chose Thomas, who would refuse to believe in the resurrection until he could personally inspect the wounds. He chose James and John, who asked whether they could sit at His right and left hand in glory — a

request so tone-deaf to everything He had been teaching that it is almost funny. He chose Judas, who He knew would betray Him.

He knew all of this in advance and He chose them anyway.

## The Selection Criteria

What was He actually selecting for? Not competence. Not polish. Not the absence of failure. The record suggests He was selecting for availability, for genuine hunger, and for the specific potential that each person carried. Potential that their current circumstances and their own self-assessment had almost entirely obscured.

Peter was impulsive, emotionally volatile, prone to overcommitting and underdelivering. Jesus called him a rock. Not as a description of who he was but as a statement of who he was becoming — and would become, after the

processes of failure, restoration, and the Holy Spirit's work had finished what the original calling had started.

**CONTEMPORARY MIRROR**

The person your institution, your family, your social system has written off. The one who failed publicly. The one who asked the wrong question. The one who comes from the wrong background. The one who is too emotional, too passionate, too rough around the edges. Jesus's track record suggests these are often the most interesting candidates. He had a particular habit of seeing what people were becoming rather than being stopped by what they currently were.

The twelve were not selected because they were ready. They were selected because they were willing. The readiness was the project — and Jesus committed to it for three years of the most intensive, most challenging, most transformational mentorship programme ever conducted.

They ate together. Walked together. Were challenged together. Failed together. Were restored together. Watched Him cry at a tomb. Watched Him turn water into wine at a wedding. Watched Him silence storms. Watched Him sit with children when the important people thought children were an interruption. Watched Him confront power. Watched Him embrace weakness. Watched Him die. And watched Him come back.

By the end of it, they were different people. Not perfect people. Different. Genuinely, permanently, world-changingly different.

That is what genuine mentorship produces. Not compliance — but transformation.

“He chose the wrong people by every conventional measure. History suggests He knew exactly what He was doing.”

**Reflection**

- » Who have you written off — in your organisation, your family, your community — that Jesus might have selected?
- » Which of the twelve disciples do you most recognise yourself in? What does that recognition tell you?
- » What would it mean to see the people in your life as Jesus saw His disciples — not as they are but as what they are becoming?

I will see people in terms of their potential, not just their present. I will invest in the people the world has passed over.

PART THREE

# HOW HE LOVED

---

*The People Nobody Else Stopped For*

## CHAPTER 5



# THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

*What Happens When Jesus Crosses Every Line At Once*

---

*She came to the well alone at noon. The wrong time.  
The wrong person. The wrong location. He was waiting.  
He always is.*

It is midday at Jacob's Well in Samaria, the hottest part of the day. At the time when no respectable person would be drawing water — because respectable people came early, in the cool of the morning, in groups, with the social protection of community.

She came at noon, alone. For reasons the text does not need to state, because the combination of the time, the place, and the aloneness says everything: she was avoiding the other women. She had something to hide, or she had been excluded, or both.

Now watch what Jesus does. He is a Jewish man. She is a Samaritan woman — and the history between Jews and Samaritans was long, bitter, and mutual. He asks her for water. She is so surprised that she says it out loud: 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman, how can you ask me for a drink?'

The answer to her question, which she did not yet know, was: because He had already decided that who she was mattered more than what

separated them. Because the categories that his culture used to determine who was worth talking to had no authority over Him — because the woman drawing water alone at noon was exactly the kind of person He came for.

## The Conversation Nobody Else Was Having

What follows is the longest recorded one-on-one conversation Jesus has with any individual in the Gospels. With a woman. A Samaritan woman. A Samaritan woman with a complicated personal history — five previous marriages and a current live-in arrangement that was outside the social norm. He knows all of this before she tells him. He tells her He knows. And He does not use it as a reason to end the conversation.

He uses it as an entry point into the deepest thing He came to offer: the living water.

The specific, personal, thirst-quenching truth that the human soul most needs and cannot find at any well of human provision.

### THE LESSON

Jesus crossed four lines simultaneously to reach this woman: gender (a man speaking to a woman alone), ethnicity (a Jew speaking to a Samaritan), social status (a rabbi speaking to a social outcast), and moral history (a holy man speaking to someone whose personal life was considered disqualifying). He crossed all four without pausing. Because the person on the other side of all those lines was worth every crossing. The woman, after this conversation, ran back into the town she had been avoiding. She told everyone she met: come and see a man who told me everything I ever did. And the people came. And many believed. The woman who had been hiding at noon became the first recorded evangelist in John's Gospel. The person who came to the well in shame left it with a message.

