

# Jesus as Leader

*Notes from a pastor's reflection*



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*These are reflections I have been working through for myself rather than for anyone else. They began with a question I keep coming back to in the work of The Family Centre and the Onesimus Foundation: if I take the gospels seriously as the description of how Jesus actually conducted his ministry, does the leadership he modelled map onto the leadership formation that the contemporary church offers its pastors? I am not sure it does, and I find the gap worth sitting with.*

*I have framed the reflection in five movements. First, what the gospels show about how Jesus actually spent his time — where he was, with whom, doing what. Second, how that pattern lines up with the dominant contemporary frameworks for leadership and management. Third, where the standard pastoral formation pipelines sit in relation to this. Fourth, a separate note on the genuine difficulty of comparing first-century ministry with the world of phones, cars, and screens. A fifth section addresses something most “what would Jesus do” frames quietly skip past — that he did not have a wife and children — and what that absence and its inverse mean for how a pastor with a family might inhabit his pattern.*

*Two weekly calendars in the annex anchor the reflection. The first imagines what Jesus’s week might look like in a contemporary setting without family responsibilities. The second imagines the same week with a wife and three children. They are thought experiments, not historical reconstructions, and the side-by-side is where some of the argument quietly lives.*

*I write this conscious that I have led a church for many years and still carry pastoral responsibility for the work of the Foundation. These are not abstractions for me. They are the questions I have been asking myself for a long time.*

## Section One

# How Jesus actually spent his time

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**W**hen the gospels are read with this question in mind — where did he go, with whom did he spend his hours, what did he focus on — a few patterns surface that the leadership literature does not usually name.

### Where he spent his time

Predominantly in Galilee. A peripheral, agricultural, ethnically mixed region, regarded with some contempt by the Jerusalem establishment.

*Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”*

JOHN 1:46 · ESV

*They replied, “Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee.”*

JOHN 7:52 · ESV

He moved between villages, lakeshores, hillsides, houses, and synagogues. He went to Jerusalem strategically and at appointed feasts, but the centre of gravity of his ministry was the periphery, not the centre. He showed up in Samaria and the Decapolis, crossing boundaries that respectable rabbis did not cross.

## With whom he spent his time

At table with tax collectors and sinners. With women in ways that scandalised his contemporaries. With the ritually unclean — lepers, the haemorrhaging woman, the demonised. He also spent time with the religious elite — Nicodemus, Simon the Pharisee, the lawyers who tested him — but he did not centre his ministry there. The proportion matters. He invested most heavily in twelve, more deeply in three, and most intensely in one. Concentric circles of investment.

*And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.*

MARK 2:15 · ESV

## How he spent his time

Three rhythms recur through the gospels.

- **Withdrawal** — “*But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray*” (Luke 5:16). The imperfect tense in the Greek suggests habitual practice. Before choosing the twelve he spent the night in prayer. Before the cross he withdrew to Gethsemane. The pattern is structural, not occasional.
- **Engagement** — teaching, healing, eating, walking, conversing. Most of his recorded ministry happens in the interstitial spaces. He used the platform, but the formation of his disciples happened largely in motion.
- **Confrontation** — he did not avoid conflict with religious power. The temple action, the seven woes, the deliberate Sabbath provocations. He was not pastorally evasive when *mishpat* was at stake.

## What he focused on

If you ask what Jesus actually talked about, the data is uncomfortable for contemporary church framing. The Kingdom of God is the dominant theme — its arrival, its nature, its ethic, its reversal of expected categories. He spoke far more about money and possessions than about sexual ethics. He spoke far more about the danger of religious self-righteousness than about the sins of the irreligious. He spoke about the poor, the

meek, the mourners, the persecuted, the merciful — the Beatitudes are not incidental but programmatic. He spoke about love of enemy, forgiveness, mercy. He spoke, repeatedly, about the heart — the inner orientation that produces the outward act.

