

Write Your Own Psalm

Purpose of Activity: The purpose of this Sabbath practice is to experience the psalms in a new, creative, embodied way. The psalms are a collection of prayers that enter into the deepest human emotions, longings, needs, and praises. They contain doubt, fear, despair, thanksgiving, wonder, and worship. The authors understood that God cannot be fully comprehended or contained within language. The best we have is metaphor. Now is your chance to engage scripture by using it as a template for your own thoughts and prayers.

Supplies needed: bible, pen, journal

Step 1: Read. Spend time reading through a few psalms to familiarize yourself with the literature and elements and emotions present. A few places you could start are Psalm 23, 40, 63, 100.

Step 2: Underline. As you read through these psalms, notice what stands out to you. Go through and underline any words or phrases that resonate with you.

Step 3: Reflect. Take a few minutes and sit with the emotions that feel most real and present to you right now. What are some specific losses, burdens, stresses you're carrying? What are some blessings, gifts, and joys you feel especially grateful for?

Step 4: Write. Write down your own prayer, poem, or paragraph to God, expressing your clearest emotions, desires, longings, praises you are feeling in this moment.

Step 5: Share. Read what you have with one another.

Group Meal

Purpose of Activity: The intention of this Sabbath practice is to partake in the art of creation by cooking a meal together, participating in an activity that is tactile as a way to engage your brain and body, and share in fellowship together. One of Jesus' main ministries was eating meals with people. In fact, it was so important that he gave us the gift of communion as a way for people to eat and drink together in remembrance of him.

Supplies needed: A kitchen, ingredients for a meal, your small group!

Step 1: Choose a recipe as a group. Try to pick something that might take a bit more time and intention. Do a bit of research. Maybe choose a dish from a different culture or something you've never tried before.

Step 2: Go shopping! Gather together to pick up ingredients or divide up ingredients to bring together. Do your best to prioritize local and seasonal ingredients for your meal when you can.

Step 3: Find a comfortable kitchen to cook in with your group. Put on music, converse with one another, and focus on being present in your cooking. Pay attention to each vegetable you chop. Bring your awareness to the smells and tastes, the feeling of the food in your hands as you prepare it.

Step 4: Pray! For this prayer, begin with a mindful eating practice. Close your eyes and take a deep breath. Begin by slowing down. Imagine all parts of your meal and as you recall each ingredient and part, see if you can trace everything back to where it came from in your mind. Perhaps that's imagining a carrot being pulled from the soil, a cow or chicken grazing in a field, the rain and sun God generously provides to grow the food you are about to eat, etc. Have each person in your share something they are grateful for.

Step 5: Eat! Enjoy your meal and the company around you. Taste each bite. Notice the flavors, smells, textures.

Group Hike

Purpose of Activity: The purpose of this Sabbath activity is to immerse yourself in nature in some capacity and just notice how it makes you feel. With work and school, many of us spend a lot of our time indoors, and if we are outside, it isn't always intentional. This activity is intended to encourage us to move in a fun way, create space for conversation with one another, notice our surroundings, and connect with God by connecting with the natural world around us.

Supplies needed: Good walking shoes or hiking boots, warm clothes depending on the weather, a Discover Pass for some areas.

Step 1: Choose a location for your hike from the list below or find another one that works for your group.

Bowl and Pitcher Loop Trail | EASY | 2 miles | 4427 N Aubrey L White Pkwy, Spokane, WA 99205 (Discover Pass Required)

Iller Creek Conservation Area Trail | MODERATE | 4.6 miles | E Rockcrest Ln, Spokane Valley, WA 99206

Kit Carson Trail | MORE DIFFICULT | 5.4 miles | N Mt Spokane Park Dr, Mead, WA 99021 (Discover Pass Required)

Step 2: Before beginning your hike, connect at the trailhead and read these instructions aloud together: While the purpose of the sabbath activity is to find restoration by being in nature, it is also to build community within your group. Turn your phone on silent or put it somewhere in your bag where it won't distract you. As you hike, see if you can spend some moments in conversation and some moments in silence. Focus on noticing what is around you - what do you see? What do you smell? What do you feel? Notice how your body feels as you move. Try to also notice your breathing as you fill up with fresh air.