This is what genuine encounter with Jesus produces: not the management of shame but its transformation. Not the acceptance of the label that exclusion placed on her but its replacement with a story worth telling.

The contemporary mirror: every organisation, every community, every family has its Jacob's Well. The place where the person who feels excluded, ashamed, or too complicated for the system comes alone at the wrong time of day. The question Jesus asks is not whether they deserve better. The question is whether anyone is willing to cross the lines to meet them there.

“She came to the well hiding. She left it speaking.

That is what it means to be genuinely met by  
someone who is not stopped by what separates you  
from them.”

### Reflection

- » Who in your world comes to the well alone at noon — the person who feels too complicated, too excluded, too much to be worth meeting?
- » What lines — social, cultural, political, religious — do you need to cross to reach them?
- » When have you been the person at the well? Who crossed the lines to reach you — and what did it do to your life?

I will cross the lines. The person on the other side is worth every crossing.

## CHAPTER 6



# ZACCHAEUS UP A TREE

*What Happens When the Least Expected Person Gets the Most Unexpected Invitation*

---

*A wealthy senior official climbed a tree in his official robes because he wanted to see Jesus so badly that dignity was a secondary concern. Jesus stopped underneath and looked up. He always notices the ones reaching.*

Jericho. Jesus is passing through. The streets are lined with people. Crowds — the ancient equivalent of a viral moment — pressing in to see the man everyone is talking about.

Zacchaeus is a problem. He is short — the text says so without apology. And he is a chief tax collector, which in the Roman-occupied Jewish context meant he was considered a traitor, a collaborator, a man who had sold his people out for a comfortable salary. He is also, the text adds, very wealthy, which meant the comfortable salary had been doing its job.

He cannot see over the crowd, nobody is going to let him through, he is not popular — so he runs ahead and climbs a sycamore tree.

Now pause and appreciate this image for a moment. A wealthy, senior government official climbed up a tree. In his official robes, presumably. Because he wanted to see Jesus so badly that dignity was a secondary concern.

That detail is not accidental. The hunger is real, the reaching is real, the willingness to look foolish in pursuit of the encounter is real.

And Jesus stops under the tree and looks up.

‘Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.’

Not: I see you up there, you interesting figure. Not: perhaps later, if your repentance is adequate. Not: I know your reputation, let us discuss the conditions under which you might be considered acceptable.

Come down. I am coming to your house today.

## The Crowd’s Reaction

The crowd muttered. ‘He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.’ The Greek word is *katelusan* — they all began to grumble. Every person who had come to see Jesus, who had followed Him, who considered themselves supporters of the movement — they muttered about His choice of company.

This is one of the more uncomfortable things Jesus does throughout the Gospels: He consistently chooses the company that His followers are least comfortable with. The sinners. The outsiders. The morally compromised. The politically unpopular. The ethnically wrong. As if — and the record suggests this was entirely intentional — He was making a point that His followers needed to hear repeatedly because they kept forgetting it.

The point: the people you have written off are the ones I came for most urgently. And if you are following me, you should expect to end up in their company. If that makes you uncomfortable, you should examine what you are actually following.

Zacchaeus came down, welcomed Jesus with joy. And in the presence of that welcome, something happened that no amount of social pressure, religious instruction, or public shaming had produced in years of Zacchaeus's life: genuine, voluntary, specific restitution. 'Here and now I give half my possessions to the poor. And if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.'

Encounter with Jesus did not produce guilt management — it produced transformation. Specific, costly, generous, voluntary transformation.

“He did not wait for Zacchaeus to clean up before he came to dinner. He came to dinner and the cleaning up happened naturally from the inside.”

#### Reflection

- » Who is the Zacchaeus in your world — the person whose professional or personal choices make them socially untouchable but who is clearly hungry for something real?
- » What does it cost you to 'go to their house'? What does your reluctance to do so reveal?
- » What is your tree — the position you have climbed, however undignified it looks, in order to see something true?

I will not wait for people to be acceptable before I engage with them. Encounter produces transformation. My job is to show up.

PART FOUR

# HOW HE CONFRONTED

---

*What He Said to Power, Religion, and Hypocrisy*

## CHAPTER 7



# THE WOES

*When Jesus Got Angry — and Who He Got Angry At*

---

*We have made Jesus so gentle that we have made Him safe. The man who said ‘Woe to you, hypocrites’ seven times in one speech was not safe. He was the most dangerously honest person in the room.*

We have sanitised Jesus — we have taken the most inconvenient aspects of His character and quietly set them aside in the effort to make Him maximally palatable to the maximum number of people.

