

PASEO PATHWAY

HEART, **SOUL**, MIND, STRENGTH

28 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

29 “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. **30** Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ **31** The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

MARK 12:28-31

PASEO PATHWAY

Simply put, if Jesus says loving him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength and loving our neighbor as ourselves are the two most important things to God, then those are the things we need to focus on. The Paseo Pathway, our method of discipleship, has two major focuses, growing in our love of God in every aspect of our life and loving our neighbors in genuine, selfless, relational ways. The Pathway, like everything God does, is not meant to be walked alone; it's meant to be shared and experienced with a group of friends.

The word for disciple in the New Testament comes from the Greek word, *mathetes*, which means, "one who engages in learning through instruction from another." In other words, a disciple is a student. However, we need to be clear about the differences between the Biblical world's understanding of a student and ours. Disciples of teachers were common in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds. Philosophers and religious teachers would gain disciples, but the disciples didn't seek to just learn from the teacher's lectures. This wasn't a classroom teacher-to-student style learning from today. Instead, the disciples would follow the teacher throughout their everyday life. They sought to learn not just their teachings, but their character and lifestyle as well. In other words, disciples followed teachers in order to become like their teachers.

This puts a new twist on our understanding of what being a disciple of Christ means. We aren't just believers and we are not just invited to come and learn from his teachings. We are invited to come and know him, live everyday life with him, and in so doing become like him. But unlike earthly teachers, when you grow to know and have a relationship with Jesus to this level, you will find that not only will your knowledge of him grow, but your love for him will grow as well. In fact, this is God's ultimate aim in our discipleship! To see him, learn about him, grow to know him, and fall in love with him more and more.

Therefore, the Paseo Pathway is far more like developing a relationship than it is like a class or process. At least, that is our hope for all of us involved. But in order for it to maintain that focus, you must commit to not treat scripture reading like homework and group times like classrooms. Instead, every bit of scripture reading is an opportunity to meet with God and grow in your love for him. Every time you gather with friends or serve is an opportunity to love others as yourself.

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Everything about the Pathway hinges on you making a commitment to what we call REALationships. Yes I know that is misspelled. We spelled it that way to make a point. Be REAL and Be Relational. Be this with God and be this with others. Bring your whole, messy, un-put-together, unperfected self and be honest about who you are and what you are struggling with. And in the Grace of Jesus you will experience life and growth.

Each week on the pathway you will be asked to meet with God on your own through Scripture reading and journaling. This may be a completely new practice for you, so be patient. Picture it like a daily time to sit down and chat with God. He will speak to you through scripture and His Spirit, and you will speak to him through your prayers and response. At the end of each week you'll gather with your friends and have meaningful conversations about what your time in scripture and what God has impressed upon you. Your group's leader will have questions to help guide these conversations, but this is not meant to be used like a teacher and a classroom. Remember, this is all about relationships. So if you don't like the questions, ditch them. The main point is to focus on what God is saying through scripture and how he wants to use that to affect change in your life. In particular, *how can what you've been reading deepen your love for God and others?*

YOURSOU

It is worth repeating that God does not see us in segments. Ultimately, when Jesus commands us to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, he is commanding us to put our entire self into our love relationship with God. In other words, do not try to confine God into one arena of your life; He is Lord of all. However, Jesus's command does allow us to get a fuller picture of who we are. We are more than just emotions, more than just thoughts, more than just efforts. We are the sum of all those things. So in order to fully engage all that we are in our relationship with God, we will take a deep dive into each arena of our humanity. During this section of the Pathway we will focus on loving God with all of our Soul. But what does that mean?

The actual word for soul that Jesus uses in this command is the Greek word *psyche*. It is the same word from which we derive the word psychology. In Greek the word meant *the essence of one's life or the breath of life*. Your *psyche* is that which animates and makes you, you. It is your true self. Not the self you project to others and to the world around you, but your true self. So when Jesus commands us to love God with our *psyche*, our soul, he is saying love God with your true, real, deep self.

But here is the problem with our *psyche* - it is broken. Because of the *fallen nature of this world* we often experience trauma and heartaches and disappointments that cause us to want to hide our true self in fear. Because of the *sin of those around us*, we often bear wounds from unhealthy relationships and unhealthy people. Because of *our own sin*, our inner self is corrupted with deceitful desires and inaccurate perceptions of life. As a result of its broken nature, we tend to surround our inner self with layers of defenses and protectiveness. Rarely do we open up to others about our deepest fears and longings. We are tempted to keep those things to ourself.

“God wants you, the real you...He doesn't want a projection of you. He doesn't want a fake you. He wants you.”

And yet, Jesus says to love God with *all of your soul (psyche)*. God wants you, the real you, with all of your wounds and fears and worries and dreams and desires and corruptions. He doesn't want a projection of you. He doesn't want a fake you. He wants you. He knows who you are already, he made you. He knows your inner self,

and he loves you anyways. That's not to say that he won't reshape your inner self; that is precisely what he wants to do. He wants to heal the wounds, bring peace to the fears, purify the corruptions, and enlighten the dreams. But in order for him to do that, he first invites us to open ourselves to him. He won't force his way in. This isn't an interrogation, it's a love relationship.

