

October 4, 2026—“*Do What Jesus Did*”

I love that we’re launching into this fall season by recalibrating around the term “apprenticing” to Jesus. Because even if we’re clear on Jesus’ core invitation to *follow Him*, the word “follow” can mean all kinds of things. We can simply click a button and consider ourselves following. Or, like a groupie, we can follow *around* a person—but both of those approaches are far more passive and mindless than the active, intentional process of apprenticing. Apprenticing ultimately moves people to a finish line of sorts, through the four stages of I-do-you-watch, I-do-you-help, you-do-I-help, and you-do-I-watch, to get someone actually *doing* what the person they’re apprenticing under is capable of and teaching them to actually *do*. To apprentice isn’t just academic or philosophical—it’s not just learning *about* someone—it’s about *doing* what they can do.

But for people like you and I today, isn’t that what makes the journey of apprenticing to Jesus the most challenging? For some of us, it may be impossible to imagine what Jesus Himself would do, if He were us, living in our body, in our day and time. In fact, recently on CBC’s Q with Tom Power, Canadian actor and playwright Ins Choi mused about this through a song they wrote and sang. Check [this](#) out!

For others, who might find ourselves a little more familiar with what Jesus did, archived in the four biographical accounts of His life called the Gospels, it may be less of an issue of *imagination* and more an issue of *intimidation*. Because when we think of Jesus Himself, what comes to mind are miracles like feeding the five thousand, walking on water, and bringing dead friends back to life. It can feel like we’ll only get as close to actually apprenticing to Jesus as a lightning bug gets to lightning—we’re not Jesus!

And yet, doing what Jesus did was precisely His invitation—and *expectation*—of those who would choose to follow Him. Jesus described it this way in John chapter 14:

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

We've been celebrating the all-inclusive invitation to apprentice that Jesus offered to anyone and everyone—to *whoever*—but now, that whoever is expected, not only to do what Jesus did, but to do *greater things* than Jesus had been doing in His lifetime!

(At a technical level, what Jesus is doing here is foreshadowing the impact of the Holy Spirit, whom He'd make available through His miraculous resurrection. As He says, "because He was going to the Father..." the living Spirit of God would become available to empower any and all believers with the same power that enabled Jesus).

But that doesn't help us sort out the idea that people like us would do what Jesus did—especially if what comes to mind that Jesus did was feed five thousand, walk on water, bring dead friends back to life and leap tall buildings with a single bound! Since we're not Jesus, how could we possibly get to the point of doing what Jesus did?

To me, what's critical at this point is to distinguish between the *core purpose* of what Jesus came to do and some of the *sensational outcomes* of His life and work. What Jesus came to do *intentionally* and what happened *sensationally* are two different things. And when it came to what He came to do, we've delivered countless messages on this: *He came to bring love to life*. As a God who *is* love, Jesus came to *reveal* what God is like, through *re-framing* a message, *modeling* that love through His sinless life and sacrificial death, and *enabling* His Holy Spirit to empower that life of love in others.

And, when you start to see the life of Jesus through the lens of love, you can see that there were three very specific ways in which Jesus brought God's love to life—three commitments in His lifestyle that I believe He intended for every apprentice of His to do.

The first thing that Jesus was constantly doing was **making space for love** by fostering connection with people. And His favourite way to make space for love was through the superpower of hospitality, and the sacred space that shared meals created. This might seem odd, considering Jesus was unhoused and lived a nomadic life, but He had a way of leveraging this power of hospitality even without a home of His own. Think about the time a tax collector named Zacchaeus was checking Him out—and as a Jeff Lockyer miniature-sized person, had to climb a tree just to get a look. Luke 19 reads:

When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."

Jesus believed so deeply in the superpower of hospitality and the sacred space that shared meals created that He invited Himself to other people's houses to enjoy it!

This is something every single one of us can do—even if we don't have a home or space of our own to invite people to, and even if our top spiritual gifts don't include hospitality. If we will appreciate the way shared meals and unhurried time opens the door to below-the-surface conversation that enables love to flow—and if we can be intentional enough to proactively structure enough of our regular rhythm to incorporate it—we can create similar kinds of sacred space and experience a similar dynamic of the superpower of hospitality in our lives too. If you don't have a home of your own, invite yourself to someone else's! If you don't have the money to host a huge meal, go out for coffee—or just go for a walk with someone. You can create the space for love to flow!

Now, let's appreciate that when you make that kind of unhurried space, love flowing is now possible—but not automatic. This is why Jesus supplemented the superpower of hospitality by **speaking messages of love**. In Zacchaeus' case, for example, it was the re-framing of how a life with God worked—from a rules-based approach (where you had to obey the Jewish law perfectly to be accepted) to a grace-based approach of receiving God's undeserved favour, just because He loves you!