One of the most aggressively sanitised passages in the entire Gospel record is Matthew 23. Read it without the filter of what you were told to think about it and you will find one of the most sustained, most specific, most devastating critiques of religious hypocrisy ever delivered.

‘Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!’

Seven times. Seven specific indictments. The people who shut the kingdom in people’s faces. The people who travel great distances to win a convert and then make him twice the child of hell they are. The people who tithe the mint and dill and cumin — the kitchen herbs, the small things easily counted — while neglecting justice, mercy, and faithfulness. The

people who clean the outside of the cup while the inside is full of greed and self-indulgence. The whitewashed tombs — beautiful on the outside, full of dead bones within.

**NOTE CAREFULLY**

Jesus reserved His harshest language for the religious establishment — the people who held the most institutional power in His world and used it to burden rather than liberate the people they were supposed to be serving. He was consistently gentle with sinners and consistently fierce with hypocrites. This is not the version of Jesus most churches present. The Pharisees were not evil people — it is important to understand. They were devout. Serious. Committed to the law. They fasted, they prayed, they tithed, they studied the scriptures. By every external measure they were the most religious people in the society.

And Jesus said they were the most dangerous.

Why? Because they had learned to use the language, the symbols, the authority of God to serve their own interests and protect their own position. They had mastered the performance of righteousness without the substance of it. And in doing so, they had made it harder — much harder — for ordinary people to find God. The gatekeeping that was supposed to be guidance had become a wall.

The contemporary mirror is uncomfortable but necessary. Every institution that claims to represent God — every church, every religious organisation, every faith-based authority structure — carries the Pharisee risk. Not because the people in it are bad people, but because the institution, as it ages and accumulates power, naturally develops the same tendencies: the performance of righteousness, the maintenance of the system, the protection of the insiders, the management of God's accessibility for the benefit of those doing the managing.

Jesus was not against the law — He was against the law being weaponised. He was not against religion — He was against religion being used as a mechanism of exclusion and control rather than a pathway to God. He was not against the temple — He was against the temple serving the interests of those running it rather than the people it was built for.

The question for every institution is: who are we actually serving? And is the answer the same as the one our founding documents claim?

“He was gentle with sinners and fierce with hypocrites. If your version of Jesus is only ever gentle, you have a partial portrait. And partial portraits produce incomplete disciples.”

#### Reflection

- » What are the ‘mint and dill and cumin’ in your own life — the small, easily quantifiable religious performances you attend to while the weightier matters remain unaddressed?
- » What does your cup look like on the outside versus the inside? Where is the gap?
- » What institution in your world — religious or otherwise — has a whitewashed tomb dynamic? What would it mean to name it honestly?

I will not perform righteousness; I will pursue it. The kind that begins on the inside and works outward, not the other way around.

## CHAPTER 8



# THE WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY

*The Trap That Became a Mirror*

---

*They brought her as an exhibit. He turned the exhibit into a mirror. Everyone in the room saw their own reflection, and one by one they left.*

They brought her in the middle of it. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees — note the company — dragging a woman in front of Jesus in the temple courts, placing her ‘in front of the group.’ Not privately. Publicly. As an exhibit.

‘Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?’

John tells us, with admirable honesty, what the purpose of this question was: to trap Jesus. If He said stone her, He contradicted the mercy He had been preaching. If He said do not stone her, He contradicted the law He claimed to uphold. A neat theological corner.

And Jesus bent down and wrote on the ground.

We do not know what He wrote. John does not tell us, and biblical scholars have been speculating ever since. What we do know is that He

let the question sit in the silence for long enough that the urgency of the moment shifted. The crowd pressing for an answer had to wait. And in the waiting, something changed.

Then He straightened up: 'Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.'

And He bent down and wrote again.

## The Oldest Ones Left First

John notes that detail specifically: the oldest, at the accusation of their conscience, left first. The ones who had lived longest had the most evidence of their own failure. One by one they left until only Jesus and the woman remained.

'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?'

'No one, sir.'

'Then neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin.'

### THE BALANCE

Two sentences. The first is grace: I do not condemn you. The second is truth: leave your life of sin. Jesus did not choose between the two. He held them together. The grace without the truth would have been sentimentality. The truth without the grace would have been brutality. The combination — in exactly that order — is what genuine love looks like.

The missing man in this story is the other partner in the adultery — the man caught in the same act. He is not there. He was not brought. The law that the accusers were quoting stated, clearly, that both parties were to be judged. His absence was not accidental. It was the fingerprint of a system that applied its moral standards selectively — enforcing on those with less power and overlooking in those with more. Jesus noticed. He did not say it out loud in this passage — He did not need to. The question that landed in the silence — ‘which of you is without sin?’ — included the absent man. It included the selective enforcers. It included everyone.