What he did not do is also instructive. He did not build an institution in his lifetime. He did not write anything down. He did not collect money beyond a common purse. He did not establish a headquarters. He did not credential his followers in any conventional way. He did not optimise for measurable outcomes — when the crowds grew, he often said hard things that thinned them out.

*After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.*

JOHN 6:66 · ESV

He did not protect his time from interruption. The gospels are full of interruptions that become the ministry. The haemorrhaging woman interrupting the journey to Jairus's daughter is not a distraction from the day — it is, in the end, the substance of the day.

## Jesus and contemporary leadership frameworks

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**F**our streams dominate the contemporary literature, and each illuminates and is illuminated by what Jesus did.

### Servant leadership

Greenleaf's seminal frame: the leader exists for the followers, not the reverse. Jesus's foot-washing in John 13 and his "not so among you" in Mark 10:42–45 sit at the headwaters of this stream, and Greenleaf himself acknowledged the debt.

*You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

MARK 10:42–45 · ESV

By this measure Jesus is the paradigm. But it is worth noting that servant leadership is often domesticated in practice into a softer style of conventional management. Jesus's version is sharper: it includes the towel and the basin and the cleansing of the temple. Service is not the same as accommodation.

### Transformational leadership

Burns and Bass: the leader catalyses change in followers' values, vision, and identity, not just their behaviour. Jesus did not manage his disciples; he transformed them. Peter the fisherman becomes Peter the rock. But the contemporary literature usually assumes the transformation is in service of an organisational goal. Jesus's transformation is in service of the Kingdom, which sometimes runs against organisational survival.

## Level 5 leadership

Collins, in *Good to Great*: personal humility plus professional will. Jesus scores extraordinarily on both axes. But the framework assumes the institution being led is the unit of analysis, and Jesus is conspicuously uninterested in institutional self-perpetuation in the way Collins's framework requires.

## Adaptive leadership

Heifetz makes the distinction between technical problems — which have known solutions — and adaptive challenges, which require learning, value-shift, and loss. Jesus's ministry is almost entirely adaptive work. When people come to him for technical solutions (*"Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me"*) he reframes the question. His parables function exactly as Heifetz says adaptive interventions should: they raise the heat without resolving it, leaving the hearer in productive disequilibrium.

## Where Jesus fits the frameworks

By the criteria most leadership scholarship uses — vision-casting, follower-transformation, multiplication, durability of impact, cultural influence — he is the most effective leader in human history. A movement of twelve that became the largest religious tradition on earth, with no institutional infrastructure, no writings of his own, no political power, and a three-year active ministry ending in execution.

## Where he does not fit

Modern leadership literature largely assumes the leader is leading *something* — an organisation, a movement, a team. Jesus leads people *toward* something — the Kingdom — that is not coterminous with any institution he establishes. This is a critical asymmetry. A pastor who is taught to lead "the church" as institution may find Jesus a poor model for that. A pastor who is taught to lead people toward the Kingdom may find every other model insufficient.

There is also the matter of metrics. Jesus's ministry by conventional measures at the close of three years: one of his inner circle had betrayed him, another had denied him, the rest had fled. The crowds had turned. He was executed as a criminal. By any reasonable performance dashboard, his ministry was a catastrophic failure at the moment of his death. The resurrection reframes that — but the point stands: he did not optimise for legible mid-stream success indicators, and any leadership theory that requires he should have done so reveals more about itself than about him.

### Section Three

## Contemporary church leadership formation, measured against this

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There is real diversity in pastoral training, and what I describe here is not the whole field. But there are recurring patterns in the dominant evangelical, charismatic, and mainline formation streams worth naming honestly.

