



Summer Camp: Adventures in Spiritual Practices Resource and Discussion Guide

Are you ready to go on an adventure? Let's go together! Many of us want to grow in our relationship with God but we don't know how, or where to start. Others of us are looking to add some new spiritual practices to our toolbox. So, this summer, as a community, we're going to learn about different spiritual practices that are based on Scripture and practiced by Christians all over the world. Some of them will be familiar to you like prayer, sabbath and giving to the poor. But we'll talk about how to put these into practice in your own life. Today we use these Biblical practices to know God better and He can use them to transform us to be more Christlike.

This guide is intended to help your group try out some practices and have a conversation about what you experienced. We hope that by the end of the summer, you'll discover one or two spiritual practices that help you connect with God in a new or refreshed way. We're looking forward to going on this adventure with you!

How to use this guide:

For each week there are discussion questions and a practice to explore. The discussion questions are meant to be done in community when you meet, or for your personal reflection if you're using this guide on your own. After the discussion questions, there will be a practice for you to try before the next meeting. A few things to remember:

- There will be more resources on our [Tools and Resources page](#) if you find a practice you love and want to dive deeper.
- This guide is meant to be used for a 6-week group and will **not** include all of the practices we'll be discussing on Sundays throughout the Summer. We are highlighting five of the practices to make it easier for groups to meet and flex around summer schedules. We will also discuss some of these practices well before we get to the Sunday message on that topic. That's okay, the repetition and

extra resources you get when we get to that Sunday will help you learn more about that practice. This can be your starting point.

- You may not resonate with every practice, and that's okay! Different practices will serve us in different stages of our life. These practices will be helpful in different seasons.

Week One: Introduction to Spiritual Formation

This week we will spend time getting to know each other and sharing about how we're hoping to learn and grow this summer. If you're doing this with a new-to-you group, be sure to do some introductions before you dive in.

Discussion/Reflection Questions:

- What's your first thought when you hear the term "spiritual practices"?
- What makes you excited to learn about spiritual practices?
- What makes you nervous or hesitant about spiritual practices?
- What are some routines or habits you already have and enjoy? Examples: a morning cup of coffee or a weekly walk with a friend.
- As you think about the practices we'll be talking about this summer, which practice seems most natural to you, and which one seems out of your comfort zone?

Before Next Week:

Scripture Practice

If you **do not** have a regular practice of reading scripture-

This week, read Psalm 1 every day and pray that God would reveal more of his character to you in your reading.

If you **do have** a regular practice of reading scripture-

Try a more formal approach, historically called *Lectio Divina*, once this week. *Lectio Divina* is an ancient practice, dating to the early church, that helps us slow down and meditate on the scriptures. It's best done with a shorter passage of Scripture. After you've chosen your passage, pray that God would make you aware of His presence as you read.

1. **Read** Read [Matthew 13:1-9](#) slowly, preferably out loud. Is there a word or phrase that sticks out to you?
2. **Reflect** Read the passage again, and take some time to reflect on it. Go back to the word or phrase that stuck out to you. Take a few more minutes to reflect on the passage.
3. **Respond** Read the passage again and respond in prayer. What do you want to say to God about this passage? What feelings or thoughts does it bring up?
4. **Rest** Read the passage a final time and rest in God's presence. This may feel challenging if you're not used to it but just spend a few minutes with God, like you would a friend. If your mind wanders, return to the Scripture phrase or your prayer and bring your attention back to God.

Week Two: Scripture

Discussion/Reflection Questions:

- What's your previous experience (if any) with reading Scripture?
- What Scripture practice did you try this week?
- What was challenging about this practice?
- What did you enjoy?
- How did you experience God or hear from Him through this practice?
- Is this a practice you sense God inviting you to do more often?

Before Next Week:

Hospitality Practice

We saw in the [Live This Book series](#) that God created us for a mission. One of the many ways we can participate in this mission is through hospitality. Hospitality is the practice of seeing, welcoming, and making space for others. Think about your week ahead- where do you interact with people in your community? Take some time to think about the people in those spaces, are there people you "see" regularly that you don't interact with?

