

THE WORK OF THE PEOPLE

SEEKING ALIVENESS

spiritual formation, reorientation and activation

People are beginning to seek a new path for our faith. For many years now, our faith has been traveling on a road that you know well. It looks like going to worship on a Sunday morning to hear a sermon from “professional theologian” who will educate us or inspire us or at least entertain us for an hour (but no more). It looks like a congregation that struggles to be a true “community” in the midst of competing demands on our time and attention. It looks like a woman in her late thirties in the last congregation I served (a small family-based church in rural Texas), who even though she had gone to this same church her whole life—baptized, confirmed, married—and her family had deep roots in this particular congregation and community, lamented to me that “these people think they know me, but they don’t know the real me.”

How can it be that we can worship side by side with the same people for years and never really get to know one another? Never really have any deep or meaningful conversation about our faith? If this doesn’t happen in a small church amongst people you’ve known your whole life, how can it ever happen in larger congregations where people come and go all the time?

Nearly every church community, conservative to progressive, Catholic to Evangelicals, Mainline to Pentecostal, operate off this same model. Hire a pastor. Build and pay for a building. Try to get as many people to come to worship once a week as you can. Hope they will also come for education classes. Twist their arms to give more money and time to the church. Hope they also see service to the community as a part of the whole deal.

This form of the faith is becoming defunct. Older generations are less committed to it. Younger generations aren’t bothering with it to begin with. Does this mean that the Church is dying or that Christianity has suddenly become irrelevant? Not at all! But this particular, traditional form of the faith is dying and feels increasingly disconnected from the reality of people’s life struggles.

This is not, however, cause for despair so long as we believe in a God of resurrection and new life. Perhaps the pain of letting go of our old ways will someday pale in comparison to the vibrant new ways that will take its place. Perhaps these new ways will seem more like the adventure of discipleship Jesus demonstrated for us in the first place: going out to meet people where they are, risking our own social status in order to become friends with the despised and rejected, reconciling with our enemies, healing old wounds, and bringing good news to the poor, recovery of sight to those who have gone blind, and the release of all who feel as if they are captives in their own lives.

In *Seeking Aliveness*, this four-session video curriculum bundle from The Work of the People, we will journey with renowned author and emergent Christian leader Brian McLaren as we seek out this new path for our faith. Drawing on the themes from his book *We Make the Road by Walking: a yearlong quest for spiritual formation, reorientation and activation*, he will offer up much food for thought for small groups both inside and outside the walls of the church, encouraging us to walk boldly into new forms and possibilities that are before us.

Let us journey together on Christ's Way.

Christ's peace,
Rich Nelson
your curriculum writer

Seeking Aliveness Overview

- **Session 1 - Aliveness in Faith** - Reflecting on Brian McLaren's "Seeking Aliveness: Faith" video, with an introductory video of McLaren reading from his book *We Make the Road by Walking*.
- **Session 2 - Aliveness in Jesus** - Reflecting on Brian McLaren's "Seeking Aliveness: Jesus" video.
- **Session 3 - Aliveness in Spirit** - Reflecting on Brian McLaren's "Seeking Aliveness: Spirit" video.
- **Session 4 - Aliveness in Word** - Reflecting on Brian McLaren's "Seeking Aliveness: Word" video, with a concluding video of McLaren reading from his book *We Make the Road by Walking*.
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Seeking Aliveness - Session One

ALIVENESS IN FAITH

(Seeking Aliveness: Faith” video)

In today’s video, we hear Brian McLaren reflect on the question, “Is the Christian faith a pathway, a way of life, or is it a parking lot, a warehouse, a system of belief and a system of sin management and death preparation?” McLaren calls us to rediscover the Way and life to the fullest.

Opening Prayer:

God of new life and new possibilities, you have the power to make all things new and show us ways we never knew existed. Today we offer before you those parts of our life which feel old and hopeless: we each give over to you our individual lives and our collective, communal life. We humbly ask you to inspire us to boldness as we seek to walk ever more faithfully in your Way. In Jesus’s name we pray. Amen.

