



A DISCIPLE-FORMING RESOURCE

The Evangelical Covenant Church

The Department of Christian Formation

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STREAMS & PATHWAYS

An Exploration
of Spiritual Practices

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

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Streams & Pathways

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DAY ONE, EVENING

Session 1: Introduction to the Spiritual Practices

Main Bible Passage: Isaiah 43:18-21


¹⁸ “Forget the former things;
do not dwell on the past.
¹⁹ See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland.
²⁰ The wild animals honor me,
the jackals and the owls,
because I provide water in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland,
to give drink to my people, my chosen,
²¹ the people I formed for myself
that they may proclaim my praise.

Disciplines or Practices?

Notes:

Ground Rules for our Time Together:

- Our experience with something new may be helped by considering some instructions or ground rules. If we were heading out on a wilderness trek and had a guide along to assist us, what might they say to help us experience the pathway to its fullest?
- A guide might suggest you carry the right equipment, and that you leave in your car the things you won't need on the trail. No sense lugging around sixty pounds when twenty would do. So you may want to leave some things behind, maybe turn off your cell phones, or silence them if you need to stay in touch with a babysitter back home. You might even want to slip off your watches and put them in your pockets. Suggestions only! It's your back!
- A guide might advise on the trail that you use your ears at least as much as your eyes. Your ears see what your eyes may not. So here, be a diligent listener, to God and to others. You never know what you might see if you listen!
- A guide might suggest that there is incredible wildlife in these woods. But you know, wildlife is fickle, and furtive. You may see it, you may not. Be open. Or others in your group may get to see something you do not. That's ok. Rejoice with them. Not every thing is for every one. Everyone's experience will be different; there is no right or wrong way to pursue these practices.
- A guide might propose that the group does not necessarily need to stick closely together. If the trail is steep, and you need a rest compared to that fleet-footed companion, take a break. Travel more slowly. Participate this weekend at the level of your comfort, breaking as you need to, to catch your breath.
- But still, a guide might ask you to get out of your comfort zone a bit, not to do anything dangerous, but just to be an eager explorer. So try new things, maybe even things that challenge your first impression of them. We are all learners.
- A guide might ask that you be conscious of others' needs along the trail and not only your own. So here, you need not give advice to others, but you can be a helper.
- A guide might say that you're coming to a hard part in the trail, perhaps steep, but that if you hang in there the view will make it all worthwhile. It's the same here: hang in there if something we try just doesn't resonate with you right now. Stay with it. There might be a great view around the corner.
- A guide might recommend you record some notes in a small notebook so that you can remember the experiences you want to share with others after the trek is completed. So with us, these spiritual practices are usually best tested in community. You can walk alone on a trail. But share your insights and ideas with a trusted Christian friend before you settle on any conclusions.
- Finally, a guide might suggest that there are different trails in the park that can allow you to enjoy different aspects of the park's features. The same holds true for us: each of the practices we consider this weekend might be like approaching the same mountain from different trailheads, or the stream from different entry points.



Conclusion: What do we do with resistance?

Notes:

Session 2: Practice #1, Imaginative Prayer

Introducing Imaginative Prayer, A Way to Enter into Scripture

Notes:

Passage 1 — John 4:3-29, Jesus the Living Water

³ So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

⁴ Now he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

⁷ When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" ⁸ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

¹¹ "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?" ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?"

¹³ Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but those who drink the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

¹⁶ He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

¹⁷ "I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. ¹⁸The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

¹⁹"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

²¹"Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²²You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

²⁵The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

²⁶Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

The Disciples Rejoin Jesus

²⁷Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

²⁸Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ²⁹"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?"

Instructions for Imaginative Prayer

Make yourself comfortable, take some deep breaths and turn your intentions toward God. Ask God to lead you to the living water he has for you in this passage. Read the passage through once to get your bearings. Read it again slowly, lingering over each line. Take it all in. Close your eyes and open your imagination.

Notice the setting.

What do you see?

What do you hear?

What can you taste, touch, smell?

Who are the people in the scene?

What are they doing? What are they saying?

What can you tell by the looks on their faces?

Where are you in this scene?

What are you doing?

What are you saying?


What are people saying to you?

What emotions are you experiencing?

When the story is over, what do you do?

Do you stay or move on?

Do you tell someone of your experience?



Passage 2 — Mark 4:35-41, Jesus Calms the Waters

³⁵That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." ³⁶Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. ³⁷A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. ³⁸Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

³⁹He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

⁴⁰He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

⁴¹They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Journaling

To close the imaginative prayer experience, the facilitator will coach the group through a journaling exercise. Journaling is fairly simple. Ask yourself: What meaning does this story have for me now? Looking back over my time of prayer, what went on in me? What feelings do I attach to the experience? Did I feel consoled? Desolate? Were there other feelings that emerged? Paying attention to our feelings can help us more easily attend to the leading of the Spirit in our life.



Session 3: Practice #2, The Prayer of Examen

Introducing the Prayer of Examen, A Review of our Day Before God

Notes:

The facilitator will lead the group in a directed prayer of examen. Instructions for this practice may also be found later in this guide under the section “Spiritual Practices Resources.”



Streams & Pathways

DAY TWO, MORNING

Session 4: Practice #3, Lectio Divina

Catching Up...

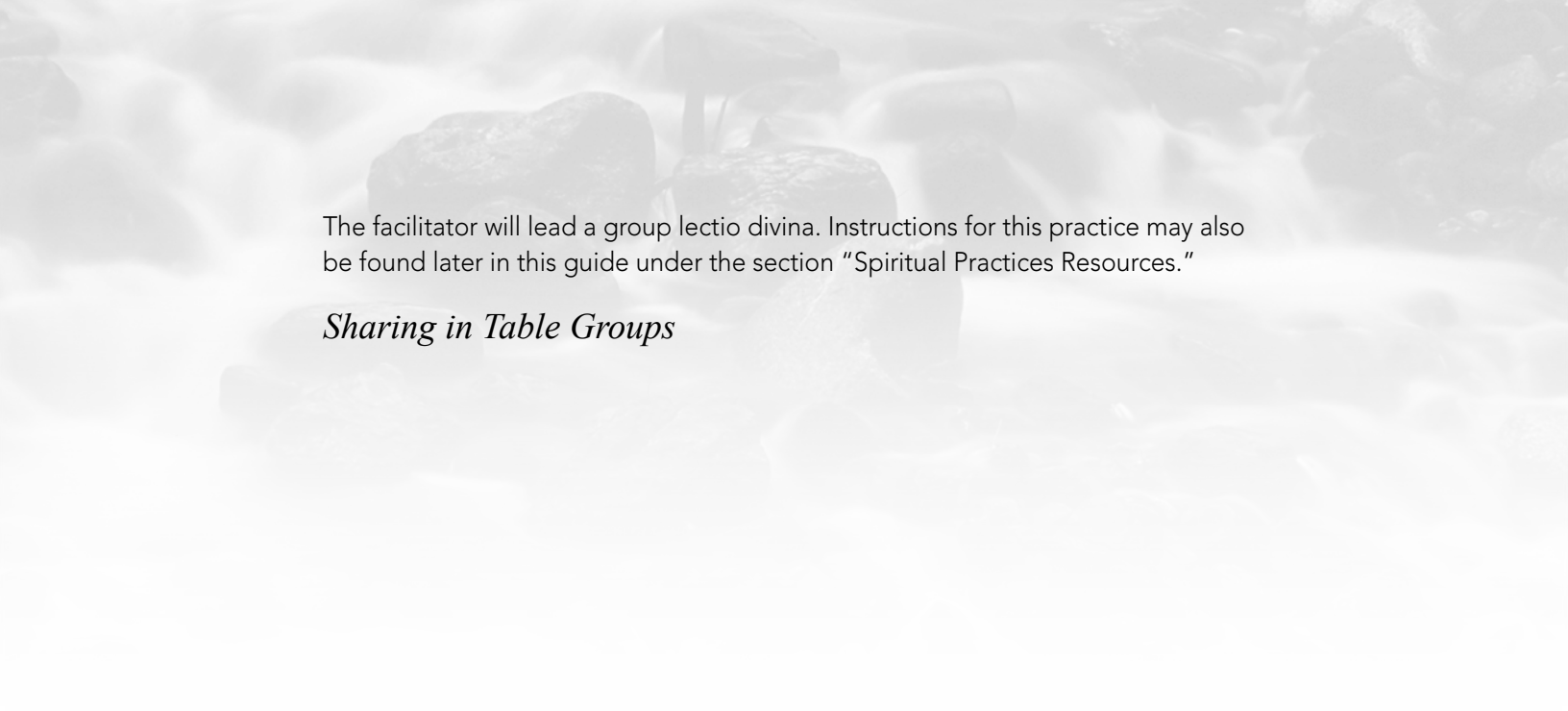
Introducing Lectio Divina, A Meditative Reading of the Bible
Notes:

