

“Let's Take A Walk”

Psalm 86:11

Pastor Charlie Berthoud | Sermon for Sunday, September 5, 2021

Let's pretend we want to go on a journey to Green Bay.

How do we get there? Maybe we get a compass? Or binoculars? Or a map? Yes, a map would be good. But once we get started, we could easily get lost or distracted.



- We might want to take a detour to Fond du Lac
- Or maybe we stop for food and then forget where we're going
- We might come across construction that delays us or diverts us, or maybe the car breaks down
- We might get tired and decide we just don't feel up to the trip
- Or we might be in the midst of a global pandemic and be unable or unwilling to go anywhere.

Sometimes we get delayed or distracted or diverted on our journeys. And we can get delayed or distracted or diverted with the journey of faith as well.

The past year and a half has been unlike any time in our lives, with lockdowns, economic problems, political chaos, racial tension, weather and climate extremes, and way too much sickness and death from Covid. And now Covid is regaining traction and things might get worse, again.

During this challenging 18 months,

- Many of us have gotten a little off track, a little lost—or maybe a lot lost.

- Many of us, maybe all of us, are weary, and find it hard to get moving or get through the day.
- Many of us have questions about where God is in the midst of all this.

As summer ends and we enter a new school year, it's a great time for us to try to get back on track, or at the very least to take some steps in the right direction and encourage each other on the way.

As Christians, getting back on track means reclaiming our identities as beloved children of God, as followers of Jesus, with the hope of renewing our journey of faith.

So we're going to take a walk together.

Today begins a new sermon series called **Getting Back on Track**. We're going to do our best to encourage each other on the journey of faith, as we walk together in this challenging time.

The Christian life is all about the journey, as we see throughout the Bible. God called Abraham and Sarah to go on a journey of faith, to a new place, and to be blessed in order to be a blessing:

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred . . . to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you . . . so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you . . . and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:1-3)

The psalmist prayerfully asks for help on the journey:

Teach me your way, O Lord,
that I may walk in your truth... (Psalm 86:11)

Jesus called ordinary people to journey with him, to discover new purpose in serving people. He tells them about the kingdom of God, and then tells them to repent, to change direction, and then he says, "Follow

me and I will make you fish for people.”

Jesus said, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” Jesus saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” (Mark 1.14-17)

In the book of Romans, Paul writes about baptism and new life, inviting followers to the journey of faith:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6.3-4)

The Bible calls us to the journey of faith.

And we get that idea of journey here at Covenant.

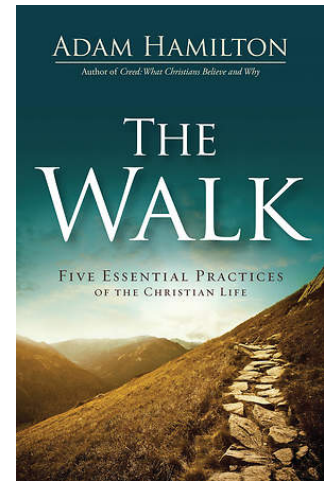
Our mission statement begins: We are disciples journeying in covenant...

Our newsletter is called “The Caravan”—and a caravan is a group of people traveling together, supporting each other, maybe going through challenging places, but continuing onward.

To help us on this journey, to help us get back on track, we don’t need maps, our compasses, or binoculars.

What we need, in a word, is God.

We need God's word, God's presence, and God's love. We can discover God's word and presence and love through the traditional practices of the Christian faith, which will be our focus over the next several weeks with the help of the book, *The Walk: Five Essential Practices of the Christian Life*, by Pastor Adam Hamilton.



The book describes five practices Christians are called to do, and Adam Hamilton offers several ways to do them.

His writing is clear and concise, and in this book he uses a lot of numbers, especially the number five:

- Pray five times a day
- Read the Bible for five minutes a day
- Do five acts of generosity per month

And so on....

I know a lot of us like to count things and track numbers, like our steps, our calories, how many touchdowns the Packers score, our stock market reports, and so on. I invite you to use those skills with this book, in making intentional efforts to grow in faith.

The Session, the elected leaders of this church, have read all or part of this book, and they endorsed it.

And the good news is: You can have a copy of this book for **free**.

Thanks to the Jim and Pauline Sparks Adult Education fund, we have 150 copies available, and we'll get more if necessary.

Along with the sermons and reading the book, I really encourage you to sign up for a small group.

We have several options, in person and Zoom. Some groups are full; we might be adding more in the next few days.

In the introduction to the book, author Adam Hamilton talks about a time a few years ago when he went for a hike with his adult daughter, and ten minutes in he had to stop because he was out of shape. He had put on a lot of weight and at his annual physical he learned that he had high cholesterol and some other issues.

So he made a commitment to get back in shape. He started eating better and began to work out, with just seven minutes a day, and gradually built up. Over the next year, he got healthier, thanks to his modest efforts every day. He reports that when he recently went for a walk with his 29 year-old daughter, he had to slow down a bit for her! (p11-12).

This series is an invitation to begin the journey to getting back on track, but it might not happen quickly. Liking losing unwanted weight or getting strong at the gym, it takes time. There are no quick fixes.

So be kind and patient with yourself, as you take steps on the journey. And remember to be kind and patient with others as well.

If you feel lost, or if you feel worn out, or if you feel alone, or if you feel like you have lost faith in God, you're in good company. You're not alone. I invite to start the slow and steady process of getting back on track.

- I really encourage you to join in this process. Make a commitment to see, hear, or read the sermons. You have lots of options: videos, podcasts, pdfs, and in person!
- Make a commitment to read the book.
- Make a commitment to join a small group, or at least talk with someone about the important things of life.

I know many of us are super busy, so I hesitate to ask you to commit more time and energy to something. But this is important.

Parker Palmer knows the importance of taking the time for important

things:

“When I’m asked for the ‘elevator speech’ that sums up my work, I always respond, ‘I always take the stairs, so I don’t have an elevator speech. If you’d like to walk with me awhile, I’d love to talk.’ I don’t know of a life worth living or work worth doing that can be reduced to a sound bite.” (from *On the Brink of Everything: Grace, Gravity, and Getting Old*)

Friends, let’s take a walk together.