### What contemporary pastoral training tends to emphasise

- Preaching and communication skills
- Vision-casting and strategic planning
- Organisational management — staff, budgets, buildings, programmes
- Pastoral care competencies
- Theological education, usually classroom-based and individual-cognitive
- Leadership development drawn increasingly from business and management literature
- Church growth methodology — what produces measurable attendance and giving

### What gets less attention in most formation pathways

- Sustained contemplative withdrawal as a structural rhythm rather than a personal preference
- Formation at tables — eating with people, especially people outside the church's social comfort zone
- Apprenticeship — being formed by being with someone over years, not by accumulating credentials
- Concentric investment — going deeper with fewer rather than broader with more
- Interruption as ministry rather than ministry as schedule
- Confrontation of religious power, especially one's own tradition's religious power
- The Kingdom as a horizon larger than the institutional church
- Spiritual direction and the inner life as the substrate from which everything else grows

- Suffering, weakness, and limitation as theological categories rather than problems to manage
- Time among the marginalised as formation, not as outreach project

The gap is not absolute. There are streams of pastoral formation that take all this seriously — the Anabaptist tradition, much Catholic and Orthodox formation, the contemplative renewal movements, certain pockets of evangelical formation. But the dominant centre of gravity in English-speaking pastoral training, for the better part of four decades, has drifted toward a CEO-pastor model that takes its primary cues from the business school rather than from the gospels.

The consequence is that a pastor formed in this dominant stream often arrives in ministry equipped to lead an organisation Jesus did not establish, by methods Jesus did not use, toward metrics Jesus did not value. This is not a moral failing of the individual. It is a systemic formation problem.

## A note on the difficulty of comparison

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Any honest comparison between first-century ministry and contemporary ministry has to reckon with the difference the tools make. Jesus walked. He used boats. He spoke to whoever was within earshot. He could not be in two places at once. He had no way to extend his voice beyond the crowd that gathered in front of him. The constraints of geography and bandwidth shaped what was possible.

A pastor today has a car, a phone, a laptop, a video call, a social media reach, and the ability to be functionally present to people scattered across the world. This is not a small difference. It changes what “spending time with people” can mean. It changes what ministry can extend across. It changes the scale at which a single person can pastor. The contrast complicates the comparison, and I want to name that complication rather than ignore it.

Two things seem true at once. First, Jesus would have used these tools. He used the tools available to him with extraordinary intentionality — feet, boats, bread, wells, mountains, tables, oil — and there is no theological reason to think he would refuse the tools available now. Second, the pattern of his ministry suggests he would have used them in particular ways.

The principle worth naming is that technology in Jesus’s hands would be incarnational, not disincarnational. It would extend presence, not simulate it. The test for any tool would be: does this put me in front of a person, or does it put a screen between me and a person?

A phone call to the prisoner’s wife when he cannot be there in person — yes. A car to get to where the recovery house is meeting that evening — yes. A video call to keep contact with a disciple who has moved interstate — yes. But not: a livestream replacing the table. Not a Zoom meeting replacing the walk. Not a social media account replacing the carpark conversation. Not a building, a website, or a programme functioning as a substitute for the slow, costly work of being where people are.

The same test applies in reverse to the pastor’s own life. The phone that lets him stay in contact with his Peter when distance prevents presence is the same phone that, in different hands, prevents presence with the child sitting next to him on the couch. The car that gets him to the prison is the same car that, on Saturday morning, can carry him past his daughter’s game on the way to an event that feels more “ministry-like.” The tools are not neutral. They serve whoever is shaping the rhythm.

What Jesus would model, I think, is this: the tools follow the pattern, not the other way around. First the rhythm of withdrawal, presence, tables, interruption, formation. Then the tools, used in service of that rhythm. When the tools start to shape the rhythm — when the phone dictates when prayer ends, when the inbox dictates which interruption gets received, when the digital reach inflates the public teaching at the expense of the table — the pattern has been inverted and the ministry distorted, however effective it appears by other measures.

## The family question

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Most “what would Jesus do” frameworks quietly skip past something obvious. Jesus did not have a wife and children. The pattern of his ministry was made possible in part by the absence of family responsibilities of a particular kind. Any honest reflection on his leadership has to take this seriously, because a pastor with a family cannot simply transpose his rhythm without considering what is being transposed.

