

**An Altar in the World**  
**Chapter Four**  
**The Practice of Walking on the Earth**

This study guide is formatted for a small group gathering. If you choose to use it as a small group leader or as an individual, feel free to adapt it in whatever way seems meaningful to you. Enjoy!

Amy Fryar Kennedy

**Lesson prep:**

Set up the canvas labyrinth in the FUMC Social Hall. Contact Dee Chapell or Amy Kennedy for labyrinth info.

If you don't have space for the labyrinth, go barefoot inside and set up a circular course of different textures to walk over-smooth wood, rough doormats, soft carpet, cold tile, sand, water followed by towels, etc. Walk around the circle multiple times.

Print out homework assignments for next week.

**Quotes and ideas worth repeating:**

*The miracle is not to walk on water but on the earth-Thich Nhat Hanh*

*Most of us spend so much time thinking about where we have been or where we are supposed to be going that we have a hard time recognizing where we actually are.*

**Related Scripture:**

*When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses, Moses!"*

*And Moses said, "Here I am."*

*God said "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."*

*Exodus 3:4-5*

Luke 24:13-35 (walking on the road to Emmaus)

**Introductions:**

Share impressions from your labyrinth or barefoot sensory walk.

**Alternative Gathering Activities:**

Practice using your sixth sense (the ability to align the body in space).

Choose from the following suggestions:

Try a 3 legged race with and without cords to join inside legs.

Walk with blindfolds through the memorial garden at FUMC.

Walk the canvas labyrinth with only socks on. Give a thought to people who go barefoot because they have no shoes. What would it be like to walk through the world with so little cushion? What might your feel look like if you had no shoes?

**Reflection/discussion:**

The labyrinth is not like the treadmill. The treadmill makes promises it can keep: over time, you will have decreased pulse, increased muscle tone, decreased weight. The labyrinth may be a set path, but it does not offer a set experience.

If given the choice between a treadmill and a labyrinth, which would you prefer to use?

Have you ever spent lots of time reading up on some activity, but then learned a lot more when you actually experienced it?

(ex: learning to ride a horse, tube feedings in nursing school)

What if Jesus had driven instead of walked? Or borrowed a fast horse? How would his ministry have differed?

*It is solved by walking-Augustine of Hippo, early theologian of Christian church*

What is "it?"

Read aloud Luke 24:13-35 (walking on the road to Emmaus)

Imagine yourself as one of these walkers. Where were you headed? What was on your mind? What did you miss? What surprises happened along the way?

**Closing:**

Sing "Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley" (FWS # 2112)

or verses 1&2 of "Just a Closer Walk with Thee"

**Materials needed:**

Labyrinth

Soft bathmat, doormat, basin of sand, basin of water, towels, smooth tile or wood

Homework assignment slips

**Homework:**

Take your shoes off and feel the earth under your feet, as if the ground on which you are standing is holy ground. Let it please you. Let it hurt you a little. Feel how the world really feels when you do not have shoes to shield you from the way things really are.

Consider giving one pair of shoes away.

Try walking somewhere for an errand this week instead of driving.

