

Coming out of the holidays is always a bit of a whirlwind. We press through the busyness, take a little time off, and then enter into a whole new year. Probably not a great time to set new year goals! And yet, we do. Why? Because inside of us we have a deeper sense of our inward reality.

- Some may feel like they're *frazzled*. Life has been so busy. We are behind on chores, behind on bills, feel the stress of taxes, or exhausted by work and family rhythms.
- Some may feel like they're *frustrated*. Life has been hard and we don't like we're at. We feel brokenness differently, and bitterness or resentment is brewing.
- Some may feel like they're *floundering*. What am I doing in life? Work is unsatisfying. Or I feel like a boat with no sail in the middle of a large lake and no wind. Rudderless. Aimless.

A good friend once told me, "*People don't need a vision statement as much as they need a visionary state of mind.*" As I reflect on that truth, it reminds me that for some seeing what the world could be is natural. For others, it's unnatural. It's important to be grounded in reality, but we need to be able to cultivate a vision for world that could be. Why? Because it's the way Jesus saw the world. **What we think about how the world *could* be changes how we interact in the world the way it *is* now.**

As we've been following along in Mark, and continue to do so through May, we are certainly aware that following Jesus isn't easy. But his aim for us isn't to be frazzled, or frustrated, or floundering. His aim for us is to *flourish*. Not to be frazzled. Not to be frustrated. And certainly not to be floundering. He longs for us to be fully satisfied in Him. But like we've seen, it's easy to miss the real Jesus. There is a life of flourishing that we can only find when we *follow* Jesus.

Following takes *focus*. At the risk of sounding repetitive, given it's a start to a new year, I want to remind us to the following:

- **Read through the entire book of Mark in one sitting.** Don't start the movie halfway through! Set aside an hour, go back to the beginning and read all the way through. Even if you've done it before, this is good practice.
- **Don't miss Sundays.** I know I'm fighting a national trend, but that's OK. Imagine trying to follow Jesus if you were there once every four times? No judgment. No guilt. But accountability is good. If you can't be in person, be sure to join in online here. Let's be committed together.
- **Utilize the Companion Guide.** Here's a question: How do we hit the mark as a church if we are all aiming at different targets? Kind of a funny image to picture. What if we all aimed at the same target? Using the guide will not only familiarize us with the marks of a disciple, but it will also help us link arms to build God's kingdom.
- **Get into a group.** Perhaps more than another other of these, getting into a group will help you the most. Why? Because it's a place where we experience grace in relationships, while also being held accountable. If you're not connected to a group yet, [click here](#).

I'd like to personally invite each of you to our All Church Prayer Gathering next Tuesday (date & time). As elders and staff we plan to attend and hope that you'll join us as the prayer team leads us in a time of worship and prayer around preparing us for this vision season. So exciting!

Also, I want to personally thank everyone who stepped up to help us finish the year strong financially! We rejoice in God's great provision. Let's keep this trend going by faithfully giving the Lord as we continue to take steps into growing and building God's kingdom locally and globally! To God be the glory!

With much love and gratitude,  
Pastor Seth