

Series: Called to Follow
“The Closeness of a Disciple”

Matthew 13:1-23

Today we continue in our series “Called to Follow” where we are studying the Gospels and learning what it means to truly be a follower of Christ. Many in our culture identify as Christians for a host of moral and well-meaning reasons, but Jesus did not call us merely to associate with him as “Christians” but to be disciples. We see the Lord’s call to be a disciple as He called the first disciples saying, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men,” **Mt. 4:19** This verse teaches us that being a disciple is first about a relationship with Jesus. We also discover that discipleship is transformational as Jesus transforms us and makes us something that we could never be on our own. This call to be a disciple is also purposeful as Jesus puts us on a new path with a new mission to reach others and make disciples for Him. And we repeatedly find in Scripture that though the Lord’s call demands a personal response, it is communal in that He calls us to walk together with others. We don’t walk with the Lord alone but in a community with other believers. If we studied the entirety of the Gospels, we would see these elements of discipleship repeatedly. From that initial call to the very end when Jesus ascended to heaven, He spent His moments with the disciples, teaching them, preparing them, and equipping them for the mission ahead, and as He did so, the Gospels tell us repeatedly of the closeness that the disciples shared with Jesus.

Over the last few weeks, we have focused a great deal on some of the challenges of following Jesus. We’ve seen specifically how the Lord calls us to examine our love for Him versus our love for others. To truly follow Him as a disciple, Jesus must be first place in our lives. We must love Him more than our father, mother, and even our children. He said it plainly, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me,” **Mt. 10:37**. Our love for Him must be greater than our love for all others, including ourselves. He went on to say, “And he who does not take up his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me,” **Mt. 10:38**. While these may sound like a heavy cost, they are nothing compared to what is gained. Jesus assures us that in laying our life down for Him, it is then that we find true abundant life in Him. In fact, there are countless blessings available for all who trust in Jesus as Lord. Today we begin to see, in Matthew 13, some of the practical blessings and benefits of being a disciple of Jesus. Those who are close to Jesus and follow Him as Lord enjoy several blessings and privileges that others do not, and I pray that the Lord helps us today to examine these wonderful blessings and to consider if we are experiencing these in our own lives.

SHOW TEXT

I imagine that many of us here today have heard of Jesus’ Parable of the Sower. This is a passage of Scripture that we studied in November when we had our “Sending Service” in the Hoop Barn at the Fairgrounds. It was there that we talked about the importance of getting the seed of the Gospel out into the community around us. We should never expect a harvest where we’ve not been willing to go and plant seeds. There is a lot that Jesus is teaching in this parable, and there is a clear application to our role of planting the seed of God’s Word everywhere we go, but for the majority of our message today, I want us to focus on the forgotten verses of this passage (v. 10-17). The message that Jesus gives to the crowd is very important, but we will mostly focus on the

message He was communicating to His disciples in this “behind-the-scenes” explanation of what was going on.

It is helpful to know the backdrop of this situation. Jesus has been going through the region teaching and preaching about the Kingdom of God. He has also performed many miracles, and, as a result, He is greatly growing in popularity. At the same time, the religious leaders of the day have had enough of Him and are conspiring together to find a way to get rid of Him. On this specific occasion, Jesus was sitting by the Sea of Galilee when the people began to realize His location. They suddenly began to flock towards Him, so once again He used this as an opportunity to teach the people. As He had done on other occasions, Jesus got into a boat, sat down, and used the boat as a pulpit by which to speak to the crowd.