Main Bible Passage: Isaiah 43:18-21

¹⁸ "Forget the former things;
do not dwell on the past.

¹⁹ See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland.

²⁰ The wild animals honor me,
the jackals and the owls,
because I provide water in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland,
to give drink to my people, my chosen,
²¹ the people I formed for myself
that they may proclaim my praise.



The facilitator will lead a group lectio divina. Instructions for this practice may also be found later in this guide under the section “Spiritual Practices Resources.”

Sharing in Table Groups



Session 5: Practice #4, Parable Walk

Introducing the Parable Walk, A Way to See God in Daily Experience

Notes:

The facilitator will give instructions for a parable walk during the session, after which the group will come back for some sharing time. Additional ideas for this practice may also be found later in this guide under the section “Spiritual Practices Resources.”

Sharing with the Larger Group

Session 6: Practice #5, Rule of Life/Part 1

Introducing the Rule of Life, A Guide for Purposeful Living

Notes:

Spend the amount of time remaining in this session thinking and praying through your regular life habits and spiritual practices.

- List your current regular daily and weekly practices (such as saying a prayer before meals, attending worship, membership in a small group, tithing, etc).
- Are there other practices that you already have in place that may be less regular but draw you closer to God, that bring you life, that remind you whose you truly are? Write them down.
- Are there things you do monthly, seasonally, annually that you could list?
- Where do you find deepest joy?
- Where do you find rest?
- How do you play? Do you find God there? Could you?
- Are there things you do because you believe you are supposed to do them to be a follower of Christ? Do they still bring you life and intimacy with God?
- In looking at what you have written, what gets you excited?
- What are you deeply drawn to and why?
- Are there practices that are no longer life-giving?
- Where do you feel God calling you to stretch and grow?



Streams & Pathways

DAY TWO, AFTERNOON

Session 7: Spiritual Practice Electives

This session will be a ‘free-for-all’ opportunity for you to experience several spiritual practices at guided stations. The facilitator will give instructions as to how the session will proceed, and you are urged to avail yourself of two to four practices in the course of the session:

- Individual Lectio Divina
- Individual Prayer of Examen
- Parable Walk
- Affirmation Cards
- Framing a Moment
- Praying with Art
- Art as Prayer
- A Prayer Walk for our Community
- Praying Scripture
- Silence/Solitude
- Lord’s Prayer Stations

At the back of this participant guide you will find a few blank pages to use for journaling if you choose.

Session 8: Practice #5, Rule of Life/Part 2

Rule of Life, The GROW Acronym...

Notes:

As it relates to your rule of life, think and pray through the G.R.O.W. acronym as presented by the facilitator – God’s Word, Relationships, Obedient Living, Worship. Where are your practices strong and life-giving in these areas? Where are you weak?

Some things to consider in identifying your Rule of Life (ROL):

- No two are alike, nor should they be.
- Don’t write a rule that Mother Teresa would have difficulty keeping, but one you can live with.
- Your rule should bring life—not guilt or something that weighs you down.
- Notice what is automatic for you, engrained, and what might be a growing edge for you.
- Your rule should have some things that stretch and challenge you.
- Consider one or two of the spiritual practices you’ve enjoyed at this retreat that you could add to your rule.

Share and Prayer in Table Groups

Toward the end of this session, the facilitator will call you back to a time of discussion and prayer. Consider the following:

- To what are you most drawn as you ‘play’ with your ROL?
- What are you most concerned about?
- How can your church help you live out your ROL?
- Pray for each other.

Session 9: Practice #6, Spiritual Friendships

Introducing Spiritual Friendships, Where Two Hearts are Better than One

Notes:

The intent of a spiritual friendship is to help each of us in our walk with God. Spiritual friendships are a safe environment where each party can openly share about their walk with God and receive support, encouragement and prayer. They can help us celebrate our joys and work through our difficult times. A spiritual friendship means allowing another person to enter your faith journey while at the same time offering your willingness to do the same for them.

- Spend some time reflecting on the friends you currently have in your life; look back over the past and consider the friends that have been transformational in your life at specific stages of your development.
- List the attributes of what would make a good spiritual friend.
- List the attributes that you see in yourself as a friend.
- Reflect on the list of your attributes and see if there are any limitations you have to being a friend; this could include time or physical or emotional issues, etc. Would you be willing to work on your limitations to facilitate the process of forming a spiritual friendship?
- Talk to someone about developing a spiritual friendship; it need not be someone totally new to you, as the Lord may already be laying the foundation for the development of this relationship in your midst.

Deeper experiences of spiritual growth can be found in small accountability groups or by establishing a relationship with a spiritual director. Talk with your pastor or another trusted leader in your church about these additional dimensions of spiritual friendship.



Session 10: Celebration Worship

Spiritual Practices Resources

Individual Prayer of Examen

Instructions

Materials: Journal (optional)

Choose a segment of time to consider: the prior hours of this day, yesterday, or this past week. (The examen may be used to look back over any period of time.) In the instructions that follow we will consider this day.

- Quiet your mind in a time of prayer and know that God is with you.
- Look back at the day just as you might watch a movie, starting at the beginning of the day and letting the time roll by.
- First, notice the gifts hidden in your day. Give thanks.
- Notice the people with whom you came into contact, and the day's experiences, taking special note of your feelings, moods and reactions along the way.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to give you insight and courage to look honestly, to guide you to what is important, to give you wisdom to understand what God wants to show you.
- Notice the times you felt most alive but also those times when you felt life drain out of you. Where did you sense a closeness of God's presence and where might you have felt distant from God? Were there times during the day in which you experienced peace or lack of peace?
- Reflect on these things as long as you would like. You may or may not want to journal some of your thoughts or a prayer.
- End this time of prayerful reflection by looking forward to a tomorrow that will be filled with God, asking God to help you to see him more clearly and follow him more nearly.

