# LORDSHIP:

*Following Christ*



*Jesus' call to follow Him is a call to give Him the authority to direct all aspects of our lives.*

***"Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on: you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of – throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself."[1] – C. S. Lewis***



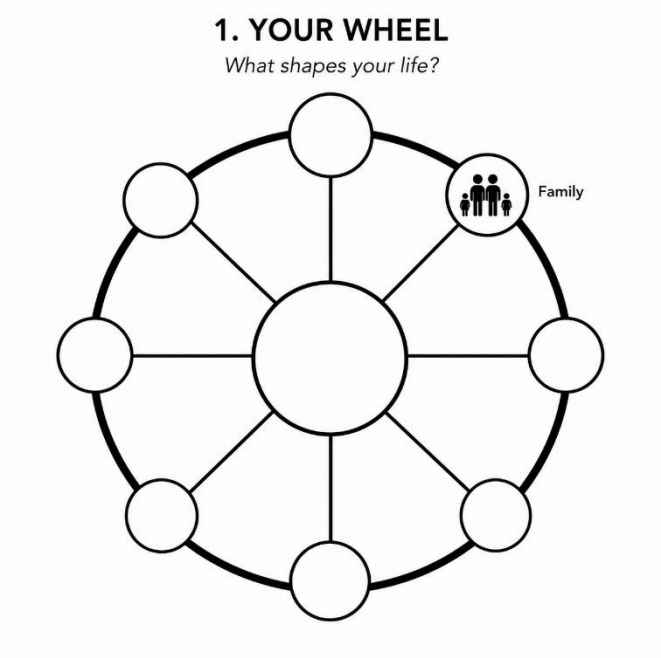
- How does this picture of Christian discipleship fit your own experience? Can you think of times when you wanted to become a decent little cottage, but God was transforming you into a palace?

Jesus is making each of us into a palace, a place where He intends to live. Repentance begins with the repairs we expect: getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof, the jobs we knew needed doing. But that is not the last word. God intends to do more. He begins knocking the house about, adding wings and towers we never planned, because He is building a home fit for Himself. For this to happen, Jesus must be given control of the building plans.

In this chapter, we are going to discuss the heart of discipleship: following Jesus as Lord, so that He can transform us into people who walk like Him. Repentance is an ongoing process of turning from the kingdoms of this world and turning to Jesus so that we might follow Him and give Him permission to lead the way. It is only when Jesus is Lord of our lives that He is able to lead us into a deep relationship with Himself and new life in His kingdom. Only when we allow Jesus to be Lord of our lives is He able to rebuild us into the beautiful palaces we were created to be, rather than the decent little cottages we too often settle for. My hope in this chapter is to help you think practically and personally about Jesus' lordship and leadership in your life.

Before we do this, however, it would be helpful to think about your life. Imagine that the wheel below represents your life, with each spoke representing a different part of it. Complete the wheel by filling in the roles, activities, and relationships that are most significant to you: the things that take up much of your time and shape your decisions

and priorities. One way to begin is to ask, "Who am I?" How do you usually describe yourself when you introduce yourself to someone new? (Examples include: I am a family member. I am a friend. I am a boyfriend or girlfriend. I am a student. I am an employee. I play sports. I go to the gym…)




## LOOK IN THE BIBLE: MARK 10:17-31

17 And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" 20 And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." 21 And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." 22 Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. 23 And Jesus

looked around and said to his disciples, “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” 24 And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” 26 And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, “Then who can be saved?” 27 Jesus looked at them and said, “With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.” 28 Peter began to say to him, “See, we have left everything and followed you.” 29 Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, 30 who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

Follow the Stages of Study (Appendix 2), marking your observations, impressions, and questions in the space provided above. Then reflect on the following:

- What do you observe about the man who comes to Jesus and the conversation between them? What is the man hoping for, and what does Jesus seem to want for him?
- Jesus responds, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.” What might He be pointing the man toward?
- What is the one thing he lacks? How is this connected to Jesus' command: “Go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me”?
- Why is it difficult for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God? How does Jesus answer the disciples' question, “Then who can be saved?”
- What promises does Jesus make in this passage? In what ways is this good news for you?

- Can you think of a time when Jesus called you to do something difficult? Why do you think He called you to it? What did you learn about Him as you chose to obey?
- Summarize the main point of this passage in one or two sentences. What is God's personal word to you from this text, and how will you respond?