The stone in your hand. The stone you are ready to throw. At the person whose failure is visible. Whose sin is public. Whose story has become a useful exhibit in your argument about someone else’s moral inadequacy. Jesus’s question is always the same: put it down. Look at your own hands. Then we can talk about how to help the person in the middle of the room.

“The crowd brought one sinner for judgment. Jesus turned the judgment on the crowd. He consistently does this. Do not be surprised when He does it to you.”

### Reflection

- » Who are you currently 'bringing to the temple courts' — holding up as an exhibit of failure in your judgment of others?
- » What would happen if Jesus wrote on the ground in your hearing right now — if the silence asked you to examine your own record?
- » What is the 'stone' you are currently holding? What would it cost you to put it down?

I will examine my own record before I manage anyone else's.  
Grace and truth together, in that order.

PART FIVE

# HOW HE CALLED US

---

*The Invitation That Has Not Expired*

## CHAPTER 9



# FOLLOW ME

*The Two Most Demanding Words He Ever Said*

---

*He did not say: believe the correct things, attend the right services, maintain your reputation, observe the requirements. He said: follow me. Two words. A completely different life.*

He did not say: attend services, believe the correct doctrinal positions, maintain your reputation, perform your obligations, observe the external requirements, and you will be considered a member in good standing.

He said: follow me.

To Peter and Andrew, casting nets into the Sea of Galilee: 'Follow me.' They left their nets immediately.

To Matthew, sitting at the tax collector's booth: 'Follow me.' He got up and followed.

To the rich young ruler — the one man who came to Jesus eager, sincere, apparently qualified, genuinely interested — Jesus said: 'Go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.' And the man went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Follow me is an invitation. But it is the most demanding invitation available, because following a person requires going where they go. And Jesus went to places that were expensive, inconvenient, socially complicated, and frequently hostile.

Following Him means following Him to the Samaritan woman at the well, across the social lines that are comfortable to maintain. Following Him means following Him to Zacchaeus's house, into the company that your community disapproves of. Following Him means following Him to the temple courts to turn over the money-changers' tables — into the confrontation with institutional corruption that is always costly. Following Him means following Him to the cross — to the place where self-interest is finally, completely surrendered.

## The Problem With Comfortable Christianity

The version of Christian faith that is most commonly marketed in the twenty-first century is a significant distance from 'follow me.' It is, more often, 'believe this, join this, attend this, give this, and your life will be more comfortable, more prosperous, more successful, more protected than it would have been otherwise.'

Jesus never promised comfort. He promised presence. 'And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age' — not in the absence of difficulty but through it.

He promised meaning. He promised transformation. He promised the specific, costly, irreplaceable satisfaction of a life lived in alignment with its actual purpose. But He did not promise easy. And the church that promises easy in His name is selling something He never authorised.

The rich young ruler went away sad not because Jesus was harsh. He went away sad because Jesus was accurate. The man's wealth was not the problem — but his attachment to it, his willingness to let it be the thing that stopped him following, was the problem. And Jesus, who genuinely loved him — Mark's account says so explicitly — would not soften the truth to make the invitation more comfortable.

Real love does not make the invitation more comfortable. It makes the destination clearer.

“Follow me is the most demanding sentence in the history of human language. It is also the most liberating one. The two facts are inseparable.”

## The Invitation Is Open Right Now

You have read the record. You have seen twelve chapters of a life unlike any other. The man who washed feet. Who stopped at the well. Who looked up at a tree. Who put down the stone. Who fed thousands and raised the dead and refused every opportunity to use power for His own benefit. That same man is the one making the invitation in these words: follow me.

Not: join a religion. Not: sign a statement of faith. Not: clean up your life first and then we will talk. Follow me — which means begin, imperfectly, right where you are, moving in His direction, with His presence as the guarantee.

The rich young ruler went away sad because he chose his attachment over the invitation. You do not have to make the same choice. If you have never made a deliberate, personal decision to follow Jesus — not the institution, not the tradition, not the inherited version — but the actual man in these pages — this is the moment the whole book has been building toward.

A prayer as simple as this one is where the journey of following begins:

*Lord Jesus — I have read the record. I have seen the model. I have no good argument left for walking away from what You are offering.*

*I want to follow — not the religion, not the institution,  
not the version edited for comfort. You. The one who  
crossed every line, washed every foot, stopped at every  
well, and went to every cross.*

*Come into my life. Rearrange it. Begin the work of  
making me into someone who lives the way You lived. I  
do not know all of what that costs. But I am willing to  
find out.*

*Follow me, You said. Here I am. Let's go.*

*Amen.*

If you prayed that — or something like it, in your own words — you have just made the most important decision available to any human being. The next step is community. Find people who are genuinely following, not just attending. Tell one person what you decided. The journey of following is not a solo one — He never sent anyone alone.