Using the Psalms for Prayer of Examen

Step 1: Get centered and quiet—Psalm 46: 10-11

- ¹⁰ “Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.”
- ¹¹ The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Step 2: Be grateful for the gifts of the day—Psalm 103: 1-5

- ¹ Praise the Lord, my soul;
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
- ² Praise the Lord, my soul,
and forget not all his benefits—
- ³ who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,
- ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,
- ⁵ who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed
like the eagle’s.

Step 3: Prepare to look at your day with God—Psalm 43: 3-4


- ³ Send me your light and your faithful care,
let them lead me;
let them bring me to your holy mountain,
to the place where you dwell.
- ⁴ Then I will go to the altar of God,
to God, my joy and my delight.
I will praise you with the lyre,
O God, my God.

Step 4: Look at the day with God— Psalm 139: 23-24

- 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.

*Step 5: Come before God for forgiveness and healing—
Psalm 51:1-17*

- ¹ Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.
- ² Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.
- ³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.
- ⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.
- ⁵ Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time
my mother conceived me.
- ⁶ Yet you desired faithfulness even in the
womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.
- ⁷ Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
- ⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
- ⁹ Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.
- ¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
- ¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
- ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
- ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will turn back to you.
- ¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodguilt, O God,
you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing
of your righteousness.
- ¹⁵ Open my lips, Lord,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
- ¹⁶ You do not delight in sacrifice,
or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
- ¹⁷ My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.



*Step 6: Look forward to the day ahead—
Psalm 17:15*

¹⁵As for me, I will be vindicated
and will see your face;
when I awake, I will be satisfied
with seeing your likeness.

Spiritual Practices Resources

Individual Lectio Divina

Instructions

Materials: Journal (optional), Bible

Choose a Bible passage to consider.

- **Centering/relaxation.** Sit comfortably, breathe deeply, relax your body, ask God to help you release distractions and invite God's presence.
- **Read the passage 1 or 2 times.** Stop when a word or phrase stops you, becomes vibrant or attracts you. Is there a word or image that impresses you? Bring your senses to the text. Allow for two or three minutes of silence.
- **Read the passage again.** Listen to discover how this passage touches your life today. Why did it attract you? What is God trying to say to you through it? Do not try to force a meaning. Stay open. This is a time of reflection, involving thinking, feeling, and/or intuition. Allow for silence.
- **Read the passage once more.** Listen to discover the invitation. What is God calling you to do or be today or this week? Be aware of resistance. Open your heart and will to what God is saying to you personally. Allow for silence as you respond to God.
- **Journal and pray.** Take time to express what you have heard from God in silent, spoken or journaled prayer. (If in a group, share aloud the word, image, or invitation received. Pray for God to help the person next to you respond to the invitation or word received.)

Spiritual Practices Resources

Parable Walk

Instructions

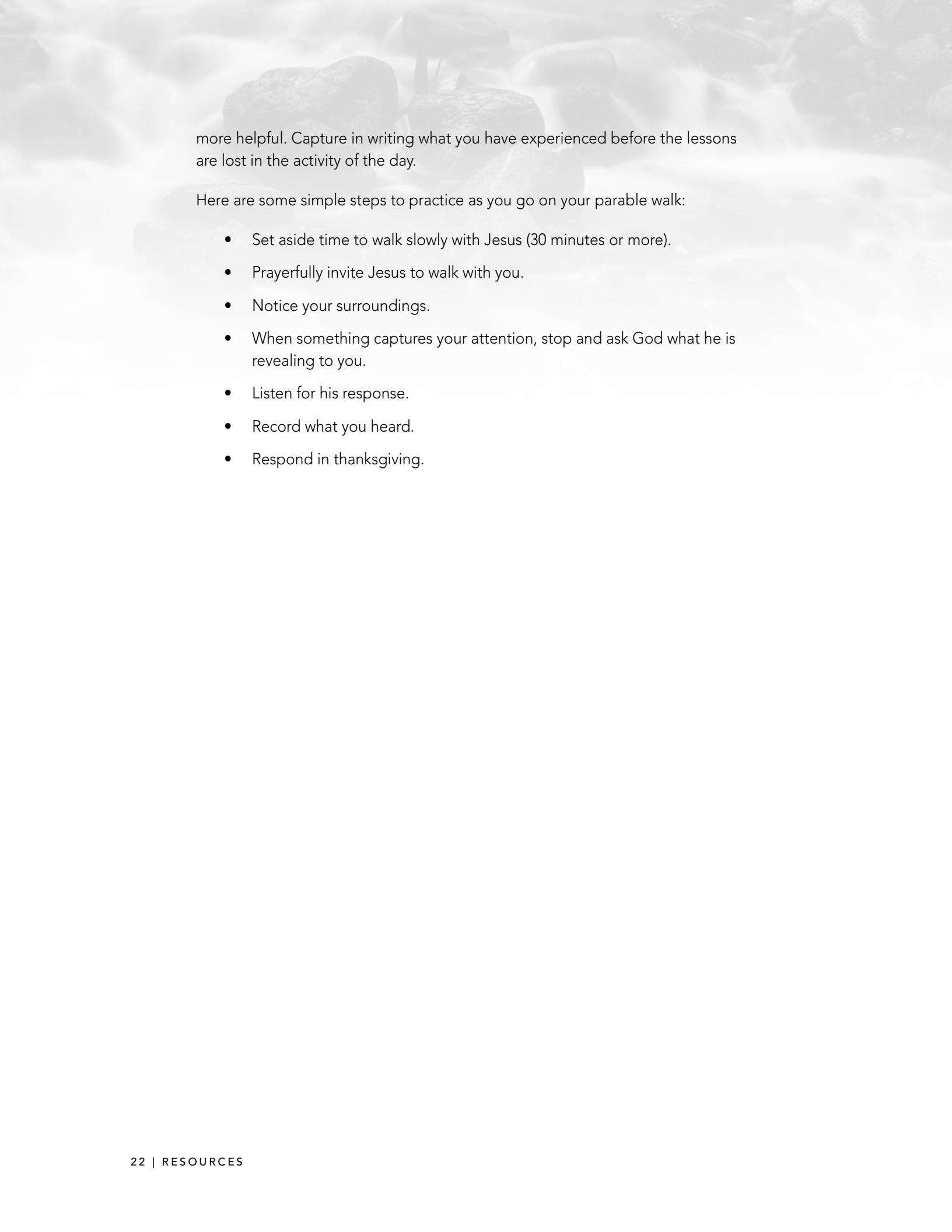
Materials: Journal or small notepad (optional)

If you spend time in the Gospels that tell us about Jesus and his life and teaching, you will notice that he spent a lot of time walking from village to village, from event to event. As he went, people often joined him. They gathered to hear him speak and he used those times to teach his friends about the Kingdom of God, about his Father, and about themselves. He often did this by pointing out something in their surroundings that might illustrate a truth he was trying to share with them. “The Kingdom of God is like this..., and it is like this, too,” ...seeds falling on different kinds of soil, lamps hidden under baskets, a lost sheep, a found coin.