THE PSALMS

So how do we engage our soul in a relationship with God? There are many different ways to answer that question, but as a church we will be using the book of Psalms to guide us. The Psalms provide us an excellent avenue to and example of a soulful relationship with God. The Psalms are a collection of lyrical poems and prayers to God or about God. They were made for worship and introspection. Like many works of arts, they cover a gamut of emotions. Some Psalms are filled with joy and praise and others with lament and sorrow. Some Psalms are begging God to move; others are thanking him for having already moved. Like going to an art gallery and looking at each piece of art and getting to know more about the author, the Psalms are a beautiful collection of pieces of people's relationships with God.

When read together, the Psalms give us permission to be real with God. They have a way of stirring our innermost parts of our being. As you read each Psalm, pause and truly take it in. Try to feel what the author must have felt. Don't get caught up in the names of places that you do not recognize, the Psalms were each written in a contextual time and place. Instead focus on the eternal God that the Psalmist is writing to or about.

Each week will contain five different selections from the book of Psalms. Unlike reading a narrative, a Psalm is a poem and can be read multiple times in multiple ways. I would suggest starting your day off reading the Psalm and then returning to it throughout the day. If one of the Psalms you read stands out to you, don't feel the pressure to get through all the reading. Instead, lean into why the Holy Spirit might be using that particular Psalm to speak to you. And then in your own journal, take notes on what the Psalmist was feeling and expressing to God. Take time to digest those expressions, inhale them and let them resonate within your soul, and then exhale your own prayers to God.

Like the Psalmists, learn to pray from the soul:

BE HONEST - As you study the Psalms you will notice that the authors are regularly very open about their fears, hurts, and shortcomings. In Psalm 32, David speaks of

what it was like to try to hide his sin from God. He tried going on like there was nothing wrong, yet he couldn't do it. Listen to his words:

*3 When I kept silent,
my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
4 For day and night
your hand was heavy on me;
my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer.
5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not cover up my iniquity.
I said, "I will confess
my transgressions to the Lord."
And you forgave
the guilt of my sin.*

What is the purpose of lying to God? He knows it all anyways. So be honest. Everything changed for David when he "*acknowledged*" his sin to God. God knew it was there, and he knew David was hiding it from him. But the lack of honesty kept David from experiencing the Lord's power and movement. So, he finally admitted to God what God already knew. What does that mean for us? It means, be honest with God! If you're scared, tell him. If you're mad, tell him. If you've messed up, tell him. If you're hurt, tell him. If you're hopeful, tell him.

BE DEEP - Far too often we settle for a shallow spirituality. Our prayers are quick and surface level. Perhaps we do this because it's convenient and we are busy, but most likely our busyness is simply an attempt to cover up deeper desires and hurts. Shallow spirituality always yields dissatisfaction and boredom. It leaves us wanting more. Which is a shame, because with God there is ALWAYS more. More to know, more to experience, more to be empowered by, more to be healed by, more to be comforted by.... There is ALWAYS more. So if your Christianity leaves you longing for more the issue isn't Christ, it's the shallowness of your relationship with Christ. Dive deeper. Listen to your soul. It longs to know the "*eternal more*" of God. As the psalmist says, "*my soul thirsts for you!*" (*Psalm 63:1*). Make a commitment to not quickly fly through the routine of scripture reading and prayer. Carve out a time to truly savor the words of scripture, tasting each one. Truly think about what you're praying for. Don't settle for shallowness, go deeper in your thoughts.

BE INTROSPECTIVE - So often our prayers are about what we want God to change in our situations and relationships and circumstances. And while those requests are

certainly important to God, if they are all that we pray for then we are missing a gigantic piece of the relational puzzle with God. The change he most wants to bring to our lives is a change to who we are within. One of the bravest prayers given in the Psalms is in Psalm 139 - “*23 Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*” The Psalmist is asking God to look deep within and reveal anything there that doesn’t need to be there. Notice that the Psalmist, in his honesty, is assuming that there will be anxiety and offensiveness within him. And yet, he invites God in anyways. More than that. He asks God to reveal and uproot that which doesn’t belong in his inner self. Meaning, he knows that God will see him more clearly than he can see himself. There may be no better example of loving God with our soul than this. He is opening himself up fully to God and asking God to go to work. In your time with God, learn to pray this psalm over your life. Ask God to reveal the anxious thoughts and the offensive ways within you. Allow him to “lead” you in his way of life.