### Reflection

- » What are the specific places Jesus is currently calling you to follow Him to — and what is your resistance to going there?
- » What is your version of the rich young ruler's attachment — the thing that, if Jesus asked you to give it up to follow more fully, you would go away sad?
- » What is the difference between believing in Jesus and following Jesus? Where do those two things currently diverge in your life?

I will follow, not just believe. To the places He goes. With the  
people He chooses. At the cost He names.

## CHAPTER 10

...

# THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

*The Most Radical Manifesto Ever Delivered*

---

*He gave the most ambitious ethical framework in human history on a hillside to whoever showed up. No membership required. No prerequisites. He just sat down and began.*

Matthew 5–7. Three chapters. The longest continuous teaching record we have of Jesus. Given on a hillside to a crowd that included, as far as we can tell, everyone: disciples, Pharisees, Roman sympathisers, the sick, the poor, the curious, the hostile, the hungry.

He began with the Beatitudes, and if you have heard them so many times that they have become familiar, I want you to read them as if for the first time. Because what He said was extraordinary:

*Blessed are the poor in spirit... the mourning... the meek...  
those who hunger and thirst for righteousness... the  
merciful... the pure in heart... the peacemakers... those who  
are persecuted because of righteousness.*

(Matthew 5:3–10)

The people the world considers winners are not on this list. The powerful. The celebrated. The confident. The winning team. Those who have their kingdoms fully established and their armies fully funded. They are not here.

The people on this list are the people the world typically considers to be losing: the humble, the grieving, the gentle, the hungry, the merciful who keep extending grace even when the math suggests they should stop. These are the ones Jesus called blessed.

Then He raised the stakes: ‘You have heard that it was said... but I say to you.’ Six times. Six ancient laws, each one broadened and deepened until it was almost impossible to comply with in the way the religious system had made it appear easy to comply with. Do not murder — fine, I have not murdered. But I say to you: anyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment.

Do not commit adultery — fine, I have not committed adultery. But I say to you: anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

### WHAT HE WAS DOING

He was not raising the bar to make people feel like failures. He was relocating the bar — moving it from external compliance to internal transformation. The Pharisees had made righteousness a performance metric. Jesus made it a heart condition. And that shift changes everything about what it means to be good.

Then love your enemies. The most famous, most quoted, least practised instruction He ever gave. Not because it is unclear. Because it is expensive.

‘You have heard that it was said, Love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.’

Why? He gives the reason: ‘that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.’

The God who causes the sun to rise makes no distinction. The instruction to love enemies is not a special level of Christianity for advanced practitioners. It is the basic operating principle of a universe made by a God who does not distinguish. To reflect that God — to be His children in the operational sense — is to operate the same way.

This, incidentally, is the answer to every national, tribal, and cultural conflict this book has encountered: the enemy is entitled to the same rain and the same sun. The instruction to love them is not naïve. It is the only approach that has ever actually broken cycles of retaliation. Every other approach has merely deferred them.

“He did not give the Sermon on the Mount to religious professionals. He gave it on a hillside to everyone who showed up. The invitation has not expired.”

### Reflection

- » Which of the Beatitudes describes your current condition most accurately? What does Jesus say about that condition?
- » Where in your life are you performing external compliance while the internal reality is different? What would genuine heart transformation look like there?
- » Who is your enemy? Not abstractly — specifically. What would praying for them look like? What would it do to you to do it?

I will pursue the inside of the cup. External compliance is not the goal. Internal transformation is. And it is available.

## CHAPTER 11



# THE LAST SUPPER

*What He Did on the Night He Knew Everything Was About to  
Change*

---

*He knew Judas was in the room. He knew Peter would  
deny him before morning. He knew they would all  
scatter. He served them dinner anyway. That is the  
chapter.*

We covered the feet-washing back in Chapter 3 — it happened the same evening. But there is far more to that night than the towel and the basin.

Jesus and his disciples gathered for the Passover meal. The Passover was the foundational Jewish memorial — the annual re-enactment of God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Every element of the meal carried centuries of meaning. The unleavened bread. The bitter herbs. The cups of wine. The prayers. It was a liturgy of liberation. And Jesus, in the course of that meal, did something to it.

He took the bread. He broke it. He said: 'This is my body, given for you; do this in remembrance of me.'