We know that God continues to speak to us and teach us today, as his Spirit opens our hearts and minds to Scripture. That same Spirit of Jesus Christ may also teach us as we are “on the journey,” going about the day’s activities. One way you can listen for the Master’s voice today is by taking a parable walk. A parable walk is time spent slowly walking with Jesus, prayerfully noticing your surroundings, acknowledging that Jesus is there right beside you. Ask Jesus to teach you along the way. When something catches your attention, stop and ask God what he is revealing to you. Linger long, and let God’s often quiet voice tell you the secrets of the Kingdom, and his lessons for your life. When you sense God speaking to your heart, you may want to stop and record what you heard. Spend as much time at any particular spot as you feel you need. When you are ready to move on, do so. Ask Jesus again to lead you, to teach you, to speak to you. Let this be your time with Jesus—resist the urge to go with other people, and allow God to speak to you personally.

Here’s an example: Perhaps you stop to look at a melting snow bank. Really look at what’s before you. Engage not just your sight, but your other senses as well. What do you see, hear, taste, touch and feel in your heart? What lesson might God be teaching you about your life right now, through what you’re experiencing around you?

This kind of prayer requires time to quiet your spirit and allow your heart to begin to listen. Give yourself no less than a half hour, using up to a full hour if that is



more helpful. Capture in writing what you have experienced before the lessons are lost in the activity of the day.

Here are some simple steps to practice as you go on your parable walk:

- Set aside time to walk slowly with Jesus (30 minutes or more).
- Prayerfully invite Jesus to walk with you.
- Notice your surroundings.
- When something captures your attention, stop and ask God what he is revealing to you.
- Listen for his response.
- Record what you heard.
- Respond in thanksgiving.

Spiritual Practices Resources

Praying Scripture

Instructions

Materials: Journal, Bible

Praying Scripture is a conversational, devotional approach to God's Word. When approaching Scripture in this way you are not merely reading the words to grasp the content, you are allowing God's Word to guide a prayerful conversation. Listen for God's message to you, and stay alert to how your heart may be prompted to respond to God.

- Prayerfully choose a Psalm or another Scripture to which you feel drawn.
- Spend some moments quieting yourself.
- Read through the passage once or twice. Notice the little tugs, the words that grab your attention, the images and memories that are evoked, the people that may come to mind.
- Rewrite the passage in your own words, inserting your own conversation with God. Change the words to fit your situation. Spend time, meditate, dialogue with God. Be open to God's words, God's images.
- When you feel your time is complete, read over what you wrote and consider writing a prayer of response. Give thanks to God for your time together.

Possible Scriptures—Old Testament

Psalm 18

- ¹ I love you, LORD, my strength.
² The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;
my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
³ I called to the LORD, who is worthy of praise,
and I have been saved from my enemies.

Psalm 57

- ¹ Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me!
for in you I take refuge.
I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings
until the disaster has passed.
² I cry out to God Most High,
to God, who vindicates me.
³ He sends from heaven and saves me,
rebuking those who hotly pursue me—
God sends forth his love and his faithfulness.

Possible Scriptures—New Testament

Many New Testament gospel and epistle passages also provide guidance for this kind of prayer, particularly as the passage invites response.

Matthew 6:25-27

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?”

Response: *“Jesus, forgive me for the many times I have worried in the past week. So many times, I’ve gotten caught up in the day-to-day details of the material side of life. Thank you for calling my attention to the birds, and for reminding me of your love for me. Help me to quit worrying (it doesn’t help, anyway!) and to serve you joyfully and faithfully.”*

Philippians 1:9-11

⁹ And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰ so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

Spiritual Practices Resources

Framing a Moment

Instructions

Materials: Journal

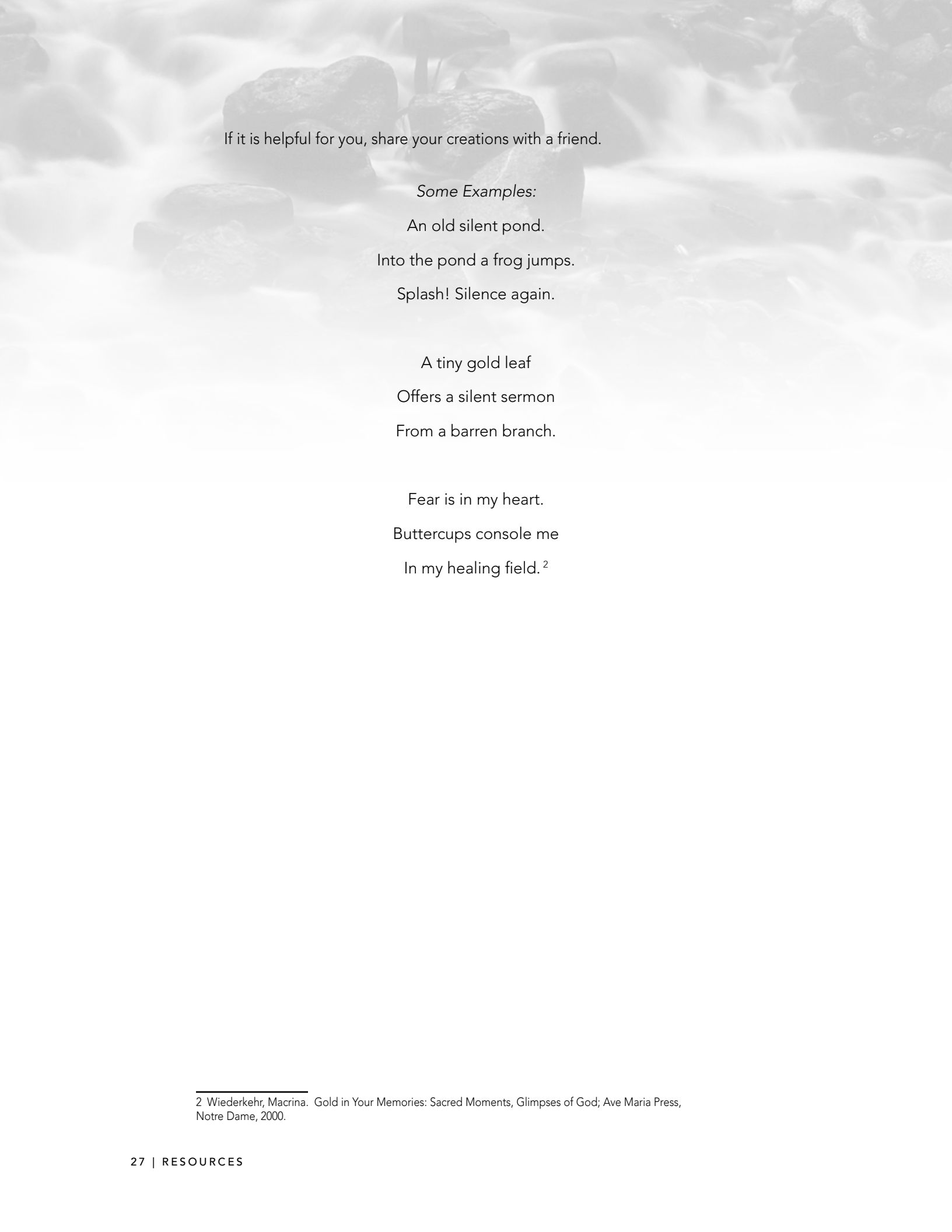
Our lives are made up of moments—ordinary and extraordinary moments—that speak of God’s presence with us. However, we are often inattentive and miss them or don’t give them a second thought. Poets, artists, composers and writers invite us to pay attention and notice what is right in front of us: the sleeping child, the way the sun is caught in the water as it sprays from the faucet, the katydid that rests on the twig, the lonely look in the face of the stranger, the lump in the throat, the tear in the eye.