BE EXPECTANT - And finally, if you are being honest and deep and introspective with God, then expect him to show up and speak to you. Turn your ear towards heaven and be quiet. Listen to what God has to say to you. You’ll know it’s God’s voice when he is calling you to Him and His way of life. If it is the voice of conviction, do not shy away. Conviction is not condemnation. In Jesus, there is no condemnation. The penalty for what God is convicting you for has already been paid. So the purpose of his conviction is not to tear you down, but to uproot the issue so that he may build you up. It might be the voice of peace or comfort. It might be a voice of guidance and assurance. Whatever God is saying to you, come to your prayer time expecting to hear from Him. When you open yourself to God, He will definitely illuminate the parts of your *psyche* that are in need of repair. But, take heart, we can trust His grace and mercy that His repairs are needed and good. Expect God to go to work within you.

GROWTHGROUPS

The Pathway is designed to work best in conjunction with a Growth Group. Like you, each person in the group is seeking to grow in their love for God and others. They will also be using the Reading Plan and Journal practices to meet with God regularly. The group will meet weekly to discuss all that God has been teaching them and revealing to them through scripture, and to get REAL with one another about what is happening in their lives. We invite you to join in to this way of life on the Pathway.

This Group will meet weekly for a six week session. Throughout the session the groups will have three main rhythms:

BIBLESTUDY - During Bible Study times the group will review the passages of scripture that they read over the previous week(s). They will seek to answer questions about the text and about what the text reveals about God and his nature. Again this is not meant to be a time to go over “homework” but a time to share about what everyone is experiencing in their relationship with God through scripture.

FAMILYTIME - Adults aren’t the only ones walking the Pathway together, our Paseo Kids are as well. Once during the six week session, older kids will be invited to join their parents in the Bible Study time. It is an opportunity for generations to connect and learn from each other as kids get to hear their parents share about their relationship with God and as they share with their parents and others about their own relationship. It is important to model for the kids that this is all about loving God and others more deeply and genuinely. This six week session will end with multiple growth groups gathering on a Friday night for a **Beach Party!!** This will be a multi-generational gathering as young and old and all those in between connect with one another.

DISCIPLESHIPGROUP - And finally, once during the six week session, men and women will split up for some REAL-talk time. These nights are meant to allow each person to open up their life and be honest with each other. It provides opportunities for support, accountability, and friendships to genuinely develop.

The goal of each of this six week session is to provide as many opportunities as possible for people to grow in connection and relationship with other believers as they grow in their love for God. To maximize these opportunities to their fullest, we ask each participant to fully commit to the Growth Group rhythms for the entire six week session. We understand that life can some time get extremely busy and might require a person to miss a few meetings. But, if possible, we challenge everyone to make the Growth Group a priority in their scheduling. Our suggested schedule for the six week session would be:

GROWTH GROUP DAY	
WEEK 1	BS/FT
WEEK 2	BS
WEEK 3	BS
WEEK 4	DG
WEEK 5	BS
WEEK6	BEACH PARTY! (Friday June 7)

READING PLAN

	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5
WK 1	PSALM 1	PSALM 3	PSALM 62	PSALM 100	PSALM 58
WK2	PSALM 131	PSALM 130	PSALM 22	PSALM 23	PSALM 26
WK3	PSALM 91	PSALM 16	PSALM 37:1-20	PSALM 37:21-40	PSALM 118
WK4	PSALM 139	PSALM 102	PSALM 40	PSALM 27	PSALM 147
WK5	PSALM 42	PSALM 4	PSALM 46	PSALM 51	PSALM 34
WK6	PSALM 104	PSALM 19	PSALM 84	PSALM 138	PSALM 150

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. What does this teach me about God?
2. How is the Psalmist engaging his soul in worship to God?
3. What is my soul saying to God?
4. What is God saying to my soul?

GROUP QUESTIONS

Due to the deep nature of the Psalms it is hard to predict how the Holy Spirit will use each week’s reading and where he will take the Group Discussions. It is suggested that each leader first start by asking the Growth Group which Psalm most spoke to them individually and why. Then, pick a Psalm that most speaks to you as the leader and walk through the four journal questions. Ask each person in particular to relate to

the emotions expressed by the Psalmist. Some question worth exploring every week might be:

1. What role does fear and anxiety play in our relationship with God
2. Why is praise and adoration to God important for our soul?
3. How do the voices of others help or hurt our trust in God? What voices are you most listening to currently?
4. Why is it important to remember what God has done in the past? How has he been faithful to you in the past?
5. What are you most longing to see God do in your life currently?

Learning to engage our soul in relationship with God can be a scary or uncomfortable yet extremely rewarding and personal process. It is suggested that each week the group ends in reflection by answering four questions:

1. How can I be more honest with God this week?
2. How can I take my relationship with God deeper this week?
3. In what ways can I allow my time with God to be more introspective this week?
4. How can I respond to what God is doing in my life through this session?

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

1. Did I invest the proper quality/quantity of time in my most important relationships?
2. Did my life reflect verbal integrity?
3. Did I express a forgiving attitude toward others?
4. Did I practice undisciplined or addictive behavior?
5. Was I honorable in my financial dealings?
6. Was I sexually pure?
7. Did I spend time with the Lord this week, completing the Bible reading for the week?
8. Did I pray for my pre-Christian friends? Did I talk with someone about Christ?