



Vision and Commitment 2018  
A year to focus on discipleship

Every day, in  
everything  
&  
everywhere

## Discipleship Series Sermon - Putting First (Prioritising)

**Bible Reading:** Mark 6:45–46 and Luke 10:38–42 (supporting text)

**Main Point:** Jesus made time to be with his Father and his ministry was all the richer because of it.

**Intended Response:** To encourage people to spend more time in God's presence, if they don't already do so, and to be transformed by this time as disciples.

### Introduction

Why should we spend time alone with God? Why is meeting with God in the secret place so important? Until we gain an understanding of the immense value and availability of encountering God, we will never consistently engage in this foundational, vital practice. As we discover God's heart to meet with us in order that we might experience the depths of his love, I pray that your life would be marked by a new grace to consistently and powerfully encounter the living God.

We see, in the busyness of life and ministry that Jesus prioritises time with the Father (Mark 6:45-46). He has to dismiss the people. He knows he doesn't have enough to give without taking time to replenish his spirit. He takes time, sets himself apart, and receives from the Father what no one else can give him.

### Context

Jesus has been on an emotional rollercoaster - from being rejected in his home town and finding frustrating blockages in his ministry (Mark 6:4) to having a really fruitful time in ministry of empowering and equipping the disciples to go out (vv 7-13).

He then hears the news of the death of his cousin John the Baptist (v 27), the person who understands most what it feels like to be called for such a time as this. Jesus is then swamped by thousands of people who are spiritually and physically hungry (vv 33-44).

- In **verse 45** Jesus tells the disciples to get into the boat, away from the crowds, reiterating his initial plan to give them a chance to be alone and rest (v 31). They obey. The difficulties that they experience on the sea are not of their own making but stem from their compliance with Jesus' command.





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- In **verse 46** after Jesus has sent the multitudes away, he goes by himself to pray. The mountainside location signals the importance of this moment. He knows that this time of solitude is key and that prayer is vital to his overall mission.

What was it like when Jesus walked on the water just after this? Was he ‘skipping’ over the waves, energised by time with his Father? Were the storm waves parted around him as he walked calmly through peaceful waters in the middle of it all? Was he fiercely fighting and battling his way victoriously through the treacherous waters? Whatever it looked like, this time with the Father gave Jesus all he needed to move forward from an emotionally and spiritually exhausting season.

## Key Headings

### Jesus is focused

- Of course we can meet with God anywhere, but Jesus demonstrates the need to set aside time for focused, dedicated prayer. He goes up on the mountainside, where he won’t be disturbed. He gets away from it all: the people, the burdens, the distractions.
- He sets a specific time, and a specific place, to do a specific task. It is all about meeting with his Father. What Martha missed, and Mary grasped with both hands, was an opportunity to set aside distraction and focus only on the ‘one thing’ that was needed.

### Jesus needed to pray alone

- Jesus sent his disciples on ahead, and dismissed the crowds. He got away from any sense that this was all about him and what he could do, away from adoring fans or booing enemies.
- It’s in that personal time with God that he reminds us who we are, and who he is, and the other voices fade away as we learn his truth. We’re designed to live and work and minister in community. Praying together is precious, and a beautiful way to get to know each other’s hearts and to spur each other on.
- There also need to be times, when it comes down to it, where it is just us and Jesus. These often become the most precious times. We can’t rely on others for our relationship with God. He invites us into a level of intimacy that only comes from one-on-one time together.
- ‘There are some things you cannot get in public; you must press in for them in private’ (Banning Liebscher).

### Transformed by time in the presence of God

- Martha is different when we next encounter her after Lazarus has died. She runs straight to Jesus, eager to have deep, frank conversation with him (John 11:20).





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Time with Jesus has shown her his power to transform lives, and she focuses on that, rather than being 'worried and upset about many things' (Luke 10:41).

- For Jesus, this time away with the Father is vital in helping him to mourn his cousin healthily and process the struggles he has been working through, recharging and revitalising him as he continues his ministry.
- It's one thing to 'say your prayers', it's another thing to wait on God for him to show up and see what he wants to say or do.

## Conclusion

So often, life requires that we meet with God 'on the run'. Ask the congregation what time in their week they set aside for devoted, undistracted connection with Jesus. Sometimes we are in danger of developing a faith that relies on other people's relationship with Jesus to survive. How do they stand when it's just the two of them together? Encourage them to take some time in the coming week to spend time in private personal prayer and ask Jesus what he wants to show them and how he wants to take their relationship to deeper levels.

## Application

Do they have somewhere special (favourite armchair, bench in the garden, coffee shop, prayer room, sanctuary, walk in nature - beach, forest, mountain, etc) where they like to meet with Jesus? Is it time for a visit?

Have they been 'saying your prayers' rather than holding out for a real two-way relationship? Can they look back over their prayer life and see how time in the presence of God has changed them?

