



## *Practices for Becoming Mature Disciples*

### INTRO TO THE WAY

#### **Introducing *The Way: Being an Apprentice of Jesus***

This sermon series is focused on following Jesus' example and instructions on how to follow God, or what many Christians call "The Way of Jesus." We call ourselves apprentices because we are doing more than just following a set of rules written thousands of years ago. An apprenticeship is defined by [vocabulary.com](http://vocabulary.com) as "training that involves following and studying a master of the trade on the job instead of in school." So as apprentices, we are actively learning from 'the Master' himself and then practicing what we learn in real time. God doesn't ask us to have it all figured out, just to follow Him and get a little on-the-job training as you go. Over the next 10 weeks, we'll explore what it looks like to be an apprentice of Jesus through teachings from across the Bible, testimonies from our church family, these sermon practices, and small group discussions.

#### **This Week's Focus: Getting Started**

If you're anything like us, you're shocked it's September already. It seems Fall always comes barreling in with full force before we've even thought to say goodbye to summer. But since we have no power over the seasons, on we march; out of popsicles and pools, and into schools, sports, and pumpkin spice everything.

This week, we're making space for that transition. We'll focus on trying new things (like this updated version of the sermon practices) and finding time to meet with our God and each other. We hope you will be both intentional and gracious with yourself as you get started.

#### **How To: Sermon Practices**

As you have noticed, we've expanded our sermon practices. Our hope is not to add more, but to better align what we're already doing. Each week, there will be three sections: Time Alone, Time Together, and Family Time.

In the 'Time Alone' section, you'll find several practices to do on your own throughout the week. These are self-paced activities that can be done either in place of or in addition to your regular time with God. We suggest starting with 15 minutes a day, 5 days a week for the Time Alone practices. The 'Time Together' section is designed for both one-on-one mentoring relationships and small groups. We recommend you meet together weekly for 1 - 2 hours and work through the section together. The 'Family Time' section provides child-friendly discussions and activities designed to bridge the gap between families' daily lives and spiritual lives. They will typically fit within about 10 minutes a day. If you ever have a particularly busy week, take your time and focus on one or two activities. It is better to fully engage a single practice, than race through all of the sections half-heartedly.

## TIME ALONE

### **PRAY: Our New Life in Christ**

We love to celebrate baptisms because we get to see our church family leave their old life behind in that water and walk into the new life God has for them. But it is easy to forget what we left behind when we decided to follow Christ - either by forgetting where we came from or by carrying that old life with us - and even harder to remember what we get to walk in every day.

Fortunately, intentional prayer keeps us connected to the source of that new life and reminds us of what we've been given. In your prayer times this week, focus on the ways in which you have experienced God's healing, provision, and transformation personally. You can start off each day this week with praying prayers of thanks, or ask Him to bring specific things to your mind throughout the day and thank Him for them as they come up.

*Go Deeper: Read Psalm 40, then write your own psalm praising God for how he has made you new.*

### **READ: Matthew 28:16-20**

Read through this passage each day. It can be helpful to read in different translations, such as NIV, ESV, or The Message.

### **REFLECT: Finding Your "Why"**

Following "The Way" is the single most life-giving thing you can do, but it is not always easy. If we are going to take seriously following Jesus' way and do it our whole lives, we need to understand why we want to do it.

During your reflection time, first write a list of reasons why you "should" want to follow the way of Jesus. Write out all things you hear in sermons or small groups, things you read in the bible, what your parents perhaps taught you, and anything else that comes to mind. Most of these will be good and valid reasons, but there's likely one or two reasons that you feel strongly about. On a new page, expand on those two reasons and why they matter to you specifically.

*Go Deeper: Spend some time in quiet, listening prayer and ask God to show you what you uniquely need from him and why that matters in your day-to-day life.*

## TIME ALONE, CONT.

### **WORSHIP: Introducing VC's Worship Playlist**

We now have a playlist made up of worship songs that are meaningful to our community; including our Sunday setlists and even a few originals! Each week, we'll add new songs. Find it on Spotify and Apple Music using the QR codes or links below.

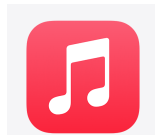
### **ACTION: Invest in a Group**

We grow better when we grow together. This is why Sermon Practices will now have a "Time Together" section each week, to help you as you meet with others in discipleship groups or mentoring relationships. So our practice this week is simple: find some people and commit to meeting together regularly.

- First, get connected.
  - If you are not already in a group or discipling relationship, join one for the next 10 weeks. If you're not sure which group to join, fill out an interest form to let us know you're looking. Find the form using the QR code or link below.
  - If you are already in an established group, make room and invite someone new to join you. Perhaps there's a younger couple or a single adult who needs to be welcomed into your group.
- Then, get invested.
  - Commit the next 10 weeks to follow these Sermon Practices, both in your time alone and time together.



