

The Walk: Five Essential Practices of the Christian Life

Small Group Leader Guide



Thank you for leading your small group through *The Walk* study. We believe you will find this study will grow you in your individual faith, your corporate faith but also in community as a small group. When our small groups start to incorporate all five of these essential practices you will grow in authenticity, depth, and commitment with each other. Your group may already do many of these well. If that's the case, we encourage you to consider what your next step in each of these areas might be and how you can practice them with each other.

How to use the study:

- **A sample 1 ½ hour meeting might look like this:**
 - ⇒ First 15 – check in and connection time
 - ⇒ Next 15 – Show the DVD session
 - ⇒ Next 45 – Discussion time
 - ⇒ Last 15 – Prayer
- **Discussion time.** We have provided some focused questions that you can use for each chapter. You are also free to use the Leader Guide or come up with your own questions.
- **Optional Activities.** Many of the chapters are intended to encouraging members to take part in a new practice during the week, i.e. starting a gratitude journal, or doing five acts of kindness. Many of these are suggested in the book. We've included others as a way to help your group engage in living out the practices during the week. Asking how the group participants have engaged the optional activities each week will give you an easy way to begin your next meeting.

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Week 1: Worship

Opening Prayer (or choose your own):

Loving God, thank you for walking with us. Thank you for inviting us to walk with you. Be with us as we learn together and grow in our understanding of what it means to be a Christian. In the name of your Son Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.ⁱ

Group Questions:

1. Pastor Adam shares that *“without spiritual exercises or practices, we will find it difficult to keep up as Christ calls us to follow.”* What does it look like in your life when you are spiritually winded or struggling?ⁱⁱ

“When pursued daily, these practices will increase your spiritual health, deepen your faith, make you more aware of God’s presence, and help you live the Christian life.”ⁱⁱⁱ

2. Pastor Adam says that *“Worship connects us with God, and it connects us with others.”* As you think about worshipping with others, what are your favorite aspects of corporate worship? Why is it important for us to worship in community?^{iv}

3. When you worship on your own how central is prayer to your faith? How does the five-fold pattern of prayer compare with your current practice?^v

4. Part of living fully into worship is cultivating a spirit of gratitude. In what ways do you choose to cultivate gratitude?

5. What would it look like to incorporate this practice into our small group community? What would prayer look like? How might we incorporate gratitude with each other?

Prayer:

Take a few minutes to ask the group how they can all be praying for each other and record them so you can look back on them next week. Consider sending out a reminder a few days later.

Close with prayer. You can use the prayer at the end of chapter 1 or choose our own.

Optional activities:

- **Gratitude Journal**: There is an app called *“The 5 Minute Journal”* that you can use to help you journal your gratitude each week. You can also use a physical journal or post-it notes.
- **Commit**: A bit of a different take on fasting, choosing instead to take on something to draw you nearer to God. It could include a specific time of day to pray, an activity you choose to add, or a person with whom you will connect spiritually.^{vi}
- **Observe**: There is so much beauty all around us, so much to be grateful for, but we often fail to recognize it. Walk outside and pick up a rock and place it in your pocket. Use it as a reminder to give thanks throughout the day. Write down instances when this rock was a reminder to give thanks.^{vii}
- **Take a Walk**: Find a time to meet up with someone from your small group to take a walk spending time connecting in God’s creation.

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Week 2: Study

Opening Prayer (or choose your own):

Holy and loving God, thank you for walking with us. Thank you for revealing yourself to us as we walk with you. We pray that you will open our eyes and our ears so we may be mindful of what you are saying to us. Open our hearts to receive your word. In the name of your Son Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.^{viii}

Group Questions:

1. Do you remember your first experience with the Bible? If so, what was that experience like? Who introduced you to the Bible?
2. Read the definition of general and special revelation on page 43, middle of the page. When you think about general revelation, how have you experienced this in your own life? Where have you seen God speaking through the world around us? (Nature, The arts, life experiences, other people, and our own conscience, intuition and reason)
3. How have you experienced special revelation? (The Holy Spirit, Scripture, Jesus)
4. How do we know when we're hearing from the Holy Spirit?
5. In the book Pastor Adam suggests several ways to read scripture; reading for understanding, reading for formation, praying the scriptures, Lectio Divina, and studying with others. Which have you found to be most helpful to you? Why?
6. What keeps you from studying Scripture on your own?
7. As a group, how can we challenge each other in our individual study practices? Is there one that we would like to all try this week as part of our individual study?

Prayer:

Take a few minutes to ask the group how they can all be praying for each other. Check in about requests from last week.

Close with prayer. You can use the prayer at the end of chapter 2 (p. 62) or choose your own.

