

The Practicing the Way Course

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Sample session

Here is what a typical session could look like.

Welcome

Welcome the group and open in prayer.

Discussion 1: Practice reflection (15-20 min.)

Process your previous week's practice in community with the questions in the Guide.

Course Video, Part 1 (20 min.)

Watch Part 1 of the video.

Discussion 2: Group conversation (15-30 min.)

Pause the video when indicated for a group-wide conversation.

Course Video, Part 2 (10 min.)

Watch Part 2 of the video.

Discussion 3: After the video (10-15 min.) (Optional)

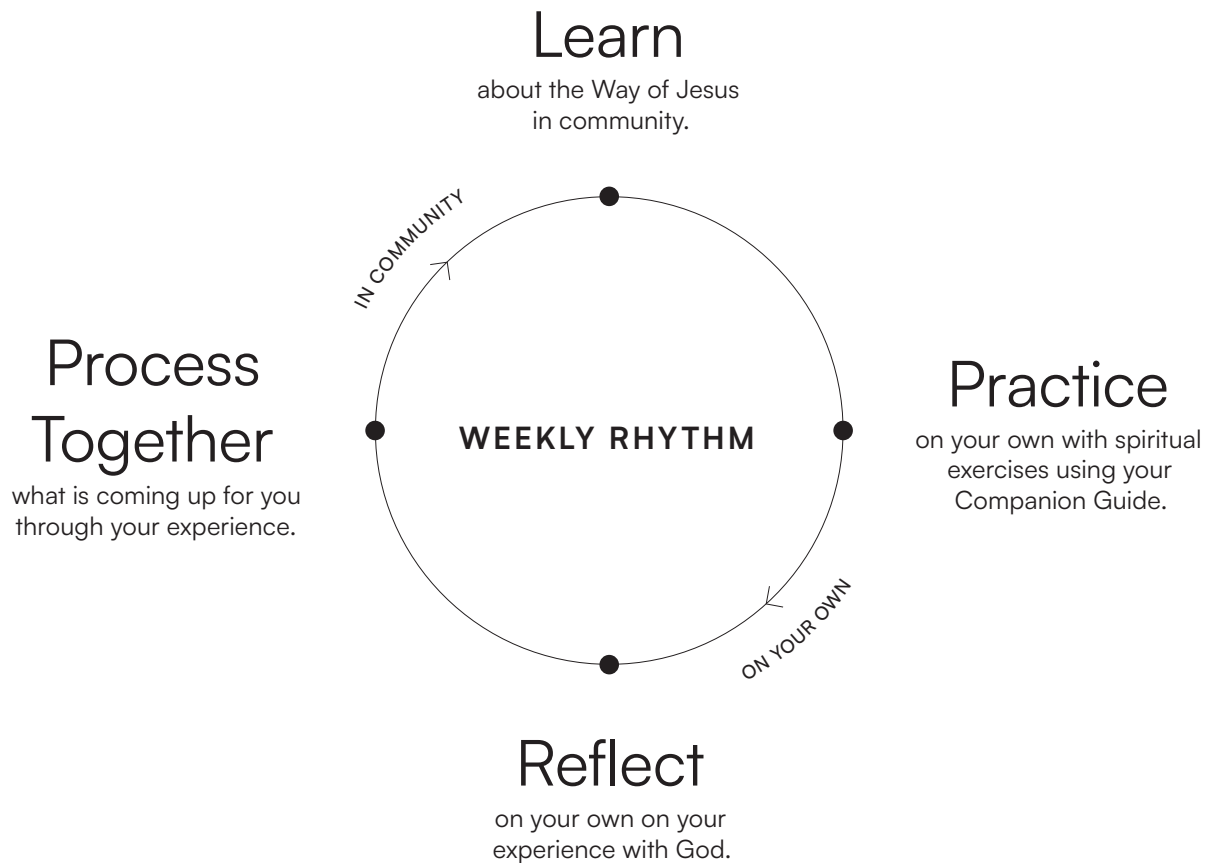
If you'd like, we have additional questions in the Guide for continued conversation. They are geared toward the coming week's practice.

Prayer to close

Close by praying the liturgy in the Guide, or however you choose.

The Practicing the Way Course is designed to work in a variety of group sizes and environments. For that reason, your gatherings may include additional elements like a meal or worship time or follow a structure slightly different than this sample. Please adapt as you see fit.

The weekly rhythm



01 **Learn:** Gather together as a community for an interactive experience of learning about the Way of Jesus through teaching, storytelling, and discussion. Bring your Guide to the session and follow along.

02 **Practice:** On your own, before the next session, go and “put it into practice,” as Jesus himself said. We will provide weekly spiritual disciplines and spiritual exercises, as well as recommended resources to go deeper.

03 **Reflect:** Reflection is key to spiritual formation. After your practice and before the next session, set aside 10

to 15 minutes to reflect on your experience. Reflection questions are included in this Guide at the end of each session.