### Jesus’s cultural setting

In first-century Palestinian Judaism, marriage and procreation were normative and theologically weighted — the command of Genesis 1:28 was understood as a religious obligation. Celibacy was unusual but not unprecedented. The Essene community at Qumran practised it, John the Baptist seems to have been celibate, and there were prophetic and ascetic traditions that included celibacy. Jesus’s own teaching in Matthew 19:10–12 acknowledges celibacy as a calling “for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” but treats it as exceptional and gifted, not as superior.

That said, Jesus had a family. The gospels record that he had a mother, brothers — James, Joses, Judas, Simon — and sisters. His relationship with his family of origin was complicated. Mark 3:21 records his family attempting to seize him, thinking he was out of his mind. Mark 3:31–35 records him redefining family around obedience to the will of God. John 7:5 notes that his brothers did not believe in him during his ministry. From the cross he entrusted his mother to the beloved disciple. After the resurrection, James becomes a central leader in the Jerusalem church and is martyred for it.

*When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.*

JOHN 19:26–27 · ESV

So Jesus was not detached from family. He carried family complexity, navigated tension with his family of origin, and at the moment of his death made provision for his mother’s care. What he did not have was a wife

and children of his own.

## What celibacy made possible — and what it cost

The Jewish rabbinic tradition assumed a married rabbi with children. Most of the rabbis whose teaching is preserved in the Mishnah and Talmud were married. They did not separate ministry from family — family life was the matrix of religious formation. The Shema is given to be taught “when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise” (Deuteronomy 6:7). The home was the primary site of religious formation. Had Jesus been married with children, the integration of family and ministry would not have been a problem requiring solution — it would have been the assumed shape of faithfulness.

What he could not have done with a family is what he did do without one: itinerancy on the scale he practised, exposure to danger on the scale he accepted, freedom of movement of the kind his ministry required. Paul makes exactly this argument in 1 Corinthians 7:32–35 — the unmarried can be devoted to the Lord’s affairs without the legitimate competing claim of spouse and children.

*I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided.*

1 CORINTHIANS 7:32–34 · ESV

There is no embarrassment in Paul’s argument here. The legitimate competing claim of family is not framed as a deficiency. It is framed as a genuine and good reality that shapes what is possible.

## The structural argument

Here is where the question gets interesting. If we are honest about Jesus’s pattern — sustained withdrawal, deep investment in few, refusal to optimise for visibility, presence at tables on the margins, interruption as ministry — none of this is incompatible with marriage and children. It might in fact be *more* compatible with family life than the dominant CEO-pastor model is.

The pastor working a 60-hour week, evening meetings stacked on top of one another, event-driven ministry, perpetual visibility, no rhythm of withdrawal, programme management on top of preaching preparation — that pastor’s family life is structurally under siege, and it is not Jesus’s pattern that is doing the siege-work. It is a model of ministry he did not practise.

A pastor who structures ministry around Jesus's actual rhythms — protected contemplative time, concentric investment in a few, presence at tables rather than performance from platforms, formation through life-on-life apprenticeship — would in many respects have a *more* sustainable family life than the conventional alternative, not less. The family becomes a participant in the ministry rather than a competitor to it. The home becomes a primary site of formation rather than a place to recover from ministry exhaustion. The annex sets out two calendars that try to make this argument visible — the same week, with and without family, and what survives the transposition.

There are real losses Jesus's celibacy made possible — the absolute itinerancy, the absolute exposure. But the pattern of his ministry, as distinct from the geography of it, is not what threatens family life. The thing that threatens family life is a pattern of ministry he did not practise and would not have recognised.

## Questions worth sitting with

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I have tried to write this as reflection rather than prescription. The questions below are the ones I find myself returning to, and I offer them in that spirit.