Optional activities:

- **Lectio Divina** means "divine reading" and is a way for you to be open to what God might be saying to you in Scripture. Practicing this can allow you to let go of your own agenda and connect deeper with what God might be saying. Read the passage 4 times by following these steps:^{ix}
 - Read – What word or phrase speaks to you?
 - Meditate – What does your word or phrase means to you?
 - Pray – How is God calling you to act in response to this passage?
 - Contemplate – Silently reflect
- **Memorize:** Memorization is a way to instill within our heads and our hearts something that we can turn to in the midst of challenging and joyful times. It offers us an opportunity to center our thoughts on something that connects us deeply to God.^x
- **Take a Class.** Meet Your Bible is an excellent study if you are interested in learning more about Scripture.

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Week 3: Serve

Opening Prayer (or choose your own):

Holy and Loving God, thank you for inviting us to draw closer to you. Thank you for each person in this group. Be with us as we answer your call to love our neighbor and serve those in need. In the name of your Son Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.^{xi}

Group Questions:

1. What was one of your first experiences serving others? What was it like?
2. Is there someone in your life who has modeled serving for you?
3. How have you been transformed by serving or being served?
4. How do small acts of kindness move the needle on social justice issues? On cultural and political polarization? On loneliness?
5. Pastor Adam talks about being open to "*divine interruptions*" (p.79). Have you experienced divine interruptions before? If so, please explain.
6. What makes it difficult to open ourselves up to "*divine interruptions*"?
7. How might simple acts of kindness make a difference in how we treat each other? What would be the impact on our small group?
8. Where and when could we set up a time to serve together as a group?

Prayer:

Take a few minutes to ask the group how they can all be praying for each other. Check in about requests from last week.

Close with prayer. You can use the Wesley Covenant Prayer (p. 76) or choose your own.

Optional activities:

- Converse: None of us agree on everything, and there is always something that we can learn from someone else. John Wesley reminded us, "*though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike?*" (*The Catholic Spirit*). Take the time to connect with someone who thinks differently than you on an issue – give of your time by listening to them. How can you show love to this person? Pray for God to open your heart and mind to show love.^{xii}
- Remember: When we take the time to remember how someone we know has offered grace and love to us; it inspires us to live a life of service. Think of a time someone served you. How did their gift free you up to attend to what you needed to do? How did it make you feel? Send them a thank you note.^{xiii}
- Serve: As a group decide on a serving opportunity. It can be here at Resurrection or somewhere out in the community. Then show up and serve together. When you're done spend some time reflecting on the experience together.

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Week 4: Give

Opening Prayer (or choose your own):

Holy and Generous God, we thank you for your abundant blessings and your amazing generosity toward us. We stand in awe of your gifts of overflowing grace, mercy, and love. Open our hearts that we may respond to your love with generosity toward others. In the name of your Son Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.^{xiv}

Group Questions:

1. What is your favorite gift you have ever given? Why is it your favorite?
2. When have you received extraordinary generosity?
3. Read Matthew 6:19-21 (p.87) Do you believe that "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"? Why or why not?
4. Pastor Adam writes that the "keys to a good life" include gratitude, living purposefully, and generosity. How can these practices help you create a rhythm of generosity in your life? What might that look like for you?
5. What excites you about living a life of generosity? What makes you nervous or anxious about it?
6. What would it look like for us to be generous with each other? What stops you from asking for help when you need it?

Prayer:

Take a few minutes to ask the group how they can all be praying for each other. Check in about requests from last week.

Close with prayer. You can use the prayer at the end of chapter 4 (p. 110) or choose your own.

Optional activities:

- **Simplify:** We all have things stored up that we do not need. Take some time to go through one closet, drawer, or cabinet. Ask yourself this question – what in there have you not used that someone else could benefit from? Gather these things up and take them to a local charity or donate at the church.^{xv}
- **Release:** We have a tendency to over-plan, over-prepare, and over-schedule our lives and we have left no room for margin. What would it look like to release some of the "obligations" that we have which no longer serve us? What is one thing that no longer brings you joy but you feel obligated to do? Rather than fill it with something else, keep that space and time open to connect with God.^{xvi}
- **Give:** This week look for small ways to practice generosity and gratitude – pay for the coffee for the person behind you in line, write a note of gratitude and send it to someone, give generously of your time to someone who needs someone to listen and be present. See how small acts throughout the week start to lead to a rhythm of generosity.
- **Learn:** We offer Financial Peace University a couple of times a year at Resurrection. If you have never taken it, consider signing up the next time it is offered.

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Week 5: Share

Opening Prayer (or choose your own):

Lovin and Gracious God, we thank you for your presence in our lives. We thank you for the people who have shared your love and generosity with us, who have made your faithful presence known to us. We hear your call to be faithful witnesses and followers of Christ. We look to you for guidance, strength, and courage as we answer that call. In the name of your Son Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.^{xvii}

Group Questions:

1. Who were/are the most influential people in your life? Why?
2. Adam writes, "most people who choose to follow Jesus do so because of the positive witness of Christians through whom they experienced love and from whom they heard a compelling witness and example of what it means to be a Christian." (p.118) Who was that person in your life? How did they do this?
3. St. Francis of Assisi is sometimes credited with the phrase "Preach the gospel at all times. When necessary use words". What do you think this means? What does it look like in your personal life?^{xviii}
4. When it comes to sharing your faith with words, how comfortable are you sharing? What helps you feel more comfortable?
5. Pastor Adam talks about giving his "elevator" speech and how answering 3 simple questions helps him share his faith story:
 - What was your life like before you were a Christian?
 - What happened that changed that?
 - What difference has being a Christian made in your life?Think about your own answers to these questions. Would using this as a guideline make sharing your faith easier? Why or why not?
6. What role does relationship play in the way you share your faith with others?
7. How open are we as a group to inviting new members to join us?

