

*Guide to Spiritual Practices*

**Rest. Sabbath. Hope**



Virtual Chaplains Training 2021

September 23 to 25



Christian Reformed Church  
**Chaplaincy and  
Care Ministry**

## SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

**Practice Square Breathing** for at least 3 minutes before you begin personal devotions or prayer.



Square breathing is a type of breathwork that can shift your energy, calm your nervous system, and decrease stress in your body. Find a relaxed, comfortable position. Keep your back upright, but not too tight. Hands resting wherever they're comfortable. Notice and relax your body. Relax any areas of tightness or tension.

- Begin by slowly exhaling all of your air out.
- Then, gently inhale through your nose to a slow count of 4.
- Hold at the top of the breath for a count of 4.
- Then gently exhale through your mouth for a count of 4.
- At the bottom of the breath, pause and hold for the count of 4.

## **Journaling**

In what ways does writing help you focus or know what you think? If writing is not something you enjoy, what other ways do you process and reflect on your experiences in the presence of God?

## **Reflection—Sabbath**

**Pause** and **think** about this statement by Abraham Joshua Heschel:

“The Sabbath itself is a sanctuary which we build,  
a sanctuary in time.”

- Reflect on the Sundays of your own childhood. Recall Saturday evenings. Anything different? Recall Sunday mornings and getting ready for church. Worshipping. Think about the 5 senses...what did Sundays taste like, smell like, feel like, sound like, look like? What flavor do those memories have for you?
- How did you spend Sunday afternoon and evening? What kind of a day was it for you?
- How is Sunday or Sabbath observed in your life today? What advice would you give to someone who is new to the practice?

## **Reflection—Sabbath**

What would I do for a twenty-four-hour period of time if the only criteria was to pursue my deepest joy?

## Prayer-Rituals

Find a quiet, comfortable place where you will not be interrupted for 60 minutes. (not driving in your car - no phone, TV, music, etc.) Sit in a comfortable chair with a straight back, feet resting gently on the floor. Your hands should be in a comfortable position. Take a few deep, cleansing breaths using the Square Breathing method or similar practice.

For the first 30 minutes, [looking at the past] consider leisure and sabbath in your life. Ask, *Lord, how has this been for me in my life? How have I dealt with leisure and sabbath? Do I try to avoid it? Do I truly have leisure and sabbath with You?*

For the next 30 minutes, [looking at the present] Ask: *“What would it be to do leisure and sabbath with You, Lord? How might it affect the work I do? What does rest mean in my life? Where do I find delight-- what are the experiences, places, times, relationships and things that bring me delight?”*

**Reflect** on this quote\* about rituals and worship:

**“Rituals, like stories, emerge from and speak to our intuitive, emotional consciousness....**

**When worship becomes too intellectual or wordy, it loses its depth and significance.”**

- a) What do you think about this statement?
- b) In what ways have you incorporated rituals in...
  - your daily life and/or household?
  - Your corporate worship experience?
- c) What role does ritual play in your personal spiritual life? How are rituals formative? deformative?

\*John Westerhoff, Bringing Up Children in the Christian Faith.

## **Mindfulness Walk--30 min (~15 min walk/10-15 min journal)**

Mindfulness is a cultivated way of being present to ourselves, others, God and the world around us. It includes the practice of focusing our attention and awareness on the present moment with an appreciative curiosity. Spending time in nature is one of the ways we can focus on enjoying and being in God's presence.

**Let's go on a walk!** Invite God to show you the glory of the world around. Plan to spend no more than 30 minutes for this activity.

This is not a time for exercise--this is a "wondering walk." You'll want to remain quiet and mindful. You can begin from your front door or head out to a favorite walking trail. Walk slowly so you don't miss anything. Turn your senses on high and notice the natural environment...all the birds, bugs and nature that you can.

*\*If you are unable to go outdoors, you can do a nature wondering experiment from within your home or retreat center. Select a spot that has a view of the outdoors and follow the prompts below. Instead of collecting an object to hold, you may take a photo of it, zoom in and draw what you see. Consider this question: How does it feel to remain indoors and do this activity?*

While walking, **consider these questions:** "Which details are easier to remember? Did I notice anything I haven't noticed before? What helps me keep my focus?"

**Search** for one small object from your walk. Maybe a leaf, flower, bottle cap...and take it back home. Spend time noticing what your object looks like, smells like, how it feels, and if it makes a sound.

In your journal, **describe the object** you found. Use as many vivid words as possible.

**Reflect** on this Nature Walk Activity. What do you notice...

- About yourself
- About nature
- About God

**Questions for Reflection:**

- What does it mean to you that God is in every place? How does this affect how you pray?
- How does moving or being still affect the way you pray?

This uses the fingers on your hand to become appreciative. A good compliment to the Wondering Walk.

### 54321 Grounding Exercise



5: Acknowledge FIVE things you SEE around you.



4: Acknowledge FOUR things you can TOUCH around you.



3: Acknowledge THREE things you HEAR.



2: Acknowledge TWO things you can SMELL.



1: Acknowledge ONE thing you can TASTE.

## A Nightly Reflection on the Day

7 minutes

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Adapted from Examen of Ignatius of Loyola

1. **Begin:** At the end of your day, find a comfortable place and remind yourself that God is with you and has been with you all day. God rejoices that you have come regardless of how forgetful you have been of Him today.

a. "In the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen."

b. "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

2. **Reflection on the Day:** Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you look back over your day.

a. **Joy Reflection:** What is it that made you happy today, what are the best things that happened today, what did you say or do or that happened to you that gave you joy. Open to them again. When did you feel most fully alive cooperating with God today. Thank God for those things.

b. **Sadness Reflection:** Were there moments that made you unhappy today, things you said or did or were said to you that made you sad. Tell them to God.

c. **Sin Reflection:** Now, were there times where you did not live up to what you could be today and were there times that made you sad about the way you acted and are sorry about. When were you out of tune with God and felt least alive. Try not to be judgmental, just honest. Tell God you are sorry. And know that you are precious to God and nothing ever changes that.

d. **Thanksgiving Reflection:** Now go over your whole day and ask God what gifts you received from him, what was he doing in your life today. What does the Father want to show you -- and thank Him.

e. **Tomorrow Reflection:** Finally, is there anything you would like to ask God about for tomorrow, anything you are worried about. What is it that you need from God to strengthen you for tomorrow? Tell God about those things.

3. **End:** “Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and evermore shall be. World without end. Amen.”