



Practices that Promote a Deeper, More Authentic Spirituality

The beginning of the year is a great time to consider the trajectory of our lives. Is there any realm of your existence that needs a reset, an adjustment in trajectory? Annie Dillard once said, “how we spend our days is how we spend our lives.” In other words, the quality of our life in the big picture depends greatly upon small daily choices that we make. I invite you to consider small, repeatable choices that you can make in the major realms of your life . . . for the glory of God . . . and for the increase of your joy in the one life God has entrusted to you.

Note: The aim is not to do all of the things on this list! Simply choose whatever the Spirit might be inviting you to experiment with.

1. Personal soul care practices

“Put your own oxygen mask on first. Then help the person next to you.” The instruction given at the beginning of an airplane trip applies to life as well. Here are some simple soul care practices to consider:

- a. Daily practices
 - i. Determine to not look at screens for the first and last 30 minutes of your day.
 - ii. Read a Psalm to start the day. Use a [devotional](#) if that helps you.
 - iii. (Re)engage a journaling practice.
- b. Weekly or monthly practices
 - i. Define the bounds of the Sabbath for you (and your household).
 - ii. Seek the guidance of a spiritual director. If you need guidance, contact someone on our [pastoral team](#).

2. Small group practices

In our current context, the quality of our small group experience is of heightened importance. So, consider practices that esteem your circle of friends.

- a. Honor the leader(s) of the group
 - i. Affirm them as spiritual shepherds (many don’t feel that way), name their unique gifts, and encourage them to lead out.
 - ii. Ask them how you can exercise your gifts to lighten their burden and strengthen the group.
- b. Strengthen the relational bonds of the group

- i. Express appreciation and admiration for others in the group.
 - ii. In the isolation of pandemic life, there are fewer places to ask for and offer prayer. So, take initiative to do so (whether in group time or outside of group time).
- c. Converse together about the health of the group
 - i. Are there new possibilities that God is putting on your heart for the group?
 - ii. Are there ways in which the group feels stuck?
 - iii. Are there adjustments to make?

3. Household (housemate or family) practices

The household was always intended to be a primary place of spiritual development. What mundane, daily routines might make your home a more sacred place?

- a. Gratitude and lament
 - i. Dinner time or bedtime can be natural times for this practice.
- b. Blessing
 - i. One of the first responsibilities of the Old Testament priest was to speak God's blessing over others.
 - ii. If you'd be helped by consulting a resource, a good beginning place is an old book by Gary Smalley and John Trent. [Here](#) is a summary.
- c. Sabbath and play
 - i. [Here's](#) one family's list of ideas.