# LORDSHIP: FOLLOWING CHRIST

*Mark the statements in the following section that impress you, that you have questions about, or that you want to discuss further.*

## A TROUBLING PASSAGE

To be honest, I have not always liked this passage. I have wondered why Jesus makes such a big deal out of the man's choice of the word "good." I have struggled to see Jesus as kind when He calls this man to leave everything behind and then allows him to walk away sad. I have wrestled with Jesus' statement about the difficulty of entering the kingdom of God. I imagine my trouble with this passage has more to do with a nagging fear that I am more like this man than I care to admit.

Of all the Bible studies in which I have participated, it is the study of this passage as a university student with some of my close friends that has left the greatest impression on me. It was that evening that I saw something I had missed a million times: "And Jesus, looking at him, loved him" (v. 21). Everything Jesus says and does in the passage is motivated by His love for this man. His question about the word "good" is motivated by love. His shocking call for the man to sell his possessions and follow Him is motivated by love. Even allowing the man to walk away disheartened is motivated by Jesus' love for him.

## WHY DO YOU CALL ME GOOD?

The man runs up to Jesus and kneels before Him, seeking wisdom about eternal life. Mark later tells us that he has great possessions; there is probably little he does not own or could not buy. He is also a religious man who has kept the commandments since his youth. Yet there is still something missing in his life that he cannot put his finger on. For this reason, he comes to Jesus, hoping to find the answer to the emptiness in his soul.

Jesus responds with His own question: "Why do you call me good?" The rest of the conversation depends on the man's answer. Is Jesus one of many good teachers? Are Jesus and His kingdom just one of many good options? Are His words only good suggestions? Or is it possible that this man is standing before the good God? If Jesus is only one good option among many, then nothing else He says to the man will make any sense or be of any value. It is for this reason that Jesus lovingly raises the real question and gets to the heart of the matter: What does this man believe about Him? The way you and I answer that same question has the potential to direct each one of us to the life we are seeking.

## GO, SELL… AND COME, FOLLOW ME

Jesus names the unspoken problem: there is something the man lacks. Jesus knows the heart of the matter and addresses it, but not in a way the man expects. I imagine this man anticipates being given one more thing to do or one more rule to follow. Instead, Christ points him to a new way of life: "go, sell all that you have… and come, follow me."

Jesus desires to be with this man. He wants to know him and be known by him. He wants to spend time with him and go on adventures with him. Jesus wants to lead and transform him. Christ's call to him is the same call He made to the disciples: to come and be with Him (Mark 3:14). The one thing the man is lacking is Jesus. Eternal life – life filled with meaning, wholeness, and joy – is a result of being with Christ and following Him. This is the very life the man came asking about. Because He loves him, Jesus calls the man to come and be with Him.

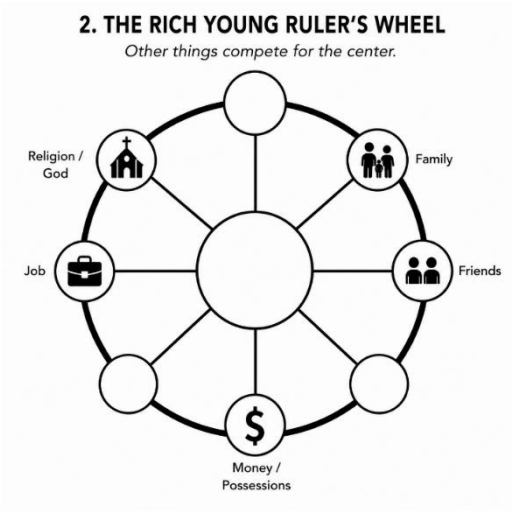
It is easy for us to be overwhelmed, as the rich man was, by the first half of Jesus' call to go and sell. Yet this is only a means to the end. Jesus' call for him to go and sell his possessions is not some kind of test or mean trick. Instead, it is the only way that the man will be free to respond to the invitation to come and be with Jesus. Jesus is setting out on a journey (v. 17), and there is no way the man can follow Him with all his possessions in tow.[2] In this way, we see that Jesus' call flows from His love for the man and His desire to be with him.

Now we see the importance of Jesus' first question. If Jesus is just one among many good options, then it would be foolish for the man to go and sell all he has to follow Him. On the other hand, if being with Jesus and following Him is the path to eternal life, then the only response that makes any real sense is to leave any hindrance behind to pursue Him.

