

Try Different Practices

ISAIAH 43:19; HEBREWS 4:15-16

1 As you gather, discuss your experiences with unplugging since the last session. In addition, take some time summarizing each practice explored (Fast, Pray, Listen to God, Embrace Simplicity, Unplug), allowing those who were present to briefly share.

Once everyone has gathered, open the session with the following prayer:

God of grace, creativity, and imagination, you reach out to us in new and surprising ways. May we be attentive to your presence and point the way to your open and welcoming arms. Amen.

2 Read “Summary of the Practice” on the other side of this page. Take turns telling what spiritual disciplines have worked best for you so far.

3 Spend a few minutes in silence looking over the list of spiritual practices on this page. Circle ones you might like to try. Add any you can think of to try that are not listed. Return as a group and share your responses.

4 Read “Finding the Practice in the Bible” on the other side of this page. Invite a volunteer to read Hebrew 4:15-16. Ask: Where in this text do you see an invitation to experiment boldly with spiritual disciplines? Discuss how you’ve seen different faith communities experiment with spiritual disciplines.

5 Read “Finding the Practice Then and Now” on the other side of this page. Challenge participants to come up with one or two spiritual disciplines that they want to experiment with in the next week or so. Form pairs and invite them to make a plan for how they will try out this new spiritual discipline.

6 Review this time you have spent looking at spiritual disciplines. Have a few people practice telling someone who is not a Christian what a spiritual discipline is.

Try Different Practices			
Centering Prayer	Silence	Advocate	Celebrate
Labyrinth	Enjoy Nature	Lectio Divina	Exercise
Journal	Make/Enjoy Art	Prayer Beads	Rest
Retreat	Express Gratitude	Chant	Listen to a Friend
Solitude	Fast	Garden	Give
Dance	Unplug	Sacraments	Reflect
Create/Listen to Music	Attend Worship	Confession	Write a Letter
Meditate	Read the Bible	Fellowship	

SUMMARY OF THE PRACTICE

“Every time you listen with great attentiveness to the voice that calls you the Beloved, you will discover within yourself a desire to hear that voice longer and more deeply. It is like discovering a well in the desert. Once you have touched wet ground, you want to dig deeper.”¹ Spiritual disciplines help us remove the sand covering the well to find that water and hear the voice that is always there. But there is not just one way to remove the sand. Spiritual disciplines come in many different forms, and we can experiment to find the disciplines that work best for us in each stage of life. We can engage in spiritual disciplines with the lightness of knowing that the well of living water is right there below the sand, and there are multiple ways to dig down and find that water.

FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

God is an experimenter. The Creator of all life—who set in motion an ever-expanding universe and who intervenes in human history in particular, transformative ways—knows a thing or two about trying something new.

The God we meet in Scripture is always at work in new and surprising ways, providing water where before there was only dry sand, and new life where death prevailed. In the history of ancient Israel and the stories of Jesus and the early church, we see that God will try new things to draw the people of God closer: covenants, prophets, priests, kings, exodus, law, exile, a baby in a manger, miracles, resurrection, the Holy Spirit, communities of faith. How could we not respond in a similar fashion, with an openness to new ways to draw closer to God?

FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Through time, people of faith have been bold and tried hundreds of spiritual disciplines with the goal of freeing up space to draw near to God. So how do we experiment with spiritual practices? We could just list a hundred different kinds of spiritual practices and encourage one another to go for it. Pick and choose from a long list, and just see what happens. God is certain to show up in that method, because that’s just who God is. To make the discipline of experimenting truly a spiritual discipline, however, takes real intention. Maybe that’s as good a place to start as any—with an intention.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THIS GUIDE

If possible, distribute this sheet to participants before gathering. Be prepared to summarize the information on this page. Bring extra copies, some pens, and a Bible.

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CLOSING PRAYER

Close with the following prayer:

O Lord, you are always with us. You offer yourself to us in so many ways. Open our eyes to see you. Open our ears to hear you. Open our hearts to love you. Open our hands to serve you. Help us walk with you all our days. We pray in the name of Christ Jesus, the risen Lord, who shows us what love looks like. Amen.

1. Henri Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 31.