[Worship Playlist on Spotify](#)



[Worship Playlist on Apple Music](#)



[Join a Group Interest Form](#)

## TIME TOGETHER

### **Welcome:** *Getting (Re)Acquainted*

Take some time to get to know each other and/or catch up as a group.

For new groups or members...

- First, pick an icebreaker question.  
Favorite smell? What do you like to do outside? Favorite spot in your house? Your hidden talent? Would you rather have to only eat out or cook every meal for the rest of your life? Coldest you've ever been?
- Then, in 3 - 5 mins, share who you are and why you're here.  
Where did you grow up? Who is your family? How long have you been at VC? Why did you want to join a group? What do you hope to put in and get out of this group?

*Go Deeper: Share your testimony. How did you begin to follow Jesus? What are your "highs" and "lows" of life? Who do you believe God created you to be?*

For existing groups...

- First, share a fun story.  
Something that made you laugh recently; a funny picture of your pet; most impressive wordle game; newest food and/or drink you're obsessed with.
- Then, share one thing you appreciate about your group as a whole.  
Consistency, authenticity, passion, fun, gracious, deep, etc.

### **Scripture:** *Matthew 28:16-20*

Have someone read the passage out loud. Others can take notes below.

### **Discussion:** *The Bible*

- What stands out to you in this passage?
- What is Jesus telling his disciples to do? Make a bullet point list, then discuss.
- Do you believe that you have what it takes to make disciples?

## TIME TOGETHER, CONT.

### **Discussion: *The Practices***

If meeting earlier in the week...

- Look ahead to the “Time Alone” section to make sure everyone understands what is being asked, and perhaps give ideas of how to respond and clarify any questions.
- Discuss your past experiences with spending time alone with God.
  - Have you done these kinds of practices before? Which ones are you comfortable with and/or think you’ll enjoy more than others?
  - Do you have a set time or rhythm you like for spending with God? If so, what helps you stick to that time or rhythm? If not, what might make it easier for you to start a regular time?

If meeting later in the week...

- Discuss your experience of taking time alone.  
How hard/easy was it to find time? How did you feel before you started versus after? Do you have a go-to place or spot in the house? What adjustments can you make to help you make time?
- Share insights, questions, and challenges from the “Time Alone” Practices
  - What has been encouraging to you this week?
  - What questions do you have from your Time Alone?
  - Where do you see God challenging you here?
  - What are 2-3 steps that you can take now to grow in this area?

### **Discussion: *The Journey***

Remember, your relationship with Jesus is a life-long walk. Each of us has highs and lows along the way, and each of us is still growing. But the best part is that we don’t have to do it alone. With that in mind, discuss as a group where you are today in your relationship with Jesus.

- How else have you been encouraged in your relationship with Jesus lately?
- What challenges have you experienced that seem to pull you away from fully trusting God? [distractions, defeats, doubts]
- During this next season of focusing on our relationship with Jesus, in what ways are you especially hoping to grow?
- How can the group encourage you and pray for you as we each begin walking together?

### **Prayer: *What You Want for The Group***

In addition to prayer requests and anything else the group wants to pray about, share with God what you hope to see in this group as we go through this sermon series. Ask God for help with that goal and pray for the endurance and grace to meet it.

# FAMILY TIME

## Finding the Time

While we can all agree that raising our kids to follow Jesus is arguably one of our most important responsibilities as parents, many of us can struggle to find the right time and place in our busy schedules for those important moments and conversations. As we continue growing together, we want to give you some ideas for where these conversations can happen. Test them out as each child and family is different. It may be a challenge, but over time and with grace, you will find a rhythm that works best for you and your kids. Here are some suggestions to get you started:

### Breakfast

Carve a few minutes out of your morning rush before school and work. This is a great way to model and pass on morning devotions to your kids.

### Dinner

Create a ritual of sitting together for dinner. It may not be realistic every day, with work and sports pulling you different directions. But even getting 2 - 3 dinners each week can make a big difference.

### Bedtime

For some families, the tuck-in time is the most sacred time. Instead of sending your kids to bed, join them for a few minutes of reading and talking in the bedroom. You might be surprised to discover that it becomes your most important part of the day.

### Car Rides

Grab a child to go with you on errands, and talk along the way. Some kids more naturally open up as they sit next to you. Turn down the music and give them your (mostly) undivided attention and encouragement.

## Family Check-ins

During those times, ask your family intentional questions like:

- What were your “highs” and “lows” today? (Mom and Dad need to share too!)
- What are you thankful for today?
- How did you see God today?
- What’s something you want to ask Jesus?