He took the cup. He said: 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'

He reoriented the Passover — the foundational liberation story of his people — around himself. He made himself the centre of a new liberation story that would be even more fundamental than the Exodus. Not liberation from a human empire. Liberation from the deepest form of captivity available: sin, death, and the permanent separation from God that both produce.

The audacity of this is breathtaking. Only someone who genuinely believed themselves to be the Son of God could do what He did that night with the Passover. And only someone who genuinely was the Son of God could do it with such complete, calm authority — on the eve of his own arrest, knowing exactly what was coming, and doing it anyway.

He knew Judas was in the room. He knew Peter would deny him before morning. He knew the disciples would scatter. He served them dinner

anyway. He washed their feet anyway. He gave them His body and blood in the bread and the cup anyway.

The Last Supper is one of the most powerful demonstrations of love in the entire Gospel record — not the emotional declaration kind, but the specific, sacrificial, fully-informed kind. The love that serves even with complete knowledge of who it is serving and what they will do.

#### THE CONTEMPORARY MIRROR

When did you last serve someone with full knowledge of their failures, full knowledge of their capacity to disappoint — and do it anyway? Not from naïvety but from genuine, costly love? That is what the upper room looked like. That is what He modelled.

**Reflection**

- » Who in your life are you withholding full service from because of their failures or their likelihood to disappoint? What would it mean to serve them anyway?
- » The Last Supper shows Jesus orienting the entire history of his people around himself. What does that claim mean to you? What do you do with it?
- » What do you carry from that evening — from the Eucharist, the communion, however your tradition observes it — that has become so familiar it has lost its weight? What would it mean to sit with it as if for the first time?

I will serve with full knowledge of the person I am serving, not despite their failures but in the full light of them. That is what love looks like.

## CHAPTER 12

...

# BE LIKE ME

*The Most Ambitious Instruction in Human History*

---

*He gave the standard at the Last Supper, immediately after they had argued about which of them was greatest. He did not raise His voice. He just told them the answer: love one another as I have loved you. By that, everyone will know.*

He said it plainly. Not metaphorically. Not as an aspiration for the spiritual elite. He said it to twelve ordinary people who had just argued about which of them was greatest — Luke 22:24, at the very Last Supper, immediately after He had washed their feet. He said it to anyone who calls themselves His follower, in any century, in any culture, at any level of spiritual maturity or immaturity:

*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*

(John 13:34–35)

As I have loved you. That is the standard. Not ‘be kind when it is convenient.’ Not ‘love the people who are easy to love.’ Not ‘love your tribe, your denomination, your social circle, your nation.’ As I have loved you — which had just included, that same night, washing their feet, serving them dinner, speaking peace into their fear, and beginning the long walk toward a cross that He was going to climb for all of them.

## The Most Recognisable Thing

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples. Not by your worship style. Not by your theology. Not by your church attendance or your denominational affiliation or the bumper sticker on your car or the statement of faith on your website.

By this. By the love.

Two thousand years later, the single most effective advertisement for the reality of Jesus is still a community of people who genuinely love each other in the way He described — across the differences, across the failures, in the full knowledge of each other’s limitations, with the specific, sacrificial, costly, consistent love that He modelled.

And the single most effective argument against Him is still a community of people who claim His name while treating each other — and the world outside their community — in ways that are the precise opposite of what He taught.

The world is watching. Not the theology — the behaviour. Not the services — the treatment of the people outside the services. Not the statement of faith — the gap between what is professed and what is practised. That gap, more than any intellectual argument against Christianity, is what keeps people away from the Jesus who would change their lives.

And the closing of that gap — the genuine, costly, daily, imperfect work of living up to the instruction He left — is both the greatest challenge and the greatest opportunity available to anyone who claims to

follow Him.

He modelled the life. He called us to match it. The model is in these pages. The matching is the work of every day that follows.

“Everyone will know you are His disciples by the love. Not by the doctrine. Not by the performance. By the love. He was very specific about that.”

#### Reflection

- » What would it mean for you specifically to love ‘as He has loved you’ — in the relationships currently in front of you?
- » What is the gap between what you profess and how you practice? What specifically needs to close?
- » If the people in your world judged your discipleship only by the love you demonstrate — not by your theology, your church attendance, your public faith identity — what would their verdict be?

I will be known by the love. Not by the label. The life He modelled is the life I am called to. I choose to begin again today.

