
CAMINO: WALK IN THE WAY PART ONE: DISCIPLESHIP

1. What is a disciple?

- *Isaiah 59:2a; Romans 3:23; John 3:16-18, 14:6; Acts 9:2;
Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15*

2. What do we do?

- *Ephesians 4:11-13; 2 Peter 3:18*

3. What do I do?

- *2 Peter 1:2-11*

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Camino: Walk in the Way Part One: Discipleship

More than 1,000 years of relentless feet, hooves, and (now) bike tires have literally carved this trail into the earth, making it likely the most famous 'pilgrimage' trek in the world.¹ It is called the "Camino de Santiago," or "The Way of Saint James." At its least, it is a 500-mile hiking trail through the Pyrenees Mountains and along the northern portion of Spain. At the most, it is a spiritual pilgrimage that people have trekked for over a thousand years.

I confess that I did not know anything about the Camino, until our middle son, Ryan, decided to take the pilgrimage along with his college roommates right after graduation. Within two weeks of beginning, two of his roommates dropped out, but he and his close friend finished the course. Along the way they trekked with new friends from all over the world. He was able to update us when the hostels he stayed in had Wi-Fi. It took them a little over a month before finally arriving at the Cathedral of Saint James, believed to be the final resting place of the bones of Saint James himself.

I don't know if you've ever watched Rick Steve's show on PBS, or read his books, but they are great resources when you travel, especially abroad.

Here is his explanation of the Camino de Santiago:

(Rick Steves' video - - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_2sGATllOM)

I don't share all this with you just so I can brag about my son, although I'll take any opportunity I can get to do that! Nor do I share this with you to just be some kind of historical tour guide. We are using the Camino as a metaphor for the Christian life. All of us who have become Christians have stepped onto the path of following Jesus. The word "camino" in Spanish means way, or path, or journey (not to be confused with "El Camino," which is a really cool classic car. My uncle had a metallic blue one. I had a few in my Hot Wheels as a kid.)

This four-part sermon series is giving an overview of what it means to be on this journey, walking the way of Jesus.

Our last sermon series talked about our church's mission – *why* we do what we do – which is to introduce people to Jesus Christ, equip people with a faith that works, and live as people with purpose – or more simply, to love, learn, and live.

¹ Hiking Spain's Oldest Trail: Camino De Santiago
Sam Burbank - <https://gearjunkie.com/hiking-spain-camino-de-santiago>

So in this sermon series we want to explore the “how” – *how* do we live out this Christian life; what is it we are to do on this journey?

So today we are looking at discipleship; what it is and how we do it.

Let’s begin by answering the question...

1. What is a ***disciple***?

It’s important that we define our terms. I’ll answer that by first saying that our church has a statement from which we approach this all-important part of our lives as Christians. This is how West Valley Church defines a disciple:

At West Valley Church ***we define a disciple as a passionate follower of Christ who is saved and compelled by grace to:***

- ***Love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength***
- ***Love and serve others sacrificially***
- ***Seek opportunities to explain their faith***

By knowing God’s word a disciple strives to:

- ***Grow in the likeness of Christ***
- ***Recognize and obey God’s direction***
- ***And be mentored and mentor others***

That sounds pretty comprehensive, and it should, because *all* of the Christian life is about being a disciple.

If you were going to walk the Camino, or any trail for that matter, you would need to begin by getting on the trail, right? So being a disciple begins with accepting Christ – allowing him to save you.

It is not about just acknowledging a religion or a philosophy; it is accepting what Christ has done for you on the cross and entering into a relationship with him.

God wants most of all to be in relationship with us, because he loves us. But it is our sin that separates us from him:

“The trouble is that your sins have cut you off from God.” (Isaiah 59:2a, tlb)

That’s our fault, not God’s. And yet there was nothing we could do to restore that relationship; once we sinned, (and according to the Bible we have *all* sinned, Romans 3:23), once we sinned there was not way to undo it and make it right again. So God, because he loves us so much, did what we couldn’t do:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not

believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." (John 3:16-18, niv)

That's what Jesus did for us. So the Camino begins for us when we recognize our sin, and ask God to forgive us for our sin that sent Jesus to the cross. And then we accept what he did in our place, and commit our lives to following him. That's when we step onto the Way. In fact, Jesus *is* the Way:

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6, niv)

And, according to Acts 9:2, early Christians were called "Followers of the Way." I don't know if you heard what that video said about a Pope in the Middle Ages: he declared that if people would make the pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago, they would earn forgiveness for their sins. Well, with all due respect to the Pope, according to the Bible itself, that is totally and absolutely *wrong*. There is *nothing* we can do to earn our forgiveness or salvation:

"God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it." (Ephesians 2:8-9, nlt)

So *we don't walk the way of Christianity in order to get saved; we walk it because we are saved*. And, if you recall our definition of a disciple, it is because we are saved that we are compelled by God's grace to be Christ's follower:

"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again." (2 Corinthians 5:14-15, niv)

To take the Camino, metaphorically speaking – to walk in the way of Christ – is to no longer live for ourselves, but to live for Christ who died for us and was raised to life again for us.

