

Vision Month - Do what Jesus did - Year 3

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Date: 06 October 2024

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everybody. Time flies by, doesn't it? This is the 3rd October in this building. And I know that because this is the third year of the vision purpose statement of the church, the objectives that we unite around.

They're written on the back wall. As followers of Jesus Christ, we unite under three objectives, to be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what Jesus did.

So this is the beginning of the third year, and therefore the third part of that vision statement, the focus on doing what Jesus did. And so the scriptural passage that we have that will come on the screen is from Matthew 11, verses 28 to 30.

And it's become a nice habit. We'll read it together. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

[1 : 18] For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Amen. The Lord will bless to us the reading of his word. Now, it's very common to hear Christians say, well, of course, I'm not Jesus, and I can't do what Jesus did.

Now, in one sense, I understand that statement, because our Lord Jesus Christ is sinless, and perfect, and very God of very God, and yet, in his incarnation, became a man and dwelt for a while among us.

But it is simply not the New Testament vision to say, well, I'm not Jesus, and therefore you can't expect me to be perfect. Actually, the New Testament vision of the life that we have in Christ is the very opposite of that.

Because Jesus is in you, your heavenly Father calls you to be perfect just as he is perfect. And then you say, but that's impossible. It is impossible, this side of heaven, but it is still your aspiration. It is still to be your goal, your ambition, to become like Jesus by being with Jesus and then learning to do what Jesus did.

[2 : 46] And as we do so, we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, of course, we can't do it by our own power, by our own will, by our own determination.

But again, the Lord Jesus took care of that for us. When he spoke in John chapter 14 through 16 of the work of the Holy Spirit, he presents to us a vision of the indwelling Spirit, where the Spirit of God takes what is of Jesus in terms of his teaching and his truth and makes it known to us.

But he not only makes it known to us, he empowers us to do what he did. And therefore Jesus said, it is better for you that I go away.

And the disciples say, it can't be better. We're not going to be able to manage without you. But he says, no, you will manage without me because I am giving you another like myself.

And again, that is very much the Greek tense of his words. Another like me to be with you and to never leave you.

[3 : 55] the Spirit of truth. who will work in you by his powerful working to do even greater things than I have done.

And this is the language that is held out before us. So it's a great vision of what is possible for those who surrender to the Lord Jesus and walk in his strength and power.

On Thursday, the Next Steps group, we had some feedback from the last group and one of the final questions we addressed was, if you could ask one thing from Jesus, what would it be?

There's a question for you. Jesus once asked somebody this. He said, what would you like me to do for you? Imagine if Jesus was before you now and he asked you that question.

What would you like me to do for you? What is your greatest ambition? What is your deepest desire and longing? Well, you can answer it in your own heart as I answer it in mine.

[5 : 08] But by the grace of God, the answer has to do with Jesus. I want to know him more. Nobody on Thursday answered it any differently. It wasn't just because either teacher was there and they thought it was the right answer.

The Sunday school answer is always Jesus. You don't know the answer, isn't it? But really, for the heart that loves Jesus, it really has to do with him. Above wealth and above health and above any other consideration, we have an eternal longing for Jesus because, John says, we're born of God and the Spirit of God is within us.

And that's why he said, you cannot go on sinning, not because, you know, you're going to force yourself to be good, but because if the Spirit of Jesus Christ and the heart of Jesus Christ is in us, we're never satisfied until we do the things that Jesus does.

for just as he loved the Father and longed to do his will, so his Spirit within us loves the Father and longs to do God's will.

And so, as we think about this over the next few weeks, what it means to do what Jesus did, we need to adopt the lifestyle of Jesus and learn from the practices of Jesus in order to begin to do the things that Jesus did.

[6 : 27] what have been called the unforced rhythms of grace. And they will be, and they're coming on the screen now, these various sermon themes that we're going to look at over the next few weeks.

We're going to seek to do what Jesus did in terms of his witness, his observance of the Sabbath, his generosity, his prayer life, his commitment to community, his love of the Scriptures, his delight in being in solitude alone with his Heavenly Father, his attitude to fasting, and his attitude and model of service.

