

Practicing the Way of Jesus: Life Together in the Kingdom of Love
Available July 2011
\$15, 192 pages, paper
978-0-8308-3634-5

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A Call to Action

Too often we settle for simply thinking and talking about our faith, without actually doing anything. Mark Scandrette believes that we need to recover a sense of immediacy and action in our spiritual practices. In *Practicing the Way of Jesus*, Scandrette shares his experience of spiritual growth in community and outlines practical spiritual “experiments” that believers can do together to live out a new way of life in the kingdom.

Why do we need another book on spiritual formation?

If practicing a spiritual discipline sounds like just one more thing on the to-do list, how might we reframe that so we can actually experience grace?

What sort of life does Jesus offer in the kingdom of God?

You suggest that in our society today, we need “communities of experimentation” more than ever. What might such a community look like?

What do you see as the five basic themes of human experience? What are some examples of experiments that help us with each of these?

What are the characteristics of a good spiritual experiment?

How do you evaluate the success of these experiments?

What are the dynamics of real transformation?

How might one begin to initiate and lead shared experiments and practices?



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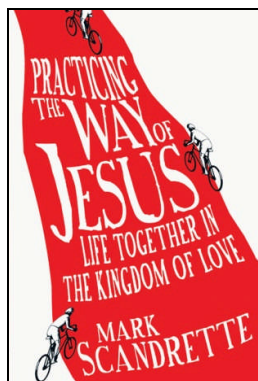
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Following Jesus: It's a Lifestyle

"I am convinced that God's good news spreads best, not through force, but through fascination. Mark Scandrette is fascinating. He lives with imagination and beauty. He is a poet and artist. But he is not just about creative thinking; he is about creative living. His book is an invitation to love creatively and recklessly, so that we might do something to interrupt the status quo, surprise the world with God's goodness and fascinate the world with grace."

Shane Claiborne, author, activist and compiler of *Common Prayer*

"This book provides something we urgently need today: a practice-based approach to spiritual formation. It is an honest account of someone, and several someones, who actually tried to do the things Jesus taught us to do. This book is inspiring because it shows a willingness to take risks, and is honest at the same time. Focusing on practice can tend toward legalism, but Mark avoids any hint of legalism by stressing the inner character over the outer action, and as he puts it so beautifully, not merely engaging in pious practices, but 'learning to dance to God's song.' In an age when we talk more about spirituality than we practice it, this book will provide us a healthy balance. It is a much-needed approach to Christian formation for the current generation and beyond."

James Bryan Smith, author of *The Apprentice Series*

"We often think that spiritual formation is following the way of Jesus and abiding 'in' him. However, the author helps us to see that spiritual formation is to live 'out' the way of Jesus who abides in us. Our ultimate goal of spiritual formation is to be more like Jesus through our spiritual exercises and practices. This practical manual of spiritual formation will help you to be a little Jesus."

Rev. Joshua Choonmin Kang, author of *Scripture by Heart* and *Deep-Rooted in Christ*, and senior pastor, New Life Vision Church, Los Angeles, California



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BUZZ

ENDORSEMENTS

“Reading about his ‘experiments’ in faith makes you close the book and think, ‘I can do this! I want to do this!’”

“Mark Scandrette has been a great inspiration to me for years now. In his latest book he gave me goose bumps just thinking about the possibilities that could arise if a group of people really did find a space where they could work out the vision and teachings of Jesus together in real life. Practical, wise, thoughtful and grace-filled, this book is a gift.”

Michael Frost, author of *Exiles* and co-author of *ReJesus* and *The Faith of Leap* (with Alan Hirsch)

“Mark Scandrette is better than most in helping us move our faith from a thought to a lifestyle. In a magnetic and compelling way, he offers us an irresistible invitation to open our lives to the many ways in which we can follow Jesus. Reading about his ‘experiments’ in faith makes you close the book and think, ‘I can do this! I want to do this!’”

Nancy Ortberg, author of *Looking for God: An Unexpected Journey Through Tattoos, Tofu and Pronouns*

“It has been a long time since I was this stirred and humbled by a book. Mark Scandrette is a voice for all who are ‘sensing a pull towards a spirituality that is more holistic, integrative and socially engaged.’ This inspiring leader of an intentional community gives me deep hope for the future. Reading this book I felt personally moved to be more intentional about living my life the way Jesus would live my life if he were me.”

Gary W. Moon, Ph.D., Vice President and Chair of Integration, Richmond Graduate University, and author of *Apprenticeship with Jesus*

“Wow. A beatnik Tolstoy who makes ‘overcoming temptation’ seem like a potentially playful enterprise. This book is full of examples of how a community might embody faith. It’s immensely practical and inspiring.”