That's how people so radically responded to Jesus—because of the radical message of love He articulated. Whether He was formally preaching, responding to questions, or simply encouraging someone He met, core to Jesus' purpose of bringing love to life was re-framing a life with God around what He called a “new command”:

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

Once space for connection had been created, Jesus used words to articulate the love God had for people and the life of love He was inviting people to experience personally.

And again, what's important for us to appreciate in this day and age is that we don't need to be the world's greatest preacher in order to do this. For sure, we need to orient ourselves to the love-based message of Jesus (rather than articulating some kind of shame-based, or guilt-based, or fear-based message about God). But once we're clear on that ourselves, that message of love can be articulated in so many ways.

Maybe for you—once you've created space for love to flow—it's asking deeper-than surface questions, just caring about how someone's doing. Maybe it's providing encouragement or pointing out strengths you see in someone. Maybe it's a text or email or card or sticky note—to just let someone know they're loved. You can do this!

And then—looking back at the life of Jesus Himself—we see that one of the things He was constantly doing was backing up His verbal message of love by **visibly demonstrating love**, through extending compassion and justice to people around Him.

We talk a lot about that around here—that Jesus centred those society tended to push to the margins—and beyond creating space with them and articulating a unique message to them, He provided a practical care and support to those who needed it most. And the practicality of expressing love in concrete ways was His hope for every would-be follower of His. Our world often refers to this as “being a Good Samaritan”, that originates from a parable Jesus once told about a person who’d been robbed and left half-dead, whom religious types crossed to the other side of the street to avoid. But in this story, a Samaritan (someone of a background despised by first-century Jewish people) not only saw the person in need, but approached them, handled them, supported them, addressed their needs, and followed up with them. Referring back to the Greatest Commandment to love your neighbour, Jesus then asked His hearers:

Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

One of the best ways to do what Jesus did is to centre those He centred and intentionally get up-close and personal with people on our society’s margins. Around here, we support that through enabling participation in each of our Southridge location’s Anchor Causes—our collective initiatives of compassion and justice. To learn what it could look like to participate in your location’s Anchor Cause, sign up in your lobby today for your upcoming orientation event—to discover how you can do this too!

Here's the thing I want us all to appreciate today: Jesus envisioned apprentices of His to do what He did, and Jesus died and rose again to enable and empower apprentices of His to do what He did. But Jesus' expectation that we'd do "greater things than Him" wasn't from the perspective of *more extraordinary* things than feeding five thousand, walking on water, or bringing dead friends back to life—it was "greater" in the sense of *more expanded* love being brought to life. This is how we understand the purpose of our community collectively as well, where the original word for church, *ecclesia*, means "assembly, we understand that definition not to mean the assembly of people to an event or gathering, but the assembly of people into a more collective expression of love. To be the church is to bring Jesus' love to life—all together!

And while not impossible, it does take out-of-the-ordinary intentionality and proactivity to do the kinds of things that Jesus did in a culture whose values tend to flow in the opposite direction. It takes intentional organization and structure to leverage the superpower of hospitality, to carve out sacred spaces in our busy calendars for love to flow. It takes intentional deliberacy and courage to ensure those spaces get filled with deeper-than surface conversation—questions, empathies, challenges and encouragements—that let Jesus' message of love register in people's hearts. And it takes intentional effort and willingness to position ourselves in up-close-and-personal environments with people society prefers to marginalize—resisting society's values of comfort and status—to let go of and leverage our privilege to elevate someone else's.

It's not out of this world, but it is out of the ordinary to do what Jesus did. This is why He gave us His living Spirit to rely on as a resource, and why doing what Jesus did is step three—flowing out of a life of *being with* Jesus and *becoming like* Jesus first.

But here's the thing about that thing (that you can actually do what Jesus did, and increasingly bring His love to life, through making space for love, speaking messages of love, and visibly demonstrating love): when that begins to happen—structurally, courageously, sacrificially—something else starts happening as well.

We've seen this around here for years: when Jesus' love starts to come to life, people who've been chronically lonely find lasting acceptance, belonging, and friendship. People who've been ignored become respected citizens of society. People ravaged by addiction find unconditional support and accompaniment that, at times, helps set them free. People who've felt they need to live life in a closet can be embraced and thrive as their true selves. People whose money-each-month math doesn't work find themselves fed. People who've been chronically homeless find and experience stable housing. And in all these cases, people find the Person of Jesus as real and His love just as transformationally and miraculously powerful as it was 2,000 years ago. When you focus on the intentional, you actually start to experience the sensational. This is why the book of Acts—the sequel to Luke—begins this way:

In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

The Gospel of Luke described all that Jesus *began* to do. The book of Acts is an account of what Jesus *continued* to do, because apprentices of His lived in a way that intentionally brought His love to life. They intentionally made space, spoke messages, and demonstrated love, in ways where the intentional led to sensational outcomes.

That can continue today, if apprentices will continue to do what Jesus did!