

# Lent 2021 - The Way of Love

## *Practices for a Jesus-Centered Life - Week One: Learn*

In our sacred Scripture, we see the story of God's love for humanity and our engagement with it. Also, in this story we find our place in the midst of it. We not only learn about the ancient stories which happened long ago, we also learn about ourselves as well.

There is meaning in the stories, the deep meaning that extends beyond the bare facts. For example, when we read about Jesus' life, we see how much God loves us - that God's own son Jesus Christ entered our world to live in solidarity with us and show us a different way to be human. We learn that because of Love, the Spirit is with us yet today, reminding us that we are loved, that we are a part of a breathtakingly vast story that continues today.

Most of us understand that learning is essential as we move through life. We take our car to a mechanic who is well trained. We learn to cook, adapting recipes when we don't have all the listed ingredients. We navigate relationships in an adult way, not treating friends like we might have done as young children. Our faith is no different.



We want to be taught by someone who is well trained. We want to understand the spiritual journey and how to adapt to the changing circumstances of our life. We want to be able to respond to the inevitable struggles and trials of life in a reasonable and well-considered way.

Learning - deeply engaging and responding to Scripture - will absolutely change our lives. We need to learn - to read, mark, and inwardly digest - not just the facts and particular stories but also the bigger picture of identity and meaning.

"Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them." - John 14:23. By reading and reflecting on Scripture, especially the life and teachings of Jesus, we draw near to God and God's word dwells in us. When we open our minds and hearts to Scripture, we learn to see God's story and God's activity in everyday life.

There is no one right or wrong way to learn, and odds are you have some methods that work for you. Here are a few approaches to engage the Scriptures - to learn more about the story of God and our place in it - choose one that works for you. Of course this is not an exhaustive list.

Read the Bible. Dive into the wondrous story of the Bible and it will change your life! If you are new to reading the Scriptures, begin by reading one of the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John). Or read the psalms. Or read the page-turning action starting at the beginning of 1 Samuel (featuring the stories of Saul, David, Goliath, etc). Whatever you do, just try reading some of the Bible. When you run into something you don't understand, look it up or ask Pastor Mark or a friend who has spent time with the Scriptures.

Try a Daily Devotion. Many daily devotions offer snippets of Scripture along with a short meditation on what you've read, and a prayer.

Read Books. There are countless books about our faith to engage every interest and level of experience. Odds are a friend or Pastor Mark would be happy to recommend a good book for you. Or join a book club or book study.

Listen to Podcasts. Podcasts are great for listening as you are doing other things like driving, working, walking, doing the dishes, etc. And they are shorter than listening to a whole book. There are plenty of podcasts out there which engage in the biblical narrative or various issues of faith and life. If you are having trouble finding something, ask Pastor Mark for ideas that may interest you.

### *For Reflection*

When is a time you learned in a way that helped you grow in your faith?

What keeps you from learning?

What might you do to learn in new ways, more often?

### *Write it Down*

Which of the above approaches for learning appeal to you? Write down a plan for how you might live into this approach. Be specific and realistic for where you are now. For example, if you decide to commit to reading and praying a daily devotional, name the time and place you will practice this.

### *Pray*

Give me an inquiring mind, O God, and enable me to know  
your wisdom and to learn your Way of Love. Amen.

*\*portions adapted from The Way of Love: A Practical Guide to Following Jesus by Scott Gunn*