## HE WENT AWAY SORROWFUL

We can understand much about the man from his response to Jesus' call. Mark tells us that he goes away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. His response reveals his answer to Jesus' first question. Jesus might be good, but He is not worth leaving everything else behind and giving away his many possessions. He believes Jesus and His teachings are just good options and does not realize he is standing before the Lord of the universe, who has all authority and knowledge to direct his life and care for him.

If we could visualize this man's wheel, it might look something like what I have drawn here.




At first glance, it does not look bad. God is a part of his life; his relationships and job have their place. The problem, however, is that God is only an equal part of his life. He is only one of the many spokes that influence the man's actions and decisions. So when God calls, obedience is weighed along with all the other influencing spokes. On this particular day, the man's many possessions and his way of life are more important than the call of Jesus.

Jesus is not interested in being one among many spokes; He desires and deserves to be the hub of the wheel. He alone must be the center, on which everything else depends. Jesus' call to follow Him is a call to give Him the chief place in our lives and the authority to direct every part of them. This is not because Jesus is bossy and a control freak or because He has nothing better to do. Quite the opposite. Jesus desires to be the hub because He alone is the way to eternal life. Only when Jesus is the hub can everything else find its proper place. Jesus invites the man into a relationship where he can finally find what he is truly seeking.

The real tragedy is that the man is content to remain as he is. He may be willing to make a few small changes here and there but nothing too radical. At the same time, Jesus loves the man too much to lower the call. Jesus loves him too much to agree to be one of the many competing lords in the man's life. The problem is not that possessions and money are bad; the problem is they make a terrible god. No possessions, family members, job, or religion will ever be able to lead him to true life. Jesus does not force him; He leaves the choice with the man and lets him walk away rather than allowing him to settle for something only half good.

## STUDENT EXAMPLE: COMPETING LORDS

When I went to university, I had been a Christian for some time. Yet Jesus was not always the center of my wheel. My studies too often took that place. I thought to myself that if I got good grades and worked hard during my university years, I would be guaranteed a good job with a happy and secure life. I would never say that studies were my god, but I too often lived as though they were. I chose to miss opportunities to grow in my faith (conferences, Bible studies, quiet times, etc.) for the chance to study just a little bit more. Studies, just like money and possessions, are good things, but they make a bad lord.

Studying engineering never helped me become a better, more loving person. Nor did it give me eternal life or peace; these are things only Jesus can give.

I remember meeting Michael at one of our student group meetings. My first impression was that he was a little overzealous. He asked the student group leaders at the beginning of each semester about all the activities and possibilities for spiritual growth that were being offered. Then, before knowing his schedule for the semester, he made a commitment to participate in each of these events. He had become a Christian right before coming to university and told me he did not want to miss one chance to grow in his faith. He was not going to let anything else get in the way of his being with Jesus. Michael missed only one small group meeting that first year; he was out of town for a family event. Michael arranged his schedule and studies to make time for the next opportunity to be with Jesus and His people.

Then came the night our small group studied the passage with Jesus and the rich man. The leader asked us, "Imagine you were this man. What do you think Jesus would say to you? 'You lack one thing: go, ____, and come, follow me.'" I knew at once Jesus would bring up my studies. I took joy and relief in the fact that Jesus looked at me and loved me. He wanted me to experience eternal life and real security in Him. I did not want to walk away disheartened like the rich man, so I committed to make a change. Michael became an example for me. From then on, I put Jesus first and organized my other priorities, including studies, around my commitment to Him. I still struggled with this occasionally, but through this process, I learned that following Jesus leads to real life, joy, and peace.

- What stands out to you about the fact that Jesus looks at you and loves you? How does this shape the way you hear His call to follow Him?
- If you were to approach Jesus today, what do you think He might say to you? "You lack one thing: go, ____, and come, follow me." What might need to change in your life in order to respond to Him?