## CONCLUSION

---

*The Life That Is Still Being Lived*

---

*Thirty-three years. Three years of public ministry. One  
consistent, unbroken, stubborn, cross-boundary life.  
And an invitation that has not expired.*

Thirty-three years. Three years of public ministry. Twelve disciples. Hundreds of recorded encounters. Thousands of words. One consistent, unbroken, stubborn cross-boundary life that reached from the stable to the cross without a single moment of hypocrisy, self-interest, or failure of love.

That life is not ancient history. It is, by the claim of the resurrection — which its companion volume examines — a life that is still being lived. A presence that is still available. A love that is still operational. A model that has not been superseded, improved upon, or made redundant by any subsequent development in human thought or technology or culture.

Every chapter of this book has held a mirror to the contemporary world. The mirror is uncomfortable. The Jesus of the Gospels confronts every system we have built to manage rather than transform people. He confronts every gatekeeping structure. Every selective application of moral standards. Every community that has drawn its circle too small and excluded the people He spent his entire ministry seeking.

And He calls. Still. In the same words He used to the fishermen on the Galilean shore: Follow me.

The invitation is not to a religion — it is to a life. A specific, costly, beautiful, world-changing life that He lived first and then said: now you. The world does not need more people who believe the correct things about Him. It needs more people who live the way He did. More people who cross the lines. Who wash the feet. Who stop at the well. Who look up at the tree. Who put down the stone.

The model is given. The decision is yours. And it is the most important decision available to you — not because of what it does for your afterlife, though that matters, but because of what it does to your before-life. The life

you are living right now. The people in it. The world that needs exactly what His example produces.

“He lived it first so you would know it was possible.  
He called you to follow so the world would know it  
was not finished.”

— Timilehin Idowu

Festac Town, Lagos, Nigeria, 2026

# THE 30-DAY PRACTICE: LIVING THE MODEL

---

*Because studying a life without attempting to live it is the definition of the Pharisee mistake.*

---

This practice is structured around the twelve themes of the book. Each phase pairs a Gospel reading with one concrete, real-world action — because the life of Jesus was never meant to be admired from a distance. It was meant to be followed up close.

## Phase 1 — The Man (Days 1–5)

### Days 1–2: The Resume

Read Luke 2:41–52 and Luke 3:21–23. Jesus at twelve in the temple. Jesus at thirty being baptised. Write down what you know about His ordinary years. Then write down what your ordinary years are currently teaching you. What is the formation happening right now that your future will require?

### Days 3–5: The Anti-Religion Test

Read Matthew 23 in full — all seven woes. In your journal, complete this sentence for each one: ‘The version of this I am most at risk of in my own life is...’ Be honest. This is not for public consumption. It is between you and the God who already knows.

**Days 3–5 Action: Identify one place in your life where you are performing**

righteousness rather than pursuing it. Name it. Make one specific change this week.

**Phase 2 — How He Led (Days 6–12)**

**Days 6–9: The Servant Test**

Read John 13:1–17. The feet-washing in full. Ask honestly: in the leadership roles you currently carry — parent, employer, mentor, older sibling, team leader — what does ‘washing feet’ look like? Not metaphorically. Practically. This week.

**Days 6–9 Action: Do one act of servant leadership that is below your perceived**

status. Do not announce it. Do not post about it. Simply do it — and notice what it does to you.

**Days 10–12: The Selection Audit**

Read Mark 3:13–19 (the choosing of the twelve). Then look at the people around you — in your family, your workplace, your community. Who have you written off? Who is your Thomas — the doubter you are impatient with? Your Peter — the volatile one you have given up on? Write their names. Pray for them specifically for three days.

**Phase 3 — How He Loved (Days 13–18)**

**Days 13–15: The Well**

Read John 4:1–42 — the full Samaritan woman encounter. Identify the person in your world who comes to the well alone at noon. The excluded one. The complicated one. The one your community quietly avoids. This week, make contact. Not with an agenda. With genuine presence.

**Days 16–18: The Tree**

Read Luke 19:1–10 — Zacchaeus. Then ask: who in your life is up a tree — reaching, hungry, clearly wanting something real but too proud or too compromised to ask directly? What would it mean to stop underneath and look up? Do it this week. Invite them to something real.

**Phase 4 — How He Confronted (Days 19–22)****Days 19–20: The Stone**

Read John 7:53–8:11 — the woman caught in adultery. Then sit with the question: what stone am I currently holding? What exhibit am I using to avoid examining my own record? Write it down. Then write: I put it down. Date it.

**Days 21–22: The Cup**

Read Matthew 23 again — but this time read it as a mirror, not a critique of someone else. Ask: where is the outside of my cup cleaner than the inside? Where is the performance stronger than the reality? Identify one specific gap and make one specific change.