Watch the “Seeking Aliveness: Faith” video

Questions for Reflection:

1. In our video today, Brian McLaren contrasts what he calls two different forms of Christianity. The first is based around Sunday morning worship with an end-goal of ensuring entry into heaven. The other, he says, is based around living our everyday lives out in the world. He describes this second form of the faith as “a Way” that we walk.
 - A. What are your experiences of these two forms of the faith?
 - B. Are they mutually exclusive or do they overlap or intersect in some ways?
 - C. Do you sense a need to make a new/different path for the faith as he does?
2. McLaren talks about salvation as liberation—not only physical liberation (as the Israelites gained from Egypt) but also social, relational and political liberation. He says, “When we discover a deeper, and really more biblical, meaning for that word—*salvation*—everything else will change.”
 - A. What do you think McLaren means by saying we need a deeper understanding of salvation?
 - B. Do you hold this same hope for our understanding of salvation? Why or why not?
 - C. What do you feel like you need to be saved from?
 - D. How is God saving you?
3. McLaren notes, “When Jesus would meet people and challenge them to follow him, he was inviting them into a new path of what I call *aliveness*. He called it life abundant, life to the full—or literally *life of the ages*.”
 - A. What do you think life with Jesus should feel like?

- B. What does the word *alive* connote for you?
- C. He continues, “If we want to find happiness...we are going to have to have something so strong going on in our lives that it’s stronger than all these attempts to make us discontented and unhappy and unsatisfied.” Can following the ancient way of a wandering Jewish peasant really compete with the barrage of modern multimedia marketing?
- D. What does it mean to be alive in the story of creation?

A Way of Pilgrimage

Over the course of these four sessions, in addition to the videos and reflection questions, we also offer a series of reflections that envision a new “Way” of following Jesus. These reflections are excerpts from curriculum writer Rich Nelson’s “Following the Way” discipleship program (www.followingtheway.me) and used with permission. Feel free to use these reflections, as needed, as food for deeper thought.

There is a stereotype of men that they don’t like asking for directions. I pretty much fit that stereotype. Some men don’t like to admit that they don’t know it all. That’s not the issue for me. I’ll readily admit that I don’t know a lot of things and how to get from Point A to Point B can sure be one of them. The real issue for me is that I don’t like troubling other people with my problems. And being lost seems like a real problem. And asking someone for directions feels like troubling them.

I remember the first time I ever used a GPS. It was a Christmas gift from my brother-in-law. I was excited to receive it and remember feeling very high tech as I installed it in my car. My childhood-rooted geek fascination with technology was on full display. I loved that I could just type in my desired destination and this seemingly all-knowing, gentle, reassuring voice would turn-by-turn safely guide me there.

There have been times in my life when I longed for a GPS: Spiritual Version. I think a lot of us wish God worked that way. Wouldn’t it be nice to be able to tell God exactly where we want to go and exactly when we want to get there and have God’s all-knowing, gentle, reassuring voice guide us safely there turn-by-turn? These prayers usually sound like, “Lord, please help me get _____.” or “What do you want me to do, Lord? Just tell me and I’ll do it!” or even more to the point, “God, why did you let that happen?!” We don’t like it when we run off the road. It would be nice if God always corrected us before we get stuck in a rut.

But life doesn’t work like that. And God doesn’t work like that. And truth be told, life would be pretty boring if it worked like that; if all we ever did was follow the exact instructions of “the great voice in the sky.” No one likes to be told what to do all the time. Why? Because it is important that we be free to explore, and free to make mistakes, and free to go on an adventure every now and then.

Adventure. That's what life is supposed to feel like. Is that what your life feels like? Maybe. But if it doesn't you're not alone. Too many of us feel like life is a mere exercise in survival. And worse yet, our faith feels like a strict, GPS-like, path. Go here. Don't go there. Do this. Don't do that. Turn left in 100 feet. Turn here. Wait, what? Was that the turn? I thought it was the next one. DANG! Rerouting...

We use the bible this way. We ask our pastors to serve this role. We expect prayer to work this way. We just want someone to tell us what to do and we'll do it. God instead wants us to go on an adventure. When Jesus sent his disciples out on their first missionary adventure, he told them, "Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic." In other words, no GPS. Trust God to guide you. That's all. Now, go enjoy the adventure.

To conclude your first session, watch the video “We Make the Road by Walking: One” a reading from McLaren’s book of the same name.

Seeking Aliveness - Session Two

ALIVENESS IN JESUS

(Seeking Aliveness: Jesus” video)

In today’s video, we hear Brian McLaren reflect on the question, “Has religion stopped ‘working for you?’” Have you become a Christian conformist instead of a follower of Jesus? He challenges us to let Jesus lead us out of captivity into a life of discovery and to let the Spirit lead us into greater things than even Jesus himself did.

