

YOUTH BECOMING LEADERS

High School Christian Leadership and Global Transformation Institute

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES PACKET

OVERVIEW

There are many ways to communicate and spend time with Jesus, our Lord and Savior. We call these practices and rhythms "spiritual disciplines." They exist not to make us check boxes off our lists, but to deepen our intimacy with the Lord and to spur spiritual growth by utilizing different creative avenues that He instilled in us. The ones provided here are not exhaustive, nor are they the only ones to exist.

This resource exists for you so you may lean into the way God has wired you. Some will come more naturally to you, and that's okay. All serve the purpose of glorfiying Him, so that you may commune with your Creator.

Prayer for the Project:

God,
Thank you for the passions you have placed in my heart. Thank you for the ways you have blessed me with (a person, gift, etc.).

The spiritual disciplines listed below are to follow:

- Mindfulness
- Breathe Prayer
- The Jesus Prayer
- Lectio Divina
- Examen of Consciousness
- Labyrinth Prayer
- Ignatian Examen
- Fixed Hour Prayer
- Liturgical Prayer
- Intercessory Prayer
- Journaling

MINDFULNESS

When you find yourself out of sorts with yourself and about to angrily snarl at yourself, take a pause and offer a prayer of grace to yourself.

1. Using your five senses bring your focus into the present moment.
- Start with your sight. What are 5 things you see around you?
- What are 4 things you hear around you?
- What are 3 things you physically feel?
- What are 2 things you smell?
- What is one thing you taste?

2. Now put your hands on your heart and prayerfully say to yourself:
- May I know/experience God's rest.
- May I know/experience God's tenderness.
- May I know/experience God's love.

This is a prayer for more than just wishful thinking. You are asking that this be true for yourself.

3. When you finish, consider pausing and pray this prayer of blessing (#2) on another: a brother, sister, parent, co-worker. Shower them with God's love. It will do you both good.

BREATHE PRAYER

1. Close your eyes and recall the line" "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). Be still, calm, peaceful, open to the presence of God.

2. With your eyes closed, imagine that God is calling you by name. Imagine that God is actually asking, "(Your name) what do you want? Like the blind man on the road to Jericho, Jesus kindly looks you in the eyes and asks, "What do you want from me?"

3. Give God a simple and direct answer that comes honestly from your heart. Write down the answer. If you have more than one answer, write them down. Your answer may be one word such as peace or love or help. It may be several words or a phrase such as "feel your presence" or "lead me into life." Whatever your answers, they are the foundation of your breath prayer.

4. Select the name that you are most comfortable using to speak with God. Combine it with your written answer to the question God asked you. This is your prayer.

5. Breathe in the first phrase/word (generally your invocation of God's name) and breathe out the second phrase/word (request or need).

THE JESUS PRAYER

The Jesus Prayer is very similar to the Breathe Prayer. If you are having trouble coming up with your phrase, word, or request try the Jesus Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

The prayer is meant to be repeated thoughtfully and slowly.

1. Find a quiet place away from distractions.

2. Decide how many times you want to repeat the prayer, so you will not be distracted. (50 times is a good goal for a beginner.)

3. Lower your head, shut your eyes, breathe out gently and imagine yourself looking into your own heart and speaking the words from your heart.

4. As you breathe in say, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God.”

5. As you breathe out say, “Have mercy on me, a sinner.”

6. You can say it moving your lips gently, or simply say it in your mind. Try to put all other thoughts aside. Be calm, be patient, and repeat the process very frequently.

LECTIO DIVINA

Listening to the Scripture:

1. Read the passage aloud two or three times, slowly and deliberately. Pay attention to a word or phrase that is especially meaningful to you.

2. Silence for 1-2 minutes. Listen and silently repeat the word or phrase that attracts your attention.

3. Write down the word or phrase that attracted your attention.

Reflecting on How the Scripture Speaks to Me:

1. Read the passage two or three more times with different emphasis on words or phrases or insert your name where appropriate.

2. Silence for 2-3 minutes. Reflect on “How does this passage touch my life today? What does it make me think or feel?”

3. Write down: “I hear, I see, I feel...”

Discovering What the Scripture Invites Me to Do:

1. Read the passage again.

2. Silence for 3-5 minutes. Ask God why this word and this feeling have been provoked. Reflect on “Is there something this passage is calling me to do?”