In speaking to this large crowd, Jesus was using a unique and impactful teaching method called “parables.” Parables were practical but profound tools that Jesus used to teach truths about who He is, about the Kingdom of God, and even about the Church. A parable was a story that the common listener could easily relate to and understand. Jesus often taught in parables to engage the interests of the people, to arouse their curiosity, and to stir in them a hunger for greater understanding. The word “parable” means “to cast alongside.” It was usually a short story that teaches something new by putting the truth alongside something familiar. Parables started as some sort of picture that everyone could relate to, but as they carefully considered the picture being described, they would suddenly realize that the parable was a mirror in which they could see themselves. In other words, the parables of Jesus weren’t merely presenting truths about Him, but they also revealed truths about themselves that called for a response. This is why so many people heard Jesus’ parables and became angry. Their attention would be captured by the familiar cultural stories, but then when Jesus pointed the story to the people, they suddenly realized that He was confronting their sins and calling them to repent. The Pharisees, for example, became so angry at what Jesus was saying that they wanted to kill him. The disciples on the other hand were the ones who received the words of Jesus and humbly sought to understand them so that they could grow deeper in relationship with Him. Between these two opposite responses, there were a multitude of people responding in many middle-of-the-road ways. It should be noted that this became one of Jesus’ most popular methods of teaching with 39 specific parables being recorded in the Gospels, and potentially more depending on how you categorize some of His other teachings.

As we pick up the text, the crowd is pressing in on Jesus, and He begins to tell them the Parable of the Sower. Everybody knew what a Sower was, as they had likely witnessed or even firsthand experienced the sowing of seeds. The Sower went out to sow his seed and hoped that there would be a harvest of crops. Some of the seed fell by the road, and the birds ate it all up. There was no harvest there. There were also some seeds that fell on the rocky places where the soil was very shallow. There appeared to be a harvest, but because of the shallow soil, it eventually dried out and died. Some other seeds fell in the area where there were tons of weeds and thorns, and there was no harvest there because the thorns choked them out. Lastly, some seeds fell on good soil and produced a crop up to a hundredfold. There was an abundant and beautiful harvest in the good soil. Every person sitting there that day could understand the imagery that Jesus was painting. They all understood that the seed has life and the power to bring about a fruitful harvest, but the ability of that seed is greatly impacted by the quality of the soil it is placed in. It will be greatly hindered if it is placed in the wrong type of soil, but in good soil, there is no limit to the measure of fruit that

can come. Then just like that Jesus announced, “He who has ears, let him hear.” That’s the parable. The end. You’re dismissed. Can you imagine if our sermon was that short this morning? 😊 It really didn’t end that fast because when Jesus made this statement, He was calling them to truly listen spiritually to what He was saying. He is saying, “Look beyond the imagery of the Sower, and consider how this relates to the Kingdom of God. Listen to what I have said. Take it in. Meditate on it. Take it’s meaning to heart.” In other words, “hearing” is much more than just simply listening to words but listening to receive and understand spiritually. The importance of truly hearing the Word is so evident that “hearing” is used in various forms 19x’s in this chapter alone. Why is hearing so important? Because hearing God’s Word is what leads us to faith. **Romans 10:17** says, “So faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ.”

Up to this point, Jesus has been speaking to the crowd, welcoming them all to spend time with Him and inviting them to hear the message, but He did not seem at all impressed by the large crowds that were following Him. He knew that most of them would never produce any fruit from their lives being changed because the Word He was teaching them was like a seed falling into bad soil. So, Jesus teaches the parable, encourages them to really listen and take in what He has said, and then says, “You’re dismissed.” As the crowd goes away and the disciples come more clearly in view, I want us to see four realities about the closeness of a disciple:

I. The Disciple has a Unique Relationship (vs. 10)

What we see in this first point is that the depth of the relationship between Jesus and the disciples was very different than the relationship between Jesus and the crowd. Many in the crowd were fair-weather fans who were following Jesus for their own selfish reasons. Others in the crowd were also following Jesus simply because they were curious about who He was and what He was doing. We will see in the coming weeks how Jesus dealt with these. For now, though, please understand that the disciples followed Jesus because they truly believed in Him as Lord and Savior. The more they spent time with Him and learned from Him they came to love Him like a friend. As the crowd begins to break up to return home, the disciples aren’t going anywhere. They were very close to Jesus, having already surrendered everything and left it behind to follow the Lord. As the crowd goes away now the disciples gather near because they are in a unique relationship.

