

Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life. And we've said before, a helpful way to reframe that is that he basically says, there is a way, the way of the master.

And if you will follow that way, the way that Jesus said that we could live, you will find that it is true. There is a way that you can follow that Jesus teaches and you will find that it is true on that way and it produces life.

There is a way that is true that produces life. And this is what Christianity is. It is a life, a flourishing life following Jesus.

It is a life lived both individually, obviously, but also collectively.

And in the same way that our bodies, living bodies have a need for inputs and outputs, the spiritual lives that we have in Christ, because the Spirit has made us alive in Christ through faith and repentance, we need to nourish our physical bodies and

our spiritual bodies. I wonder, did anyone get a little bit dehydrated yesterday or the day before? Anyone find that the heat got to them? Well, we have a need, and the need is water.

As human beings, our bodies have made up of about 60% water. Every cell, tissue, and organ depends on water. When we don't get enough water, the body starts a kind of orderly shutdown.

And it starts with mild dehydration. I'm sure we've all experienced it. The body loses fluid through sweat and breathing and urine, and blood volume drops slightly.

The brain has this thirst center, apparently. It's called the hypothalamus. And it notices changes in blood concentration.

There's more salt and less water. And so the body releases an antidiuretic hormone right at the start with the beginning of a bit of dehydration. And it says to the kidneys, do not produce any more urine.

Hold on to water. And so then if you don't do anything about it, don't give the body what it needs, water, you move to moderate dehydration, which is 3 to 5% body weight loss. And because there's less water in the blood stream, the blood is thicker.

And the heart has to work harder to pump and blood pressure may begin to drop. And we can probably be in there before we can get a bit dizzy and there's dry skin, reduced sweat, poor concentration.

Sorry if you hate this medical stuff, but just cover your ears just for a sec more. And then there's the third stage which is called severe dehydration, loss of up to 10% body weight. Blood volume is now seriously reduced.

Blood pressure drops in some cases dangerously. The body clamps down on blood flow to non-essential areas to protect the brain and the heart. And tissues starve of oxygen and nutrients.

This is why it's not good when you don't look after your water intake and you start really feeling sick. Electrolytes like sodium and potassium become imbalanced, which disrupts nerve and muscle function, including the heart.

At this stage, people are experiencing confusion, irritability, disorientation. And the final stage, there's only three stages until it gets really bad, is organ failure and collapse.

So, looking after our water intake on very hot days is very important. It can actually lead to something that can kill us.

Okay, so why have I spent an inordinate amount of time explaining dehydration in a probably fairly poor way? Because the water needs, the body needs water to survive. Amen.

Is this essential? And I would put it to you that in our spiritual lives, there are some things that we need to survive as much as water for the physical. What would that be?

Three thoughts. I think there's probably more than three, but three things that we need to stay alive spiritually and to thrive in this life that Jesus has given us. They are the Word of God, fellowship and prayer.

The Word of God, fellowship and prayer. Jesus said, let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. He even says it, there is a living water that sustains the spiritual human.

The church is a body, and we've celebrated that at communion, and we need to be as a body, well hydrated on the word, community and prayer.

When Jesus lived his perfect life, and then died on the cross, rose again from the dead, he turned up amongst his disciples for 40 days, then ascended to heaven, and he sent his Holy Spirit back at Pentecost, as he promised.

The early church was born. And the early church is a wonderful group to look back at. If you're a brand new Christian, we often talk about the first Christians as the early church.

And we love to go back and think, what did they do at the start in that pure expression of life as a group of believers? Well, Richard read for us the gold standard of community for the early church.

Let me read it to you again, because it's so important. This early group of Christians following the life that Jesus gave to them, they devoted themselves to the Apostles teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the Apostles. All of the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

Every day, they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with gladness and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people.

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. What a beautiful picture of community, amen. It's just an amazing scene.

They devoted themselves to the Apostles' teachings. Now, this is like the live word of God coming straight to them. It's like they've got the New Testament, but it's being delivered live.

So essential ingredient number one, the word of God. We need the word of God, like water. On page 84 of our book, if you have it there with you, I wanted to read a few of the scriptures that we quoted in the book.

2 Timothy 3, all scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Psalm 119 says your word is a lamp unto my feet, a light on my path. Nothing is more important to a believer than the word of God. What do you reckon?

