

The Practicing the Way Course

Starting on Sunday, January 11, Brenneman will engage in an 8-week church-wide introduction to spiritual formation. We will do this by using the content from a course called Practicing the Way by John Mark Comer.

Practicing the Way is designed around three simple truths: apprenticeship (what we commonly call discipleship) to Jesus means being with Jesus, becoming like Jesus, and doing as He did. Trying harder to follow Jesus is just about as effective as trying harder to kick a field goal when you've never done so. The good news is that God is not opposed to effort; he is opposed to earning. When we practice, we are in a place to receive God's grace, enabling us to further grow as we practice.

This course is also designed around 8 practices, such as daily prayer, Sabbath, confession, and doing life in community. As you engage in reading or participating in your group to class, my challenge to you is to go beyond conversation and into actual practice. Give them a shot!

How will we interact with this content as a congregation?

1. Pastor Wesley will preach a sermon series over eight weeks. He will not be sticking close to the book material, but will preach on one chapter each week.
2. We will post the material we can on our website, www.bmmchurch.org/practicingtheway. It is live now if you want to check it out. For this series, a more important link is www.practicingtheway.org.
3. Sunday School classes and small groups will all be covering this same material, with the book, handouts, or a combination of them. Each class and group is working through this slightly differently. Sunday School classes will be able to cover one of the eight chapters each week, following the sermon schedule. Small groups are each figuring out how they want to cover the material. Some will try to keep the pace of the sermon series, and some will use this as their curriculum beyond the time the church is done in order to study it more in-depth.

If you are not part of a Sunday School class, this would be a great opportunity to join one. Classes are facilitated by:

Kent Eby, Celebration Center 104 (Open to anyone)

Doug Haarer, Choir Room (Open to anyone)

*Pastor Josh Hilty, Celebration Center 106 (Open to anyone)

Alena Konstantinidi & Andrew Shaw, Room 304 (Young Adults ages 18-25)

Jared Mudrack, Room 405 (Young Adults ages 25-30s)

*Note: The Dave Stevenson class will be combining with Pastor Josh's class for this study and all will meet in Celebration Center 106.

What if I am in both a small group and a Sunday School class?

I encourage you to continue to engage in both. You'll hear the content from different perspectives in each and have multiple opportunities to think about how you will incorporate each of the habits in your own life. Which brings us to our goal: **The goal is not mastery of new content, but beginning new practices in order to participate in spiritual formation in community.** I also encourage you to stay in your same group or class regardless of which format they choose to cover the material because just as important as learning new habits are the people you learn them with. Stick with those who have been part of your walk with Christ because we often see things in others that we cannot see in ourselves.

What resources do I need to have?

This course has several resources. **If you are in a group or class, check with your leader to find out what they are asking you to use.** Some leaders are still determining this, and they may not know just yet, but will in the coming weeks.

1. www.practicingtheway.org (optional). If you choose, you can create an account here. It will give you access to all of the video content, the Spiritual Health Reflection, and the Rule of Life Builder. You can also explore any of the practices further on your own there.
2. Practicing the Way book (optional). We will not have these available and groups or classes will not be using them; you can purchase one on your own if you prefer. While the books have great content—we are emphasizing the practices over learning new content.
3. Practicing the Way Course Companion Guide (looks like a workbook; optional for group/class members). This can be purchased or found as a free PDF on their website. We will have a small set of these available on Sunday, December 14. They are really only helpful if you are in a group or class (or if you choose to use the website on your own).
4. We will also create a PDF version of the Spiritual Health Reflection and Rule of Life Builder so those who are not using the website can still do them.

How do I use the Practicing the Way website?

If you are in a group or Sunday School class and your leader is choosing to use the website, he/she will add you to the group and will let you know if that is happening. You can still follow the instructions below to create an account.

If you'd like to access the website on your own, first you need to create an account with your email and a password. As you do, it will ask you which church you are a part of. You can select ours by searching for Brenneman. Once you've done this, use the menu (on the left if on a web browser) and select Courses + Practices. Then select Practicing the Way Course. By doing this, you unlock the resources mentioned above. It will ask you to set your schedule, if you are running this course with our church, and to name a group (don't worry, you do not need to create a real group if you just want access to this

on your own). Then click Continue. It will ask you to add group members. You can skip this and click Run Practice.

There are four main tabs on the left side of the website.

1. Home. This page shows you the current session your group/you is on and resources you need for it. It also has the Spiritual Health Reflection.
2. Groups. If your group uses the website, this is where you would see your group.
3. Rule of Life. This is personal to you; no one else sees it. During the course, you will be introduced to spiritual practices and challenged to do them. From this, in Session 7 you will be invited to create a rule of life. If this is still confusing, just wait until Session 7 to learn more. :)
4. Reflection. This is personal to you; no one else sees it. The Spiritual Health Reflection is something they recommend you do at the beginning of the course. You can then return to it anytime to track how you are growing in Christ. You are given statements to mark on a continuum between “Agree” and “Disagree.” These statements are one way to measure how you are being with Jesus, becoming like Jesus, and doing as He did.

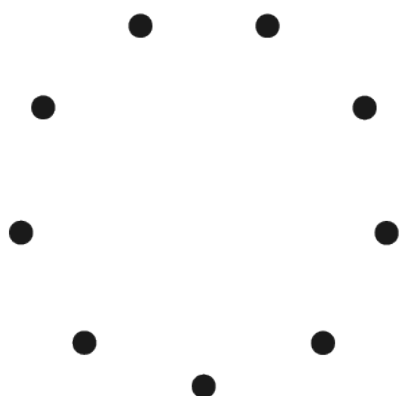
Let me finish with these words from the book:

The practices aren’t everything, but they are really, really important. They are non-negotiable for those who desire to be with and become like Jesus. They will not carry us all the way down the path in our formation, but they are how we begin. And like dribbling drills in basketball, we never mature beyond them. This is what it means to “follow” Jesus—it means we adopt his overall Way of life. And the good news is that transformation is possible, if we are willing to arrange (or rearrange) our lives around the practices, rhythms, and truths that Jesus himself did.

—John Mark Comer, Practicing the Way, pp. 180-181

In HIM,

Pastor Josh



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