ILL: Several years ago, the boys and I were at a Toby Mac concert. As I watched I realized that I knew the trumpet player in the band. After the concert, we ended up getting access backstage because of the relationship that we had. So, when the concert was ending and everyone was leaving the arena, the boys and I were hanging out with all the artists backstage. How did we get this access? Because of the relationship.

Similarly, because of their faith in Jesus, the disciples have a close relationship with Him, and Jesus is spending His life with them. He has invited them in to fully know Him and learn from Him, and they have accepted the invitation. His relationship with them was so close that He would say in **John 15:15**, “No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.” What do friends do? They share life, laugh together, cry together, talk about things – everything – together. What an incredible blessing was given to these disciples as they shared a relationship with Jesus. Jesus looks at them as close friends, and as such, He invites them to come to Him at any time over any matter which we see as the scene unfolds.

The disciples were concerned about Jesus' method of teaching. How are the people to fully understand what He meant if He didn't take the time to explain it and why would He not explain the details of what He was saying? We don't get the impression that they were scolding Jesus or even suggesting what He should do, but they were certainly concerned and sought to understand why He was teaching in this specific way. To them, parables weren't the best way to teach. There were too many unknowns, and it made better sense to them for Jesus to be as clear as possible so that as many as possible would believe in Him and follow Him. Jesus, though, knew and understood the condition of the crowd's heart, which He was about to explain to the disciples.

We will see in a moment why the parables were so important, but for now, it is good for us to pause and examine the nature of our own personal relationship with Jesus. Do you have a close relationship with Jesus, or do you just follow in the crowd? Do you follow Jesus because you have trusted in Him as Lord and Savior, or do you follow Jesus because He makes you feel good? Do you follow Jesus because you have a deep conviction that He is the Lord over all, or do you follow Jesus as a crutch to help you along? Do you follow Jesus because you desire to honor and glorify Him, or do you follow Jesus in hopes of what He will do for you? There was a major difference between Jesus' relationship with the crowd and His personal relationship with the disciples. Perhaps you're wondering how a relationship with Jesus is even possible since we don't physically walk with Him the way that the early disciples did. Today a relationship with Jesus begins in the same way, by turning from our sin and trusting in Jesus to be our Savior. At the moment you call up Jesus to save you, the Holy Spirit of God begins to indwell you. In fact, so close and comforting is the Holy Spirit in our lives that Jesus said in **John 16:5-7**, "But now I am going to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are you going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." If you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, take great comfort in knowing that you have a relationship with Him. Through Christ, you have been adopted into God's family, clothed in His righteousness, counted as a friend, and indwelled by the Holy Spirit. The disciples did not know the answer to their initial question yet, but the mere fact that they could come to Jesus with their question reveals that they had a unique, close relationship.

II. The Disciple has a Unique Revelation (vs. 11, 13-23)

At first glance, we would easily conclude that the purpose of a parable was simply to illustrate a spiritual truth and that this understanding was likely available to everyone. However, Jesus shows that the purpose of the parables was to explain the truth to those who believed in Him, while at the same time leaving out those who rejected Him. As the disciples would hear these parables the Lord would give them understanding as to what he was saying, but many were left on the outside looking in. ****ILL:** I have experienced this with my kids in sports. They can take their seat on the bench, and I can make eye contact with them. With just a few glances, we can communicate with each other completely across the room. We know what each other is saying, but nobody else in the gym has a clue. Similarly, the Lord reveals His mysteries to His disciples, but those who refuse to follow Him are left out. Jesus used these parables for His disciples to shed new light on various truths,

but to those who rejected Jesus, they were left in the dark. The word "revelation" may sound odd to some, but this is exactly what Jesus is referring to. In the New Testament, a "mystery" is a

spiritual truth understood only by divine revelation. It is like an inside language or secret known only to those on the inside who learn from the Lord and obey Him. ****ILL:** I imagine that you married couples who have been married for many years can relate to this. When you are in a close relationship with someone you can learn how to communicate in the simplest of ways and at times even without words. My wife can read my body language and my facial expressions almost instantly. Sometimes, they have gotten me out of some uncomfortable conversations, there are other times that we have laughed about a situation and how she just “knew” something, and there have been other times that my facial expressions got me in trouble. For example, several years ago Heather decided to get her hair cut and on this particular occasion she decided to get her hair cut very short, which is not my preferred style. When she came home and walked in the door, I greeted her warmly I gave a verbal compliment, and she ran to the back room crying. Why? Because my mouth said one thing, but my eyes and my facial expressions said another. That illustration might be light-hearted and humorous but in essence, Jesus is saying, “As followers of Me, I am giving you the inside scoop. I am revealing to you the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven, but this has not been granted to those who reject Me.”