One way to pay closer attention and capture those moments is to use the ancient Japanese poetry form called Haiku. Frederick Buechner likens the exercise of writing haiku to framing a moment, the frame makes us stop and take notice.¹

Haiku is a three-lined poem with a syllable pattern of five, seven, five. The first and last lines contain five syllables; all the words that fit in between must be contained in seven syllables whether in one or two lines. The discipline of reducing an experience to very few words requires that we stand still and enter into it. It invites us to look with lover’s eyes at the beauty and radiance of the moment, whether painful or joyful. As we paint the picture with few words we reverence the God’s presence in our lives.

- Begin with prayer. Look into your heart’s archives. Let memories roll by like pictures on a movie screen. When a memory appears that takes hold of you, **stop!** Put a frame around that memory. Stand back and gaze at it. Savor it. Take a walk. Have a coffee break. Find a chapel or some sacred spot, and sit in reflection. Choose whatever works for you. All this is preparation. It is also prayer. When you feel you have spent sufficient time musing over this memory, settle down in one of your favorite holy places with your notebook and begin writing your haiku.
- After writing your first haiku, let the memories roll again. Perhaps you will want to write a second and third. As you create your haiku, try to capture different emotions: joy, sadness, delight, disappointment, satisfaction, awareness...

¹ Buechner, Frederick. *Listening to Your Life: Daily Meditations with Frederick Buechner*; Harper, San Francisco, 1992.



If it is helpful for you, share your creations with a friend.

Some Examples:

An old silent pond.

Into the pond a frog jumps.

Splash! Silence again.

A tiny gold leaf

Offers a silent sermon

From a barren branch.

Fear is in my heart.

Buttercups console me

In my healing field.²

² Wiederkehr, Macrina. Gold in Your Memories: Sacred Moments, Glimpses of God; Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, 2000.

Spiritual Practices Resources

Affirmation Cards

Instructions

Materials: Postcards, or notecards and envelopes

...who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. (2 Corinthians 1:4)

As brothers and sisters in Christ, we are called to be together in community and to encourage each other. Additionally, in your neighborhood you may know of many who work tirelessly, often in 'thankless' professions. Some examples? Stay-at-home moms, nurses, social workers, mail carriers, trash collectors, teachers, pastors, Sunday school teachers, church leaders... The list could go on and on.

Take a few minutes and read 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 in silence and listen to God for those whom God may lay on your heart. Pray for that person, then write them a note of encouragement or affirmation. It may include gratitude for their service, even how you may see them furthering the Kingdom of God. Let that person know they are valued. You may address the card later and send it when you get home.

Spiritual Practices Resources

Praying through Art

Instructions

Materials: Journal (optional), samples of a variety of sacred art or a published book on same

Classic artwork and sacred images have been used for millennia to help people see God more clearly, or to explore a facet of God they may never have considered. The images shown here are invitations to interact with God in a fresh way. Some questions you may want to ask as you interact with the pieces might be:

- What about this image surprises me?
- What do I notice about this story, or about Jesus, that I haven't seen before?
- What is God conveying to me personally in this artwork?

Process:

- Pray for God's guidance.
- Find a comfortable place to sit and reflect on the art you have chosen. Choose a piece that grabs your attention. Pray that your spirit would be cleared of distractions and spend time reflecting on the sacred art. Ten to twenty minutes are suggested.
- As you reflect on the sacred art, allow God to speak to you and direct your thoughts. Simply sit and gaze at the image and connect with God.
- End with a prayer of gratitude for God's presence.
- Reflect on this experience for a few minutes and notice how you were able to enter into the presence of God by way of the artwork. It may be helpful to record your reflections in a journal.

Spiritual Practices Resources

Art as Prayer


Instructions

Materials: clay, paint, paper, pens, collage materials, glue, and other miscellaneous art supplies

Prayerfully creating works of art through painting, drawing, sculpting, crafting, or other forms of visual art, can be spiritually meaningful. For many, visual art can stir our souls or connect us to God in new ways that might not be experienced through other forms of prayer. Please do not avoid trying this because you do not think you have any artistic talent! It can be useful for prayer regardless of your artistic ability! The intent is to express your spirit before God in prayer through visual artwork.

So many media could be considered: painting, sculpting, collaging, paper tearing, sketching, even photography.

- Place your chosen art supplies on the table in front of you.
- Pray to God to settle yourself and clear your mind of distractions. Breathe deeply; with each breath imagine God's love and creativity flowing over you.
- Focus on a question or feeling that you have considered in your prayer life recently. Write out this question, or a statement about it, as a clear intent of the focus of your prayer time. Keep this in front of you. An example might be, "I intend to explore my desire to trust God more deeply during this time." You may even write this upon your artwork.
- Once you have settled on a question or feeling to focus on, prayerfully quiet your mind once again and allow your imagination to start forming an image that addresses it. Be patient. Try not to force an image to appear. If you are having trouble, acknowledge it and ask for God's help. If you need to get up and walk around for a bit, feel free to do so.
- Draw, paint, sculpt, or otherwise craft a representation of what appears to you, allowing your heart to guide you through this process. Refrain from being critical of your work. Let your artwork represent what your intent was for this time.

- 
- Reflect on what you have created. Are you surprised? How did this visualization come to you? Where did you feel God's direction? Where did you feel most distant from God?
 - Close with a prayer of gratitude for the many ways God is present with us in prayer.

Spiritual Practices Resources

A Prayer Walk for our Community

Instructions

Materials: none

Choose from one to three friends to share this adventure with you. You may also do this alone, but there seems to be greater effectiveness in sharing the experience with at least one other. Hit the streets!

Where can you pray? Invite God to show you where he wants you to go and be willing to visit those places as God reveals them to you. Allow for some flexibility in your walking or driving route, but plan to stop in specific, predetermined areas to target your prayers. You may want to consider the following locations:

- Individual homes or streets
- Schools
- Churches
- Hospitals
- Businesses
- Shopping centers
- Beaches
- Parks
- Strategic viewpoints

Spiritual Practices Resources

Silence/Solitude

Instructions

Materials: none

This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it." (Isaiah 30:15)

Entering into silence before God is a way to practice attending to and listening to God without interruption or distraction. The desire is to free yourself from the disruption of noise so you can be totally present to God, placing yourself in the presence of God without the interference of words, music, reading, or anything else audible. It is a particular kind of fasting. Simply come before God in quietness and allow God's presence to flow over you.

Process:

- Find a place that is quiet, where you will not be interrupted.
- Set a desired amount of time to spend in silence. For the beginner, fifteen minutes is a reasonable place to start. You may want to set a timer so that you are not tempted to stare at a clock for the entire time!
- Prayerfully be silent before God. Seek not to speak but to listen. When thoughts come into your mind that overwhelm you, try not to focus on them; allow them to pass, and return as you can to silence.
- After your allotted time has passed reflect on the experience of what it was like to simply be in the presence of God in silence.

