

Port City Community Church
Small Group Material
U-Walk Series
Week #2 “Finding Your Pace”

Introduction to U-Walk Series

It starts with a simple invitation, “Come and follow me.” Our relationship with Christ involves movement, forward momentum and a drive towards intimacy with Him. Yet, we are incapable of intimacy unless there is a pursuit. Pursuit at its core requires motion. We must put feet to our faith. Along the way we’ll have to switch out our shoes for the new terrain, appropriate for what we will encounter. Together we’ll embark on this trek, this pursuit of God, putting one foot in front of the other.

We are invited to walk with God. Jesus did not come to create a religion, but to extend a personal invitation – an invitation to follow. God has created us to know Him and to live in a relationship with Him. This requires that we approach Him very differently than we might be used to. In this series, U-Walk, we are going to dive into what happens to us and in us as we learn to walk with God.

Insight, Discussion Question and Activities

Philippians 3:12-14 (The Message)

I'm not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me. Friends, don't get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward—to Jesus. I'm off and running and I'm not turning back.

You’ve been training and anticipating for months. You fall asleep imagining the rhythm of your steps and you wake up before dawn to begin another run. In the early morning sun, you’ve logged countless hours and hundreds of miles in preparation. Only now, it’s race day. You can picture the starting point, the finish line, and the people cheering you on at mile markers and checkpoints along the way. Today you will run the marathon.

To run a marathon you need to find a sustainable pace. Those who come off the line in an all out sprint are unable to keep the pace for the 26.2-mile trek. They tire quickly and do not finish well. However, those who begin the race knowing that they just have to keep putting one foot in front of the other will get a second wind and finish strong. Setting the pace at the beginning (being satisfied in an abiding faith) allows them to focus on the next checkpoint while keeping the end in mind (mature faith).

Following Christ is more of a marathon than a sprint. This course called life is filled with adventure, boredom, danger, sadness and thrills. We all experience these things, but something has nudged you toward a life with Christ. At some point you understood and agreed with God that you are a sinner and unable to do anything about it. You received Jesus as your Savior and joined Him in our race.

- **What did you believe would happen or change in you when you became a Christian?**

Those serious about training for a marathon have a running partner, are familiar with the flow of the race and anticipate the checkpoints along the way. So it is with our relationship with God. Those of us who are earnest about our newfound faith will at some point choose a running partner (an accountability partner or small group), will become familiar with the flow of a walk with Christ, and will anticipate the checkpoints common to everyone’s journey.

Some common checkpoints experienced along the way:

- ❖ Relief at becoming a “friend of God.”
- ❖ Excitement at how God immediately starts to make some noticeable changes in our new walk.
- ❖ Disappointment that sin still exists and at times seems to reign.

- ❖ Stepping up our efforts toward self-control and self-discipline.
- ❖ Discovering we can never do enough Bible study, witnessing, praying, etc., to “earn” our place with God.
- ❖ Finding the secret to a sustainable, joy-filled walk, living in a more “others-centered” state of mind.

- **Which checkpoint have you most recently experienced?**

Just to be sure we are all on the same page when we say, “race,” we are not talking about a competition to see who can reach the end the fastest. Rather, the idea that a marathon involves training, finding your pace, and striving towards the goal. Thousands of people run the Boston Marathon, all with varying levels of fitness but with one common goal: to cross the finish line. Obviously, as we run this marathon called life with Christ, we can’t expect that everyone will move at the same pace.

A relationship is not defined by a single week, a single day, or even a moment. It is established over time. God uses time to form us into His image and because of this we must learn to embrace process and discipline. God will change us, but we must allow Him to change us and not just try to appear as though we’ve changed all at once. This breeds frustration. We need to trust that God will do what He says as we pace ourselves and position ourselves- walking with Him today and trusting Him with tomorrow.

We don’t all pass through checkpoints at the same time. There will be some who will progress more quickly to a deeper intimacy with God, while others might be stuck for a while wrestling with their new identity in Christ. And we sometimes bounce around within the list of checkpoints. For most of us, though, disappointment eventually sets in. Some of the old passions that once drove us aren’t quite as dead as we first believed they were. Then we become disappointed in God for not answering our prayers to take away these desires.

- **Have you ever felt disappointment about the pace of your walk with God?**
- **Do you ever compare your walk with the walks of other Christians? How can comparison detract from your own relationship with God?**

Often when we come to know Christ, we understand the bare basics and then make several assumptions about the rest. Our lack of understanding all that happened on the starting line, which is the cross, leads to our disappointment in God and our walk with him.

Is there a secret to running this race? Is there a determined length of time we must walk with God before we can begin experiencing a consistent walk? Or is it possible to continue maturing in the Lord in a steady pace from start line to finish line, all the while experiencing a deep, abiding relationship with Him?

Before we go any further, let us make the distinction between an abiding walk and maturity. It is easy to mistake the checkpoints of our walk as a checklist to a mature faith. When we follow along the path, hitting the checkpoints and processing through them, we will grow into a maturity in Christ that we did not have when we began.

Maturity takes time and there are no shortcuts or fast tracks. It is possible, however, to experience an abiding, joyful relationship throughout the process of maturity. This can begin at anytime along the way (Galatians 5:22). This abundant life and deep relationship can be just as strong emotionally through all phases of maturity. During the marathon that is the process of maturity, we can jog side-by-side with God receiving direction and encouragement, and enjoying His companionship. Maturity is not a task we take on alone.

It is of utter importance to remember that maturing in Christ is God’s job (Philippians 1:6) and we simply partner with Him in the task. We position ourselves for it and submit ourselves to His coaching. It is His power that enables us to walk with him, but our willingness to surrender to His will - moment by moment - allows us to keep a steady pace, run with joy, and finish strong.

Reaching a steady, forward pace is something we can do no matter where we are in our journey with Him. When we start looking down the road to what it will be like as a “mature” Christian, we can miss out on the things that God is doing in our life in the here and now. When we quit focusing on producing maturity and begin to see life as a marathon, we run alongside Him, finding our pace becomes easier. We are free to enjoy life moment by moment, knowing each step brings us into a deeper intimacy with God.

- **How can our attempt to bypass the checkpoints of maturity rob us of experiencing the richness of a mature relationship with Christ?**
- **Describe a time when you’ve felt a deep, abiding relationship with God. Was it early in your maturity, or later?**
- **What steps are you taking now, or do you need to continue steadily the race you are running?**

For additional insights see:

Philippians 1:9-11: Growth Brings With It Discernment

Galatians 2:22-26: Fruits of the Spirit

Ephesians 3:14-21: Rooted and Established in Love

1 Corinthians 1:4-9: Eagerly Awaiting God to be Revealed