

Walk In A Relaxed Manner (Life Lessons from the Camino), Joyce Rupp. Orbis Books, 2005.

(The following could be used for personal reflection or for group conversation. This book and the following integration suggestions could also serve as the source of a personal or communal retreat.)

Introduction

1. What “seeds” inspired and led the author to walk the Camino? Describe an event or experience in your life that required significant time before coming to fruition.
2. Walking the Camino became “a life-changing event” for Joyce Rupp. If you were to write about one of your transforming experiences, what would you choose, and why that particular one?
3. The author mentions C.G. Jung’s advice about “...needing to allow their undeveloped self room to emerge and grow.” What life events have stretched some aspect of your undeveloped self?
4. Do you agree that most people get caught up in the push and pull of calendars and not-enough time? Does this happen for you?
5. In the “Introduction”, what did you find particularly insightful or inspiring?

Chapter 1 “Allow the Historical Route to Empower You”

1. This book focuses on the Camino de Santiago as a sacred route. What other historical routes or religious destinations have attracted people (or yourself) to travel to them?
2. How would you describe or explain “spiritual energy?”
3. Imagine placing your hand in the indented palm print of your ancestors. Who are some of the persons of the past who’ve inspired you?
4. “Each of us has a camino, a road of life.” What title would you give your camino?
5. With which of the legends connected to this Camino do you most resonate with?

Chapter 2 “Become a Pilgrim”

1. Review the characteristics of a pilgrim. Any other traits you would add to these?
2. Have you ever felt like you’ve been a pilgrim, or met someone who was? If you have been on a pilgrimage what attracted or enticed you to make the journey?

3. How would you have responded to the “Mother Superiors” of Joyce and Tom’s first night? What is your approach to rules and regulations?
4. Recall some of the “comforts of home that Joyce missed. What would you probably miss the most if you were on the Camino?
5. What does the author mean by “The journey was walking me as I was walking it”?

Chapter 3 “Go Prepared”

1. Notice the preparations Tom and Joyce chose to do before they began walking the Camino. Consider a significant event that you undertook. How did you get ready for this? What were the benefits from your preparations?
2. Talking to others about their experience of being pilgrims on the Camino was something these two pilgrims enjoyed. What do you most enjoy about preparing for something you’ve not done before? Least enjoy?
3. Recall a time when you had to “pay the price,” to give up one good thing for the sake of another. What did you learn from doing this?
4. Joyce received helpful advice from her spiritual director. What advice have you received that has made a difference in how you approach something challenging?
5. What were some of the “unforeseen blessings” of the Camino? Which ones appeal to you?

Chapter 4 “Walk in a Relaxed Manner”

1. “The biggest lesson” Joyce Rupp learned was that she “needed to slow down.” What prompted her to hurry along?
2. Have you had difficulty with slowing down? If so, how have you adjusted the swift pace of your life? If not, how might you do so?
3. The “stress of hurrying” denied Joyce and Tom “inner harmony and the spiritual adventure of the Camino.” What other positives might be lost in the stress of a fast paced life?
4. “Walk in a relaxed manner” became the motto and practice of these two pilgrims. If you were to create a motto for your interior pace, what might that be?
5. Joyce states: “It is nigh impossible to walk in a relaxed manner externally unless I walk in a relaxed manner internally...” What effect might these two modes of existence have on each other?

Chapter 5 “Let Go”

1. What were some of the challenges Joyce faced in “letting go?” How do you engage with the necessity of relinquishment?
2. “Holding on too tightly to anyone or anything only deprives oneself of growth.” Share an example of how you grew from “letting go.”
3. Name the expectations the author had regarding the Camino. How did these expectations produce the struggles she faced?
4. One must be “willing to enter into another society and accept its differences.” When have you had an experience of this?
5. “(The Camino) tears the stuffing out of our neat and tidy ways of doing life.” What tears the stuffing out of yours?

Chapter 6. “Remember: Life is a Great Adventure”

1. The author was thrilled with her first step on the Camino. What “first step” have you taken that filled you with excitement and enthusiasm?
2. Who or what has nudged you to go beyond your comfort zone?
3. If you have ever bypassed an adventure you wished you had taken, what led you to decline?
4. Of the journeys or trips you’ve taken, which ones have you especially relished?
5. What are you curious about? Name some questions you carry within you.

Chapter 7. “Live in the Now”

1. How did Eckhart Tolle’s *The Power of Now* influence Tom and Joyce? What kinds of specific things helped in following Tolle’s advice?
2. Describe some resources that encouraged you to change certain aspects of your life.
3. Where do your thoughts tend to lead you—toward the past, present, or future?
4. The yellow arrow and the scallop shell guided the pilgrims way. What are some interior markers guiding your way from day to day?