Opening Prayer:

God of the journey, you alone know the way. Guide our footsteps into the way of peace, revive our faith in times of stagnation, and give us the strength and courage we need to continue to follow our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Watch the “Seeking Aliveness: Jesus” video

Questions for Reflection:

1. In our video today, Brian McLaren talks about people he has met for whom religion “quit working” and “goes sour.” He says that if your religious tradition stands still it becomes stagnant and asks, “what would it mean to be part of a tradition that didn’t just seek to parrot what it’s founder said, but to actually continue in the direction it’s founder was leading?”
 - A. In what ways do you believe your faith community falls into the comfortable pattern of “parroting what Jesus said.”
 - B. In what ways do you believe your faith community seeks instead to “continue in the direction Jesus was leading?”
 - C. How can we better capture Jesus’s spirit of creativity, non-conformity, and life of continuing discovery?

2. McLaren notes that “The older I get the more I realize that to be a committed Christian is to be on a lifelong journey.”
 - A. How has your faith life grown and changed over time?
 - B. In what ways do you challenge yourself to keep from becoming stagnant or complacent in your faith journey?
 - C. What’s so wrong about staying put for a while? Does life even require us to backtrack at times to revisit old ground?

3. Towards the end of the video, McLaren says that “One of the great challenges for all of our religious traditions is to take all of the wisdom from the past (don’t forget about the past, cherish the tradition) but let our traditions be living traditions that help us engage with the life and death issues of today rather than dead traditions that just keep rehearsing issues and questions from the past.”
 - A. What do you presume he means by “the issues and questions of the past?”
 - B. What issues and questions do you wish we could focus on now and into the future?
 - C. What does it mean to be alive in the adventure of Jesus?

A Way of Adventure

Over the course of these four sessions, in addition to the videos and reflection questions, we also offer a series of reflections that envision a new “Way” of following Jesus. These reflections are excerpts from curriculum writer Rich Nelson’s “Following the Way” discipleship program (www.followingtheway.me) and used with permission. Feel free to use these reflections, as needed, as food for deeper thought.

Would it surprise you to learn that before our faith was called Christianity it was called *The Way*? Whenever I ask this question of a church group, I find a large majority have never heard of this. For many reasons, it is a shame we didn’t keep our original name. Perhaps it’s not too late to claim it again. The four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, tell the story of Jesus’s life and ministry. The Acts of the Apostles is the next book in the New Testament which tells the story of the disciples after Jesus’s death and resurrection. Here, in this earliest history of the followers of Jesus, we find this:

*Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogue in Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to *The Way*, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. (Acts 9:1-2)*

For many people, *Christianity* implies a system of belief in a person we call the Christ. This is a good place to begin to identify ourselves. In fact, early on we were called *Christians* by people outside of our community as a way to distinguish us from all the rest (for example see Acts 11:26 and Acts 26:28). Only later did this term come to be used by people within the community (for example see 1 Peter 4:16). However, these three examples are the only times the word *Christian* appears in all of scripture. The word *Christianity* never appears.

One term that does occur many times to describe our faith is *The Way*. And it draws on a deep and rich tradition in scripture of speaking about the way of the Lord, the ways of humans, metaphors having to do with roads which were *ways*, and Jesus’s own words when he said, “I am the way...” (in John 14:6). The Acts of the Apostles uses the term *The Way* seven different times.

- Acts 9:1-2
- Acts 18:24-28

- Acts 19:8-10
- Acts 19:21-28
- Acts 22:1-7
- Acts 24:10-23 (twice mentioned)

The Greek word for *the way* is ὁδός (haw-dos). In just the New Testament it appears dozens of times:

- 38 times to describe *a way of life*,
 - 37 times to describe a means of getting from one place to another such as a road,
 - 25 times to describe the process of taking a trip or going on a journey,
- and a handful of other similar uses.

A similar exploration of that term's use in the Old Testament provides for another rich study. So anytime one of the early disciples used the term *The Way* they were using a word that clued others in. It draws from a very deep well of their scriptural tradition in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and from everyday usage of the word as evidenced in the writings we now call the New Testament.

The beauty of the term *The Way* is that it implies not just a system of belief, but also a pattern for living life in a way different than all the other ways of living that are available to us. Furthermore, it sets Jesus's Way apart from them. Jesus shows us a particular path, a particular Way, that is so much more than the generalized image of Jesus most of us have when we call him "a really good person" or even "the Son of God." The Way is a particular pattern of living our lives that does not match the other patterns humanity has created. It is God's pattern and as we live into it, it will seem at first as if the pieces don't fit the puzzle life has given us. They don't. The image we are called to create with our lives looks much different than the average obituary. It looks much more like the story of Jesus's life we find in the Gospels.