What would have to be true of my week for it to look more like the rhythm the gospels describe than the rhythm my role currently produces? Where would the resistance come from — from outside, or from inside?

Where is my Galilee? Where is the periphery I am called to inhabit, and where is the Jerusalem I am called to engage strategically without making it my centre of gravity?

Who are my twelve? Who are my three? Who am I investing in so deeply that the formation passes through life-with rather than through programme delivery?

What does it mean for me to protect the pre-dawn hour as a structural rhythm rather than an aspirational one? And what would have to change about my evenings for that to be sustainable?

Which interruptions in my week am I receiving as ministry, and which am I treating as deviations from a plan? Where does the gospel ask me to invert that?

What are the tables in my week, and who is at them? If the table is the site where *chen* and *hesed* take visible form, what is my table doing?

What in my use of phone, screen, car, and platform is extending my presence to people I could not otherwise reach, and what is replacing my presence with people I could?

If I have a family, where in my week is the home functioning as the first site of *da'at* — the place where formation happens by being together — and where is it functioning as the place I recover from ministry rather than the place I do it?

I do not have settled answers to these questions for myself, after a long time of asking them. I offer them not as a checklist but as the kind of questions a person might want to carry for a season and let do their work slowly.



## Two weekly calendars

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Both calendars are thought experiments. They imagine Jesus present in a contemporary regional Tasmanian setting, doing what he did in Galilee: announcing the Kingdom, forming disciples, eating with people on the margins, withdrawing to pray, confronting religious power where *mishpat* is at stake. The first calendar imagines him without family responsibilities. The second imagines the same week with a wife and three children, aged twelve, nine, and five.

The argument the side-by-side is meant to make is structural. The substance of the gospel rhythm survives the introduction of a family. What does not survive — and what was never gospel rhythm in the first place — is the CEO-pastor week.

### Calendar One · Without Family

#### SUNDAY

*7h withdrawal · 4h public · 3h table*

|              |            |                                                                                                  |
|--------------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4:30–7:00am  | SOLITUDE   | Walking and prayer · alone · the back paddock track                                              |
| 9:30–11:00am | TEACHING   | Worshipping with a local congregation · reads, listens, doesn't take over                        |
| 12:00–3:00pm | TABLE      | Long lunch with the household of a man recently out of prison · wife, three kids, two neighbours |
| 4:00–6:00pm  | THE TWELVE | Walk with the disciples · debriefs the morning · they ask why he ate with that family            |
| 9:00–11:00pm | SOLITUDE   | Prayer · alone                                                                                   |

## MONDAY

*Day of withdrawal · disciples sent on their own errands*

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|                    |           |                                                                              |
|--------------------|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Before dawn</i> | SOLITUDE  | Leaves the house before anyone is up · drives to the coast                   |
| <i>All day</i>     | SOLITUDE  | Alone · walking, silent, no phone · the disciples know he won't be reachable |
| <i>After dark</i>  | THE THREE | Returns · sits late with Peter, James, John · says little, listens           |

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## TUESDAY

*5h with the twelve · 4h public · 2h interruption*

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|                       |              |                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>5:30–7:00am</i>    | SOLITUDE     | Prayer before the day starts                                                                                      |
| <i>8:00–11:00am</i>   | THE TWELVE   | Walking teaching · no classroom · stops, sits, points at things, asks questions back                              |
| <i>11:00am–1:00pm</i> | INTERRUPTION | A woman approaches in the carpark · her son is unwell · the planned visit is abandoned · two hours in her kitchen |
| <i>2:00–6:00pm</i>    | PUBLIC       | Open conversation at the community garden · whoever turns up · question-led, not lecture                          |
| <i>7:00–9:30pm</i>    | TABLE        | Dinner with the twelve at someone's house · the host's neighbours drift in                                        |