If we look at Matthew 11 from another vantage point, again, I think I have it on the screen, this is Eugene Peterson's lovely description of Matthew 11, 28.

Are you tired, worn out, burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest.

Walk with me and work with me. Watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.

[7 : 54] Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly. So when we learn to do what Jesus did, we do this by walking, working, and imitating Jesus.

Walking, working, and imitating Jesus. You see, the problem with religion is that religion lays heavy burdens on you. without giving you the ability and the power and the energy to do them.

So if we were just thinking about praying more or reading scripture more or fasting or doing some religious work, following some religious duty, if that was all our aim, then we would be kind of doing it for the wrong reasons and with the wrong motive.

It would all be about trying to get better. trying to make ourselves more acceptable to God, feeling a twinge of guilt and guilt and saying, I must try harder.

Now we all know what that feels like. We do that when we let ourselves down. But if we remember the gospel is about the grace of God that comes to us first, then the reason to pray more or the reason to read scripture or the reason to attend services is not that we might earn brownie points with God, it's that we might express our love to God and our desire to be with Him.

[9 : 20] It's a very different motive. You see, when you're children of a loving father or a loving mother, you don't say, well, I'll be a good boy or a good girl so that my mom or dad will love me more.

Your desire to please mom and dad comes from a heart of love. It's not about earning anything. It's about being a good child of a good parent.

And that's what we want to be with God. That's why that question is so important. What do you want? If you could ask Jesus for anything, what would it be? I want to be a good child. I want to be a good servant.

I want to be a good follower. I want to be the best that I can be for Him because He deserves it. I want to learn to walk with Him and work with Him and learn from Him how to live life in the unforced rhythms of grace.

Unforced rhythms of grace. Where it's not about just being the tough thing. It's about doing the loving thing. So the first thing we want to see this morning is we do what Jesus did by walking, working, and imitating Him.

[10:39] Walk with me and work with me. Watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. Now the yoke was designed to make life easier for the cattle.

It was designed to go between two cows or bulls or donkeys or whatever it might be as they plowed the fields, helped to plow the fields and keep a straight line.

And it was designed so they could walk together and not work against each other. And then they would work effectively. And then they would work effectively.

The yoke was not designed to make their life more difficult. It was designed to make their life easier. You get the point? When Jesus lays His yoke on us, it's not to make our lives more difficult.

You must pray more. You must read Scripture or you must give more. You must do this. You must not to beat us down. What Jesus is saying is the way to get through life in a better and easier way is to take my yoke upon you.

[11:44] It is not to seek personal freedom. It is to surrender your freedom to Jesus. It is not to live life on your own. It is to live your life in step with Jesus.

Brings to mind, if any of you watched the film Bruce Almighty, this wonderful moment when he goes up into that empty building and then God appears to him and they say, and he says, come and walk with me a while.

And then you see them sweeping the floor and they're in perfect sync. It's just that idea that you're at your happiest in life when you are in perfect sync with God.

When you are working together with God, when you are walking with Jesus, that's when you are at your happiest and you can never be totally happy, totally free, or totally content unless you are yoked together with Jesus.

Can't do it on your own. Religion is good, but religion wears you out. And when Jesus was speaking to these disciples, he was speaking in the context of Pharisees and scribes who he said lay heavy burdens on people but do nothing to lift them.

[12:59] You have to give your tenth. You have to pray. You have to do this. You have to repent. You know, and they just burdened them with rules, rules, rules, rules, rules. This is how you are to do it and if you're down, they'll certainly kick you when you're down.

And Jesus says, religion, it can wear you out. Try and really hard to do the best you can. You can't do it. You can't do it without Jesus.

You need to be yoked together with him. Burned out on religion. There are loads of people in the world burned out on religion.

See what it does. And this is no judgment on a particular religion. Just an observation. You look at what religion can do. even some in the name of Christianity can do.

You see them fighting their wars against each other. Endlessly attacking one another. Hating one another. In the name of religion. In the attempt to persuade and to dominate the other.

[14:10] Whoever it might be. That is not the way of Jesus. Jesus says, if you want real rest, you want real peace, you want real joy in life, you want real freedom, come and link your life, yoke your life with me.

