

The Walk: Five Essential Practices for the Christian Life
Adam Hamilton

Session 6
The Five Practices from the Cross
Study/Discussion Guide

Goals of this Session

- To discover the connection between Jesus' last words from the cross and the five essential practices.
- To reflect on how the intentional practice of the five spiritual disciplines have strengthened your walk with God.
- To commit to the continued practice of these spiritual disciplines.

Biblical Foundation

'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' Luke 23:34

'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.' Luke 23:43

'Woman, here is your son.' 'Here is your mother.' John 19:26-27

'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' Matthew 27:46

'I am thirsty.' John 19:28

'It is finished.' John 19:30

'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.' Luke 23:46

Review

Essential Practice #1: Worship (weekly) and Prayer (daily); 5 components of prayer
Essential Practice #2: Study (5 verses a day, moving toward 5 chapters a week, or more)
Essential Practice #3: Serve (find 5 ways to serve or help someone every week)
Essential Practice #4: Give (demonstrate 5 acts of extravagant generosity each month)
Essential Practice #5: Share (share your faith at least 5 times in the next year)

Checking In

- Since the last session, in what ways did you witness to your faith and share Christ's love with others?
- Did you have an opportunity to share your elevator speech? How did that go?

Remember that Jesus calls us to be light to the world both individually and collectively as the body of Christ.

Prayer

Loving and gracious God, thank you for life and the many ways you bless our lives. Thank you for Jesus, who showed us by example how to walk with you. Guide and direct our steps as we practice the spiritual disciplines of worship and prayer; Bible study and listening; service; giving generously; and witnessing. Walk with us as we seek to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ. In his name we pray. Amen.

Listen to the Audio Recording for Session 6Questions Related to the Recording

- What is one thing you learned from this session that you didn't know before?
- Jesus demonstrated the five essential practices on the cross. Based on his words, which do you find most compelling and inspiring? Why?
- How do Jesus' words on the cross reflect his lifelong commitment to the five practices?
- How has this study helped you to grow in faith? How will you carry the practices forward in the coming weeks and months?

Bible Study and Discussion – Matthew 5:14-16 (printed above)

- Meditate thoughtfully on the seven last words, printed above. Spend some time with them.

Book Study and Discussion*Worship and Prayer*

Turn to page 143 in *The Walk*. Recall Jesus' words of dereliction from the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). Recall that prayer was a vital part of Jesus' daily life.

- What do we learn about Jesus from his prayer life?
- What do we learn about prayer from his prayer life?
- When have you expressed feelings of abandonment to God in prayer?
- How has the practice of prayer strengthened your walk with God?

Study...Scripture

Turn to page 146 in *The Walk*. Remember that Jesus recited Scripture (Psalm 22) when he prayed his prayer of dereliction. He also cited a verse from the Psalms when he committed his spirit to God (Luke 23:46). Jesus knew the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) deeply. He would have learned from his parents, the synagogue, the local rabbis. He might have learned Psalm 31: 5, "Into your hands I commend my spirit," from his mother as a bedtime prayer.

- What bedtime prayers did you learn as a child?
- Have some of them become statements of faith for you?

- Who told you Bible stories and taught you passages of Scripture when you were a child?
- When did you begin to study Scripture on your own?
- What passages of Scripture do you lean on in a time of crisis?
- What does it mean to you that Jesus quoted Scripture from the cross?
- How has the practice of Bible study strengthened your walk with God?

Serving Others

Turn to page 148 in *The Walk*. Recall Jesus' words to his mother and John: "Here is your son." "Here is your mother."

Adam Hamilton infers that these words from the cross apply to us and to our parents and families. Furthermore, he understands that we are to care for others as if they are our parents.

- If your parents are still living, how do you honor them? (The fifth of the Ten Commandments.)
- Whom among your friends and acquaintances is God calling you to honor like a parent?

Hamilton notes that Jesus commits the ultimate act of service on the cross, giving his life for others...for us.

Generosity...Giving

Turn to page 151 in *The Walk*. Recall John 19:28: "I am thirsty." Hamilton believes the underlying meaning of these words is that Jesus has poured himself out completely, giving all that he has and is, for us.

- What new insights have you gained about Jesus' self-sacrificing love from this section of chapter 6?
- When have you made sacrifices for another person out of love for that person?
- When have you been the recipient of someone's sacrificial love?
- How has the practice of sacrificial love and generosity strengthened your walk with God?

Witnessing to the Gospel

Turn to page 153 in *The Walk*. Recall these two "words" from the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Luke 23:34. "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise." Luke 23:43.

- How can you embody Christ's desire and action to seek out and witness to all people?
- How has the practice of witnessing and sharing your faith strengthened your walk with God?

Wrapping Up

“It is finished.” John 19:30. Adam and many authorities understand that in this statement Jesus is saying, “I’ve completed the mission for which I was sent.” His mission is completed on the cross. All humanity may experience forgiveness, salvation, and new life through the risen Christ. One way we live into this new life is by practicing these five essential Christian disciplines (and others, as we grow and mature).

- How will you commit to making the practices of these spiritual disciplines a part of your daily life?

Continuing the Essential Practices (Spiritual Disciplines)

1. Practice the disciplines of Worship (weekly) and Prayer (5 times daily); remember the five elements of prayer (p. 37)
2. Practice the discipline of Study (5 verses of scripture per day; grow to 5 chapters per week, or more)
3. Practice the discipline of Service: find ways to help someone, or to serve in another way, 5 times each week
4. Practice the discipline of Giving: commit to 5 acts of extravagant generosity over the next month
5. Practice the discipline of Sharing: commit to sharing your faith with at least 5 people over the next year

Prayer

Pray the prayer on page 159 in *The Walk*.

John Wesley’s Covenant Prayer (Contemporary Version)

I am no longer my own, but yours.
 Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will;
 put me to doing, put me to suffering;
 let me be employed by you, or laid aside for you,
 exalted for you, or brought low by you;
 let me be full, let me be empty,
 let me have all things, let me have nothing:
 I freely and fully yield all things to your pleasure and disposal.
 And now, glorious and blessed God,
 Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
 you are mine and I am yours. So be it.
 And the covenant which I have made on earth,
 let it be confirmed in heaven. Amen.