## MEMORY VERSE: JOHN 6:68–69

***Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.***

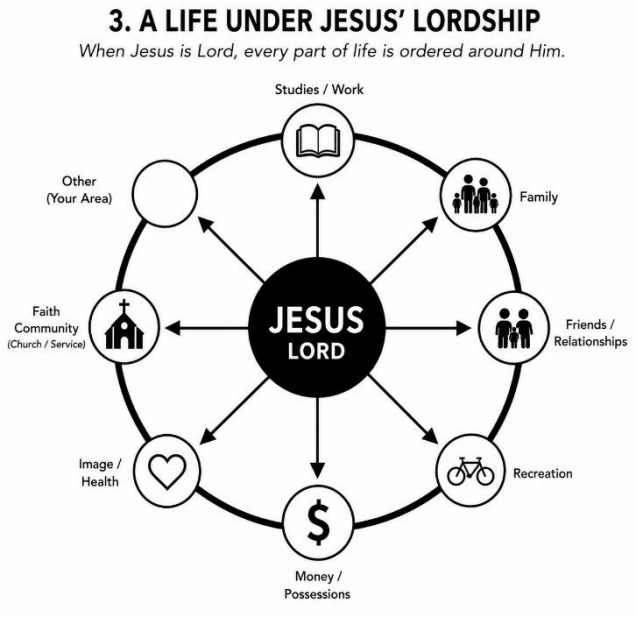
- Peter speaks these words as many of Jesus' followers are turning away (John 6:66), much like the rich man. What has Peter discovered that compels him to stay? In what ways have you experienced this, or long to experience it?
- What might change in the way you live if you truly believed that Jesus has the words of eternal life?

# ANOTHER LOOK AT OUR WHEELS

Jesus is inviting us to come be with Him and follow Him. He loves us and wants us to experience eternal life. Yet this is only possible when Jesus is Lord of our lives, because He alone knows the way to life. We know that Jesus is our Lord when we listen to His word and obey it completely and when He is the center of every part of our lives: our possessions, friendships, studies, and work. We are only deceiving ourselves when we say we are disciples of Christ but do not obey His instructions in all these areas. Jesus said it this way: “Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?” (Luke 6:46).

The beauty of Jesus' lordship is that He does not impose it on us; He invites each of us to choose Him and His life. However, if we have believed and have come to know that Jesus has the words of eternal life, then, like Peter, we have nowhere else to go but to follow Him.

Look again at the wheel you filled in at the beginning of this chapter. When Jesus is Lord, He is no longer one spoke among many. Rather than fitting Jesus into the margins of life, our other commitments begin to be ordered around Him. With this in mind, it would be helpful to think through some of the most important aspects of our lives and to consider what it means practically to live with Jesus as Lord.




## TIME AND POSSESSIONS

We often talk about time as a commodity and as something we possess. We say, “I did not have enough time for that,” or “I will come if I have the time.” But none of us owns time; each of us is allotted twenty-four hours a day as a gift from God.

Time is a way of measuring our priorities. Simply stated, we make time for the things we find important. We might have a job and allot time for it in our schedule because it is a priority for us to be productive or to have the resources to pay bills and buy food. Similarly, we make time for the friends and family members in our lives who are important to us because we enjoy and value them. A young man almost always has time for his girlfriend

because she is a priority. He arranges his schedule, his work, and even his sleeping pattern to make time for this special person in his life. If we want to know what is truly important to us, all we need to do is look at how we spend our time.

Conversely, the things we do not have time for show what we do not prioritize. For example, if you do not have time to clean your room, what you are really saying is that something else in your schedule – whether it be a friend, work, sleep, or a video game – is more important to you than having a clean living space. Similarly, if you believe you do not have time to pray, to go to a Bible study, or to go to church, what you are really saying is that something else is more important to you.

If Jesus is truly your Lord and the One you are following, then it only makes sense that your priorities, shown by what you make time for, would reflect this. At the very least, this means you would set aside regular time for prayer and Bible study, as well as for corporate worship and service, because these are part of the way that leads to life. Everything else in your schedule would be planned around this priority.

In a very similar way, how we choose to spend our money also shows what is important to us. This is true whether we have a lot of money or just a little. There is no getting around the fact that one of the Bible's major themes is our relationship with our money and possessions. Jesus has a great deal to say about money, and He warns that we "cannot serve God and money" (Matt. 6:24). Paul writes that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils," and that some, craving it, "have wandered away from the faith" (1 Tim. 6:10).

These warnings show us how easy it is to live as though money and possessions will give us life, security, and true joy. Only Christ can give us these things. Almost every day we are bombarded with ideas from the world telling us that we need more and more things – a new phone, computer, or car – in order to be truly happy. This is why it is so hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. It is easy for us to trust money and possessions to provide security and life, rather than trusting God to provide these things for us.