**Phase 5 — How He Called Us (Days 23–30)****Days 23–25: Follow Me**

Read Matthew 4:18–22 (the first disciples called), then Matthew 19:16–22 (the rich young ruler). Ask the honest question: what would I go away sad about? What is the thing, if Jesus named it specifically, that I would struggle to release in order to follow more fully? Name it. Pray over it for three days.

**Days 26–28: The Sermon**

Read Matthew 5–7 in full — the Sermon on the Mount — over three days (one chapter per day). After each chapter, write one sentence: the thing Jesus said that most directly confronts the way I am currently living. Do not write the comfortable answer. Write the accurate one.

### Days 29–30: The Love Test

Read John 13:34–35. Then ask the people closest to you — your spouse, your children, your closest friend, a trusted colleague — to answer this question honestly: ‘On a scale of one to ten, how well do I love the people around me in the way Jesus described?’ Listen without defending. Then write your purpose statement for the next season:

I will be known by the love in these specific ways: \_\_\_\_\_.

I will not merely study the model. I will attempt the life.  
Imperfectly. Consistently. One day at a time.

## WHAT COMES NEXT

---

This book is the first volume of a trilogy examining the three events that define Jesus of Nazareth and the movement He launched.

Book 9 — Lessons From the Death of Jesus examines what the cross accomplished, who it was for, and why the death of this particular man changed the relationship between God and every human being who has ever lived.

Book 10 — Lessons From the Resurrection of Jesus examines the single event that separates Jesus from every other founder, prophet, or leader in human history — and the power that event made available to every person who is willing to receive it.

The model is in this book. The price is in the next. The power is in the one after that. Read all three. They belong together.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

---

Timilehin Idowu — Timi to those who know him — is a husband to Oluwakemi, the father of three extraordinary children (Mojolaoluwa, Olaoluwatitomi, and Oluwafoyinsolami), and the co-founder of Flourish Playhouse, one of Lagos's finest foundation schools, nestled in Festac Town.

He serves as a Pastor at Worship Nation International Church, Festac Town, and pours himself into the lives of young people as a mentor, speaker, convener of Teenspreneurship, and transformational writer. His mission: to help every person, regardless of background, culture, or starting point, find and live the life they were designed for.

He discovered himself on June 9th, 2023, standing on the stage of the school where his own journey began — the same stage he had stood on as a student between October 1992 and June 1998. Twenty-five years between the questions and the answers. Everything he has written since then is an attempt to save others from waiting as long as he did.

Lessons From the Life of Jesus is Book 8 of the Becoming Great Series — and the first of a trilogy on the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth. He wrote it not as a theologian with answers, but as a pastor with questions and a Gospel record that has never stopped surprising him. The more carefully he reads it, the more convinced he becomes that the world's most urgent need is not a new religion, but a genuine encounter with the man these pages describe.

He is still following. Imperfectly. Daily. In the direction the model pointed.

timijos@yahoo.com | medewheidowu@gmail.com | WhatsApp: +234  
703 055 5256

## THE BECOMING GREAT SERIES

---

This is not just a series. It is a movement.

Book 1 — I Must Blow

What Every Young Person Must Know Before Chasing Success

Identity • Character • Purpose • Process

Book 2 — I Am the Champion

How Champions Are Built, Not Born

Discipline • Mastery • Consistency • Resilience

Book 3 — I Will Be Rich and Famous

How to Create Value, Attract Opportunities and Shape Culture

Wealth • Influence • Enterprise • Legacy

Book 4 — Don't Scroll Past This

What Ancient Disciples Can Teach the Generation That Has Seen Everything

Character • Generations • Mentorship • Legacy

Book 5 — LIFE: The Journey

Nobody Told You It Would Feel Like This — But Here We Will Talk About It Honestly

Life • Identity • Purpose • Legacy

Book 6 — The Truth about LIE

How to Live With Integrity When the World Rewards the Lie

Truth • Peace • Integrity • Reconciliation

Book 7 – It's Not Your Fault. But It's Your Life.

How to Stop Inheriting Pain and Start Owning Your Future

Responsibility • Reprogramming • Growth • Legacy

Book 8 – Lessons From the Life of Jesus

The Model That Has Never Been Improved Upon

The Model • Servant Leadership • Love • The Commission

Book 9 – Lessons From the Death of Jesus

What the Cross Paid For – and What It Made Available

The Cross • Forgiveness • Reconciliation • New Life

Book 10 – Lessons From the Resurrection of Jesus

The Power That Is Still Available – to Everyone

Power • Becoming • Access • Hope

timijos@yahoo.com | medewheidowu@gmail.com | WhatsApp: +234  
703 055 5256