It is the easiest way to live. When Jesus was speaking to the Jews, he said to them, if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

Now think about that for a moment. He died on the cross to cleanse you from all sin. He died on the cross so that you could be forgiven and that you would have the guarantee of eternal life.

And he put his spirit within you. And then he says, if I set you free, you will be free indeed. How? Well, think about when you sin. And then you feel guilty.

You feel ashamed of it. And then you think to yourself, how am I going to be free of this guilt and shame? What am I going to do? Maybe I ought to just pray a bit more.

[15:19] Maybe I ought to go on pilgrimage. Maybe I ought to punish myself in some way. Maybe I ought to give more money to the offering, etc. Maybe I ought to do good works or say three Hail Marys and, you know, whatever else it may be.

That has been the answer some people give. But it's not God's answer. God's answer is this. If you confess your sin, he is faithful and just and will forgive your sin and cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

You can be instantly free of guilt and shame if you simply believe the word. You're not excusing yourself. You're not pretending you're a good boy. You're simply saying, yes, I acknowledge that I'm a sinner.

God have mercy on me. And you can be free. That's a much easier yoke than any yoke that religions have invented or men have invented. I mean, God forbid you're a public figure and you do some scandalous thing.

They on Twitter and Facebook, etc. and in the news, they will crucify you and there will be no redemption. No redemption. But that's not the way of Jesus.

[16:28] His is an easier way. He looks at a woman caught in adultery. In a public scandal. He says, woman, where are your accusers? There are none, Lord. Neither will I condemn you.

Go and sin no more. Now, looking out at all of you, as beautiful people as you are, I'm sure there's a whole record of things that you're ashamed of and would cause scandal if they were known.

But I don't care. Because God doesn't care. It doesn't matter how bad you've been, how bad your record is, how ashamed you might have felt once.

If you have trusted in the blood of Christ, he cleanses you from every sin and your record, your slate is clean and nothing will be held against you.

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Isn't that good news? And isn't that an easy yoke to carry? You see, when we feel guilty and burdened all of the time and feel so terrible, it's because we're trying to carry a weight that we're not meant to carry.

[17:41] We're meant to give it over to Jesus and let him carry the burden. And maybe that's a message you need here today because you're struggling in some way with all kinds of burdens.

Jesus says, come and lay it on me. Work and walk with me. Don't try and do it on your own. Don't try and live this Christian life on your own.

Keep step by step with me. Paul says that, doesn't he, in Galatians, keep in step with the Spirit. Walk in the Spirit and you will not give in to the lust of the flesh.

Because bad company corrupts good character, doesn't it? But not only so. If we keep company with Jesus, it isn't so easy to sin.

In order for us to give in to sin, we have to close the door on Jesus. And he says, don't do that. I'm knocking at your door. Let me in. When you're facing temptation, when you're facing struggle, don't shut me out.

[18:47] Let me in. And as you let me in, you begin to walk with me and work with me. You begin to do what I would want you to do, not what you want to do. And then you begin to do it well.

Keep in step with Jesus. Walk, work with him. Let him carry your burden and you take his yoke. Take his yoke because it's easy and because of who he is.

I am gentle and humble of heart. You see, if we have to kind of work for somebody, if you ever work for a nasty boss or a bad boss, it's not easy, is it?

Years ago, when I learned to drive, I was being taught by a man who believed that the best way to get you to do the right thing was to shout and swear at you. And of course, when you're learning to drive, everything's tricky, isn't it?

And you're coming along and you kind of make a mistake and then you kind of put the, well, he puts the brakes on and then the next thing, he's shouting and bawling at me. I said to him in the end, look, I can't carry on with you.

[19:54] I can't learn when somebody's having a go at me and shouting at me and telling me off for all the mistakes I've made. I needed to find a new driving instructor who was patient with me, who was gentle with me, who understood what it was to learn once.

You get the point? Jesus says, I am gentle and humble of heart. I know you'll mess up lots of times, but I won't tell you off and I won't scold you and I won't have a go and tell you you're useless.