One of my mentors once told me that every purchase we make is a spiritual decision. How we choose to spend our money often shows what we believe about God. If Christ is truly Lord, then your spending will reflect this, and your priority will be using your money and possessions as He instructed. This includes embracing a lifestyle of generosity, giving to the work of God in the world, and caring for those in need around you.

Let me share an important secret about time and money. We often justify our practices now because we imagine that at some point in the future – after we graduate, after we get a job, after we get married – it will become much easier to follow Jesus in these areas of our lives. Some might think that when we make more money it will be easier to be generous and follow Jesus' commands about money. In actuality, it only becomes harder to follow Jesus with our schedules and money. As we grow older, our lives often become more complicated with greater responsibilities and expenses. The patterns you set now in

these areas have a great influence on how you will deal with them in the future. As Jesus says, “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much” (Luke 16:10).

- If someone were to look at your schedule and your relationship with money and possessions, what would they conclude is most important to you?
- If Jesus is your Lord, how should His lordship be reflected in your schedule and your finances?
- Compare your answers to the first two questions. What specific changes would help your time, money, and possessions better reflect Jesus' lordship in your life?

## RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships are a beautiful thing. In fact, God created us to be in relationship with Him and with one another. Like every other aspect of our lives, relationships are most enjoyed when Jesus is Lord and we obey His commands. This is especially true, since Jesus said there is no greater commandment than “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength… You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:30–31).

We cannot call ourselves disciples of Jesus if we choose to ignore the command to love the people in our churches, our colleagues, our roommates, and the people we meet throughout the day. This includes all those who are easy to love as well as those who easily annoy us. Love, we must remember, is primarily an activity. It means forgiving others when they have wronged us, asking for forgiveness when we have wronged them, seeking the best for others, serving them, sharing generously, praying for others, and using our words to bless and encourage.

One area where we might find this difficult is in our relationship with our parents. Throughout the Bible, we are given the command to honor our parents. When Jesus is Lord of our lives, we will strive to honor our parents by speaking well of them, listening to their desires, caring for them, forgiving them when they make mistakes, and serving them. At the same time, Jesus warns us not to make parents the lords of our lives: “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10:37). Honor and obedience are not the same thing. There may be times when we must respectfully disobey our parents in order to obey and follow Jesus.

Jesus' lordship also reaches into our romantic relationships, and we are to follow His instructions in this area of our lives. God's model is for one man and one woman to be in a faithful and loving covenant relationship in order to be partners in life and service. This has many implications, one of which is that we should not become romantically involved with someone who is not a disciple of Jesus. Scripture warns against this again and again.[3] The problem is not that God does not love our non-believing friends; He certainly does love them. The problem is that you might fall in love with and marry someone who does not love Jesus. How sad it would be for the most important person in your life to be

headed in a fundamentally different direction and to be, at best, only tolerant of your desire to follow Jesus.

I have known too many Christians who have made compromises and disobeyed Jesus in this area of their lives and have come to regret it. The result has been living with the agony that comes from constantly feeling torn in two directions.

Jesus' teaching on marriage and family also shapes our sexual practices. Sex was created as a gift to be enjoyed in marriage, where a husband and wife "become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). Within these boundaries, sex is truly a wonderful gift, but outside of marriage sex leads to pain and heartbreak. Obedience to Jesus' lordship in our relationships means saving sex for marriage and being faithful to our spouse. Before marriage, this will certainly mean creating healthy boundaries in your physical relationships and arranging your activities so that you will not be tempted to do something you later would regret.

- What kinds of relationships are most significant in your life right now? What does it mean for Jesus to be Lord in those relationships?
- In which relationships do you struggle most to follow Jesus' command to love your neighbor as yourself? What makes this difficult?
- How would you describe your relationship with your parents? In what practical ways might this relationship more fully reflect Jesus' lordship?
- If you are in a romantic relationship, how is Jesus' lordship shaping it? Are your boundaries helping you follow Jesus faithfully, or placing you in situations of temptation?

## WORK AND RECREATION

Work is a very significant part of our lives. From the very first pages of Scripture, we see that God created us to be people who work alongside Him in this world to fulfill His purposes. When we work and study, we are living out one of the first callings and blessings God gave to humanity (Gen. 1:28; 2:15). Whether you have a job or are a full-time student, it is important to think about how you can practically allow Jesus to lead you in this area of your life. Although there is much that could be said about this, it is important to mention at least three aspects of our work that must be shaped by Jesus' lordship in our lives.