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## WEDNESDAY

*A day on the margins · prison · hospital · recovery house*

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|                |          |                                                                                                   |
|----------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5:30–6:30am    | SOLITUDE | Prayer                                                                                            |
| 9:00am–12:00pm | MARGINS  | Risdon · visits inside · sits with men who get few visitors · two of the twelve come with him     |
| 12:30–2:00pm   | TABLE    | Lunch with the families waiting in the visitor centre carpark · sandwiches from the boot          |
| 3:00–5:00pm    | MARGINS  | Royal Hobart · oncology · two specific people, by name · no agenda, just present                  |
| 6:00–8:00pm    | MARGINS  | Drop-in meal at the addiction recovery house · serves food, doesn't preach, knows everyone's name |

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## THURSDAY

*Day of public teaching and confrontation*

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|                 |            |                                                                                                               |
|-----------------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5:30–7:00am     | SOLITUDE   | Prayer · long this morning · the day will cost him                                                            |
| 10:00am–12:00pm | PUBLIC     | Speaks in a public square · talks about money, mercy, and the Kingdom · the crowd thins when he gets specific |
| 1:00–3:00pm     | CONFRONT   | Meeting with denominational leaders who have asked to see him · he goes · he is direct · it does not go well  |
| 4:00–6:00pm     | THE TWELVE | Walks with the twelve · processes the meeting · doesn't soften it, doesn't gloat                              |
| 7:00–10:00pm    | TABLE      | Invited to dinner by one of the leaders from the meeting · accepts · eats with someone who opposes him        |

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## FRIDAY

*Deeper formation day with the three*

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|               |           |                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5:30–7:00am   | SOLITUDE  | Prayer                                                                                                                                  |
| 9:00am–4:00pm | THE THREE | Drives Peter, James, John up to kunanyi · walks, sits, eats with them · works through what they're afraid of · doesn't fix it, names it |
| 5:30–8:00pm   | TABLE     | Sabbath meal · his mother is there · so is the haemorrhaging woman's contemporary equivalent · candles, bread, wine, no programme       |

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## SATURDAY

*Sabbath proper · interruption-receiving day*

|                  |              |                                                                                           |
|------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Morning</i>   | PUBLIC       | Synagogue · sits at the back · is asked to read · reads Isaiah 61 · sits down             |
| <i>Afternoon</i> | INTERRUPTION | Heals someone in a way that breaks Sabbath convention · is criticised · doesn't apologise |
| <i>Evening</i>   | TABLE        | Eats with friends · laughs a lot · sleeps in the boat tomorrow before the storm           |

*Across the week: roughly 20 hours of solitude and prayer, 22 hours at tables or on the margins, 16 hours with the twelve or the three, 8 hours of public teaching, 5 hours of unplanned or interrupted time, and zero hours of administration or strategic planning.*

*The absence of the last category is theological, not accidental.*

### Calendar Two · The Same Week, With a Family

**W**ife, three children aged twelve, nine, and five. The gospel rhythms are preserved, redistributed across the household. The substance of the ministry survives intact. What changes is the geometry.

## SUNDAY

*Family worship · Sunday lunch becomes the table*

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|              |          |                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5:30–7:00am  | SOLITUDE | Walking and prayer · before the children wake · this hour is sacred                                                                                     |
| 9:30–11:00am | PUBLIC   | Worshipping with the local congregation · whole family together · the five-year-old on his knee                                                         |
| 12:00–3:00pm | TABLE    | Sunday lunch at their own home · the man recently out of prison and his family invited · the children meeting his children · two tables pushed together |
| 4:00–6:00pm  | FAMILY   | Walk to the river · all five of them · the twelve are not here · this is family time, protected                                                         |
| 7:00–8:30pm  | FAMILY   | Bath · bedtime stories · the Shema-equivalent prayed over each child by name                                                                            |
| 9:30–10:30pm | SOLITUDE | Prayer · alone · the day reviewed before God                                                                                                            |