Step 3: Talk about what you are noticing with each other.

Listening to Music

Purpose of Activity: The purpose of this sabbath practice is to take time to really appreciate music, even the songs we listen to often. A lot of times we listen to music while doing other things - homework, cleaning, running, etc. and this practice invites us to slow down, just be, and focus our attention completely on the music we're listening to. We believe God can show up in all things, even the small details of simple parts of our everyday lives, which is why we want to experience music not just as background noise, but as a small window into something sacred and beautiful.

Supplies needed: headphones or a speaker and a quiet place

Step 1: Find a quiet place. This could be a spot in your room, on a drive, or a walk with headphones. Make sure this is a space you feel safe where there are no distractions.

Step 2: Spend a bit of time choosing your song - that could be one you really enjoy or that makes you reflect or feel a certain emotion. You might even pick a playlist if you have more time to spend listening.

Step 3: Take a deep breath and if you are in a place where you can, close your eyes. Listen to the song one time through just to listen and see what you notice.

Step 4: This time, listen to the song one more time and pay attention to the lyrics. Think of how they make you feel and what they mean to you. Are they uplifting? Hopeful? Sad? What emotion do they elicit in you? Is there a certain line from the song that really stands out or resonates with you?

Step 5: Now listen one final time and turn your awareness to the music. Listen to the instruments playing together and think of the intricacies of the sound. Can you identify all the instruments on the track? What are some small details you don't often hear or might go overlooked? How does the music make you feel? What does it make you think of?

Step 6: Pray. As you listen or after the song is over, spend a moment connecting with God. Tell God how the song makes you feel or ask yourself where you might sense God's presence in the music you're listening to. Where can you find God in the small intricate details of your life?

Mandala Coloring Prayer

Purpose of Activity: Often we find it difficult to pray in a focused or sustained way. The noise in our life doesn't go away just because we say we're taking time to pray. Often the temptation to distract ourselves with to-do lists, napping, stressing about the thing we were trying to offer up to God, daydreaming, or pure boredom can get in the way of prayer. Coloring mandalas offers a way for us to focus our thoughts as we pray. The designs of the mandala can symbolize the connection between the inner self and the outer world. The abstract shape focuses but does not dictate the content of the prayer.

Supplies needed: A coloring page, 2-5 colored pencils, a method of keeping time, a good drawing surface.

Step 1: Prepare. Find a quiet space and a good surface to draw on. Choose your mandala and a few different colored pencils (or pens or markers or crayons.) If you're not sure how many a few should be, start with 3 different colors.

Step 2: Check your posture. Are you gripping your pencil tightly or loosely? Roll your shoulders back and soften your neck line. Take several slow, deep breaths.

Step 3: Color and pray! Set a timer for yourself, maybe only a minute or two at first. (Pro tip: make your alarm sound something gentle and peaceful). Choose one color and use it and only it for the duration of your timer. Pick one topic: a person, situation, or other aspect of your life to offer up to God as you color with that one color.

Step 4: When the timer goes off, take a minute to assess where you are. Do you need to pray longer on this topic? Are you done? Feel free to extend your time with one color/prayer, or put down your pencil and offer the rest up to God. Then pick a new color and a new prayer topic, reset your timer, and continue drawing and praying.

Step 5: Continue switching colors and prayers until your time is up, your mandala is filled, or you feel done. If you run out of thoughts but still have time left, continue to color and settle yourself in the silence.

Step 6: Reflect. How did the coloring intersect with your prayer? What were you able to let go of? What did you receive?

