

“Faith Circles: Walk”
Deuteronomy 6:1-9 (ESV)
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<https://www.sermonspice.com/product/42166/learning-to-walk>

Having a faith walk is not easy. We start off crawling in our faith walk. Just as when our children or grandchildren are learning to walk we have to let them do it on their own, but we are there to help them. We gradually let go and yep, they fall. Are we afraid people are going to laugh at us if we fall in our walk---our faith walk? When a child falls we help them up. A church provides a means to not only help you in your faith walk, but to help you up when you fall. Oh yes, you will have to look on your own for those ditches and pits than can cause you to stumble or fall in your faith walk. You will need to avoid them.

A child could look back and say, “You know it was a lot easier crawling, but I am sure glad I learned to walk. It was a challenge. But I’m a walker now.”

In fact, a child grows from barely being able to sit up—you put them in a chair and they lean over, to sitting up, to crawling, and then holding on to tables and learn to navigate from one piece of furniture to the other. And then those first few steps—and we as parents and grandparents get so excited. We video it. We clap. We share. Yay, first steps. Beloved we want you to take first steps in your faith walk. But more than that we want you to walk. And we want you to not just walk, but to run.

The Apostle Paul says, “let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus.” (Hebrews 12:1-2). Let’s walk the faith, let’s run the race looking to Jesus.

Today we finish the sermon series, Faith Circles. The series has included Faith Circle: Table. Circle around the common calling of Jesus who died for our sins. Faith Circle: Torch of passing our faith from one generation to the next. Faith Circle: Talk where we need to talk of our faith to each generation. And today Faith Circle: Walk. This doesn’t mean we are to walk in circles. Although to be honest some times it’s fun to walk in circles. I get tempted to do that when I see these revolving doors (**image**). In fact, confession is good for the soul, I’ve been with Sarah and we go through revolving doors and she goes out one side and I take another ride around the circle of the revolving doors.

However, by Faith Circle: Walk we don’t mean walking in circles but we a circle is complete. A circle is ongoing. So, we use the symbolism of circle to remind us that for our faith walk to be complete we need to be in an ongoing progress of learning how to walk and live out our faith.

In our Deuteronomy passage it mentions early on in verse 2 that you should keep all of God’s commandments. The phraseology is you, your son and your son’s son. All generations. A circle of faith. Ongoing from generation to generation.

What has been read today in Jewish tradition is called the Shema. The Shema begins in verse 4. ⁴“**Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.**” The Hebrew word for “Hear, or Listen” is the word Shema, thus this passage is known as The Shema.

Hear oh church the Lord our God is One. Hear oh campus the ministry here is one (**We are One logo slide**). We are...One. We have had some banners placed around campus as a reminder that in all of our ministries we are all one serving our One and only God, our one Savior Jesus Christ. One in calling, one in ministry, one in serving, one in loving God and loving all. We are...One. Listen and hear the oneness on our campus. Many ministries and missions all for the reason of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

To continue that celebration, we recognize that we are all on the same team. Team Jesus (**Team Jesus logo**). Next Sunday, September 2 we will have one service at 9:30. One worship service, one in ministry, one in our unity around our one Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. When are we having one service? (Next Week) What time is the service? (9:30). It's the beginning of football season so all are invited to welcome your favorite team Jersey, college, pro whatever. We will receive Holy Communion as one. After worship we are going to have a Tailgate Party in the Multi-Purpose Room. There is going to be food, games such as corn-hole and just a good time being together and celebrating that we are One in Jesus Christ.

There is a word in verse 5 that is repetitive. It is important that we catch the significance of that word. On Wednesday, Robin McFerrin leads our elementary school chapel. I had the privilege of giving the lesson this week. It was on wisdom. The key verse was from Proverbs 3.

Proverbs 3:5 New International Reader's Version (NIRV)

⁵**Trust in the LORD with all your heart. Do not depend on your own understanding.**

We talked about that word “all.” It doesn't mean an “itty bit.” It doesn't mean part. It doesn't mean even half or $\frac{3}{4}$'s it means---all---complete/entire/the whole thing.

With that in mind look at this Great Commandment from our passage this morning. ⁵ **You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.**

Repeated over and over is the word ALL. Love God with ALL your heart. ALL your soul. All your might. It doesn't mean an “itty bit.” It doesn't mean part. It doesn't mean even half or $\frac{3}{4}$'s it means---all---complete/entire/the whole thing. How do we going about learning to love God with our ‘all?’ Hold on to that question.

⁶ **And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.**

⁷ **You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.**

Now we are instructed by God to teach them to the next generation. How are you going to do that if you do not learn what you are supposed to be teaching? You need a Small Group Connect.

Last week we had the opportunity to make a Small Group Connect. There is a description of all the Bible Studies/Small groups that are going on. Some getting ready to start. We have several new ones getting ready to start. Be involved in a Bible Study/ Small group. Again, I say I really don't want to hear excuses for why you are not in a small group/Bible Study. Child Care is provided, there are classes on Sunday, there are classes at evening, there are classes in the mornings. There are women's classes, men classes, youth classes, children classes. Everyone here should be in a Bible Study/Small group. Next week we are talking about Team Jesus---well friends it's time to get into the game. Go to the Multi-Purpose Room after service meet the facilitators, ask questions, and sign up.