5. "When any of us is not focused and attentive to the Now, we lose our way." Agree? Disagree? Have you ever lost your interior way due to this? If so, how did you resolve it?

Chapter 8. "Be Attentive to Your Body"

1. What were some of the ways that Tom and Joyce took care of their feet? How did they manage to keep their feet blister free?
2. On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the highest, how attentive are you to taking care of your body?
3. How do you feel about taking time to rest?
4. Joyce turned toward her physical pain and emotional irritability. She befriended it. What in your life asks you to turn toward it?
5. The sloughing off of old, dead skin was seen to be symbolic. What might need to be sloughed off from your ways of treating and tending to yourself?

Chapter 9. "Acknowledge the Kindness of Strangers"

1. Had you been among the strangers who extended kindness to Joyce and Tom, with which ones would you have enjoyed a relationship?
2. Describe your experience of unknown persons being kind to you.
3. Recall a situation like "the big tomato" where someone offered you a gift and you hesitated to accept it. What led you to hesitate? (Did you eventually receive it?)
4. What are some ways you express concern for others? Share an example of when someone responded to your care and compassion.
5. Joyce names several lessons as a result of the kindnesses of strangers? What are some of your lessons?

Chapter 10. "Don't Let Difficulties Deter You"

1. Review the "irritating pebbles," the "unwanted and unexpected tribulations" in this chapter. Which ones seem to be the most difficult?
2. With which of Joyce's difficulties do you especially relate?
3. Share some of your irritating pebbles and how you respond to them.
4. Of the "teachings" that Joyce mentions, which ones have you found as part of your experience?

5. "When I obsessed about the dirt of a refugio, I quickly forgot the joy and bounty of being on the pilgrimage as well as the blessing..." In what situations do you allow your difficulties to distract you from "the joy and bounty?"

Chapter 11. "Embrace Beauty"

1. "Each of us needs to hold something beautiful in our heart." What type of beauty appeals to you?
2. "Beauty awakens what is sleeping in our spirit." How do you benefit from beauty?
3. Read aloud the poem on page 119. Sit quietly with it for a few minutes. How might this poem relate to your life?
4. "She (JoAnne Dodgson) emphasizes how beauty resides within every moment." Is it possible to find beauty in every moment, in every aspect of life?
5. What is it like to be in a place that feels so sacred that you are drawn into silence?

Chapter 12. "Experience Homelessness"

1. Joyce compares some of her situations on the Camino to that of being a homeless person. What were some of these incidents?
2. How was her experience of homelessness different from that of homeless people in general?
3. What experience have you had with homelessness? How comfortable are you when around homeless people?
4. Imagine that you were in Joyce's place when she experienced feeling like a homeless person. What would it be like to be treated with disdain because of how you looked or how you spoke?
5. Having a better understanding of what homeless people go through led Joyce to make some changes when she returned from the Camino. Are there other actions she could also have taken?

Chapter 13. "Return a Positive for a Negative"

1. Their tendency to judge others was something Tom and Joyce recognized as they walked. What were some of their false judgements? How did they choose to move away from this?

2. Name several opportunities when you've chosen to return a positive for a negative.
3. What is most challenging for you in regard to people who have differing views from yours?
4. "The first time a pilgrim elicited a negative response from me that I couldn't replace with a positive was the night I stayed in Hontanas." Are there times when it's valid to make a judgement that is negative?
5. When do you tend to make negative assessments of others?

Chapter 14. "Keep a Strong Network of Prayer"

1. How did prayer influence Joyce and Tom when they walked the Camino?
2. Is there anything you would add to the prayer they composed and prayed each day?
3. Has prayer affected how you walk your path of life? If so, how? Is there a particular prayer you use each day?
4. How did their network of prayer expand before, during, and after the Camino?
5. If you were to create a cairn, what people would you want to remember?

Chapter 15. "Look for Unannounced Angels"

1. Who were the persons who acted as angels for Tom and Joyce? How did they do this?
2. What is your belief or view regarding angels?
3. Have you had someone be an angel for you, or know someone who has?
4. Recall the situation that moved these two pilgrims to tears. Has something similar happened to you?
5. When have you been an agent of kindness or guidance without your being aware of doing so?

Chapter 16. "Deal with Disappointments"

1. "No matter how well we plan our future, unforeseen disappointments are bound to push their way into our experience." Of the disappointments mentioned, with which ones could you especially identify?
2. Describe one of your biggest disappointments regarding your life's journey. How did you deal with it?