As you gain experience, consider extending this time far beyond fifteen minutes. Try an entire morning or a day. If God gives you the opportunity and circumstances allow it, consider going on a solitude retreat where a day or more is spent in silence.

Spiritual Practices Resources

The Lord's Prayer Stations

Instructions

Materials: Small tables for each of the six stations, with several chairs at each; every station will require an instruction card and an item for a simple activity done in conjunction with that petition. (The item will be underlined within the instruction card's text.) The text for the instruction cards is listed below.

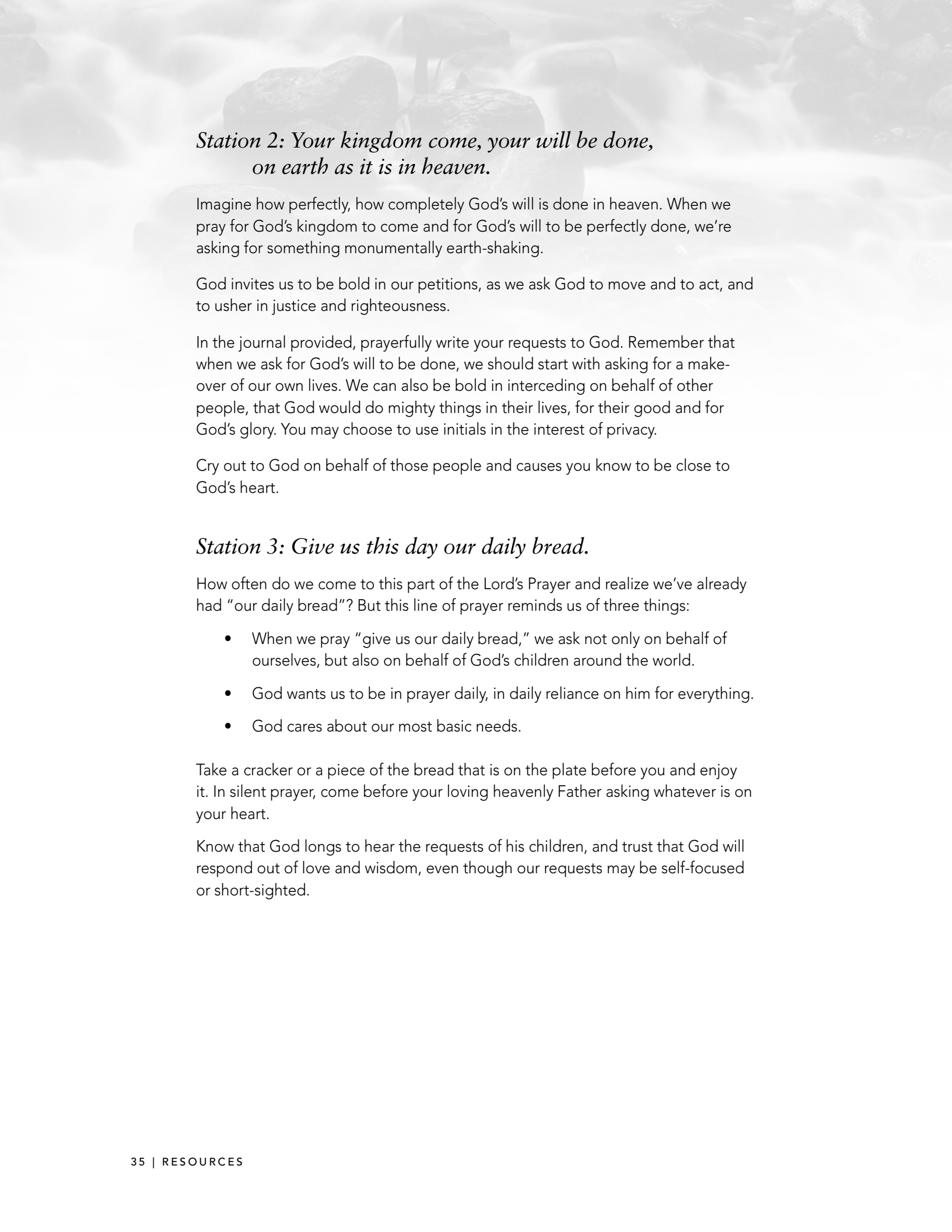
Unlike most of the spiritual practices previously shown, this prayer experience is intended to be practiced by a group of persons in a large room, with several 'stations' set up for privately praying the intentions of The Lord's Prayer. Each of the stations' instructions below should be printed on a separate card and placed on a small table, with ample room separating the stations to allow adequate traffic flow.

Station 1: OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME...

When we think about God's name, we perhaps most often think of the word "God." But the Old and New Testaments record hundreds of ways of referring to God, including many ways that reflect God's character, actions and attributes: our provider, our shelter, my rock, my savior, etc.

One way to "hallow" God's name, or honor it as holy, is to reflect on how the various titles and descriptions for God shed light on God's identity and character. Take a moment and write down two or three names of God on separate strips of colored paper. Select names that are particularly meaningful to you at this time, names that reflect your thankfulness for who God is and for what God does.

Add your strips of paper to the poster paper on the wall before you. Give praise to God using those names you have chosen, reflecting on those others before you may have placed there as well.



*Station 2: Your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.*

Imagine how perfectly, how completely God's will is done in heaven. When we pray for God's kingdom to come and for God's will to be perfectly done, we're asking for something monumentally earth-shaking.

God invites us to be bold in our petitions, as we ask God to move and to act, and to usher in justice and righteousness.

In the journal provided, prayerfully write your requests to God. Remember that when we ask for God's will to be done, we should start with asking for a make-over of our own lives. We can also be bold in interceding on behalf of other people, that God would do mighty things in their lives, for their good and for God's glory. You may choose to use initials in the interest of privacy.

Cry out to God on behalf of those people and causes you know to be close to God's heart.

Station 3: Give us this day our daily bread.

How often do we come to this part of the Lord's Prayer and realize we've already had "our daily bread"? But this line of prayer reminds us of three things:

- When we pray "give us our daily bread," we ask not only on behalf of ourselves, but also on behalf of God's children around the world.
- God wants us to be in prayer daily, in daily reliance on him for everything.
- God cares about our most basic needs.

Take a cracker or a piece of the bread that is on the plate before you and enjoy it. In silent prayer, come before your loving heavenly Father asking whatever is on your heart.

Know that God longs to hear the requests of his children, and trust that God will respond out of love and wisdom, even though our requests may be self-focused or short-sighted.

Station 4: Forgive us our sins (or debts), as we forgive those who sin against us (our debtors).

After teaching his disciples how to pray utilizing The Lord's Prayer, Jesus centered on this one petition for further explanation, saying:

"For if you forgive others when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." (Matthew 6:14-15)

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

We are taught that as forgiven people we need to be willing to forgive others. The Lord's Prayer reminds us that receiving forgiveness and offering forgiveness go hand in hand.

Take two stones. On one, write something with the white crayon that represents an item for which you seek God's forgiveness. On the other, write something representing some hurt, affront or grudge which you choose to let go of in a spirit of genuine forgiveness, by God's grace. Prayerfully, drop both stones in the dish of water provided, symbolizing both your own cleansing and your release of some 'debt' owed to you.

