



WEEKLY STUDY

WEEK 4

This week we dug into the repeated invitation to practice the Way of Jesus in our daily lives. We are all practicing towards something. We are practicing A way regardless of who we are or what we believe is important. We are formed by the things we love and pursue. If we love and pursue Christ-likeness, we are formed into his image. We can make a one time decision to follow Jesus, but following him requires thousands of daily decisions to practice in his Way, THE Way.

Peace of Christ,
Dr. Mark Youngman
Pastor of Discipleship

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture and follow the daily prayer prompt. Pray this or another prayer as you move into your day.

Jesus,

*You tell us that you are the Way, the truth, and life.
Guide me in your truth today, that I may see with your eyes
You are the Way to a full life of power and purpose.*

Amen.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: PHILIPPIANS 4.8-9

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

- Paul was writing to others who were trying to follow Jesus. They had struggled and wondered what it would take to live a life in response to the gift of salvation through Jesus. What they received from Paul was a beautiful tool of grace. **As you consider which way to go in any particular situation, ask yourself—Is it true? Noble? Right? Pure? Is it lovely, admirable, and praiseworthy? How can you use these as a daily filter to your decisions? What would help you to stay focused on them?**
- *Holy God, teach me a rhythm of thinking of things that are good. Focus my affections and desires on You. Give me strength to practice the Way of Christ. Amen.*

TUESDAY: MATTHEW 5.17-19

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.¹⁹ Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

- These words of Jesus are located early in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Prior to this passage, Jesus had proclaimed the beatitudes. He said things like, “Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are the persecuted.” They were hard teachings that are so different from the norm that they will require practice. And while we live them out, Jesus calls us to be salt and light to a hurting world (Matthew 5.13-16). So we practice being salt and light to a world that has lost its saltiness and experiences great darkness. **How do you practice being salt and light in your daily life?**
- *Jesus, you are the light of the world. Help me to reflect your light, and give me grace as I practice your Way. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: MATTHEW 7.24-29

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

²⁸ *When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching,²⁹ because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.*

- Near the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus repeats the command to put into practice the words that he has spoken. These words are the rock on which we can build our lives. **When has God’s word been a strength to you in times of great trials and life’s storms?**
- *God, thank you for the words of life that Jesus came to share. May they take root in me as I put them into practice today. Amen.*

THURSDAY: ACTS 9.1-6

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.³ As he neared Damascus

on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

⁵ “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied.⁶ “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

- Before Paul was a leader in the Christian movement, he persecuted followers of Jesus as a devout religious leader—a Pharisee. He was called Saul back then and his actions did not go unnoticed. In this passage, he was on his way to Damascus intending to snuff out the Jesus movement in places of worship there. The people he was looking for were known as those who belonged to the Way. On the road to Damascus, the resurrected Jesus appeared to Saul and initiated one of the biggest transformations in history. **Does the way you follow Jesus draw attention? Do people notice that you are one of his followers? If so, has that ever led to any kind of persecution?**
- *God, Above all else, I want to be known as a follower of Jesus. Thank you for seeking to transform the hardest of hearts, even mine. Amen.*

FRIDAY: ACTS 9.17-20

Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”¹⁸ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized,¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus.²⁰ At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.

- Saul’s encounter with Jesus left him unable to see. God sent Ananias to move Saul to the next stages of his conversion. Notice the quick progression. Saul could see again. He was baptized. He ate to regain strength. He spent time with the disciples (the ones he had intended to persecute). And he began to preach that Jesus is the Son of God. It was a conversion that no one saw coming. God was writing another great story through his life. **Have you experienced a dramatic moment of conversion? Who has been sent to lead you to the waters of baptism and to proclaim that Jesus is the Son of God.**
- *God, at times I wonder if I am a fully converted follower of Jesus. Remove any scales that remain on my eyes—anything that leads me to miss your movement in my life. Draw me to (or remind me of) the waters of my baptism and give me strength to be your vessel. Amen.*

SATURDAY: PSALM 51. 6, 10-12

*Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.
Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

¹¹ *Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.*

¹² *Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

- David had committed sins of adultery and murder. He was far from God, yet because he had experienced God's mercy and power before, he knew he could be transformed into the man God intended him to be. A pure heart, renewed spirit, the joy of salvation, and a willing spirit are things that only God can grant. Like Paul, David's changed heart was a means for others to know God better. **As you practice the Way of Jesus, how might the lives of those around you be changed?**
- *Jesus, I look to your Way today. May it lead me to a pure heart and renewed sense of your Spirit. Amen.*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Reflect on these quotes from Sunday's message.

"A Christian community at worship is a community gathered for rehearsal. It is "practicing" the practices in the same way a child practices catching a ball or playing scales." -Dorothy Bass

- Do you tend to think of worship in this way? Does it ever feel like practice for something even better?

"*Pilgrim* tells us we are people who spend our lives going someplace, going to God, and whose path for getting there is the way, Jesus Christ." -Eugene Peterson

- If we are pilgrims "going to God", what keeps us going? What distractions do we encounter along the path? What do we require for sustenance?

"Everybody thinks of changing humanity and nobody thinks of changing himself." Tolstoy

- The great author Leo Tolstoy was being a little pessimistic here, but was he right? One of the great distractions when following the Way of Jesus is to focus on whether or not others are following his Way before we ourselves are following his Way. How can you be an agent of change through focusing first on your walk in the Way of Jesus?