04 **Process together:** When you come back together, begin by sharing your reflections with your group. This moment is crucial, because we need each other to process our life before God and make sense of our stories. If you are meeting in a larger group, you will need to break into smaller sub-groups for this conversation so everyone has a chance to share.

Overview

Who are you following? Everybody is following *somebody*. Put another way: We're all disciples. The question isn't, "Are you a disciple?" but, "*Who or what* are you a disciple of?" In this session, we explore what it means to be a disciple or apprentice of Jesus.



Teaching

Scripture

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him.

—Mark 1v16-18

Session summary

- Following Jesus is based on the first-century practice of rabbis and apprentices.
- Today, to follow Jesus means to apprentice under him.
- To apprentice under Jesus is to organize your life around three driving goals:
 - Be with Jesus
 - Become like Jesus
 - Do as he did
- Apprenticing under Jesus means practicing a way of life.
- One of the best ways to begin is through a daily prayer rhythm, where you create a time and place for solitude, silence, and prayer.

Discussion questions

Pause the video and take some time to process together as a community.

Here are some questions for discussion:

- 01 What are you hoping Jesus will do in you through this Course?

- 02 As you look back on your life, who or what has had the greatest impact on your spiritual journey thus far?

- 03 What do you think is the driving aim of your life? Your top goals and priorities?

- 04 How can we as a community be praying for you?

After the video

Closing prayer

End your time together by praying this liturgy:

God of love, who seeks and pursues us,
teach us how to seek and pursue you too,
that in our learning anew how to pray,
we may give you what you so deeply long for —
all of us enjoying all of you, forever.
Amen.

OPTIONAL

If you'd like to continue your conversation, here are some additional questions for reflection:

- 01 When you envision starting your day with silence, solitude, and prayer, what excites you? What challenges you?**
- 02 Think about your week and come up with a plan. When and where will you engage in this practice?**

Practice

Developing a daily prayer rhythm

We need more than information for transformation. The practices of Jesus (which we'll learn more about in Session 04) help to get the teachings of Jesus into the muscle memory of our bodies. They turn the *idea* of following Jesus into a *reality* in our daily life.

And one of the best ways to begin to “be with Jesus” is by developing a daily prayer rhythm.

There's no “right” way to do this — you may choose to go on an early morning walk with your dog or curl up under a blanket with a cup of tea or sit cross-legged on the floor and breathe deeply. You may pray the Psalms or let a prayer app guide your meditation. You may do this before the sun rises or as it sets.

Whatever you decide, our exercise for Session 01 is to develop a daily time and place to commune with God through the practices of silence, solitude, and prayer.

Here are a few suggestions for your practice:

01 Find a quiet *place* that is distraction-free.

- This could be a corner in your home or a nearby park. Find somewhere that you can focus and be at peace.

02 Find a quiet *time*.

- For many people, first thing upon waking is the best possible time to do this; but for you, it may be before bed, or while your baby is napping mid-morning, or on a lunch break.
- The general rule is: *Give God your best time of the day.*

03 Come to quiet.

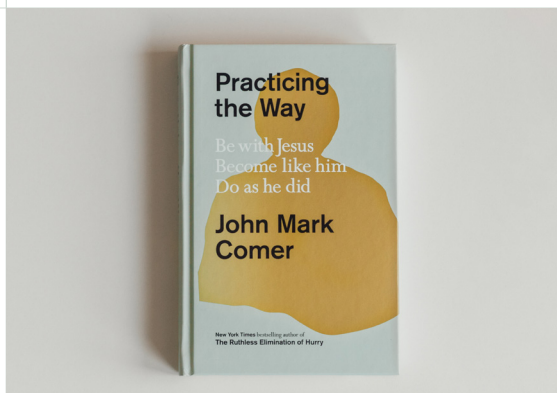
- If at all possible (unless you're using an app such as Lectio 365 or Pray As You Go to guide your prayer time), put your phone away in another room. Start with a few deep breaths ... in and out of your nose, and let your mind and body calm down.
- This may take a few minutes. You're not in a hurry.
- And then...

04 Open your heart to God in prayer.

- Again, there's no "right" way to pray. But you don't have to start from scratch.
- For thousands of years, followers of Jesus have used the Psalms for daily prayer. The Psalms are a collection of poetic prayers found in the middle of the Bible, and they were designed to be *prayed*, not just read.
- You can pray one psalm or pray a few; it's up to you. You can start in Psalm 1 and keep going to pray a selection. If you want to pray one psalm, here are some we suggest you start with: Psalms 1, 23, 37, 40, 42-43, 63, 84, 86, 103, and 139.

This whole exercise can be done in five minutes, or it can easily take up to an hour — again, that's up to you. The key is: Start where you are, not where you feel you "should" be. If two or three minutes is all you can make happen, start *there* and take the next step.