That's what Andy was saying, wasn't it? That's the devil speaking. He is ever gentle and humble of heart to say, I know. I know. Come on, let's pick yourself up and let's do this together, shall we?

You've been trying to do it on your own. Yes, Lord, I have and it's so hard. Temptation's so strong. It's so powerful. I don't know. Sometimes I just give in. I know. I'll show you a better way.

Come walk with me. Come learn to do it the way that I do it. Where's the scripture? And then pray.

[21:05] And then when it gets powerful, keep praying. And when you get angry, remember God is gracious. He doesn't treat you as your sins deserve, so don't treat others like that.

And when you want to kind of really have a go at somebody, remember that I call you to love. And I know you can't love them, but learn to see them as I see them. Learn to love them through my eyes.

And when you want to judge people and have a go, remember I said, don't judge and you'll not be judged. It's so much easier to do it with Jesus.

So much easier to walk with his yoke on. What would Jesus do? Remember the wristbands. What would Jesus do? It's a really good reminder of how we are to live every day.

Is this really, John, what Jesus would do? Is this really how Jesus would respond now? Ah, yeah. He's gentle.

[22 : 09] He's humble of heart. Walk with me. Work with me. Imitate me. And you will do what Jesus did. Next slide, please.

Oscar Weil famously said, by the age of 40, everyone has the face they deserve. Brilliant. By the age of 40, everybody has the face they deserve.

And some of you will know his work, the picture of Dorian Gray. How sin corrupts and destroys a person. Well, it's true, isn't it, that the way we live our life eventually will reflect itself in what comes on on the outside.

Somebody's shouting. Don't know what that is. It's our friend who thinks he's Jesus. That's fine. So, we get the face we deserve because we live the life we live.

And we're called to live our life, as we've already seen, in the power and with the help of the Holy Spirit. Let's take, for example, Philippians chapter 2, verses 15 to 16.

[23 : 24] Paul says, blameless and harmless. Blameless and harmless children of God. That's what we're called to be.

That's what we can be by the power of the Holy Spirit within us. Or again, Philippians 2, verse 12. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God at work in you both to will and to act according to his good pleasure.

Again, we're called to be that. We're called to do that. But we do that as God works within us. We can't do it by ourselves. We do it by the Holy Spirit.

And so this quote, we are 100% responsible for the pursuit of holiness. But at the same time, we are 100% dependent upon the Holy Spirit to enable us in that pursuit.

The pursuit of holiness is not a pull yourself up by your own bootstraps approach to Christian life. It's not you can do it. It's you can do it as the Holy Spirit works in you what you begin to work out.

[24 : 46] The influence comes within us and it is worked out of us. But God won't do it without us. He won't force us to be what we don't want to be.

We can live our lives in the flesh if we like, even as Christians. And we can be lazy and spiritually indifferent to godliness and holiness. We can do all that and then we won't grow.

Or we can say, God, make me as holy as it is possible for a saved sinner to be. Help me by your Holy Spirit to live in a way that pleases you.

Let me each day walk with Jesus and you will begin to see your life change. Walk in the Spirit. Keep in step with the Spirit.

Put all your effort into this and then you will discover that God releases his power to enable you to do it. Next slide, please.

[25 : 45] So we're called to walk and work with Jesus as we imitate him. By that means we become like Jesus and we do what Jesus did. Secondly, we do what Jesus did by relying on his presence and believing in his promises.

The two things are related. See, there is nothing magical or mystical about this. There's a tendency sometimes for Christians to think, well, I'll just pray and wait on God and then somehow I will be zapped with an energy from heaven.

Just one day, I'll get another wonderful blessing from God and then all of a sudden, all of my troubles will be open and I'll be able to live this life as I'm meant to live. That isn't the New Testament way.

Make every effort, Peter says. Make every effort to live a life of godliness. Work out what God is working within.

If you take the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is saying, your righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees. And you say, well, they were very good people, so how do I do that? Well, the problem with the scribes and the Pharisees, of course, was that

everything they did, Jesus said, they did to be seen by men.

