

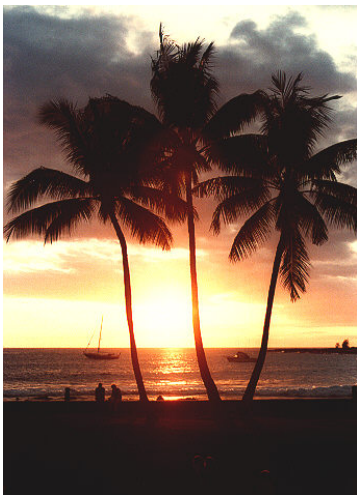
THE WAY

"I WORSHIP THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS AS A FOLLOWER OF THE WAY." ~ Paul

INTRODUCTION

This book is part of a process we use here at Washington Christian Church (WCC) to explain something called "the Way of Christ" or just "**The Way**," for short. However, studying this book or attending The Way at WCC is not the way itself. Let us explain...

Imagine that you are holding a tourism brochure for a tropical resort. Every page, with its panoramic photos of white sand beaches and colorful tropical foliage, is designed to give you a taste of what it would be like to be there. Seeing the images and reading the testimonials of happy guests provide the motivation to



make plans, save money, and secure a passport so you can eventually bask in the sun at this vacation paradise.

Obviously, seeing those images will not actually put you on the beach; it merely gives you a picture of a different reality. This book, *The*

Way, functions like that tourism guide. Hopefully, these pages will paint you pictures of what it looks like to live the life God intended for you. This book is just an introduction; **The Way** is actually what follows. We could not write that in a book; it is real life – living with God, living with intentionality – and it could be *your* life.

Throughout that tourism brochure, you would find the help you needed to prepare for a successful vacation – how to make reservations, what to pack, what to expect. Likewise, throughout this book, you will find the

help you need to make the decisions and commitments necessary to walk **The Way** with others here at WCC.

WHAT IS "THE WAY?"

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. ~ Matthew 4:19-20

The Way is not just a Bible study. Yes, you will complete this introductory Bible study, but completing a Bible study is not what anyone is striving for. We strive to learn what it means to truly follow Jesus. The goal of this Bible study is to help you get started with that. That process – learning what it means to follow Jesus – is what we call "spiritual growth" or working toward "spiritual maturity."

The Way is not a program, a method, or a system. It is not a checklist or a list of do's and don'ts. It is a practical way of being intentional about your personal, spiritual growth, helping you discover where God is leading you and helping you follow that path.

Merriam-Webster defines "Way" as:

- 1: a path for travel from place to place.*
- 2: the course traveled from one place to another.*
- 3: a course leading toward an objective.*

The Way is all these things. It is not a one-time quick fix. By definition, it is a path, a journey, not a seminar to radically change your life in a weekend. It is not a self-help movement, a recruitment strategy, or a way for Big Brother to keep an eye on you. But it is a path, it does require movement, and it has an objective. **The Way** is simply WCC's prescription for being intentional about following Jesus. It will show you where to start, where to go, and what to do once you get there.

We chose the name **The Way** because that is how Luke describes the Christ followers in the early church (Acts 9:2, 19:9, 19:23, 24:14, 24:22), and because it describes the path for getting all of us from where we are today to where God wants us to be.

“You know the way to the place where I am going.”

Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” ~ John 14:4-6

The Gospels (literally defined “good news”) are the first four books of the New Testament - Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John - which tell the story of Jesus’ earthly ministry, describing how God lived physically among his people for a time. These accounts describe how Jesus lived each day to the fullest and wishes the same for each of us...

“I came that they might have life, and have it to the full.” ~ John 10:10

Jesus came into the world to offer us a full life. He set the perfect example, living in community with others, and displaying great purpose, meaning, and intent. He loved God, his Father, completely and obeyed him fully. He gave us the best possible example of living in intimate connection with God. Each day was lived to the fullest.

Here at WCC, we believe that following **The Way**, living the way of Christ as set forth in the Gospels and letters of the New Testament, is the path to that full life of connection, passion, and joy, that Jesus came to share with us, and we invite you now to join us on this journey of discovery!

Now, you're ready to get started. The rest of this book contains segments designed for both group and individual study. The segments are laid out in three sections: **LOVE, GROW, and GO**. Each section is broken up into segments (six for LOVE, three for GROW, three for GO), each designed to be completed in one week along with the rest of a group of fellow travelers. But you can take these at your own pace - you can do one segment every day or space them out to coincide with your group.

Along the way, you will find that a context of supportive relationships is invaluable as you grow spiritually. Trusting, authentic relationships can support you as you take intentional steps to put spiritual disciplines, personal experiences, and newfound knowledge into practice.

If you decide to continue on the way of Christ here at WCC, you will be able to plug into other groups for further practical steps and personal support. Over time, this will help you develop a picture of spiritual maturity and will help you learn how to discern your own spiritual growth path. But, your next step is easy and immediate: just turn the page and dive in.

We hope that you will discover, as many of us here at WCC have, that growing toward maturity in Christ is a great way to live life, not just practical but exciting and rewarding. Just like that tourism brochure can get you fired up to vacation on a lush tropical beach, we hope this introduction to **The Way** will get you fired up to join this great adventure with us.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

The sections that follow – LOVE – GROW – GO – make up the primary content of **The Way**. Use them for personal study, classroom study, LIFEGROUP discussion, or one-on-one discussion with a friend or Running Partner (to be explained later). Write responses and

GETTING STARTED

make notes all through the book; that will be a great help to you.

You will be able to read or print each week's content from our website, which you can find at:

www.washingtonchristian.net

Just click on the link at the bottom of the homepage that says "**THE WAY.**" There you will find links to all available segments of the curriculum. Also, be sure to join the facebook discussion group for further inter-action outside the classroom.

A NOTE FOR ALL USERS OF THE WAY CURRICULUM

We will embark on this journey under four overarching assumptions:

- 1) The Bible is true and accurate.
- 2) God can handle our questions and doubts.
- 3) Everyone has something to contribute.
- 4) Everyone has something to learn.

A NOTE FOR GROWING CHRIST-FOLLOWERS

If you have been around churches or have been following Christ for awhile, some of the following content might seem a bit basic. We encourage you to look at it instead as foundational. After all, when are we ever done learning? **The Way** is packed with timeless truths from Scripture, truths everyone can learn from, no matter how many times they have heard them. Stick with it; ask God to open new doors for you, and you will be challenged in your faith.

A NOTE FOR THOSE CHECKING OUT FAITH

If you're not really sure where you stand when it comes to Christianity, or if you know that you do not yet trust Jesus, some of the content might seem confusing or might seem like steps you cannot yet take. That's fine. We encourage you to take the segments as they come. Do not pretend to have it all figured out; write down what you are honestly wrestling with, and do not be ashamed to ask questions along the way. Utilize your LIFEGROUP or QPlace group to pursue your questions. No one starts off with all the answers.

Wherever you are on your spiritual journey, we are confident that you will grow from this experience. We encourage everyone who plans to continue their journey here at WCC to fully investigate **The Way** to determine how they should proceed on their spiritual path.