There is nothing more important. Now, you could argue back, well, surely the Holy Spirit is the most important. He's the one who makes us regenerated, born again.

And that would be so true. Like, you can't be a Christian without the Holy Spirit.

But if you don't have the word of God, you just have the guidance internally and the promptings of the Holy Spirit without the clarity of the word of God to confirm those promptings.

And this has been a problem throughout the centuries when people don't have the word of God. They can get into theological error.

We learn from the Bible about the big story, the controlling narrative that God has been doing through Old and New Testaments and through the history of the last 2000 years. And God's word teaches us about who God is and what he's like, doesn't it?

It's been said that the most important thing you could ever learn is what God is like. If we don't know what God is like, then we're just fumbling around in our lives. But if we can know what he's like, his character is like, everything changes.

On page 84 and 85, we write, Spending time in the Bible regularly strengthens our faith, helps us discern truth from deception, and equips us to live in a way that honours God.

I mentioned before that we are a body, the body of Christ, and we can be healthy or unhealthy. And I've always found it really quite surprising how much spiritual life is like physical life.

And physical health, when you think about exercise and looking after yourself, the correlation is amazing with spiritual life.

So if you wanted to be healthy and have some level of longevity, as much as you can control in our lives, especially as we get a bit older, it's pretty clear what you need now, and it's a few things.

Doctors, medical professionals in various areas, would say doing some sort of steady state cardio is a good thing. Anyone agree? Have you been told that?

Steady state cardio. And that's just doing exercise where your heart rate is not too high. But do it for half an hour or 45 minutes, even an hour.

It's called zone 2 cardio. It's a heart rate that you could talk to someone on the phone while you're doing. That's really good for your health.

But people will say, that's not all you want to do. You want to do some bursts of exercise that take your heart rate a bit higher. And they call it HIIT training, high intensity interval training.

And so you might do 3 minutes of exercise. It's a little bit more vigorous. And then you have 3 minutes off, and then you have 3 minutes on it.

And so it's a different type of training. Your heart rate is higher and you have a brief rest. And so it's increasing your lung capacity, what they call your VO2 max.

But then people will also say, but that's not enough. What you really should be doing is some resistance training for your bone density and your muscles. So you should lift some weights, and you might do that with repetitions of 15 to 20.

A higher repetition will do something different to strength training, which is also good for all of us. And it might be 2 reps to 5 reps. Now again, why on earth am I going on about all of this?

It's because how we read the Bible varies. Have you found that in your life? There are different ways to do exercise that are very beneficial for us.

In fact, more beneficial when you do a broad spectrum of types of exercise. And I would put it to you this morning, reading the Bible is the same.

In January, some of us will start a pretty challenging attempt at reading the Bible en masse in large amounts of volume. We're talking about reading Matthew in one week, and then Mark the next week, Luke the next week, and then John the next week.

So the whole Gospels in one month, are you going to have a commentary wading through every verse doing that? No. But in a month, you will have a scope that you've never had before of the Gospels.

Are you with me? That's a bit like Zone 2 training, isn't it? You're just covering a lot of ground, like doing a jog or a walk for a long period.

There's a lot of benefit that you can get from that, but there's also so much benefit in having a commentary and reading just a chapter and then trying to work out, what does that mean?

Let me understand the context and what people have thought that that means from various times in history. So there's long slabs of reading, there's deeper study. There's also meditative reading of the scriptures, isn't there?

Have you done that? Will you say, I can't think of a scripture, I've gone completely blank, For God so loved the world, that he gave his only son.

And just to sit in that, that whosoever would believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life and let that be the one scripture, the one verse you sit in for an hour, meditative, spending time in the word.

I believe there's one further type of scripture reading that's the most important of all. What do you reckon that is?

Reading together would be a good one, it is a good one, but I would say the most important type of Bible reading we can do for health is memorization. Scripture memorization.

King David said, I have hidden God's word in my heart so that I will not sin against him. There's nothing more important than actually putting the word of God inside of us, amen?

So that we remember it, and you can pull it out, it's a sword, the sword of the spirit, from your own scabbard and say this, that's what Jesus did in the temptation, isn't it? He used the word of God. I mean, that's just phenomenal.

When Jesus represented humanity completely, and he was attacked by the devil in the desert, he responded with the word of God. We need to know the word of God. It's so important.

