

BEYOND WWJD

(1Tim 4:7-8)

History of WWJD

- 1418-1427, Thomas à Kempis, *Imitatio Christi (The Imitation of Christ)*
- 1891 sermon, Charles Spurgeon, used the phrase “What would Jesus do?”
- 1896, Charles Sheldon, *In His Steps*
- By 1935, the book had been translated into 35 languages, published worldwide
- Films: (1964) *In His Steps* film by Ken Anderson
- In 1990s, WWJD bracelets popular with Christian youth groups
- More films: (2010) *WWJD* with Adam Gregory; (2013) *In His Steps* by Zack Lawrence
- By 2018, *In His Steps*, over 40 million copies sold; one of the Christian best-sellers of all time

In this truth lies the secret of the easy yoke: the secret involves living as he lived in the entirety of his life—adopting his overall life-style. Following “in his steps” cannot be equated with behaving as he did when he was “on the spot.” To live as Christ lived is to live as he did all his life. (Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*)

To do what Jesus did we must live as Jesus lived.

Jesus practiced *spiritual disciplines*—regular, intentional activities we plan and accomplish that deepen our intimacy and strengthen our relationship with God, resulting in fruit-bearing and Christ-likeness

To act like Jesus,
we do not imitate WHAT we see Him DOING,
but HOW we see Him LIVING.

• HOW did Jesus LIVE?

- Mark 1:35—*In the early morning, while it was still dark, He arose and went out, and departed to a lonely place and was praying there.* (solitude, prayer)
- Luke 6:12-13—*One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. ¹³When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles.* (solitude, prayer, guidance)
- Matthew 4:1-11—*Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights ...* (fasting), He was tempted four times by Satan and answered the same way each time: *It is written...* (study, Scripture memory)
- John 2:1-12—*a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee...* (celebration)
- Luke 7:34—*The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, “Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.”* (celebration)
- John 17:1-5—*Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.... ⁴I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.* (worship)
- Gospels—*Jesus quotes extensively from the OT almost 40 times with Psalms, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Exodus as His top four books.* (study)
- Luke 22:42—*Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.* (submission)

- Luke 9:58—*Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.* (simplicity)
- Mark 10:45—*The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.* (service)

The secret to behaving like Jesus, is not to TRY HARDER IN the moment, but to TRAIN PRIOR TO the moment.

• HOW must WE live?

Train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. (1Tim 4:7-8)

There is no “quick fix” for the human condition. The approach to wholeness is for humankind a process of great length and difficulty that engages all our own powers to their fullest extent over a long course of experience. But we don't like to hear this. (Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*)

• How have we acquired a negative attitude toward spiritual disciplines?

We grew up in Western society, and have been nurtured on the message of inalienable rights:

- We all have a right to do what we want, when we want
- We have the right to pursue happiness in all ways possible
- We have the right to feel good
- We have the right to lead a “productive and successful life”
- This is the *the good life*, taught by the media, political rhetoric, and our educational system
- This is the way life *should* be

Celibacy, fasting, penance, mortification, self-denial, humility, silence, solitude, and the whole train of monkish virtues:—for what reason are they everywhere rejected by men of sense, but because they serve to no manner of purpose; neither advance a man's fortune in the world, nor render him a more valuable member of society; neither qualify him for the entertainment of company, nor increase his power of self-enjoyment? We observe, on the contrary, that they cross all these desirable ends; stupify the understanding and harden the heart, obscure the fancy and sour the temper.... A gloomy, hair-brained enthusiast, after his death, may have a place in the Calendar; but will scarcely ever be admitted, when alive, into intimacy and society, except by those who are as delirious and dismal as himself. (David Hume, *Enquiry into the Principles of Morals*, 1751)

• What is the role of the spiritual disciplines?

They are to mold and shape our embodied personalities. Our part is to engage in the specific and appropriate activities, which will bring that about. (Dallas Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*)

Cf. Philippians 2:12-13