First, if Jesus is our Lord, then our work is not. Although this might seem fairly obvious, in practice it is difficult for most of us. It is often tempting to live as though our studies and our work are what give our lives security and meaning. We must learn that we are not primarily what we do, but that we are first and foremost children of God and disciples of Jesus. It is important that we learn to practically seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness with faith that God will care for our needs (Matt. 6:33).

Earlier in this chapter, I shared with you how as a student my studies became the lord of my life. I was ready to sacrifice almost anything, including opportunities to grow as a disciple, in order to get good grades. I had to learn to create proper boundaries and

expectations for my studies so that my first priority truly was knowing God and being transformed by Him.

Likewise, when it comes to work, Jesus' lordship compels us to consider the true spiritual and relational costs of the jobs to which we apply, of taking on a promotion at work, or of moving for a job. There are things that are more important to the disciple of Jesus than just a bigger paycheck.

Second, as disciples of Jesus, we must work in a way that honors our Lord. This means we will be good employees and students by working hard and doing our best to fulfill our responsibilities. It will mean honoring our bosses and teachers and being kind and loving colleagues. We will not cheat, steal, or deal dishonestly with others. Paul puts it this way: "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:23–24).

Finally, we need to make time for rest. Just as with work, rest and recreation are things God created for our good so that we would be able to celebrate life and God's creation. Rest also reminds us that it is God who provides for us and truly cares for our needs. God instructed His people to set aside one day each week for rest (Exod. 20:8–11). This reminds us both that we need rest and that work must not rule our lives.

At the same time, recreation must also come under Jesus' lordship. Rest is a gift, but recreation can easily begin to consume our time. As with all aspects of our lives, recreation is best enjoyed when Jesus is Lord over it and we follow His lead.

It might be helpful to think about one particular aspect of recreation as an example. Many of us spend hours on our phones and screens chatting, playing video games, watching videos, or scrolling through social media. This type of recreation has a special way of filling our time without us even noticing. I have heard many people say, "I felt like I just picked up my phone, and half a day had already gone by."

What is more, screens and life online can easily become addictive. Part of their attraction is that they keep us at a safe distance from people and allow us to communicate with others in a way that is convenient for us. One of their dangers is their capacity to isolate us from others. Likewise, there are many people who do things alone on their screens that they would not do if others were watching, especially if they remembered that Jesus, our Lord, sees everything.

- What does it mean practically for you to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness in your work and studies? What changes will you make so that they reflect Jesus' lordship?
- How do you rest, and what do you do for recreation? In what ways might Jesus' lordship shape or reshape these practices?
- Are there specific temptations you face in your recreation or use of technology (addictions, pornography, distraction, escapism)? How will Jesus' lordship change your choices and habits?

## IMAGE AND HEALTH

There is one last issue to address in this chapter. We live in an age and culture where we are bombarded with images and repeatedly told that a good life depends on being attractive, fit, and admired. As a result, many of us spend an unhealthy amount of time, money, and energy thinking about how we look, how we dress, and how others perceive us.

In contrast, Scripture calls us to give greater attention to the beauty of Christlike character: love, joy, peace, kindness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22–23). These are the qualities that will last long after our bodies grow old and tired. It would be a tragedy to spend our lives pursuing what will not last while neglecting what is eternally significant.

This does not mean that our bodies do not matter. They are a gift from God, and under Jesus' lordship they belong to Him: "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:19–20). Caring for our health through sleep, good food, and exercise is part of honoring Him, as is dressing appropriately and practicing good hygiene. We can fail to honor God by neglecting our bodies as easily as by idolizing them. What matters is why we care for them. My guess is that if we were truly honest with ourselves, much of our time spent in the gym or worrying about our appearance has little to do with seeking to please and serve God.

Scripture tells us that Jesus, the most significant person in history and the only one who lived in perfect obedience to the Father, "had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him" (Isa. 53:2). If Jesus truly is our Lord, then our attention, time, and energy will be given to becoming like Him – especially in the ways we love God and love the people around us.

- What does your concern for image and appearance reveal about what you believe is important in life and about where you find your value?
- Are there ways your attention to image and health could more fully reflect Jesus' lordship in your life?
- How will you practically make becoming truly beautiful – growing in love, kindness, gentleness, and the fruit of the Spirit – a priority in your life?