Blackout Scripture

Purpose of Activity: The purpose of this practice is to interact with scripture in a fun, creative way. This practice comes from blackout poetry, which is a way of interacting with a text, whether a newspaper, page of a book, or piece of scripture, and only using the words on the page in front of you to create a poem. So why practice this with scripture? By paying close attention to each individual word on the page, we become familiar with the text. Each word is important and has meaning. We practice interpreting the message and noticing what resonates most with us and noting what we may not like or what we find confusing. The goal is not to change scripture, but to dance with it, play with the meaning, and bring our unique creativity to the table as we wrestle with the message on the page.

Supplies needed: Printouts or copies of various pages from scripture, pens, and black markers or sharpies.

Step 1: As a group, choose which portion of scripture you would like to use for the activity. Find a comfortable space at a table with your supplies and begin with prayer, inviting the Spirit to be a part of your scripture reading.

Step 2: Read the passage aloud once together, following along on individual sheets.

Step 3: Read the passage a second time individually, and as you read, draw boxes around any words that stand out to you.

Step 4: Spend the next 10-15 minutes (or as long as you need) with the passage on your own. Continue to draw boxes or underline words or phrases that stand out to you. You might also cross out words you don't want to include in your poem. Then, try to connect your words together.

Step 5: Using a marker or a sharpie, "black out" the rest of the page by coloring everything you haven't underlined or placed a box around. You should be left with the words you chose outlined in white and the rest of the page black.

Step 6: Share with one another!

Animal Shelter Sabbath

Purpose of Activity: Dogs are simple; love and be loved is their philosophy. Spend some time loving on the dogs (and cats!) of Spokane that do not have homes of their own yet. Time with animals can lower your blood pressure and release endorphins in your brain. Spending time with animals is a way for us to enjoy God's creation and practice caring for the earth.

Supplies needed: An hour or two, a shelter, and a friend!

Local Shelters:

Spokane Humane Society (dogs and cats) 6607 N Havana St. (Mon-Fri 11:00-6:00, Sat-Sun 11:00-5:00)

SpokAnimal (dogs and cats) 710 Napa St (Mon-Fri 11:00-6:00, Sat 10:00-5:00, Sun closed.

SCRAPS (dogs and cats) 6815 E Trent Ave (Mon-Tues, Fri 12:00-7:00, Sat-Sun 11:00-5:30, Thurs closed)

River's Wish Sanctuary (farm animals) 11511 W Garfield Rd (visit by appointment only (they take you on a tour))

Julia's Jungle (cats and dogs) 12619 E Sprague Ave Suite 1 (Mon-Fri 7:30-6:00, Sat 8:00-6:00, Sun 11:00-4:00)

Step 1: Go to your selected shelter on your own or with friends. Browse the animals and choose a dog to walk or cat to hold; there may also be cat rooms available. Ask staff for help after you have chosen your dog or cat and they will get the animal out for you.

Step 2: (Dogs): Take the dog out to play in the yard, or snuggle cat. As you hang out with the animal, pay attention to it's personality. Is it curious? Afraid? Adorable? Sometimes animals respond to our feelings, so try breathing deeply and centering yourself, and see if it makes a difference in how the animal responds to you.

Step 3: Return the animal to its proper kennel. Thank the animal, the staff, and God for the opportunity to enjoy this time of rest.

Important notes: If you go as a group, only walk one dog at a time (sometimes dogs will fight and that's no bueno for you or for staff). At SpokAnimal, you are only allowed to hold one cat per day to lessen the spread of illness from cat to cat. Make sure to pay attention to the signs posted around the facilities!

Jesus Movement Prayer

Purpose of Activity: Too often we disconnect ourselves and our spirituality from our bodies. We think prayer as a quiet, settled thing where we have to hold hands or bow our heads and close our eyes. In scripture, however, we find people praying from a variety of postures. They lift up their hands and stand, they kneel, they lie face down on the ground. This is a simple exercise to incorporate your body into prayer practice, and to become conscious of the presence of God in the everyday places you inhabit.

Supplies needed: yourself, comfortable clothes, a space to move

Step 1: Find a space of open floor or ground to move around in. This can be inside or outside. Take off your shoes if you want, stretch, breathe deeply, and get comfortable in the space.