Debbie Blue, author of *Sensual Orthodoxy* and *From Stone to Living Word*



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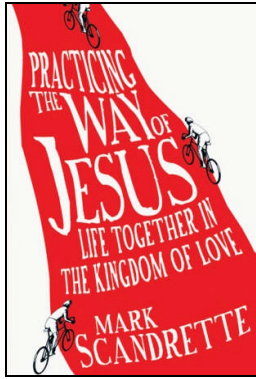
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Joining the Jesus Dojo

So many of us want to live in the Way of Jesus—pursuing a life that is deeply soulful, connected to our real needs and good news to our world. Yet too often our methods of spiritual formation are individualistic, information driven or disconnected from the details of everyday life. We simply are not experiencing the kind of transformation that is the historically expected result of the Christ phenomenon. If Jesus of Nazareth demonstrated and taught a revolutionary way of love that is actually possible, alive with healing and hope, then we need a path for experiencing that revolution in the details of our daily lives. Simply put, I believe we need to recover a sense of immediacy and action in our spiritual practices.

Perhaps what we need is a path for discipleship that is more like a karate studio than a college lecture hall. With this book I hope to offer a practical approach to spiritual formation that is serious about Scripture, action-focused, communal, experiential and connected to real world challenges and opportunities. . . .

During my formative years I spent time with philosopher and theologian Dallas Willard, who often and memorably told us that to experience the kingdom of God, “a group of people should get together and simply try to do the things that Jesus instructed his disciples to do.” We don’t enter the kingdom of God merely by thinking about it or listening to one another talk about it. We have to experiment together with how to apply the teachings of Jesus to the details of our lives. In discussions with friends, I began to say,

“It seems like what we need is a Jesus dojo—a space where we can work out the vision and teachings of Jesus together in real life.” In Japanese the word *dojo* means “place of the way” and is used to describe a school or practice space for martial arts or meditation. Theoretically, a dojo could be created for any skill or discipline. You could have a knitting dojo, a cooking dojo, a karate dojo—or a Jesus dojo. The important distinction is an *active* learning environment, where participation is invited and expected. . . .

To offer a more precise description, a Jesus dojo, or community of practice, is (1) an experiment, (2) inspired by the life and teachings of Jesus, (3) in which a group of people commit time and energy to a set of practices, (4) in conversation with real needs in our society and within themselves, (5) and reflect on how these experiences can shape the ongoing rhythms of life.



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Mark A. Scandrette is the founding director of ReImagine, a spiritual formation center based in San Francisco that invites people into integrative spiritual experiments and practices with an emphasis on creativity, community building and social action. He has extensive experience providing leadership in churches and community-based organizations and has been a minister, writer and spiritual teacher for twenty years. Mark lectures with the U.S. Center for World Missions, leads retreats and workshops, mentors pastors and leaders, and provides life coaching and spiritual direction. He is the author of *Soul Graffiti* (Jossey-Bass, 2007) and a contributor to several other books.

Most of us have had transformational encounters that reflect the essence of what I am describing here. The intent of this book is to help readers become more mindful of this process and more intentional about creating spaces with greater transformational potency.

I use the term “community of practice” here to describe the ancient and enduring historical phenomenon of whole person apprenticeship to Jesus. It is the way that disciples to Jesus have always been made. When Jesus proclaimed the immediacy of God’s kingdom, he asked for a whole person response: “Repent and believe the good news” (Mark 1:15). Eugene Peterson’s dynamic paraphrase highlights this text as a call to action: “Time’s up! God’s kingdom is here. Change your life and believe the Message.” In other words, dream up your whole life again—because there is a new way to be human. Those who first heard his message began making dramatic changes in their lives based on his instructions. For example, after Jesus had taught his disciples to sell their possessions and give to the poor (Luke 12:33) we later find them doing just that: “Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone [who] had need” (Acts 2:45 NIV). Together they created a shared culture—a community of practice where whole-life transformation was expected and supported.

Jesus taught with unique authority, convinced that his teachings corresponded directly to the reality of the way life actually works. He embodied and presented not a theoretical construct, but a path for becoming fully human and awake to our Creator. Like a produce vendor offering free samples at the farmer’s market, Jesus seemed to take a “try before you buy” approach. He invited those who were skeptical about the divine origins of his message to test the authenticity of his teaching through experiments in obedience—confident that the truth of what he taught could be proven by experience: “Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own” (John 7:17). The way of Jesus can be verified by direct experience and must be practiced to be understood. Through shared practices of obedience we can know the truth of what Jesus taught about the reality of God’s kingdom. In the well-known parable of the wise and foolish builders, Jesus makes the point clear that putting the teachings into practice is not merely an option—it is the difference between safety and destruction (Matthew 7:24-27).

—Adapted from chapter one, “An Invitation to Experiment”



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