## MONDAY

*Half-day withdrawal · school run anchors the day*

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|               |           |                                                                                                               |
|---------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5:30–7:00am   | SOLITUDE  | Prayer · before anyone else stirs                                                                             |
| 7:00–8:45am   | FAMILY    | Breakfast · school lunches · school drop-off · this is ministry, not preparation for ministry                 |
| 9:30am–2:30pm | SOLITUDE  | Drives to the coast · alone · walking, silent, phone off · once a month this is the whole day                 |
| 3:00–5:30pm   | FAMILY    | School pickup · homework at the kitchen table · the twelve-year-old asks a hard question, he sits with it     |
| 5:30–7:30pm   | FAMILY    | Dinner as a family · no visitors tonight · the Monday table belongs to the household                          |
| 8:30–10:00pm  | THE THREE | Phone call with Peter · the twelve are scattered tonight · technology used to extend presence, not replace it |

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## TUESDAY

*Mobile teaching with the twelve · evening table at home*

|                |              |                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5:30–6:45am    | SOLITUDE     | Prayer                                                                                                                                      |
| 7:00–8:45am    | FAMILY       | School run                                                                                                                                  |
| 9:30am–12:00pm | THE TWELVE   | Walking teaching · the same as before · formation in motion                                                                                 |
| 12:00–1:30pm   | INTERRUPTION | A woman approaches in the carpark · her son is unwell · the planned visit is abandoned · ninety minutes in her kitchen                      |
| 2:00–3:00pm    | PUBLIC       | Short open conversation at the community garden · ends in time for school pickup                                                            |
| 3:00–5:30pm    | FAMILY       | School pickup · sport for the nine-year-old · he watches the whole game · the twelve are not invited to this                                |
| 6:30–9:30pm    | TABLE        | Dinner at home · three of the twelve come over · his wife cooks · the children eat with them, then go to bed, then the conversation deepens |

## WEDNESDAY

*Day on the margins · some of it the family shares, some of it not*

|                |          |                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5:30–6:45am    | SOLITUDE | Prayer                                                                                                                                                     |
| 7:00–8:45am    | FAMILY   | School run                                                                                                                                                 |
| 9:00am–12:00pm | MARGINS  | Risdon · inside visits · two of the twelve with him · the children are at school, this is not their day                                                    |
| 12:30–2:30pm   | TABLE    | Lunch with the families in the visitor centre carpark · sandwiches the children helped make this morning · they don't see it but they're part of it        |
| 3:00–5:30pm    | FAMILY   | School pickup · he's home for the afternoon · the hospital visit moves to another day                                                                      |
| 6:30–8:30pm    | MARGINS  | Drop-in meal at the recovery house · the twelve-year-old comes with him tonight · serves food alongside her father · this is formation she will not forget |
| 9:30–10:00pm   | FAMILY   | Sits on the edge of the twelve-year-old's bed · they talk about what they saw · she has questions                                                          |

## THURSDAY

*Public teaching · confrontation · he comes home tired*

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|                 |            |                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5:30–7:00am     | SOLITUDE   | Long prayer this morning · today will cost him · his wife knows what's coming                                                         |
| 7:00–8:45am     | FAMILY     | School run · normal · he kisses them goodbye as if it's any other day                                                                 |
| 10:00am–12:00pm | PUBLIC     | Speaks in a public square · money, mercy, Kingdom · the crowd thins when he gets specific                                             |
| 1:00–3:00pm     | CONFRONT   | Meeting with denominational leaders · he goes · he is direct · it does not go well                                                    |
| 3:00–5:30pm     | FAMILY     | School pickup · he doesn't say much in the car · the children sense it · the five-year-old hugs him at the door                       |
| 6:00–7:30pm     | FAMILY     | Family dinner · he tells his wife about the meeting · she sees him clearly · the home holds him                                       |
| 8:30–10:00pm    | THE TWELVE | Video call with two of the twelve who weren't there today · processes it · the dinner with the opposing leader moves to next Thursday |