Start by having a conversation with someone that you normally wouldn't. Take the time to introduce yourself to a coworker or neighbor and ask them how they spend their days. If you see someone at the park, the pool, or your office that you don't usually interact with, ask them their name and a little about themselves. If you already know some folks in your community but not more than enough to wave hello or goodbye, consider inviting them to your home or having a longer conversation with them over coffee. How can you take a step this week to be hospitable to someone?

Week Three: Mission/Hospitality

Discussion/Reflection Questions:

- Are there ways that you enjoy making space for people and welcoming them?
- Did you do the practice this week? If so, what was challenging? If not, was there something that was a barrier for you?
- What did you learn about your community this week?
- How did you experience God or hear from Him through this practice?
- Is this a practice you sense God inviting you to do more often?

Before Next Week:

Sabbath and Rest Practice

Our lives are busy and we are a distracted people. To draw near to God, we need to create time and space in our days to be with Him- we need to slow down and cease our striving. Sometimes we

need physical rest, other times we need a break from all of the mental work. Take a look at your week ahead and set aside some intentional time for rest. Don't think of this as "adding" something to your to-do list but subtracting. For some of us, that may mean turning off our phone for a full day; for others, it may mean going to sleep 15 minutes earlier. What do you need to say "no" to in order to make that rest time possible?

Bonus: Listen to the [Sabbath 01: Rest episode](#) of the Rule of Life Podcast (about an hour long) to learn more about sabbath rest.

Week Four: Sabbath and Rest

Discussion/Reflection Questions:

- What's your previous experience (if any) with Sabbath?
- What keeps you from resting?
- What sabbath rest practice did you try this week?
- What was challenging about this practice?
- What did you enjoy?
- How did you experience God or hear from Him through this practice?
- Is there an invitation for you to add a new or different Sabbath practice in your life?

Before Next Week:

Crossing Cultural Boundaries Practice

In Scripture, we see that Jesus crossed barriers of culture, gender, ethnicity, beliefs, and social standing in order to love those around Him. If we are to be transformed to be more like Him in that way, then we too are encouraged to grow in our understanding of those that are different from us and learn to develop relationships across barriers. We have a vision and mission for multicultural community at Blackhawk. This week, take some time to think about your community. How many people do you spend time with that are from a different culture than you? Here are some options for your practice this week:

- Pray that God would open your heart to learning about your culture and other cultures in your community.
- Eat at a restaurant from a different culture. What do you notice?
- Listen to worship music in a different language or from a different culture.
- Watch a movie or TV with main characters of a different culture. Or read a book by an author of a different culture. What do you notice?
- You can find some great resources on our [Race and Faith page](#) if you need a starting point.

Week Five: Crossing Cultural Boundaries

Discussion/Reflection Questions:

- What's your previous experience (if any) with Crossing Cultural Boundaries?
- What did you notice or learn from your practice this week?
- What did you learn about your own culture and biases?
- What barriers exist in your life that keep you from crossing boundaries?
- How did you experience God or hear from Him through this practice?
- Is there a next step you want to take to learn more about your culture or other cultures?

Before Next Week:

Prayer Practice

- If you **do not** have a regular prayer practice (you've never prayed, or pray sporadically):
 - Check out [this website](#) and try one of the suggested ways to pray. Do it 4-6 times this week (or every day if it's working well for you!)
- If you **do** have a regular prayer practice try a new way to pray like:
 - The [Lectio 365 App](#)
 - [Praying the Examen](#)
 - Trying out some liturgical prayers (Like [The Book of Common Prayer](#) or [Every Moment Holy](#))
 - [Taking a prayer walk](#)
 - Focusing on intercessory prayer (praying for others)

Week Six: Prayer

Discussion/Reflection Questions:

- What's your previous experience (if any) with prayer?
- What keeps you from praying?
- What prayer practice did you try this week?
- What was challenging about this practice?
- What did you enjoy?
- How did you experience God or hear from Him through this practice?
- Is there an invitation for you to add a new or different prayer practice to your life?

We hope you have enjoyed this Adventure in Spiritual Practices and have a few more tools in your belt for your journey with God. Don't forget that we will be updating our [resources page](#) as we go. If you've enjoyed learning in community with other Christ followers, then keep an eye out for groups and courses sign-ups beginning this Fall. If you have any other questions, you can reach out to the Spiritual Formation team. Just email Veronica Hummel (Associate Director of Spiritual Formation) at vhummel@blackhawkchurch.org