The main difference between living life in our default ways or living life according to The Way is whether we live our lives for ourselves or we live our lives for others. Many people live much of life for themselves, accumulating as much power, wealth and material possessions as they can in an effort to shield themselves from life's pain and unpredictability. More enlightened people will expand their circle of concern to the members of their family, perhaps putting the needs and future of their children before their own. Some others go further than that, placing their immediate community (work, school, extended family, church, nation, etc.) within their circle of concern, often making inspiring sacrifices for others.

The wisest of us all do not stop there however. The wisest find ways to ignore the imaginary lines between *me* and *you/creation/God* to such a point that they realize the deep interconnectedness of all. They experience God as "I AM." They experience themselves as a part of the I AM. They see Christ in everyone they meet, knowing that whatever we

have done to the least among us, we have done to Jesus, the greatest among us. Our individuality becomes something that connects us instead of separates us. It becomes a blessing instead of a curse. We become One. This is the place we are going. This is where The Way leads.

Closing Prayer:

This week, God, we pray that you will help our faith become more alive. Inspire us to rise from the seat of complacency and respond each new day to Christ call to follow him on the Way. Amen.

Seeking Aliveness - Session Three

ALIVENESS IN SPIRIT

(Seeking Aliveness: Spirit” video)

In today’s video, Brian McLaren notes that conservatives have tended to emphasize the personal dimensions of faith and liberals have tended to emphasize the ethical and public and social dimensions of faith, and says the results haven’t been good. He then invites us to rediscover “Pentecostalism 2.0”—new life in and through God’s Spirit.

Opening Prayer:

Holy Spirit, be present among us today. Help us to be unafraid to let our private faith become manifest in our public actions. Give us the courage to acknowledge before others the importance of our faith in you. Amen.

Watch the “Seeking Aliveness: Spirit” video

Questions for Reflection:

1. In our video today, Brian McLaren says, “If the Pentecostalism of the last one hundred years was about rediscovering the experience of the Holy Spirit, especially what the Holy Spirit can do at the end of long meetings with a lot of loud preaching and motivational music, I’d like to discover in the next one hundred years what the Holy Spirit can do, not just in a church service but in our whole lives.”
 - A. In many churches God the Father and God the Son get a lot more airtime than God the Holy Spirit. What has been your experience and understanding of the role of the Spirit in the communal life of the Church?
 - B. What role do you sense the Spirit plays in your own personal life? Or is this something you haven’t given much thought to?
 - C. What do you imagine the Holy Spirit is capable of doing if fully unleashed on the world in a Pentecost 2.0 movement?

2. McLaren goes on to describe teachers, doctors, engineers, who see their vocation as being a lived out form of their religious beliefs, saying, “What would happen if we could combine the passion of personal, vibrant spirituality with a responsible, and wise, and engaged faith lived out in public life?”
 - A. Do you perceive of your work as an expression of your religious belief? Why or why not?
 - B. What are the challenges you face in seeing your work as sacred?

- C. How can we negotiate living out our faith in the workplace while simultaneously being respectful of the rights of our co-workers to hold different or even opposing views?
3. McLaren begins to paint a picture of a different kind of life he believes is possible if we live fully into the Spirit. He says, “One of the great opportunities and challenges as we move forward is to discover that the Holy Spirit is not a private spirit and is not a religious spirit but is the Spirit that fills and flows through and is manifested in all of creation...and is inviting us into this beautiful vitality and aliveness...connected to God and connected to all of God’s creation.”
- A. How can we become more aware in our daily lives of our connectedness to God?
 - B. How can we become more aware of our connectedness to all of God’s creation?
 - C. What does it mean to be alive in the Spirit of God?

A Way of Relationship

Over the course of these four sessions, in addition to the videos and reflection questions, we also offer a series of reflections that envision a new “Way” of following Jesus. These reflections are excerpts from curriculum writer Rich Nelson’s “Following the Way” discipleship program (www.followingtheway.me) and used with permission. Feel free to use these reflections, as needed, as food for deeper thought.