Step 2: Use your feet to trace the name of Jesus as you walk around the space. Experiment a little with the size and shape of your letters as you walk. Trace it over and over, and as you move, ask Jesus to be present with you.

Step 3: Reflect. Where do your thoughts go as you walk? Is it difficult to focus? Continue to trace the name of Jesus as you spend time in prayer, actively integrating mind, body, and spirit into the practice.

Read this verse and reflect: "When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it." Genesis 28:16

Lectio Divina

Purpose of Activity: Lectio Divina literally means “divine reading” and is an ancient practice of praying the scriptures. It is a participatory practice of engaging the Bible that uses images, feelings, words, and active listening as ways to enter into conversation with God. Lectio Divina is a helpful Sabbath practice because it invites us to slow down. Often we treat scripture reading as an obligation or something to check off a to-do list. What can be restful about a Lectio Divina practice is that it allows us to dive deeper into a smaller portion of text, so it is not something to get through, but something to experience.

Supplies needed: A Bible

Step 1: Choose a small portion of scripture. A great place to start might be the gospels.

Step 2: Lectio Take a few deep breaths. Read the text slowly, carefully, with full attention, a few times through.

Step 3: Meditatio This step is for meditating on the text, pondering its meaning, purpose, story, putting yourself in place of the characters, imagining what they look like, sound like. What is the scene like?

Step 4: Oratio This is a kind of praying the text, asking the Lord to reveal himself to you through the scriptures, reveal what kind of truth these words could have for you right now.

Step 5: Contemplatio This doesn't necessarily mean thinking deeply about the text, rather moving out of your head and into an experience of the text, an experience of God, possibly resting in God, being held by the words of scripture.

Mindful Prayer Walk

Purpose of Activity: Oftentimes it is difficult to focus when we try to sit still. One of the best ways to quiet our minds and practice listening to God is by moving our bodies. There are many ways to do this, but one of the most accessible is simply walking. The purpose of this mindful walking practice is to find deeper connection between our minds and bodies as we seek to be present with God by noticing the world around us.

Supplies needed: comfortable walking shoes

Step 1: Make a plan for where you want to take your walk. Maybe it is at a park or along the Centennial Trail or perhaps it is just a lap around your neighborhood. Choose the location and plan anywhere between 10-30 minutes for your walk. Put your phone on silent or in your pocket! Turn your music off and allow yourself to really experience your surroundings.

Step 2: Begin by taking a deep breath and invite God to be with you as you step outside. You might choose a word or a name of God to focus on as you walk to guide your time of prayer.

Step 3: Walk! As you walk, notice how your body feels in this particular moment. Are you feeling tense or tight anywhere? Pay attention to how your legs, feet, and arms feel with each step you take. Try your best to not rush through this experience; that might mean walking more slowly than you would like. If your thoughts begin to wander, use the next step as an opportunity to start over by bringing your attention back to your word or even your breath as you breathe in and out.

Step 4: Become aware of your sense of sight. Look around as you are walking and try to notice what is around you. Are there trees changing colors? Squirrels running around? Focus on your sense of sight.

Step 5: Now notice your sense of smell. How does the air feel or taste with each breath you take?

Step 6: With a sense of openness and curiosity, notice any sensations, thoughts, or feelings that arise as you are walking. Express those things to God.

Step 7: Ask yourself: Where did God feel present during your time walking? What did you notice around you? What did you notice within yourself?

Feelings Drawing

Purpose of Activity: Drawing is an amazing way to interpret your feelings and thoughts into something physical, which can help you identify meaning and patterns in your internal life. The purpose of this activity is to sort through different feelings by inviting God into a creative process.

Supplies needed: pencil, paper, colors, and a good place to think

Step 1: Grab a piece of paper, a pen and/or pencil, maybe some colors-crayons, markers, colored pencils, whatever you'd like. Pick a quiet place to do this experiment.