[26 : 55] Oh, the offering's coming around, I'm going to put lots of money in so people will be impressed with me. Oh, people are watching me, so I'm going to pray on the street corners and I'm going to use these wonderful words and everybody's going to think, oh, he's a very godly man.

And then I'm going to quote Scripture so they all know how learned I am. Well, Jesus said, the problem with all of that, of course, is that's all for them. The whole design of that is for people to say, oh, what a wonderful godly person such and such a person is.

Yes. So Jesus says, in contrast, actually what you're meant to do when you pray is you don't make a big song and dance about it, you don't think you've got to get the right words, go into your closet, pray in secret.

Your father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you give, he says, don't make a big show of it, just kind of slip it in the offering plate, nobody knows, that's fine, God knows.

It's all about what's in your heart. your righteousness exceeds the scribes and the Pharisees when the motivation for doing it is for God and not for you.

[27 : 59] And that's the difference between the religious and the follower of Jesus. The religious are always trying to earn their way. The follower of Jesus is surrendered, is walking with Jesus and saying, whatever I do, God, I do it for you.

I don't do it to be seen by men or to please men or to earn brownie points. That's not my motivation. I rely and I believe in the promises of Jesus.

That's how I live my life. We cannot live the life of Jesus without adopting the lifestyle of Jesus. We can't do that. We become like Jesus when we seek God and his righteousness then everything else is added to us.

As we seek God and his righteousness on a daily basis as we walk with Jesus in the easy yoke we become like Jesus and we begin to naturally do what Jesus did.

Now there's a very famous politician by the name of Lord Rhys Mogg and you see the way he dresses. He's a very eccentric character with his suit on, his glasses, a very fine man and everything else. Have you seen his children?

[29 : 12] They look just like him. They're little miniature Lord Rhys Mogg's children. I don't know what his first name is. I've forgotten. Yeah, Moggies. That kind of imitation is a real compliment.

Yeah, when somebody seeks to be like you because they like who you are. I want to be like Jesus because I like who he is. I want to be with Jesus because I love to be with him.

I like to do what Jesus did because I just want to be like him. It comes from a natural inclination of the heart. So yes, it's easy to say let's do what Jesus did.

It is of course very difficult to do. It's impossible actually to do without taking his yoke upon ourselves. so we need as we've said the Holy Spirit of God.

Let's just remember what Jesus says in John chapter 16 verses 5 to 16. Now I am going to him who sent me he said yet none of you ask where are you going because I have said these things you are filled with grief but I tell you the truth it is for your good that I am going away unless I go away the counselor will not come to you but if I go I will send him to you when he comes he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment in regard to sin because men do not believe in me in regard to righteousness because I am going to the Father where you can see me no longer and in regard to judgment because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

[30 : 51] I have much more to say to you more than you can now bear but when he the spirit of truth comes he will guide you into all truth he will not speak on his own he will speak only what he hears and he will tell you what is yet to come he will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you all that belongs to the Father is mine that is why I said the spirit will take from what is mine and make it to you and make it known to you in a little while you will see me no more and a little while after you will see me so Jesus is saying look I'm going to go away and I'm going to provide a helper for you and that helper is going to bring you into all truth but he's going to do something else he's going to convict the world of sin in regard to righteousness and of judgment to come he's going to do a magnificent work that will transform the lives of people who have lived their lives so far ignoring me and ignoring my demands of righteousness in their lives now imagine the disciples when they heard this they would have been pretty confused and alarmed at the prospect of them being on their own and having to face up to this great challenge of going into all the world and making Christ known by preaching the gospel how would they ever manage how would they ever do it by the Holy Spirit the greater works that they would do they would do by the

Holy Spirit and in Acts 2 that happened in Acts 2 they were filled with the Spirit and they they were like drunken men they began to speak in tongues as the Spirit gave utterance and then Peter got up to preach he hadn't prepared his sermon beforehand he didn't know he was going to do it he got up to preach and then he got an eloquence that you could not imagine and then thousands were converted by the power of the Holy Spirit now when I read that and when I think about my own life