It’s all about relationship. That really is what it comes down to. For if we cannot find our way into loving, compassionate relationship with God, others and self, any “truth” we may lay claim to is good for nothing. We will be, as Paul puts it, nothing but a loud, clanging gong or cymbal. Undeniably present and audible, but still not anything someone wants to listen to for very long.

The Holy Spirit has its origin in the love between God the Father and God the Son. It is this same Spirit, present at the very dawn of creation, which still overflows into an exuberant life-giving generosity that has the power to heal and sustain each one of us. And it is that same Spirit that we share in when we are able to lay aside those things which seek to divide us one from another and instead embrace the other, the distant, even the enemy in pure joy and thankfulness for the love God has given us to share.

Once the dawn of this true reality rises upon our consciousness and we not only “know” but “sense” our place in the interconnectedness of all creation, we cannot help but love that which God loves. If God loves it, how can we ever despise it? If God has forgiven it, how can we ever reserve our acceptance? Sensing our own truly small place in the grandeur of all time and space, being made so humble as to understand the infinite limitations of our own worldview, we are finally made free enough to join into the awesomeness of God.

The Holy Spirit, that aspect of God which takes neither the anthropomorphic form of either Father or Son, Mother or Daughter, Male or Female, but rather remains free to simply be the God we cannot see or describe but rather sense, that is what has the power to re-enliven our sense of self and faith. That is where we can turn when words fail us. This, at last, is the God we cannot begin to name but rather can only enjoy the warmth of God's abiding presence...inspiring us not only to do but to be.

Closing Prayer:

Holy God, we pray that your life-giving Spirit will breathe new life into us in the coming week. Inspire us to do great things in your name and also to do small things with great love and care. In the power of the Spirit we pray. Amen.

Seeking Aliveness - Session Four

ALIVENESS IN WORD

(Seeking Aliveness: Word” video)

We have to disarm the stories that we’ve used to justify violence and teach people how Jesus came, in many ways, to disarm those bogus stories of the past. Author Brian McLaren invites us to consider scripture with a fresh and new set of eyes.

Opening Prayer:

We remember the passages from John that “in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”. Creative God, you are the author of all that was, is and ever will be. Help us this day to consider more deeply the role of your life-giving Word, not only in the pages we read but also that which you have written on our hearts. Amen.

Watch the “Seeking Aliveness: Word” video

Questions for Reflection:

1. Brian McLaren begins today’s video by saying the Bible has some inherent problems in that it does not speak with one voice about violence and justice and some cases those voices are in contradiction to Jesus’s teaching. He notes, “In the ancient world, people would tell stories and over time they would modify stories. As soon as a story got written down, though, it really couldn’t be modified any more. So then you’d have to tell a new story. And often we have stories in deep tension with each other in the Bible. That’s not a flaw. That’s not a mistake. That’s how learning and growth happened in the ancient world. For people to try take those stories from the ancient world and absolutize them, it just shows a fundamental misunderstanding of how the bible works.”
 - A. For some people these words sound heretical. For some people they sound like a breath of fresh air. What do they sound like to you?
 - B. What do you think the role of the Bible should be in our faith life today? Is it the final word or simply the first word?
 - C. How can we engage with these ancient texts as the sacred and inspired word while also balancing them with God’s ongoing revelation through the Holy Spirit, as Jesus promised?
2. McLaren goes on to talk about old dichotomies he says need to be reconciled once and for all: the the Bible vs. Science, the Bible vs. Violence, and our struggle for appropriate Imagery of God.

- A. How do you handle the traditionally held tension between the Bible and Science? Is the contradiction in competing claims to truth or does the Bible serve a different purpose than the scientific method?
 - B. How do we disarm violent biblical passages so that our children don't pick them up and use them to justify violence against others?
 - C. McLaren notes the inherent weaknesses in the image of God as king or father. What imagery for God do you think is faithful in today's context?
3. Throughout this series we have been searching for ways to bring a new sense of "aliveness" to our faith and our personal walk of discipleship.
- A. What inspires you to a new sense of aliveness?
 - B. What gives you hope?
 - C. What does it mean to tell better stories and to be alive in an ongoing uprising of peace, freedom, justice and compassion?

A Way of Mutuality

Over the course of these four sessions, in addition to the videos and reflection questions, we also offer a series of reflections that envision a new "Way" of following Jesus. These reflections are excerpts from curriculum writer Rich Nelson's "Following the Way" discipleship program (www.followingtheway.me) and used with permission. Feel free to use these reflections, as needed, as food for deeper thought.