The next aspect that this gold standard passage talks about is, fellowship. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship to the breaking of bread.

On page 87 of the book, we write this, being part of a church community provides encouragement, accountability and opportunities to serve. It reminds us that we're not alone.

When we worship together, study the Bible and support one another, we experience the love of Christ in deeper ways. If you go back, the beginning of this course, we said, there's a God who is good and he created everything.

And what he created is amazing, it's good. And if you go back and think about the first chapters of Genesis, there was one aspect of creation, the first aspect of creation that God said was not good. Do you remember what that is?

Being alone, yeah. Adam was created and it was good, but he needed a friend, he needed a mate. And then woman was created and God said, this is very good.

God had created community. We need community like we need water. Do you think that's a fair statement?

We need community. We need fellowship. I watched my mum, who has passed away now, but she wasn't too bad in her health.

She was in a home, but in a self-care part of a place down at Worrywood. And then COVID hit. And she didn't see people much at all for two years.

And then she had some health issues that stopped her seeing people even more, isolated her more. She had about four years of profound isolation. And I just watched her go downhill.

Her health, mental health, physical health, just shocking. It's because we need people. Fellowship is so important.

Hebrews chapter 10 says, let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another.



And all the more, as you see the day approaching, we are designed to spur one another on. Amen? We really are.

We need each other. Because we lose heart. Second Corinthians.

By ourselves, we lose motivation, we lose direction, we become vulnerable. If you've become a Christian in this course, you would have heard Ben mention last week that there is a course to keep. There's a course to keep.

And sometimes we can lose our way and start heading more towards the flesh path, rather than the spirit path, the self-directed path, rather than the Word of God-directed path. People, friends in the Lord, help us get back on track.

The Bible says, and we should listen to what the Bible says, the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for who he may devour. And he's looking for stragglers. Stragglers.

You know, the other incredible thing about community is the Spirit of God gives us special abilities, doesn't he?

He produces fruit in our lives, but he also gives us, Romans 12 talks about it, 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 talk about it, spiritual abilities, gifts, they're called.

Things like encouragement, giving, leadership, healing, faith, helps, shepherding, discernment, words of knowledge, all sorts of spiritual enablements. They're not for you and I to enjoy at home. They're for us to share, aren't they?

With each other. We're designed for community. We're designed for communion.

We're designed for fellowship. And we're enabled with spiritual abilities to bless one another so that we can be the best version of ourselves as individuals and also together in community.

The early church met together daily for mutual encouragement. They did fellowship. They came under the word of the Lord, under the word of God, and they prayed together daily.

They engaged with the Lord in prayer. On page 81 of the book, we write, prayer is not a religious ritual. It is a conversation with God.

It's the way we draw near to Him, express our hearts and hear His voice. What do you reckon about this line that I wrote? Do you think it's fair to say, prayer is simultaneously the most simple, obvious, rudimentary part of the Christian life?

And the most mysterious, curious, complex and advanced aspect? Would anyone agree? It's both and, isn't it?

Prayer is chatting to the Lord as you go on about your business. Chatting to the Lord, but it's also so much more. A helpful framework for prayer, it's in the book, is ACTS, acts.

I hope you're familiar with it. A stands for adoration. Why would we need to have some sort of formula for prayer?

It's because often we come to prayer, and if we don't mature, we will do this all our lives. Prayer is a shopping list. Full stop.

Prayer is a shopping list. We just come to God and say, Hey, God, you're a good provider. Can you help me out here?

Time to pray again. God, can you help me? Just take this on.

Try this on. I'm going to pray in ACTS. So I'm going to start with adoration.

I'm just going to say what's true about God in His greatness. And often I'll use scripture to help me say it well. Adoration.

And then move to see. Confession. Own up to our failures.

Confess sin to God. Sometimes the devil gets us with his fiery arrows, doesn't he? Anyone know that feeling?

You know what's great to do when the devil gets you? Oh, so he gets you with a fiery arrow. You fall with temptation.

Pull it out and go, good shot. It's OK to say good shot. He's pretty good at what he does.

And then say, I am covered by the blood of Christ. Lord Jesus, thank you for covering me with your blood. And I know you forgive me.

You've made me a saint, just not a sinner alone. And so we confess our sins. We own up when we mess up.

T stands for thanksgiving. Can you see supplication is being pushed to the end? We thank the Lord for all He's done.