My hope in this chapter has been to help you live with Jesus as Lord of your life. Only under His lordship can we fully enjoy life – including our time, money, work, recreation, relationships, image, and health – as God intended. Then, and only then, will we truly know the way of eternal life.

Following Jesus is a lifelong journey. Along the way, we need to regularly examine our beliefs, actions, and priorities. It is good to ask ourselves, and our discipleship partners, whether we are truly following Christ and allowing Him to direct every area of life. We do this because we are often skilled at deceiving ourselves; we can say that we are following Jesus while still holding back parts of our lives from His lordship.

The good news is that Jesus looks at us with love. When we stray, He graciously calls us back. When He shows us what we lack, it is not to shame us, but to invite us to leave behind whatever keeps us from following Him. And when we return to Him and surrender our whole lives to His care, He can and will transform us into a palace. As Lewis put it, "He intends to come and live in it Himself."

- What other aspects of life did you include in your wheel? What would it mean for Jesus to be Lord in those areas?
- Summarize in your own words the message of this chapter. What is the connection between Jesus' lordship and Christian discipleship? How will you personally respond?

# RESPONDING TO THE WORD

## AN HONEST LOOK AT OUR TIME AND MONEY

Over the next fourteen days, track in detail how you spend your time and money. Write down the main activities you participate in each hour, as well as any purchases you make during the day. After the two weeks, look over your chart with your discipleship partner and discuss what you notice.

What does this reveal about your priorities? Are there things that surprise you? Are there things you would like to change so that your time and money more fully reflect your priorities and Jesus' lordship?

## SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

The spiritual disciplines of the church are given to help us become more aware of God's presence so that we can listen to Him and follow His lead. We cannot transform ourselves or save ourselves. We need God's grace and mercy. We need His leading. We need Him to show us the way to life and reveal the sinful ways within us that lead to death. The spiritual disciplines are one of the primary ways we learn to receive God's grace and follow His leading day by day.

In "Appendix 4: Spiritual Disciplines," you will find more information about this topic and detailed explanations of several common disciplines. As discipleship partners, choose one or two disciplines to focus on in the coming days and weeks – practices that will help you listen to Jesus' voice and follow Him more intentionally as Lord of your life. When you meet again, share your experience and what God has been teaching you.

# PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER

As you have thought about Jesus' lordship in this chapter, what is one next step you want to take? Share this with your discipleship partner. Share also any other concerns or situations in your life that you would like prayer for in the days to come. After sharing with one another, pray for each other. Ask God to be Lord over every area of your life and to give you the courage to leave everything to follow Him. Continue your plan to pray for each other regularly until your next meeting.

*Heavenly Father, we thank You that You look at us and love us. We are also grateful that You truly desire us to experience eternal life with You. Forgive us for believing and living as if anything else could give us what we are seeking. Help us once again to follow You as Lord over every area of our lives. We want to be people who listen to Your voice and trust Your ways. Complete Your work in us so that we would become the people You always intended us to be, for Your glory. AMEN.*

## FOR FURTHER STUDY:

To look deeper into the subject of Jesus' lordship, study the following passages:

**Matthew 7:13–27**: Jesus' closing words in the Sermon on the Mount, including the narrow way, those who say "Lord, Lord," and the wise and foolish builders.
**Genesis 22**: Abraham as an example of obedience, willing to give up what he loved most.
**1 Samuel 15**: Saul as an example of disobedience, obeying only in part.

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[1] C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 174. Lewis introduces this image as a parable borrowed from George MacDonald.

[2] We see a similar example when Elijah calls Elisha to follow him (1 Kings 19:19–21). Elisha slaughters his oxen, boils their meat using the yokes for fuel, and gives it to the people. This is an act of commitment to follow his new teacher. Jesus' first disciples do likewise when He calls them, leaving their nets and their families behind in order to follow Him (Mark 1:16–20). The call to this man is the same, except that he is unwilling to part with his many things.

[3] As Israel entered the land, God warned His people not to intermarry with the surrounding nations, "for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods" (Deut. 7:3–4; see also Josh. 23:12–13). The concern was worship, not ethnicity. Solomon's wives "turned away his heart after other gods" (1 Kings 11:4), and Nehemiah later points to Solomon as a warning (Neh. 13:23–27). In the New Testament, Paul instructs believers to marry "only in the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:39).