We are to teach this commandment and the love of God to 'your children.' Friends *you* are the teaching parent/grandparent of the children on this campus. In the lobby you will see a board **(image of name board)** with around 900 first names of children that are on this campus from a Sunday to a Sunday. From HisKiz ministry, Soldiers for Christ Youth Ministry, The Robin's Nest, Westlake Christian School, Stars and Comets before and after school program. These children are not "those children." They are *our* children. We are one. On this campus and we have the great opportunity, privilege and responsibility to be on the same team...Team Jesus. Pray for these students. Stop by after service in the lobby and pray for the names on that board. Volunteer to help with one of these ministries to help teach 'your' child/ 'our' child about God's love.

The scripture says to TALK of them when you sit in your house. Faith Circles: Talk. Do you talk about faith in your home? "And when you WALK by the way. Here is Faith Circle: Walk. Does the way you walk let people know of your faith? There is a phrase that has been around for years. To be honest I do not know who first said it...but I think it is still a relevant phrase. **(image)** (If you were on trial for being a Christian would there be enough evidence to convict?) Next week one service, Team Jesus. at what time XXX (9:30) then we begin a new series I hope you will invite people too. It is called Fake Christianity. **(logo image)** Beloved in our faith walk we need to make sure we are not walking a Fake Christianity but Real Christianity. Join us for this series.

When you lie down and when you rise know that "you should love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." Before you lie down, or when you rise know, learn of God's love. You can do that with daily devotions. Hold it , the pastor wants me to be in a Bible Study/Small group and have daily devotions. Yep.

Let me give you some help that you can pick up today. One way before you lie down, or when you rise is to read the United Methodist Devotional, "The Upper Room." **(image)** It has a short scripture, a brief devotion, a short prayer and a prayer focus. They are 2 months at a time. So, the September/October ones are out. You can always find them down by the Multi-Purpose Room in the racks there. A suggested donation of \$2 is appreciated. Large print edition available as well. You can also get this online for your electronic devices.

Another way I am going to suggest and encourage is for all of us to be reading the same scripture each day. Our Bishop and Cabinet has asked United Methodists around the Conference to all read the same scripture on the same day. The hope is we will maintain our core purpose and integrity.

It's the same scripture each month, repetitive as we think on these same scriptures. **(image of September)** This can also be found online on the Conference website and it is in the bulletin and there are copies at the Welcome Center. I plan on starting this in September and hope you will join me. I am planning on doing this when I rise and have my time of daily devotion and prayer.

On our faith walk we need to be reminded Who we are committed to and why. A continual commitment to love God with our whole self.

In our scripture the Jewish people had a way of doing that that they still do to this day.

⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

These were in essence little boxes called Phylacteries or in Hebrew known as Tefillin (Tuh-FILL-in) They contained scriptures from Exodus (Exodus 13, from the passage we have read this morning, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, and from Deuteronomy 11 (verses 13-21)

They were to be in this Phylactery on their hand and between their eyes **(image)**. What a great reminder. In fact, the sign on your hand was such that the box was on your bicep **(image)**. Notice it is on the left arm. It is on the left arm because it is closest to the heart. The Jewish concept of the term heart was the center of intellectual and emotional life. Oh, to be reminded that our whole life---intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs to be connected to loving God with all our heart, all our soul and all our might. By the way Jesus repeats this Great Commandment in the New Testament.

⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

This is what is known as the Mezuzah. It contains parchment with scripture in it. The idea is at the door to have it and to touch it to be reminded again of the Great Commandment. **(image)** What a great way to go out the door for a walk and touch your hand to the Mezuzah. A faith walk. Some Jews have the Mezuzah not just on the doorway of their house, but on most doorways inside their house. Always being reminded of this commandment.

Here now is where once again we get to Faith Circle: Walk. We have the Bible. We can even put the scripture on our head or arm. We can put reminders in our doorways. I'm sure there are many here that have crosses necklaces. I have friends that have tattoos that are crosses. I have a cross hanging down from my rear-view mirror. **(image)** There are times I simply reach up and put my hand around the cross. Now if you have a cross hanging from your mirror in your car---you have to be careful how you drive...plus I have that PHUMC magnet on the back of my car.

It doesn't matter how many magnets, or crosses I have if I don't walk the walk. Now an interesting thing about that cross in my car. That was made from the wood of the old barn on Sarah's grandads home place. Many of you know Sarah's mom, whom I call Mama Lena...it was the barn on Mama Lena's mother and fathers place.

Mama Lena' mom who was called MeMaw was born in the house on that same property where the barn was---where this wood came from. Sarah's mom, Mama Lena was born in that same house. MeMaw was faithful in going to church and her faith. Mama Lena is faithful in going to church and her faith. Sarah is faithful in going to church and her faith. So that wooden cross represents generations that all began at the old home place...MeMaw her daughter Mama Lena, and her daughter Sarah---the faith passed from generation to generation. Taught and caught. A Faith Circle where I look at that cross and know those from where that wood came walked and is walking their faith.

And I look at *this* cross and know Jesus died for everyone here. He loves you so.

May we make the commitment with all of our heart, all our soul and all or our might to be in the faith circle and to genuinely and authentically walk our faith.