Thank God for his forgiveness, and for giving you the ability to also forgive others.


Station 5: Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

We may tend to hide it, but most of us are keenly aware of those things most likely to tempt us, and those areas in which we are most likely to fall.

Prayerfully consider the week ahead, asking God to help you be honest about places, activities and situations to avoid. Although God promises not to allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear, we can also be smart about not leading ourselves into temptation. For situations that can't be avoided, we can confess our weakness to God and acknowledge our total reliance on him to avoid failure.

Write on an index card that one thing most likely to trip you up in the week ahead. Ask God to deliver you from the evil of succumbing to sin, and to keep you out of temptation's path. Tear up the card completely and place it in the trash bin provided.

It's been said that in heaven we will no longer have the opportunity to honor God by resisting sin, since we won't have any desire to sin. As you leave, ask God to strengthen you by his Spirit so that any temptation you face this week is turned on its head and results in obedience that glorifies God.



*Station 6: For yours is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory forever, amen!*

“Amen” literally means, “So be it!” or “Let it be!” Close this time in silent prayer before God, again asking that God’s will be done just as God would choose, in your own life and in the lives of those around you. Acknowledge before God that the kingdom he is ushering in on earth is 100% God’s kingdom, that all the power necessary to answer all of your prayers belongs to God, and that any glory due anyone belongs to God.

Thank God for hearing your prayers and for blessing your time with him today. Ask for the gift of faith to wait upon God as he answers.

Using the strips of paper provided, write down two or three things for which you are particularly thankful today. Acknowledge before God that these are good gifts from God’s hand and not simply the rewards of your own hard work.

In a spirit of thanksgiving, add the strips to the poster paper on the wall before you.

So be it! Amen!



Journal



Journal



Journal

Spiritual Practices Resources

Bibliography

A complete script of the Streams & Pathways retreat experience is available through the Department of Christian Formation of the Evangelical Covenant Church. This may be of assistance to churches that have experienced the retreat and then want to consider utilizing it in a Sunday school or other small group format.

Celebration of Discipline, by Richard Foster (HarperSanFrancisco, 1998) ISBN 0060628391. *Celebration of Discipline* explores the “classic disciplines,” or central spiritual practices, of the Christian faith. Along the way, Foster shows that it is only by and through these practices that the true path to spiritual growth can be found. Dividing the disciplines into three movements of the Spirit, he shows how each of these areas contributes to a more balanced spiritual life. The inward disciplines of meditation, prayer, fasting, and study offer avenues of personal examination and change. The outward disciplines of simplicity, solitude, submission, and service help prepare us to make the world a better place. The corporate disciplines of confession, worship, guidance, and celebration bring us nearer to one another and to God.

The Deeper Journey: The Spirituality of Discovering Your True Self, by M. Robert Mulholland, Jr. (InterVarsity, 2006) ISBN 978-0830832774. If the goal of the Christian journey is Christlikeness, then you must reckon with the unhealthy ways that you root your sense of being in things other than God. Along the way, you will discover a growing sense of intimacy and abandonment to God. Not only will you encounter the joy of discovering your own self, you will also find a greater love for others and compassion for the world.

Devoted: Praying Our Way to a Rule of Life, by Heather Monkmeyer (Department of Christian Formation, ECC, 2011) www.covenantbookstore.com. Developed for the 2011 week of prayer, this resource is a seven-session guide for individual, family, or small group study, reflection, and interaction and focuses on the need for arranging our days in a way that fosters spiritual growth, through prayer.

The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul-Tending for Youth Ministry, by Kenda Creasy Dean, Ron Foster (Upper Room) ISBN 0-8358-0858-0. The authors offer a lively spiritual primer and practical guide for those who pastor young people. Dean and Foster chart a course for youth ministry through the classical spiritual disciplines of the church. The book identifies families, congregations, and

mentor relationships as the “holy ground” where young people are most likely to say “Yes!” to God.

Grow Deeper in Christ: An Introduction to Spiritual Practices, by Katie Isaza (Department of Christian Formation, ECC, 2008) www.covenantbookstore.com. Based on the belief that growth in Christ needs to be nurtured through regular spiritual practices, this small group guide was created to facilitate the shared experience of eight formative spiritual practices, also known as spiritual disciplines. Through Bible study, discussion, shared experiences, personal reflection, and practice, this guide will allow you to make these spiritual disciplines part of your journey towards growth in Christ.

Growing Deeper Tools (Department of Christian Formation, ECC, 2008), a series of fourteen practical tools for use by individuals, families, or groups. Based on the belief that growth in Christ needs to be nurtured through regular spiritual practices, these one-page tools offer a variety of practices from which to choose. Available at www.covchurch.org/resource. Titles include:

1. Reading the Bible
2. Praying Scripture
3. Telling Your Story
4. Praying Your Community
5. Reviewing Your Day
6. Walking with God
7. Making Commitments
8. Keeping a Spiritual Journal
9. Becoming Spiritual Companions
10. Mentoring Children
11. Developing Racial Righteousness
12. Choosing to Give
13. Worshipping with Children
14. Using a Rule of Life

Journaling as a Spiritual Practice: Encountering God Through Attentive Writing, by Helen Harmelink Cepero (InterVarsity, 2008) ISBN 0830835199.

Whether you are a longtime journal keeper or someone who has never kept a journal at all, this book will help you go below the surface of your life with God. It is not about the art of writing, but about how journaling can form us spiritually. Every chapter combines descriptive text, illustrations from journals, and this Covenant author’s own experience with journaling practices integrated along the way, to help you bring your own life and world into sharper focus.

The Life You’ve Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People, by John Ortberg (Zondervan, 2002) ISBN 0310250749. The heart of Christianity is transformation—a relationship with God that impacts not just our “spiritual lives,” but every aspect of living. With a new chapter on prayer and added discussion

questions, this expanded edition offers modern perspectives on the ancient path of the spiritual disciplines. This is a road map toward true transformation that starts not with the individual but with the object of the journey—Jesus Christ. (Complete Groupware Kit is also available and includes: Leader's Guide, Participant's Guide, hardcover book edition, video in both VHS & DVD formats. All items except video are also sold separately.)

Sacred Pathways, by Gary L. Thomas (Zondervan, 2001) ISBN 0310242843. This book unfolds nine distinct spiritual temperaments—their traits, strengths, and pitfalls. In one or more, you will see yourself and the ways you most naturally express your relationship with Jesus Christ. Whatever temperament or blend of temperaments best describes you, know that it's by the design of a Creator who knew what he was doing when he made you according to his own unique specifications. *Sacred Pathways* will show you the route you were made to travel, marked by growth and filled with the riches of a close walk with God.

Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation, by Ruth Haley Barton (InterVarsity, 2006) ISBN 0830833331. Spiritual disciplines are activities that open us to God's transforming love and the changes that only God can bring about in our lives. Picking up on the monastic tradition of creating a "rule of life" that allows for regular space for the practice of the spiritual disciplines, this book takes you more deeply into understanding seven key disciplines along with practical ideas for weaving them into everyday life. Each chapter includes exercises to help you begin the practices—individually and in a group context. The final chapter puts it all together in a way that will help you arrange your life for spiritual transformation.