It puts us in a posture of gratefulness, of humility. And then we come to S, supplication. We say, Lord, I've got a shopping list.

And He says, give it to me. I'd love to hear what you need. That's why I'm here.

I'm here to help you. When Jesus was with His disciples, remember they said, Lord, teach us how to pray. How do we do this thing that you do all the time?

And He says, this is how you should pray. And it's on page 80 of our book. This is how you should pray.

And can I put this to you? This is all the only framework you'll ever need if you want just one simple one. Pray these six aspects.

The Father's character. Pray into the Father's character. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Start off by just saying, God, I'm not holy, but you are. And your character is so wonderful. Thank you, God, for who you are.

Your character. And then pray Father's kingdom. That's what Jesus said.

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We pray for the kingdom of the Father to come. Injustice and eternal reign.

His goodness, his plans to be unleashed. And then you move into the supplication. Give us this day our daily bread.

We pray for the Father's provision. Because he's a provider. We acknowledge that all we have comes from him.

And we ask him for the things we need. And then we're told to pray, forgive us our debts. As we also have forgiven our debtors.

And we pray for the Father's forgiveness. We thank him for it. And then Jesus says, lead us not into temptation.

So we pray for the Father's guidance. His word is a lamp unto our feet. And then we pray, deliver us from the evil one.

We ask for the Father's protection. It's a powerful way to frame your prayers. Jesus taught a lot on prayer, didn't he?

He taught about knocking and not giving up, being resilient, being persistent. People often ask, how do I pray? What do I pray for?

I don't know how to pray. You know the best thing you can do when you're confused or not sure whether you're a good prayer? What do you reckon it is?

Just pray. Why would praying be good for you? Proximity to the Spirit, to God is always good.

Just pray. Just pray. A wise man once said to me, if you're praying for the wrong things, you can really trust Jesus.

He'll help you pray for the right things. So pray for the wrong things. And as we do, God, who is good and gracious and loves us so much, will just gently guide us to pray for the right things.

And prayer involves joy-filled praise, doesn't it? It's what they did. And it involves tearful lament.

Joy-filled praise sometimes, tearful lament on other occasions. Prayer is the safest place to bring your honest, most genuine and authentic self. Amen?

Prayer is not a performance. It is meant to be the air we breathe. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship and to breaking of bread into prayer.

And out of that context, everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed. God met them and did the miraculous. And the believers were together and had everything in common.

They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day, they met together, bonding in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with gladness and sincere hearts.

There was a gratitude attitude. Praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And there was evangelism that was effective.

The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. The communion of the saints was spirit-filled and dangerous and dynamic.

If you have declared that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you are saved, a new creation and part of the body of Christ. Can I encourage you to be healthy? Don't give up meeting together with the saints.

Don't neglect the water of the word, the fellowship of the saints, the life of the spirit found in prayer.

Today's message is all about practical stuff. We've worked through the gospel and we've come to the sixth talk and this is really practical. And the first person that came to my mind is someone who is intensely intentional, is Kathleen.

And it's a different testimony today. Kathleen's going to come up and tell us about how she orders her week to try to be the healthiest version of her spiritual self. Would you give Kathleen a warm welcome?

Hello, I'm Kathleen and today I'm going to share my story with you.

So, I've divided it into three parts, the before, before I realized that I needed spiritual disciplines in my life. There's the realization part, how it all came together, and an example I'm currently doing.

Since I've been going to church, which is all my life, I've been hearing about the good habits of a Christian. Pray, read the Bible, attend church and serve.

I never found it difficult to set habits in my life, particularly in my professional life, but in my Christian life, I did. I really did. I once spent almost an entire year without reading the Bible.

I was just not interested. I didn't even touch it. And as a result, I was not bearing much fruit and I was getting really frustrated about it.

The realization part started in my late 20s, mainly through a lot of reading. I love reading and I was reading a lot on two topics mainly, leadership and habit formation.

And it became increasingly clear that I had inevitably become the sum of the habits I had built. I was what I repeatedly did, which was not reading the word of God, not doing all the things that we just heard today. And it was really getting at me.

And I realized that as we've heard so many times, I was not being a disciple or an apprentice, as we've learned in our church. I was happy to say I'm a Christian, but then nothing, a whole lot of nothing.

