

Unplug

GENESIS 2:1-3; MARK 6:30-45

1 As you gather, read the other side of this page to familiarize yourself with the topic for today. Once everyone has gathered, spend a few minutes making sure everyone knows each other and introducing any visitors. Open the session with the following prayer:
*Holy One, help us remove unnecessary distractions to focus more attention on you and your world.
Amen.*

2 Read “Summary of the Practice” on the other side of this page. Invite everyone to share with the group how they rest, recharge, and unplug. After everyone has shared, ask everyone to think about the answer they gave and consider whether or not they think this is also bringing them closer to God. Invite everyone to share why they think it is or is not.

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3 Read “Finding the Practice in the Bible” on the other side of this page and read Mark 6:30-45. Discuss the following questions together as a group:

- ➔ What does Jesus teach his companions here?
- ➔ How does Jesus respond to the crowd after his time away?
- ➔ What will you unplug from periodically to spend time with God?
- ➔ When will you do that this week?

4 Read “Finding the Practice Then and Now” on the other side of this page, then watch the video “Shabbat/ Sabbath” (bit.ly/FMShabbat, 3:04) and discuss the following:

- ➔ What do you notice about commitments the family makes to observing Sabbath?
- ➔ How is unplugging a part of the family’s spiritual discipline?
- ➔ How does unplugging allow space to connect with God? With one another?

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5 Watch and discuss the YouTube video “Is Our Attention for Sale? | James Williams” ([bit.ly /FMAttention](https://bit.ly/FMAttention), 4:15).

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6 Spend a few minutes alone writing in the space with the plug. When all are finished, allow a few volunteers to share their responses. As a group, commit to unplugging a few times before you meet again. Next time you can share how that experience worked.



Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.

SUMMARY OF THE PRACTICE

Unplugging as a way to follow Jesus is not exactly an “originalist” spiritual practice. Jesus was not plugged in to technology, so we cannot follow his lead directly. But Jesus did unplug from everyday distractions and from crowds, and we can take instruction from him in those ways. If we recall the two main themes of spiritual disciplines—connecting with God, and making space for God to transform us—unplugging is a natural practice to explore. Unplugging helps us connect with God because we remove what is distracting us, such as screens and earphones. Unplugging makes space in our lives for God to transform us because we are more able to pay attention to what’s happening in our lives. We are more able to see where God is active, blessing us and leading us through the events and relationships of daily life.

FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

There are numerous accounts in the Bible of disconnecting from work so that rest and prayer can happen. We might begin with God unplugging. In the first account of the creation, God rested from work on the seventh day and hallowed that day (Genesis 2:1-2). In the Gospels, we find Jesus frequently seeking time to unplug and pray. In Mark 6:30-45, we find how difficult that is. Yet, eventually he succeeds. Unplugging in an overly complicated life can be difficult for anyone. We may not always succeed, but we persist until it happens so that we can be attentive to God.

FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Since Moses came down from Mt. Sinai with the fourth commandment to honor the Sabbath day, the people of God have considered how best to mark time as holy. Over the centuries, Jewish law has defined boundaries of behavior for those observing the Sabbath. Initially, the law asked for the day of rest to be honored by refraining from work of any kind. Over time, as technology emerged, Sabbath laws for some observant Jews came to include refraining from operating electronic devices, such as clocks, light switches, televisions, computers, and telephones. The specifics of exactly what is allowed, and why, is debated, but the primary goal is to honor the Sabbath and fulfill the command from God to rest.

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:

Holy One, help us remove unnecessary distractions to focus more attention on you and your world. Amen.