Step 2: Think about how you are feeling in this moment. Take a few deep breaths and try to be curious about what is going on in your mind and heart as you begin this practice.

Step 3: Talk to God about this feeling. Spend a few moments in prayer letting God know how you are doing and what's coming up for you.

Step 4: Try and interpret this feeling into a drawing. Sometimes it's difficult to translate feelings into a picture, but start by drawing whatever comes to mind while thinking of this feeling. It can be abstract like shapes or blobs of color, or something like a tree or night sky. Spend some time on this and try not to rush it. You might even just start by moving your pencil or paint brush until something comes to mind.

Step 5: Look at your drawing. What does it reveal about how you are feeling? How might you invite God into this image? Into your thoughts and feelings?

Centering Prayer

Purpose of Activity: Centering prayer is a way of practicing intentional silence with the goal of experiencing God's presence within. With so much noise in our lives, it is often difficult to be in silence for even a minute. Centering prayer is a practice to help us experience silent prayer and invite God into our intentional time of quiet.

Supplies needed: a quiet place to sit and a timer

Step 1: Choose a word or short phrase as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within. This can be any word you want, for example: Peace, Come Lord Jesus, Father, Help me, Mercy, Let go, Trust etc.

Step 2: Choose a length of time you want to participate in centering prayer. If you are just starting out, you might even try for 2-5 minutes and work your way up to anywhere between 10-20 minutes. Once you've chosen a time you can stick to, set a timer on your phone with a calming alarm and put it aside.

Step 3: Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the word or phrase as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within. You might even incorporate your breathing into the practice by silently thinking the word on every inhale or exhale.

Step 4: When engaged with your thoughts or feelings, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word or phrase. During this time, avoid analyzing your experience, harboring expectations, or aiming for a specific goal. You merely need to keep your mind and heart focused on the word. If it wanders away, calmly invite it back to the word or your breathing.

Step 5: At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes, noticing how you feel. If the practice was difficult for you, don't beat yourself up about it! Silence takes practice.

Imaginative Prayer

Purpose of Activity: The purpose of this sabbath practice is to try out a way of praying where you simply listen to scripture with your imagination. Allow yourself to rest for the next few minutes and listen to the scripture and some helpful guided questions. This card uses Psalm 23 as an invitation to imagine a place of deep rest and receive the words of God as restoration for our hearts, minds and bodies.

Supplies needed: A bible and a quiet space

Step 1: Begin by finding a more comfortable seat, adjusting your body as you need to. Take a moment to soften your neck and release shoulders. Perhaps releasing your palms to turn up are in your lap, restful and receptive. You may choose to close your eyes once you've read through the imagination practice, or you are welcome to keep them open.

Step 2: Invite yourself to take a few soft and slow breaths in and out. Inhaling and exhaling gently. As you exhale, invite yourself to let go of expectations for the next few minutes, expectations that we place upon ourselves to do, or be, or things on your list that need to get done. For the next few minutes, you are invited to release those and simply breathe in and out.

Step 3: As you breathe, hear this invitation to rest as you open your bible and read Psalm 23.

Step 4: Begin to imagine a peaceful, calm, and restful place. Perhaps it is a place in nature that you have been before, green and quiet. Maybe you have never been to this place before and you are imagining it for the first time. Notice what you see in your minds eye, what colors, light and texture fills this landscape. If you don't see anything, that is okay. No expectations. Continue to invite yourself to breathe with ease and rest here. Now take a moment and notice what sounds might fill this landscape of peace and rest. Perhaps quiet waters, or another natural noise. What do you hear in this space? What do you smell? If you could breathe in an aroma in your place of rest, what would that aroma be? Finally, take a moment to perhaps imagine how your body would move in this space. Are you walking? Or seated still? Perhaps you are lying down and resting as the Psalmist suggests. What do you feel in your body as you imagine this?

Step 5: And now, come back to your God given breath, breathing in and out, but still resting in this space. When you are ready, gently invite yourself to come back to this place around you...slowly open your eyes, breathe in, breathe out.