## FRIDAY

*Half-day with the three · Sabbath meal at home*

|               |           |                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5:30–7:00am   | SOLITUDE  | Prayer                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 7:00–8:45am   | FAMILY    | School run                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 9:30am–2:30pm | THE THREE | Drives Peter, James, John up the mountain · walks, sits, eats with them · works through what they're afraid of · half-day, not full day, in this season of life            |
| 3:00–5:30pm   | FAMILY    | School pickup · preparing the Sabbath table together · the children setting places                                                                                         |
| 6:00–9:00pm   | TABLE     | Sabbath meal · his mother is there · the haemorrhaging woman's contemporary equivalent · candles, bread, wine · the children stay up · this table is the heart of the week |

## SATURDAY

*Saturday morning sport · Sabbath proper · evening table*

|                |              |                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8:00–11:00am   | FAMILY       | Junior cricket · he is on the sideline, not on his phone<br>· the other parents notice · he knows their names                                                   |
| 11:30am–1:00pm | FAMILY       | Lunch at home · slow · no agenda                                                                                                                                |
| 2:00–4:00pm    | INTERRUPTION | Someone arrives at the door needing help · he listens ·<br>the planned afternoon nap is abandoned · this is what<br>Sabbath looks like when mishpat is at stake |
| 5:00–7:00pm    | FAMILY       | Walking with the family · the five-year-old on his<br>shoulders · ordinary, holy                                                                                |
| 7:00–9:30pm    | TABLE        | Dinner with friends · the household opens · laughter,<br>late · the children fall asleep on the couch                                                           |

*Across this second week: roughly 14 hours of solitude and prayer, 32 hours of family-home-school time, 16 hours at tables or on the margins, 11 hours with the twelve or the three, 5 hours of public teaching, 4 hours of unplanned or interrupted time.*

Solitude time roughly halved, but the daily rhythm preserved — the cost taken from the once-a-month long withdrawal rather than from the daily hour. Public teaching roughly halved as well, which is theologically interesting: public teaching is the most visible piece of pastoral identity and the easiest to inflate. The hours given to the twelve and the three reduced by about a third, and what remained shifted toward integration into household life rather than separation from it.

What did not have to be sacrificed: the pre-dawn solitude, every single day. The Wednesday day on the margins. The Friday formation time with the three. The confrontation on Thursday. The Sabbath table as the heart of the week. The substance of the ministry survives the introduction of children intact.

What gets added is thirty-two hours of family-and-school time, none of which is taken from ministry. All of it is ministry, in the specifically Jewish sense that the home is the first site of *da'at*. The Shema is given to be

taught when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way. Jesus with children would have been the one teaching the Shema, not the one delegating it.

The Wednesday change is the one worth drawing the eye to. In the first calendar, Wednesday was margins all day. In the second, the prison morning and the carpark lunch happen, the hospital visit is dropped, the recovery house happens in the evening — and the twelve-year-old comes with him to the recovery house. The day on the margins is not abandoned. It is redistributed across the family. The children become participants in the ministry rather than competitors with it. The conversation on the edge of the bed at 9:30pm is where the *da'at* gets passed on.

The Saturday morning sideline is worth defending specifically, because it is where contemporary pastoral imagination most often fails. A pastor on the sideline of his child's cricket game, not on his phone, knowing the other parents' names — *that is ministry*. It is ministry in the most properly incarnational sense. The other parents are not a project. The presence is not a strategy. But the *chen* that emerges from genuine presence over years is the soil out of which everything else grows.

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*These reflections did not begin with artificial intelligence. They began with years of ministry, reading, prayer, suffering, and conversation.*

*During the development of this manuscript, AI became a conversation partner. It challenged assumptions, tested arguments, suggested structures, and helped refine expression. Many of the words that follow emerged through that dialogue.*

*The experiences, convictions, interpretations, and conclusions remain my own.*

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