Prayer:

Take a few minutes to ask the group how they can all be praying for each other. Check in about requests from last week.

Close with prayer. You can use the prayer at the end of chapter 5 (p. 136) or choose your own.

Optional activities:

- **Learn:** If you struggle with feeling comfortable sharing your faith story with others, consider taking the Cultivate class at Resurrection the next time it is offered. This short 3-4-week class helps you think through your own story and gives you practical opportunities to practice sharing it.
- **Host:** Consider hosting or joining an Open Table dinner (groups.cor.org). This is an easy way to meet new people, help them feel welcomed and begin to connect. Already hosting or attending? Invite someone else.
- **Share:** We live a good portion of our lives online. How are you sharing your faith story with others online? Who are you inviting to Easter?

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Week 6: Lessons from the Cross

Opening Prayer (or choose your own):

Loving and Gracious God, thank you for life and the many ways you bless our lives. Thank you for Jesus, who showed us by example how to walk with you. Guide and direct our steps as we practice the spiritual disciplines of worship and prayer, Bible study and listening, service, giving generously, and witnessing. Walk with us as we seek to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ. In his name we pray. Amen.^{xix}

Group Questions:

1. When you look at all five of the essential practices which one do you find the most compelling? Why?
2. What does Jesus' prayer life teach us about prayer?^{xx}
3. Jesus often quoted Scripture, even from the cross. What do you draw from his example?
4. Are there people around you that Jesus is calling you to care for as if they were your own mother or father?^{xxi}
5. When we consider Jesus' self-giving love in chapter six does anything new stand out to you?
6. Jesus' life was a living witness to all he encountered, even on the cross as he forgave. How might forgiveness play a role in how you share your faith with others?
7. As we enter into Easter, and all the busyness that comes with it, how will we be intentional in living out these practices going forward with each other?

Prayer:

Take a few minutes to ask the group how they can all be praying for each other. Check in about requests from last week.

Close with prayer. You can use the prayer at the end of chapter 6 (p. 159) or choose your own.

Optional activities:

- **Forgiven:** We are often our own worst critics, but God reminds us that we are forgiven. He offers us grace and mercy. This week before Easter, write a letter to God thanking Him for grace and forgiveness.
- **Next Steps:** Reflect on how you will continue to practice these five essential practices. Choose one or two that you would like to pursue a next step in. Maybe it's to join a small group or show up for a Serve Saturday. Whatever it is, take action to pursue it.
- **Prayer Walk:** As a group arrange a time this week to meet up and do the Prayer Walk are Resurrection. Guides can be found at the Connection Point in the A building.

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Works Cited

Hamilton, A. (2019). *The Walk: Five Essential Practices of the Christian Life*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Rev. Wendy Chrostek and Resurrection Staff. (2019). *The Walk: Five Essential Practices of the Christian Life Journal*. The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection.

Welch, C. (2019). *The Walk: Five Essential Practices of the Christian Life*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

End Notes

Week 1: Worship

ⁱ (Welch, 2019, p. 12)

ⁱⁱ (Hamilton, 2019, p. 12)

ⁱⁱⁱ (Hamilton, 2019, p. 13)

^{iv} (Hamilton, 2019, p. 27)

^v (Welch, 2019, p. 19)

^{vi} (Rev. Wendy Chrostek and Resurrection Staff, 2019)

^{vii} (Rev. Wendy Chrostek and Resurrection Staff, 2019)

Week 2: Study

^{viii} (Welch, 2019, p. 22)

^{ix} (Rev. Wendy Chrostek and Resurrection Staff, 2019)

^x (Rev. Wendy Chrostek and Resurrection Staff, 2019)

Week 3: Serve

^{xi} (Welch, 2019, p. 33)

^{xii} (Rev. Wendy Chrostek and Resurrection Staff, 2019)

^{xiii} (Rev. Wendy Chrostek and Resurrection Staff, 2019)

Week 4: Give

^{xiv} (Welch, 2019, pp. 40-41)

^{xv} (Rev. Wendy Chrostek and Resurrection Staff, 2019)

^{xvi} (Rev. Wendy Chrostek and Resurrection Staff, 2019)

Week 5: Share

^{xvii} (Welch, 2019, pp. 49-50)

^{xviii} (Hamilton, 2019, p. 131)

Week 6: From the Cross

^{xix} (Welch, 2019, p. 58)

^{xx} (Welch, 2019, p. 60)

^{xxi} (Welch, 2019, p. 62)