So, as a church then...

2. What do *we* do?

You'll recall that a key component of our mission statement is to "equip people with a faith that works". That comes from the Scripture that says:

"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:11-13, niv)

You'll recognize there that it is the job of the pastors, among other leaders, to equip Christ's people – or, to use our metaphor, to equip folks, or give them the equipment they need on the Camino – for their ministries, so that together all of us grow into

the whole measure of the fullness of Christ, or to be filled with Christ-likeness. That is what this journey – the Camino is all about. Each step on the Camino is a step toward greater maturity, is a step of growth, is a step of greater Christ-likeness. The Apostle Peter wrote in his second letter:

“You must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All glory to him, both now and forever! Amen.” (2 Peter 3:18, nlt)

To grow to be more like Christ and to know him more; that is an important part of what we are here to do as a church.

So if part of our mission is to equip people with a faith that works, then what are the things that we are doing in order to equip everyone in our church to grow in their faith, to move further along on the journey – to get further along the Camino? One of our core values is “intentional discipleship,” which means that we don’t expect that spiritual growth is going to happen accidentally or by osmosis; we must be intentional about it. So what are we doing as a church to be intentional about equipping everyone to grow, to move further along the Camino?

We have an intentional path that each of us can follow. Let me explain.

There are many entry points for folks to connect with our church family. Our hope is that every one of us would love our friends and family and neighbors enough that we would invite them to be a part of this great church with us. Someone can first connect through one of our intentional hospitality events, which we host. So it could be as a participant of an outside group who uses our facility, or by attending Trunk or Treat, or Breakfast with Santa, or Upward Soccer, or Homework Club, or Wednesday Night Life, or through a small group. But sooner or later, we hope everyone will have an encounter with God, with us as we gather together to worship him in our worship services. Now, a person’s *first* connection could very well be through a worship service; hopefully we are all encouraging and inviting our friends to encounter God with us in this gathering. We believe there is something attractive, or winsome, or appealing, about a group of friendly and accepting people who love each other, coming together into the presence of God and worshipping him. So if you are new here, or even if this is your first time with us, I hope you sense that there is more going on here than a group of friendly, caring people. There is a supernatural presence of God, who loves us, and you, very, very much. And it is important to know what your next step along the Way can be.

So the very first thing someone can do is meet us at Starting Point right after the service. Starting Point is right back there in the corner, with the sign that says “Starting Point.” It is there for you to get more information about whatever you might want to know – about our different small groups, about our children’s group and programs or youth group or any others, you can ask any questions of us, and just get to know us better. It is there, too, that we share with you what your next step after that can be.



You've been **loved** enough to be invited and you have heard how much God loves you. Hopefully you've accepted this new life that God has for you through Christ. Now your next step after that is to **learn** and grow by participating in our four core classes. We offer them several times a year. In the first class, which we just finished last week, you can learn our history, who we are as a church, and where we are going – why God has put us as this church on this corner to make a difference in this community. You can also consider how to become a member of our church if that is what you want to do.



The second class in our core classes is the one we started just this morning – it is a course on the essentials of what you need to grow spiritually: how to really commit your life to God, how to read the Bible, how to pray, how to be a more giving person, and getting involved in a small group.

In the third class, we help you discover your unique way to make a difference in this church and in the world, by using some inventories and tools to help you learn more about yourself. The fourth class helps you learn how you can get in on what God is doing in the world – how you can find your part in the great work of bringing God's love into the world around us. There are also men's and women's Bible Studies during the week, and Bible App classes on Sunday mornings at 8:50 am.

The next step on the way after the four core classes is a very, very important one to us, and that is to get involved in our small groups. We have all kinds of small groups that meet at different times throughout the week, in different parts of our community, and that are made up of different people. So if you are looking for a group that meets on a certain day, or near where you live, or that has similar interests as you, such as your age or marital status or if you have kids or not, or if you have a friend or two in a small group that you'd like to join – we can help you find the group you like. Our groups meet together from September to May, and it's in our small groups that we find the encouragement, support, prayer, help, and close friendships that we all were made for. We can't live the Christian life alone, and we don't grow only by sitting together in church once a week.