At first glance, we might listen to these words and say, “Well that’s not fair. How could God allow some of them to know the mysteries while not allowing others to know?” We must remember, though, that He is God, and we are not. As His creation, we don’t have the right to demand anything of our Creator. He is sovereign over all things. He is loving and gracious, but He is also just. As we look at this Scripture, I believe we quickly begin to understand why the crowd did not grasp this revelation.

The majority of our text today is an explanation of why it wasn’t granted to them. In verses 13-15, Jesus tells us plainly that spiritually the crowd did not see, did not hear, and they did not understand. Why? Because their hearts had become hardened, and they were dull to the things of God. They wanted to hear what they wanted to hear, but not what God was saying. They wanted to see things that were appealing to their eyes, but not the things that God wanted them to see. Their spiritual hardness was so severe that Jesus explained that this was a fulfillment of the words spoken through Isaiah 700 years earlier. To make matters worse, God had even declared through Isaiah that He would heal them if they would simply humble themselves and repent of their sin, but the people were so focused on living for themselves that they refused to turn to the Lord. Jesus quotes from Isaiah 6, which is one of the most sobering passages of the Old Testament. Can you imagine being Isaiah? God was looking for a man to be a messenger to His people. Isaiah said, “Here am I Lord, send me.” Then God told him, “Isaiah, the people will not listen to you. They have become so consumed with self – their wants, their desires, their pleasure, their will, their ideas, etc. that they have rejected Me. Their hearts are hardened, their ears are deaf, and their eyes are blind because they continue to reject Me.” And Jesus says here in Matthew 13, that the sobering prophecy of Isaiah was being fulfilled in this moment.

How did they get there? How did this crowd of people, and many others like them, get to such a place that they missed their opportunity for relationship with Jesus and revelation from Him? I don’t think we can disconnect these verses from the context. Each of the Gospel writers who recorded the Parable of the Sower (Matthew, Mark, & Luke) all included the same context. This means that we can’t divorce Jesus’s explanation from the parable that He has just taught. Remember, He reveals the meaning to those who follow Him, which is exactly what He does in

verses 18-23 of the text. Jesus explains to the disciples that the seed is the Word of God and that He is the original Sower of the Word. Everywhere He went He has been talking about the Kingdom of God and the importance of repenting from sin. He gives the imagery of soil to describe the condition of man's heart and describes three types to resist. There is first **the hardened heart** which was represented by the seed that was scattered beside the road. The seed couldn't grow there because the ground had been hardened by all the foot traffic passing here and there. This represents the person who opens their heart to all kinds of people and influences and as a result, their hearts become very hard to the simple truth of God's Word. As a result, when the Word of God is heard, Satan immediately comes and snatches away what has been sown, and there can be no harvest there. Then there is **the shallow heart**. This heart is like thin soil that covers up rock and stone. The seed of God's Word is planted in this soil, and it immediately appears to produce some form of fruit, but because it is shallow there are no roots to sustain it. It soon withers and dies. It's like the person who is an emotional hearer who responds to God's Word because they're excited, stirred up, and it feels good. There may be a lot of enthusiasm, but as soon as the difficulties and trials of life come, it reveals the lack of roots and relationship. Then there is **the crowded heart** that is represented by the seed that is sown among thorns. This person is happy to hear God's Word, but the seed is immediately choked out by all the distractions of the world – worries, wealth, and wants – which reveals that there was no true repentance and no room for the Word to grow. Do you see what Jesus is saying? He's not being harsh or cruel. He came to make a way for all to be saved, but many rejected Him because their hearts were hardened, shallow, and crowded by all of their pursuits. Jesus said it well in **John 3:18-20**, "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil, hates the Light and does not come to the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed."