3. How did Joyce's "preconceived concepts" wake her up to her view the Camino?
4. "Much of the time pilgrims simply did not think of how their actions would affect the people whose lands they traversed." Have you noticed this lack of awareness where you live?
5. What did Joyce learn from Rachel's expressed disappointments?

Chapter 17. "Savor Solitude"

1. In what ways did Joyce cope with her need for solitude?
2. What is your relationship to "solitude?"
3. Do you ever feel the need to "hide out?" If so, how do you do this?
4. How did the solitude that Joyce sought contribute to her well-being?
5. What kind of contemplative moments have you had?

Chapter 18. "Have a Sense of Humor"

1. "Laughter came to us often and easily on the Camino." What were some of the things that Tom and Joyce found humorous?
2. How did laughter have an effect on their walk? Which story did you especially enjoy?
3. What are some sources of your laughter?
4. "It helps to laugh at one at oneself, too." Share an incident when laughing at yourself took the edge off of what otherwise would have been embarrassing or miserable.
5. Consider something currently challenging your peacefulness. How might having a sense of humor ease the strain of it?

Chapter 19. "Trust in the Divine Companion"

1. "It strikes me as quite amazing, how fear and worry creep in without our even realizing it." How did Joyce and Tom confront their fears and worries?
2. If you were planning to walk the Camino, would your list of concerns match those of the pilgrims? Are there others you would add?
3. Consider two of your current worries or fears. What personal affirmations could offset those trepidations?

4. How did “Primer Dios” improve these pilgrim’s approach to walking?
5. Which of their stories of trust encourages you in your ability to trust?

Chapter 20. “Let Yourself Be Humbled by Weakness”

1. Both of these pilgrims fell ill. How did Joyce react to her illness?
2. Who were some of the persons who helped Joyce? Who stands out in your life for helping you in a time of need?
3. Give an example of humility from your perspective and how you have experienced it.
4. Share a time in your life when spiritual growth came about due to a tough situation.
5. What is most challenging for you when accepting assistance from others?

Chapter 21. “Enjoy Existential Friendships”

1. What connotations does the term “existential friendship” suggest to you?
2. How did existential friendships come about for Tom and Joyce?
3. In what way did these relationships impact their experience of the Camino?
4. Tell of a momentary or brief encounter that touched your life.
5. What led Joyce’s conversation with the Belgian man to have special significance?

Chapter 22. “Travel Lightly”

1. In what ways did these two pilgrims travel lightly?
2. What were some of the challenges of living simply on the Camino? Would you have met them differently than these pilgrims did?
3. “Having too many material things and too much inner clutter only burdens me and keeps me from being a truly free human being.” What “burdens” can occur from having too much?
4. On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the highest, rate your current way of “traveling lightly” in how you live. Has this changed from ten years ago?
5. If you were to live more simply, what changes or adaptations would you be willing to make?

Chapter 23. "Match Your Pace to Your Walking Partner"

1. When were Joyce and Tom comfortable with one another as they walked? What caused them to mismatch each other's moods or internal tempo?
2. In the "give and take" of walking with someone as a companion on the Camino, what qualities are essential?
3. Joyce writes, "I thought I understood the challenges and blessings of my married friends," ...but she didn't. What had she failed to consider?
4. "...there were days when we talked more seriously about our misunderstandings and disappointments." Mention some of these misunderstandings.
5. "Only when we chose to define our needs internally could we let the other person know what those needs and desires were." How do you go about expressing your needs and desires?

Chapter 24. Enter into the Hum of Humanity

1. When you hear the phrase "hum of humanity," what does it suggest to you?
2. Note some of the ways the author felt united with others on the Camino.
3. How would you respond to a situation when snoring disturbed you as it did Joyce?
4. What was the result of Joyce's staying with the pilgrim who was soaking her foot? Has something like this happened to you?
5. Tom and Joyce were grateful for "the richness of personalities and diverse languages." Describe your experience of this richness, either personally or through other avenues of connection.

Chapter 25. "Pause to Reflect" and "After the Camino"

1. How did the pauses of these pilgrims benefit their journey?
2. "C.G Jung suggests 'looking inside to awaken.' Comment on this suggestion in relation to your experience.
3. How and when do you pause to reflect on your life? What keeps you from doing so?
4. Of the eight questions they created in Finisterre, choose one and respond to it as you look back on your life.

5. "Tom's goodness encouraged my own." Share an example of someone whose goodness has done this for you.
6. Consider your journey with *Walk in a Relaxed Manner*. Choose and share three memorable or influential aspects that you hope to incorporate into your life.