We do not know how many people were there to hear it. All we know is that it was a "great crowd" from many different regions who had followed this wandering preacher/healer out into the wilderness where on a mountain he gave them a sermon full of glimpses of "God's alternate reality." It seems it was time to paint a bigger picture. They were hungry for more. The words they were about to hear would be so powerful and so radical that their reverberations continue to this day to shake those of us who choose to hear them to our very core.

In Jesus's own day, the word "kingdom" made sense. The history of the Jewish people was one of a kingdom that was once mighty, had declined and been destroyed, and had struggled in fits and starts to re-establish itself. The hope and expectation for a messiah was someone who, like great King David, could once again make a great nation of Israel, overcoming the occupying Roman Empire and their great king, Caesar. Jesus had indeed come to establish a kingdom, but not the kingdom of Israel. He had come to establish what he called "the Kingdom of God" or "the Kingdom of heaven."

Kingdom language in our own day doesn't make sense for some people. We value the proposed egalitarianism of democratic society. We allow for a president, with limited powers for a limited term. We would not allow for a king, with ultimate and unlimited authority. Kings in our own day, at least those of the European mold, have largely become figureheads, relics of a bygone era. And the thought of giving them ultimate

authority back seems absurd. Few people want to be reigned over by a king. Even if that king is God.

There is something to be said for submission, but only if it is submission to a just and good higher power. The bible is full of people who submitted their will to God's call upon their lives: kings, prophets, and ordinary people like Mary and Joseph, Jesus's parents. "My soul magnifies the Lord," Mary sang. I exist to increase God in the world. We would do well to become humbler people who realize that we are not the ultimate authority for our lives and place God properly in the center.

And yet there is a mutuality in our relationship with God that was given to us by God at the very beginning of God's relationship with humanity. We are beings with free will, able to choose between one course for our lives or another. God will not force us to walk down any path, even if it is for our own good. We must choose it. God ordains us to be co-creators and caretakers, not mere subjects or slaves.

So rather than the metaphor of a kingdom, we might understand that what Jesus is about to lay out before us is an alternate reality, God's Alternate Reality. And Jesus is going to invite us to open our eyes and see that this alternate reality is all around us; we just didn't have eyes to see it.

God's Alternate Reality is a way of seeing the world that exists alongside our own universe. We walk through it every day as we pass people on the street, as we sit in our home, as we work and worship and play. It is all around us as real and as thick as the air in which we live and move and have our being. And also as completely unseen and taken for granted.

Jesus gives us what has become known as "The Sermon on the Mount." It is much more than a sermon. It is a wormhole through which we can enter God's Alternate Reality. It is the wardrobe that unexpectedly leads us into another realm. And it is in this other world that we will finally come to see the true nature of our own world that, despite all the ways it hasn't made sense, we thought we knew until now. It is in this other world that the *me* I've been searching for all my life will finally be found. At first, God's Alternate Reality will seem not to make sense. It doesn't fit into my present worldview. But in time it will prove to be the only thing that makes any sense, proving everything I thought I knew to be either a vague misrepresentation of true reality at best, or at worst a complete and outright lie.

It is your choice. You may walk through the door or not. But, as Jesus says, if you do choose to walk forward do not look back. Those who do are not ready for the Kingdom.

To conclude your last session, watch the video “We Make the Road by Walking: Two” a reading from McLaren’s book of the same name.

About the curriculum writer

Rev. Rich Nelson is a disciple of Jesus Christ, husband, father and Episcopal priest who has served both Episcopal and Lutheran faith communities and schools. He also co-founded Bridge Ministry of Burton, TX, an ecumenical non-profit that works across denominational and racial differences to serve their community together in Christ's name.

Rich recently stepped aside from congregational leadership to devote his ministry to writing and creating deeper resources for discipleship. His flagship program is "Following the Way," an innovative discipleship resource to support individuals and small groups as they explore and live into the life-giving power of the Shema/Great Commandment (www.followingtheway.me).

He is married to the Rev. Karen Buck Nelson and they have two sons. Karen is a pastor in the United Church of Christ. Their oldest son was baptized by a Methodist truck driver. Their youngest son was baptized by a Lutheran bishop. In his extended family is an Episcopal deacon, a former Orthodox monk and a Baptist preacher. Their family loves being an incarnation of a new era of ecumenism.

You can find him at www.revrichnelson.com, on Facebook and on Twitter @revrichnelson