

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Guidelines adapted from *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

DEVOTIONALLY READING SCRIPTURE (OR LECTIO DIVINA)

Purpose: To attend to scripture with an ear to hearing a word from God.

Lectio—read the word. Choose and read a scripture passage slowly and out loud, lingering over the words so that they resonate in your heart.

- When a word or phrase catches your attention, don't keep reading. Stop and attend to what God is saying to you. Don't analyze it. Listen and wait.

Meditatio—meditate.

- Read the scripture a second time out loud. Savor the words. Listen for any invitation that God is extending to you in this word. Reflect on the importance of the words that light up to you.

Oratio—respond, pray.

- Read the scripture a third time. Now you can enter into a dialogue with God. What feelings has the text aroused in you? Name where you are resistant and want to push back. Become aware of where you feel invited into a deeper way of being with God. Talk to one another and to God about these feelings.

Contemplatio—contemplate, rest in the presence of God.

- Allow some time for the word to sink into your soul. Yield or surrender yourself to God. How can you dwell on this word throughout the day?

“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to the dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrows; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”
Hebrews 4: 12

MEMORIZATION OF SCRIPTURE

Purpose: To carry the life-shaping words of God in us at all times and in all places.

The practice includes:

- memorizing Scripture, hymns, poems, quotes, etc.
- rereading portions of scripture until they are committed to memory
- memorizing scripture verses that clearly reveal God's plan of salvation
- memorizing the books of the Bible, particular dates and times as well as where verses are found
- learning by heart portions of Scripture that encourage you when you are tempted

As you memorize, take your time and let the words sink into your soul.

“Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.” Psalm 119: 97

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

Definition and purpose: Contemplative prayer is a way of being with God without wordiness. It is a response to God's invitation to "abide in Christ." It is a receptive posture of openness toward and listening to God.

The practice includes:

- allowing a portion of Scripture to sink deep into the heart as a prayer to God
- practicing breath prayer (in rhythm with your breathing, gratefully inhale the breath of life and then exhale, remembering that Jesus gave his last breath for love of you; you may also try breathing in a biblical name for God and then breathing out a word or phrase, such as "Abba...I belong to you" or "Jesus...have mercy on me")
- practicing centering prayer (set aside 15 minutes, settle into a comfortable position, choose a word or phrase that expresses your desire for God, let the word draw you into the presence of Christ by repeating it and returning gently to it when you get distracted, rest in the center of God's love, and trust that the Holy Spirit is connecting you with God)
- resting in God and allowing the Spirit to nudge, fill, or speak
- "wasting time" with God

"Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God." Romans 8:26-27, *The Message*

SABBATH

Definition and purpose: To set apart one day a week for rest and worship of God. It is God's gift of repetitive and regular rest and God's reminder that we can trust him to manage all that concerns us in this world as we settle into his rest.

The practice includes:

- resting in God one day a week
- practicing restful activities: walks, picnics, a Sunday afternoon nap, a phone visit with a loved one, tea or coffee with friends, family time, turning off email and cell phones
- letting go of things that stress you for 24 hours
- letting the difficult conversations happen another day
- not having a "to do" list for Sunday
- refraining from competition that moves you into a bad place

"There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest." Hebrews 4: 9-11