The disciples however clearly enjoyed the blessing of a unique revelation because they received the Word of God, trusted in Jesus, and were holding fast to him. Jesus concludes with their response in **verse 16**, "But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear." This would have been a great encouragement for the disciples because it assured them that they had responded rightly to the Word of the Lord. They were not living for the things of the world, distracted by worries, wealth, and wants, and they were not listening to every voice of influence in the world around them. Their belief in Jesus was not an emotional response without depth. They truly believed in Who He was and, as a result, devoted themselves wholeheartedly to following Him no matter the cost. They were looking for a Kingdom that was not made by man. They were listening to the message that was from God alone. That does not mean that they were perfect, nor does it mean that they always got it right the first time, but it does mean that they lived by faith, fully surrendered to Jesus and trusting Him as Lord.

III. The Disciple has a Unique Reward (vs. 12)

There was a clear distinction between the crowd and the disciples. The crowd rejected the Lord's Word and were thus rejected by Him, but the disciples received God's Word and as a result, were received by Him and blessed beyond measure. For those who reject God's Word, there is a harsh reality of judgment. God is clearly showing us that those who hear His Word but do not receive it by faith and act on it, His Word will be removed from them. They will miss their opportunity to respond. If you think closely about this Scripture, you will realize that you have also heard this

same statement from Jesus before. Last year we were going through a study on living a generous life for the Lord. At the end of that series, we looked at Matthew 25 with the Parable of the Talents. In that parable, Jesus described a man who went on a journey and before leaving He gave one of His servants five talents, He gave another servant two talents, and to a third servant He gave one talent. Immediately upon leaving, the servant with five talents and the other with two talents, immediately put them to work and doubled the investment but the third servant went home, dug a hole in the ground, and hid the money. After a long time, the master returned and called for the servants to give an account of the money. Both of the first two servants who had been faithful to act were blessed and rewarded. The master said to both, “Well done good and faithful servant. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.” But then when the final servant came to give an account, he had nothing to show for his work. He had wasted the talent and the opportunity that the master had given him. The master responded strongly saying, “Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents. **For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.** Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” **Matthew 25:28-30.** Jesus clearly doesn’t take it lightly when, in grace, He gives us an opportunity, but we instead harden our hearts and miss our opportunity. Do you hear the same verbiage in our text today? In Matthew 25 he was talking about the stewarding of talents, but here in Matthew 13 we are talking specifically about the way we steward and respond to the Word of God. Jesus is showing that those who refuse it and do not act on it will miss their opportunity, and it will be taken from them. However, for those who truly receive it and act on it, like the disciples, not only will they hold on to the Word, but He will give them even more and they will have an abundance.

The Gospel accounts all reveal how Jesus took strategic time with the disciples to pour into them. He spent time with them teaching them truth upon truth, but this did not end when He left them to ascend to heaven. He assured them that they would not be left alone because He would send the Holy Spirit, who would continue the work that He had begun. He said it best in **John 16:12-13**, “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.” In other words, the work that Jesus began when He walked the earth is still continuing today through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Those who receive God’s Word by faith are assured that we will receive more and have an abundance. We need to understand that God still does the same in our own lives today. As we spend time with God through His Word and ask the Holy Spirit to teach us, we begin to see things through a new lens. The Bible is not like an ordinary textbook that you might read and become familiar with. It is the living, authoritative, holy Word of God. No matter how many times you’ve read it or studied it, when you come with an open heart, open ears, and open eyes to Him, the Holy Spirit begins to reveal new things. ****ILL:** For example, even in preparing this message, I saw a connection that I’d never made before. The Lord has graciously allowed me to read His Word for many years and I have read it through at least one time every year for the past ten years, and there are still discoveries that He allows me to make. For example, I have known for many years about the Parable of the Sower, and I have preached it on many occasions. However, I never made the connection to Ephesians 2:1-3 or 1 John 2:15-17. These scriptures show us that when we are dead