3. Write what God may be saying to you through the text.

EXAMEN OF CONSCIOUSNESS

One way to practice Examen of Consciousness:

1. Recall that you are in the presence of God.
- Remind yourself that God promised to never leave you. (Hebrews 13:5-6)
- Remember that God can connect with you through ordinary moments in your daily life.
- Reflect on specific aspects of God's love for you. (Corinthians 13:4-7)

2. Give thanks for the good things that God has provided today.

3. Ask God to help you understand what He may be trying to teach you through the events of today.

4. Examine how you are living this day:
- Recall your inner moods and feelings, noting, if you can, what led to them, but refrain from any self-judgment.

5. Ask these questions:
- For what am I most grateful? Least grateful?
- When did I receive the most love? The least love?
- When did I feel the most alive? Most drained of life?
- When was I loving? When was I selfish?

6. Be with Christ as you look at these moods, and beg Him to show you the attitudes which underlie them.

EXAMEN OF CONSCIOUSNESS

7. Thank God for the times you have 'let His glory through' and ask forgiveness for the times you have refused Him entry.

8. Remember God knows your weakness far better than you do. God will forgive you and can transform your weakness into strength.

9. Note any areas that you might need to seek forgiveness from other people.

10. Conclude with a short prayer, which looks forward to the next day and asks for God's help.

LABYRINTH PRAYER

Allow yourself to become still and settled.

When you are ready, enter the labyrinth on the following page; trace the path with a finger on the hand you don't write with.

Take your time; this is not a race to the finish or a maze to be solved.

You can do one of three things:
• Open your heart and mind to God in prayer. Let your thoughts flow.
• Repeat the Lord's Prayer.
• Repeat Psalm 139:23-24 silently as you move through the labyrinth:
  - "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Stay in the center for a while and spend some time in prayer, reflecting on God's love for you and God's love for others.

When you are ready, return along the same path. Return prayerfully and gratefully, thanking God for being with you and asking God to strengthen and encourage you as you leave this place.

If you have time after you finish, repeat the exercise engaging in a different prayer than you did before.

LABYRINTH PRAYER



IGNATIAN EXAMEN

Thank God for being present and ask God to help you know yourself and where God is acting in your life.

Look back over your last day, week, or month. Examine your heart and mind as well as your actions and words. Ask yourself one or more of these sets of questions and record your answers for the last day, week, and month:

- For what moment am I the most grateful? For what moment am I the least grateful?
- When did I give and receive the most love? When did I give and receive the least love?
- When did I feel the most alive? When did I feel the most life draining out of me?
- When did I have the greatest sense of belonging to myself, others, and God? When did I have the least sense of belonging?
- When was I happiest? When was I saddest?

Look at your answers. Identify patterns, sensitive spots, or where you had trouble answering. Think about what God might be trying to tell you through those answers.

Talk to God about something you learned through this practice. Ask God for guidance and give thanks.

OTHER WAYS TO PRAY

Fixed Hour Prayer:

During YBL, we spent time praying at specific times of day. But you can pray at whatever time of day you really need. In what part of the day do you feel most distant or disoriented from the presence of God? When is it hardest to know how to approach God or how to experience all of life as a prayer?

Morning, Mid-day, Evening, Night

What is it about that part of the day that makes prayer seem so difficult, impossible or even irrelevant?

Then, consider adding some form of fixed-hour prayer to that part of your day, in a way that works for you. It could be a few minutes of silent prayer, to simply reorient yourself to God or a much longer time spent with God.

Maybe you could even start off small by setting your alarm to help you to stop and pray at the same time every day.

Liturgical Prayer:

Use your prayer book to guide you through prayer. Really think about the words you are reading. Take your time to read through the words slowly.

OTHER WAYS TO PRAY

Intercessory Prayer:

Intercession causes us to internalize God's Word and changes us. It unites our hearts to people and places we pray for. Intercession renews our hope and faith and can impart life (John 6:63).

Intercession makes a long-term impact beyond this age (Rev. 5:8, 8:1-6). It can humble us and change the spiritual atmosphere of cities and nations. Intercession causes multiple blessings to return to the intercessor (Luke 6:38).

Begin your time of intercession thinking of a bullseye. You can even draw one on a piece of paper. Start in the center of the bullseye and pray for those closest to you. If it helps you to focus you can write their names down on the bullseye. Move out a ring and pray for extended family, friends, etc. Keep moving outward until you are praying for God's hand on your city, state, and world.

Journaling:

Journaling is a great way to write out your prayers to God like a letter. It is even helpful for us to go back and read old prayers and see how God has answered them. Don't fixate on grammar, or even speed. Allow what you're thinking and feeling to pour out honestly to the page and to God.