I think why I need to know so much more I need to experience so much more of this Holy Spirit in my life I need to hold on to these believing promises of Jesus and to remember that I can't do it on my own I need very much the Holy Spirit to be working in me so that he will make a difference in the world through me that's how we live this life that's how we do what Jesus did let me remind you of another scripture Matthew chapter 9 I just want you to think about this for a little while in Matthew 9 it's on the next slide I think Josh it will come up if not doesn't matter Jesus commanded his disciples remember in Matthew 9 to go out and to preach he said that what they were meant to do was to go and do what he did cast out demons heal diseases heal sicknesses have compassion on the poor off you go and tells us their names

Matthew who'd just been called as a disciple of Jesus Judas was among them so was Peter and Thomas and you've got all of these disciples now put yourself in their place for a moment imagine they're thinking to themselves wow I've never done that before I've never gone and healed anybody I've never I've never cast out a demon before we just watched as Jesus did it and now he's saying you go and do it you can imagine they were a bit nervous wouldn't you think what if I kind of turn up come across a demon possessed man command in the name of Jesus that he the demon leave him and nothing happens what if I go to pray for a sick person like Jesus did and nothing happens you would be tempted wouldn't you to say well I ain't going to do it Lord that's obviously for somebody else somebody who's a bit bolder a little more spiritual I can't do this Lord so you doubt you doubt you doubt what do you think would have happened if that had happened nothing happily they came back and said

Lord even the demons leave on your account of your name Jesus said okay but I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven alright don't get too big for your boots you didn't do it by yourself you did it by believing in the promises and surrendering to the power of the Holy Spirit and then diseases were healed and then demons were cast out now is it any different for us Matthew 28 go into all the world and preach the gospel baptize them in the name of the Father Son and Holy Spirit and doing all things that I have commanded to you and lo I am with you always even to the end of the earth you think right okay I know my job but how am I going to do it all authority in heaven and earth is given to me therefore go don't think well I'm a good speaker and I can wow a crowd don't think well I'm kind of persuasive and I'll be able to persuade people with my eloquence and my great philosophy no no all authority is given to you by my Father in heaven you have the Holy Spirit within you therefore go that's where your confidence comes from if John Winter has ever converted anyone that's not good but if by the grace of God the Holy Spirit works through me and people are converted then praise the Lord but I get no glory for that that isn't me that is Jesus that's how we do it if we are going to do what Jesus did it's not because we'll pray more it's not because we will seek him more it's not because he will be pleased because we give more it's none of those things it's as we surrender to Jesus no good work no real work no long lasting work is ever done unless Jesus does it through us we need to rely on the presence and the power of the

[37 : 28] Holy Spirit we want to become like Jesus by being with Jesus and by doing what Jesus did in the final analysis the one who works in the church is its head and Lord and hence the powers of the kingdom are available only through believing prayer in Jesus name the outcome then will be for the glory of God the Father and so last slide please Lord just go back to that one please I tell you the truth anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing he will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father get your head round that anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing he will do even greater things than these because I am going to the

Father it's wonderful how commentators tie themselves up by trying to say what does that mean like I've never been able to calm a storm or feed 5,000 with five loaves and two fishes I don't expect to be able to do it what were the greater things that he did that the disciples did well Jesus when he preached never saw 3,000 converted in a single day he never had the success in preaching the gospel that his disciples did he never left Israel they went all over the world still do they have done greater things than him quantitatively speaking but the truth is they've never really done it without him because lo I am with you always even to the end of the earth and so to leave you with a

challenge next slide!

The greatest issue facing the world today with all its heartbreaking needs is whether those who are identified as Christians will become disciples students apprentices practitioners of Jesus Christ steadily learning from him how to live the life of the kingdom of the heavens into every corner of human existence that's our challenge we want to do what Jesus did the next time somebody comes to you and says I'm feeling really terrible I just don't have an answer my life's in a mess instead of just sympathizing with them say I believe I know somebody who can help you can I pray with you bring Jesus into it do what Jesus would do don't walk away pray the next time you think my life's in a mess

I just can't cope I can't get on I just don't have an answer instead of just reading the next self help guide why not just bring it to Jesus and say Jesus you can help me please help me today life is easier when it's lived in the easy yoke of Jesus let us pray say