in our trespasses and sin, we are held captive by the three great enemies of God – the devil, the flesh, and the world. What were the three hindrances that prevented the hearers in Matthew 13 from truly receiving the Word of God? The first seed was robbed by Satan. The second seed was in the shallow soil, representing those who respond emotionally according to their wants and whims. Their flesh hindered them from truly coming to Christ. The third soil represented the seed that was choked out by all the pleasures and pursuits of the world. In other words, the very things that Paul identifies as enemies of Christ Jesus, are also illustrated in this parable as that which prevents people from coming to Christ. The unity of Scripture is amazing! **ILL:** Just last week, I shared a brief devotional with a group of men who are serving in our Pulpit Supply Ministry. On the way out the door, one of the men came up to me and asked, “Matthew, have you ever thought about how this connects to this statement in the Gospels?” He was excited and exuberant as if a light bulb had flipped on, and he had found a connection he had never seen before. Why? Because Jesus’s statement is true. Those who receive His Word and respond by faith are assured that they will be rewarded with more, and he will have an abundance. What about you? Are you growing in God’s Word? Are you walking with Him daily and letting Him lead you, feed you, and show you what He wants you to know?

IV. The Disciple has a Unique Responsibility (vs. 17, 23)

What a blessing these disciples enjoyed as they spent time with Jesus, heard His teachings, witnessed His miracles, and were strengthened in their faith. Jesus reminded them of their unique and privileged position when He said, “For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.” That was entirely true. Think of all the Old Testament saints and all the Old Testament prophets who were given direct messages from God, who foretold the coming of the Messiah, who looked forward in faith believing the salvation that would one day come. Now that Jesus was walking on the earth, in countless ways He was proving personally and emphatically that He is indeed the Savior of the world. In fact, Jesus taught them so much that the disciple John concludes his gospel by saying, “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written,” **John 21:25**. These early disciples were certainly in a blessed position to be learning directly from and by Jesus, but this reality also led them to a unique responsibility. **Luke 12:48b** says, “From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.” The Lord surely gave and entrusted much to His disciples, but this was not for the purpose of becoming puffed up with knowledge, boastful of experiences, or spiritually fat and lazy. Their hearts were like good soil which received the Word and understood it, and now their lives were to bear fruit. The same seed of the Word that had been planted in their hearts was soon to be shared by them and planted in the hearts of others. Jesus was clearly the original Sower of the Word, but by the transforming work He had done in them, He was now inviting them and would soon be commissioning them to enter the work with Him. They couldn’t control how much fruit would come from their lives and ministries. Some might produce fruit a hundredfold, others sixty, and others thirty. Only Jesus was the Lord of the harvest and only He could bring about the fruit, but what they seemed to understand clearly is that it was up to them to be faithful in sowing the same seed that had been sown in them. Perhaps they took comfort in the ancient **Psalms, 126:6**, which says, “He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed, shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.”

It wouldn't be much longer before Jesus would commission these very same disciples to be His witnesses throughout all the world. As they went, they would boldly share the good news with others, and they would experience the same results as Jesus did on this day of speaking to the large crowd. Some would not receive the message because their hearts were hard. Some would not receive it because their flesh got in the way. Others would not receive it because they were too consumed with worldly pursuits. But, some would hear the Good News, receive it, and trust in Jesus for salvation. As they went throughout their lives and ministries, I wonder how often they looked back on this day and this moment with Jesus. We can't be sure, but we can learn from this moment and follow their example. For all of us who have trusted in Christ and are following Him, we can enter into this same mission and work with them by sowing the seed of the gospel in the hearts and lives of others. Who are you building a relationship with? Who are you sharing the Gospel with? I praise the Lord for the good soil that the Good News of the Gospel has found in you, but I remind us all, that with this close relationship, revelation, and reward, we now have a great responsibility. For His glory, may we each be faithful to His call!