So I was doing a lot of good things though, but not aiming to live the good life according to everything Jesus teaches us in the Sermon on the Mount.

The last devotion of the Daily Sevens of the Sermon on the Mount starts with those words, here, putting into practice is building on a rock, not on sand. So it was not a choice that I had there. I really needed to be spiritually transformed.

I needed to build an intentional set of habits that resonated first with how God made me and that would reframe my spirit and my mind. Effort is required to be an apprentice, is a lesson I learnt.

And as we heard several times, grace is not opposed to effort, but it is opposed to earning. And in the before part, in the start of the realization, I was trying to earn my way to it. And it was just not working.

So, the first thing I did, now we come to the now, was to list all the times in my life that I call dead time, where I was doing things like washing the dishes, sitting on the train, walking home, getting ready for work.

I calculated how long it took me to do all those things, roughly, right until the moment I stepped into the office. I also started to plan my night routines because I realized how I ended my nights directly impacted how I started my mornings.

I continually pray about this as the purpose really needs to be character transformation and not self-satisfaction. With time, a lot of time, these habits started to impact the choices I made.

They started to frame my character and then be outsourced to my body and I could feel them becoming a little bit automatic. But for this to continue, I need to put to death my old self every day by practicing.

So after years and years of trial and error, here is an example I currently do. I have an IKEA food trolley next to my bed. It's three stories.

On the second shelf is my Bible and on the third is my current book. Both are visible. I have a really pretty Bible and easy to reach.

And one of the first rules of habit formation is make it easy and visible. So that's how I do it. I wake up every day at 6 a.m.

Between 6 and 6.20 is my first dead time, which is during which I get ready. During that time, I listen to a leadership theme talk, Bible project, Bible app.

Then when I have my breakfast, I usually watch an apologetics video or sometimes Bible project, something similar. And the moment I sit on the train, I read my current book until St. Leonard Station.



Then I close my eyes to just be still or pray or just screen free. When I arrive at work, if I don't teach period one, I'm a teacher if you don't know, I do a daily service before 8 a.m.

If I do teach period one, I do it in period two or recess, just as soon as possible in the morning. And I just want to say this system, it may not resonate with you and doesn't have to essentially.

The point is find out what works for you according to how fearfully and wonderfully God made you.

So, the other thing I realized is how essential, non-negotiable, it is to be part of an environment, of a community like ours that sustains these disciplines.

And in the first part of the realization process of my story, I had to say goodbye to some friendships. It was really hard, but they were keeping me off course, and I wanted to stay on course.

So, the result of all of this is now, even though it's still difficult, I find it easier to talk about Jesus. I was able to start a Daily Sevens at my school, and we're doing another one next year, which is really exciting.

I started quoting the devotions from the Daily Sevens without meaning to, and more opportunities to minister, especially with the boys that I teach, came up.

And perfection here, and that was something I needed to say to myself, is neither the aim, it's more about the compound effect of all those disciplines and how they continually bring me closer to Jesus.

And I'll end with this, it was the biggest realization for me is, now when I repent, when I turn my mind towards God again, I have something to fall back on, to help me keep the course. So that's my story, and I hope you find it helpful.

Did you hear what she said? We've been fearfully and wonderfully made, and we can all find our best way of growing as followers of Jesus. That's what we're talking about.

And the Word of God will play a part in that, and certainly prayer will play a part, and community, and with community comes this ability to serve, doesn't it?

When you get close to other people, you can do things, you give your life away, and in doing that, we become more and more like Jesus. So let me pray to finish, and the band's going to come up and finish off, lead us in a couple of songs.

Lord Holy Spirit, we thank you that you are with us, you are the Spirit of Jesus, and you enable us to live the life that He said we could live. We thank you for the gift of the Word of God, a lamp for our feet. It is such a gift, such a privilege.

We're sorry we neglected. Would you fire us up, give us a fresh revelation, fresh eyes to see the wonders of the Word of God. Lord, help us enjoy the fellowship of the saints.

Help us find the encouragement that we need, that we would not lose heart. Help us be spurred on and spur others on. And Lord, we thank you for your willingness to join us in prayer at any moment.

It's the greatest privilege that we could ever imagine to commune with the living God. And so we thank you for the way you have designed us to be fully human. Help us follow that way that is true, that gives life in the name of Jesus, I pray.

Amen.