If you didn't get a chance to take the Spiritual Health Reflection before Session 01, please remember to do so before you come back together. Visit practictheway.org and create an account, or follow the QR code, and answer the prompt questions slowly and prayerfully.



This session's reading

For this session, we're reading "Apprentice to Jesus," in *Practicing the Way* by John Mark Comer, pp. 1-31.

Resources to go deeper

If you're interested in learning more about what it means to be an apprentice of Jesus or growing in your practice of prayer, here are some more resources to consider.

Recommended reading

- *The Deeply Formed Life* by our guest, Rich Villodas
- *The Great Omission* by Dallas Willard
- *Walking in the Dust of Rabbi Jesus* by Lois Tverberg
- *Praying like Monks, Living like Fools* by Tyler Staton
- *Time for God* by Jacques Philippe

Recommended listening

- Rich Villodas' teaching series, *The Deeply Formed Life* from New Life Fellowship: link.practictheway.org/course-s1
- The *Practicing the Way* Vision Series from Bridgetown Church: bridgetown.church/series/practicing-the-way
- Episode 01 of the *Practicing the Way* podcast: link.practictheway.org/course-s1b

Additional resources

The Prayer Practice from Practicing the Way: practictheway.org/prayer

If you'd like to learn more about the practice of prayer, you can run the Prayer Practice, a four-session experience designed to integrate the practice of prayer into your regular life.

Practice reflection

Reflection is a key component in our spiritual formation. Like practice, it allows what we learn to become a part of who we are.

Before your next time together, take five to ten minutes to journal out your answers to the following three questions.

- 01 **What was most challenging about practicing a rhythm of prayer?**
- 02 **What is something you enjoyed about it?**
- 03 **What are you hoping for as you continue this rhythm of prayer?**

Overview

Spiritual formation isn't a Christian thing or even a religious thing; it's a *human* thing. To be human is to grow, to mature, to adapt over time. Formation is simply the process by which our "spirit," or inner person, is formed into a particular shape or character. Over a lifetime, we are spiritually formed by a complex alchemy of genetic inheritance, family patterns, childhood wounds, education, habits, decisions, relationships, environments, and more.

The problem is, most of our spiritual formation is unintentional. *It just happens.* And often, we are "conform[ed] to the pattern of this world," *more* than "transformed by the renewing of [our] mind."^{*}

Practice reflection

Before we begin Session 02, break up into small groups and share your reflections on last session's practice of prayer.

- 01 What was most challenging about practicing a rhythm of prayer?
- 02 What is something you enjoyed about it?
- 03 What are you hoping for as you continue this rhythm of prayer?

^{*} Romans 12v2

Teaching

Scripture

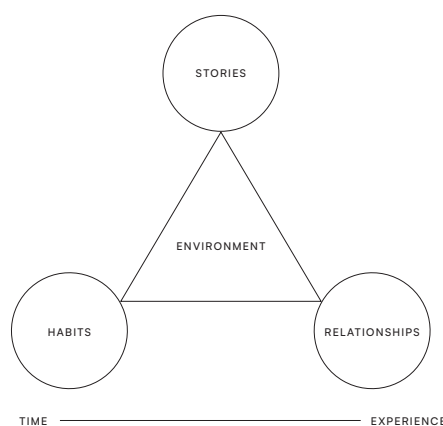
Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

—Romans 12v2

Session summary

- Spiritual formation isn't a Christian thing; it's a *human* thing.
- We are formed by a complex web of forces, but especially by:
 - Habits
 - Relationships
 - The stories we believe
 - Environment
 - Time
 - Experience
- Most of our formation is unintentional.
- Some of the most important questions to reflect on are:
 - Who am I becoming?
 - Am I being intentional about who I am becoming?
- One of the best ways to do this is through a Formation Audit.

Unintentional Spiritual Formation



Discussion questions

Pause the video and take some time to process together as a community.

Here are some questions for discussion:

- 01 What habits do you keep in your daily and weekly life? How might they be shaping you?

- 02 Who are the most important people in your life? What do those relationships look like?

- 03 As you reflect on your own journey, what stories have shaped the way you view the world? Where did these stories originate?

- 04 Did God reveal anything new to you in this session that you want to say more about?

After the video

Closing prayer

End your time together by praying this liturgy:

Good Creator, who made our inmost parts,
you see more of us than we do,
you know us better than we ever will,
and yet you call us “beloved”;
give us courage to see ourselves in the light,
to be honest with who we are, and what we’re not,
that in our being fully seen by you,
we may be transformed ever more greatly,
by your love, into your holy image.
Amen.

OPTIONAL

If you’d like to continue your conversation, here are some additional questions for reflection:

- 01** When you consider the list of forces that can unintentionally form us, does anything surprise you or stand out to you?
- 02** When do you plan to set aside time for your Formation Audit? Is there anything coming up for you as you think about doing the audit?