Savoring God's Word: Cultivating the Soul-Transforming Practice of Scripture Meditation, by Jan Johnson (NavPress, 2004) ISBN 1576833992. God has an incredibly rich life waiting for us, but it does not come unless we have an interactive life with God in which we talk to God in prayer and listen to God—especially in Scripture. This resource gives a framework for meditation that can enliven our spiritual walk.

Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation, by M. Robert Mulholland, Jr. (The Upper Room, 2001) ISBN 0835809366. This book explores the role that Scripture plays in spiritual formation. Mulholland examines obstacles often encountered in spiritual reading and introduces a new approach to reading that will enliven the Scriptures. He compares informational reading (reading to be informed) with formational reading (reading to be spiritually formed). Readers are released to God's initiative, allowing the Scripture to form a spiritual life inside them.

Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life, by Marjorie Thompson (Westminster John Knox, 2005) ISBN 0664229476. This resource offers a framework for understanding the spiritual disciplines and instruction for developing

and nurturing those practices. *Soul Feast* continues to be a favorite for individual reflection and group study.

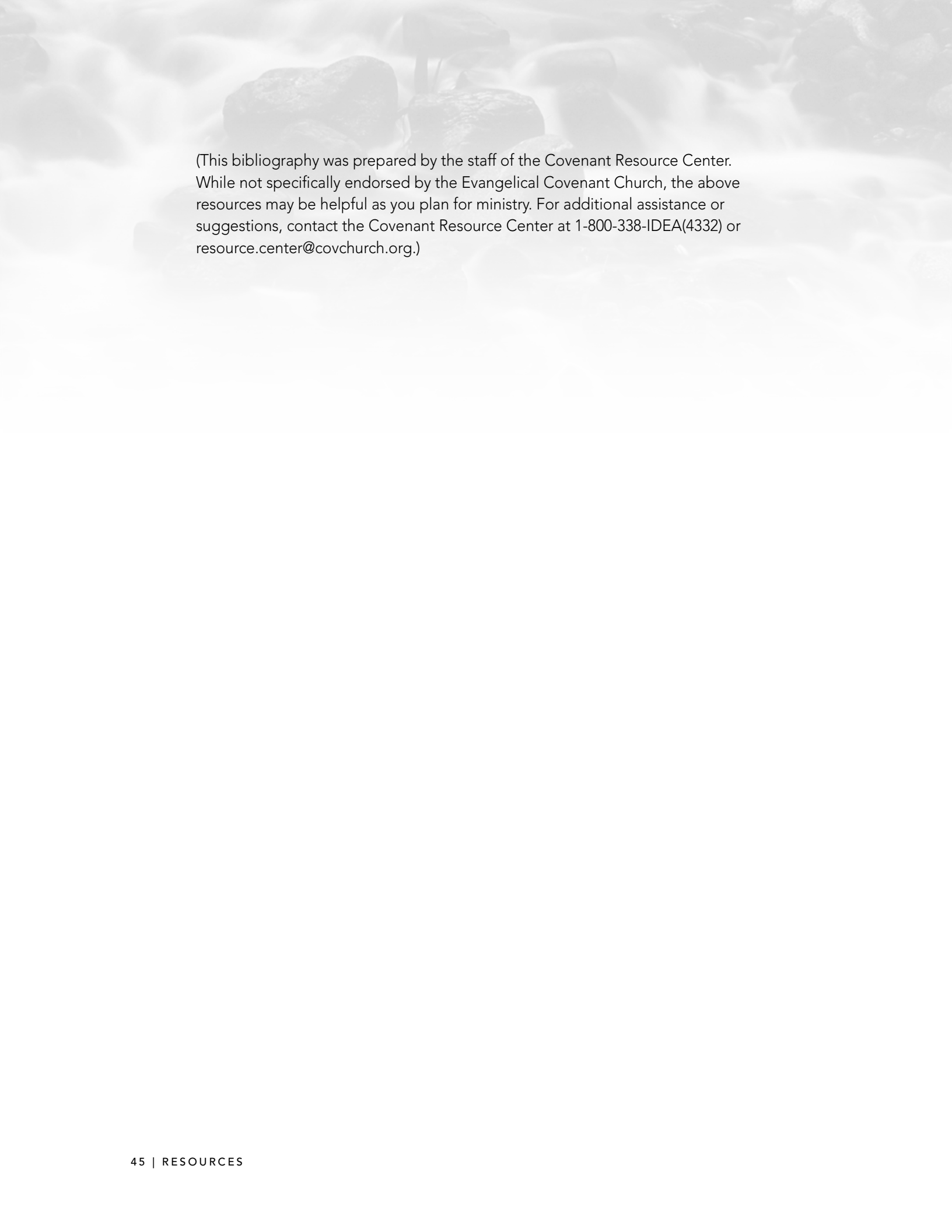
Soul Shaper: Exploring Spirituality and Contemplative Practices in Youth Ministry, by Tony Jones (Zondervan, 2003) ISBN 031025101X. This is a comprehensive primer on the study and use of spiritual and contemplative practices for the benefit of teenagers. Disciplines include: Sacred Reading, The Jesus Prayer, The Ignatian Examen, The Daily Office, Stations of the Cross, Sabbath, Silence and Solitude, Centering Prayer, Spiritual Direction, The Labyrinth, Pilgrimage Service.

The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives, by Dallas Willard (HarperOne, 1990) ISBN 0060694424. The author reveals how the key to self-transformation resides in the practice of the spiritual disciplines, and how their practice affirms human life to the fullest. *The Spirit of the Disciplines* is for everyone who strives to be a disciple of Jesus in thought and action as well as intention.

Spiritual Disciplines Companion: Bible Studies and Practices to Transform Your Soul (Spiritual Disciplines Bible Studies), by Jan Johnson (InterVarsity, 2009) ISBN 0830835237. Spiritual disciplines connect us to the God who wants to transform our souls. We discover these time-tested practices in the Bible as we look at the everyday ways Jesus related to God. These companion studies and exercises will help you to explore sixteen core practices. Three segments on each practice (a total of forty-eight sessions) allow space to go beyond superficial understanding and to begin to live in a new way.

Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us, by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun (InterVarsity, 2005) ISBN 0830833307. The author gives us directions for our journey toward intimacy with Christ. While the word discipline may make us want to run and hide, the author shows how desires and discipline work together to lead us to the transformation we're longing for—the transformation only Christ can bring. Instead of just giving information about spiritual disciplines, this handbook is full of practical, accessible guidance that helps you actually do them.

Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens, by Dorothy Bass and Don C. Richter (The Upper Room) ISBN 0-8358-0975-7. Find out how Alexx dealt with all his stuff, how Marie expressed her creativity with a paint roller, what Jack learned about play. These are just a few of the Christian practices this team of writers explores. Some ancient Christian practices turn up as ways to deepen awareness of God's presence in our lives today. Discover how to use your imagination when reading the Bible—à la Saint Ignatius—and practice tuning in to God like Brother Lawrence of the 17th century.



(This bibliography was prepared by the staff of the Covenant Resource Center. While not specifically endorsed by the Evangelical Covenant Church, the above resources may be helpful as you plan for ministry. For additional assistance or suggestions, contact the Covenant Resource Center at 1-800-338-IDEA(4332) or resource.center@covchurch.org.)