When our son Ryan was on the Camino he learned how much more rich the pilgrimage was with people. He was discouraged when two of the four of them had to leave. He struggled in the parts when he and his friends were separated and had to walk alone through some really boring, changeless sections of the Camino. He was buoyed by his friends and by making new friends, talking, sharing, and learning about each other's lives and experiences as they walked side by side. That is why small groups are so very important! That happens spiritually in a small group. Please! Consider joining a group. There is a place out near the café that you can stop and get more information. Small groups make a big, big difference in our lives.

All of us are here to make a difference in the world, or to **live** a life of purpose. So we want to help you be able to do that. One of the things that are very important to us, as well, is that we get involved in areas of outreach events. We have events specifically designed to reach out to our neighbors in our community. Trunk or Treat is specifically for us to show hospitality to our neighborhood by giving them a safe place to gather, in an environment that isn't about monsters and demons and gore but is about love and smiles and friendship and blessing.



Every one of those over 2000 people – every parent and every child that comes through gets to be loved by Jesus countless times because people who are filled with the Spirit of Jesus are loving them. We have greeters, we have 18 or so trunks, we have servers, we have carnival game leaders, we have kitchen workers – we have all kinds of ways to get involved. We have well over 150 people in our church who volunteer for this event – that is over 150 Christians – over 150 “little Christs” (which is what “Christian” means) – who can love each guest with the love of God. Trunk or Treat is just one event in the process of outreach relationship building that we have with our neighborhood, because every person that comes through gets invited to Breakfast with Santa and to Upward Soccer. At Breakfast with Santa we bless the community through what we are good at – cooking food, children’s ministry, and sharing the Good News because they get to eat a great meal, do several different holiday crafts, get a free picture with Santa (instead of paying \$20 at the mall!), and the children get to hear Santa tell the children the REAL reason for the season, as he reads the story of Jesus’ birth and tells them why Jesus came. At Upward Soccer, the children learn how to play soccer, have fun, learn sportsmanship and teamwork, and most of all have several opportunities to hear about Jesus and to accept him. So you can volunteer at any of these events in the way you feel most comfortable. Or you can get involved with your small group – we expect all of our small groups to serve in some way together, and many of them do it by signing up for a trunk, or doing set-up or clean-up of the events, or working in the kitchen, or any number of ways.

These one-time events and seasonal events really help you to see that you can make a difference by getting involved in a deeper way by becoming a part of an outreach team. We have teams of people who work together to build relationships with people in need and people in our neighborhood...teams like our cooking teams, or our Homework Club, guest services, or the café, or the missions team, or worship team, or youth leadership team, or Caravan, or Upward Soccer, or Summer science Camps. These are teams that work together locally, through small groups and ministry teams, regionally at ministries that we support like the Union Gospel Mission, or visitation to shut-ins, or Prime Time Ministries to the retirement homes, or Mission Agape in Wapato, or even globally to make a difference in this world, like our team that just came back from Guyana. You can join our next work team that will be going in February – you can sign up to be a part of that team now! We also

have a new outreach team that is working at Mountainview Elementary School. We are very excited about that team and what it means for us as a church. We'll share more with you about that after this sermon series.

We believe that a vital part of our growth on the Camino – walking in Christ, is that we get involved together to make a difference in this world. We love, we learn, and live together.

So the final question becomes...

3. What do *I* do?

What is it that you can do to be on the Camino – to walk in the way of Christ? Well, maybe you need to *start the journey*. Maybe you've never really set foot on the path. You've heard about it, you've watched other people walk it, but you've never actually started this pilgrimage. You can start today.

Lead through prayer.

If you prayed that prayer, or maybe you want to know more about what it means, then meet us back at "Starting Point;" we'd like to give you a packet of information and talk with you about what it means. You don't walk the way in order to get saved; only Jesus can save you. But you walk the way because you *are* saved.

But maybe you've already prayed that prayer; then I would strongly encourage you to take advantage of the places and ways that we provide for you to grow in your faith – to walk along this journey. Step in where you need to – maybe with the core classes, or in a small group, or sign up for an outreach event like Trunk or Treat or join one of our outreach teams.

Don't stop in the middle of the path. Don't get discouraged or try to walk it alone. Join us on the journey and begin walking the Camino – the Way of Life. If you want more information, you can meet us at Starting Point, or send us an email.

I want to close with this summary and encouragement and challenge from the Bible:

“Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make

every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:2-11,niv)

Let's pray.