



# AN INTRODUCTION TO SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Methods of Discipleship Series

**Let the footprints of  
Jesus become our  
pathway.**

Rev Karen Ross  
2024



Spiritual practices are simply rhythms of life that emulate the life of Jesus. It's allowing His footsteps to become our pathway. The more we walk like him and walk in rhythm with Him our life becomes more like His life. So whatever Jesus did, we do.

Spiritual practices allow us to dive deeper into the heart and mind of God. As we do, our desires begin to change because our love and our longing to know Jesus grows more and more every day. Until all that we want is Him. And we begin to seek Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and God begins to reveal more of Himself to us.

When we truly grasp the beauty of Christ everything in our life changes. Our motives change, our desires change, and the way we spend our time changes.

Spiritual practices enable us to grasp the beauty of Christ more and more. I pray that as you spend unhurried time engaging with these spiritual practices you will be transformed so that you can continue to be and make disciples of Jesus.

Rev Karen Ross

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**Breath Prayer:** to pray a simple, intimate prayer of heartfelt desire before God. Breath prayer is a form of contemplative prayer linked to the rhythms of breathing: 1. Breathe in, calling on a biblical name or image of God (for example, 'My Shepherd'), 2. Breathe out a simple God given desire (for example, 'Lead me').

Breath Prayer includes: connecting prayer to your breathing and returning to it throughout the day to draw your attention back to God, putting into a simple phrase a deep desire of your heart and praying that desire regularly throughout the day, *breathing in the life of Christ* and *breathing out the work of Christ*, and developing a constant, inner, unbroken, perpetual habit of prayer.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; 2 Peter 1:3-4.

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**Celebration:** to take joyful, passionate pleasure in God and the radically glorious nature of God's Word, people, world and purposes. Celebration is a way of engaging in actions that orient the spirit toward worship, praise and thanksgiving. Delighting in the never-changing presence of the Trinity fuels celebration.

Celebration includes: identifying and pursuing those things that bring the heart deep gladness and revelling in them before the Lord, cultivating a spirit of gladness, taking yourself less seriously, freedom from the addiction to criticism and negativity.

Zephaniah 3:17; Psalm 16:7, 9, 11; Psalm 47:1; Psalm 139:14

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**Gratitude:** to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's prompting to live with a grateful heart, being aware of God's work in my life and my abundant resources.

Gratitude is a loving and thankful response toward God for God's presence with us and within this world. Though 'blessings' can move us towards gratitude, it is not at the root of a thankful heart. Delighting in God and God's goodness is at the heart of gratitude.

Gratitude includes: prayers and songs that focus on God's goodness to us, a habit of expressing gratitude to others, practicing an abundance mentality, keeping a gratitude journal of all the good things you have received.

Psalm 136:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Philippians 4:6.

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**Hospitality:** to be a safe person who offers others grace, shelter and the presence of Jesus. Hospitality creates a safe, open space where a friend or stranger can enter and experience the welcoming spirit of Christ in you.

Hospitality includes: sharing your home, food and resources so that another might experience the reality of God's welcoming heart, loving, not entertaining the guest, welcoming others into your group, loving people rather than impressing them, expressing your love for God through celebrating and honouring others.

Romans 15:7; Mark 12:30-31; Hebrews 13:1-2.

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**Humility:** to become like Jesus in His willingness to choose the hidden way of love rather than the way of power. It's not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less. Humble people let go of image management and self-promotion. They honour others by making the needs of others as real and important as their own.

Humility includes: avoiding favouritism and honouring others as God does, being liberated from the need for others' approval, loving your neighbour as yourself, and taking as much interest in others as in yourself and your opinions.

Matthew 6:1,4; James 2:1; Colossians 3:12; Isaiah 57:15

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**Journaling:** to be alert to my life through writing and reflecting on God's presence and activity in, around and through me. Journaling is a tool for reflecting on God's presence, guidance, and nature in daily life. Journals can be kept regularly or during times of transitions.

Journaling includes: recording internal and external journeys, keeping a written record of God's activity in your life such as clippings, drawings, poems, scripture, etc, recording prayers and prayer requests, answers to prayer and responses to God in all of this, remembering God's faithfulness throughout your journey.

Psalms 16:7; Psalm 25:4; Habakkuk 2:1; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 119:18.

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**Meditation:** to gaze more deeply on God and His works and words.

Meditation is a long passionate gaze at God. It means slowing down and giving one's undivided attention to God.

Meditation includes: mulling over, chewing on and ruminating over God's word and its application, paying attention to God with your body by slowing down, relaxing and breathing deeply, and allowing creation to draw your attention to the majesty of God.

Joshua 1:8; Psalm 19:14; Psalm 63:6; Psalm 77:12.

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**Prayer of Examen:** to notice God and my God given desires throughout the day. The prayer of examen is a practice for discerning the voice and activity of God within the flow of the day. It is a vehicle that creates deeper awareness of God-given desires in my life.

Prayer of Examen includes: asking yourself the following questions: what moment am I most grateful for today? What moment am I least grateful for today? What moment did I feel most connected to God, self and others today? Where was I aware of living out of the fruit of the Spirit today? When did I give and receive the most love today?

Colossians 1:9; Philippians 1:9-10.

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**Prayer Partners:** to share the journey of prayer with a trusted companion.

Prayer partners agree to support one another and pray together for their own concerns as well as world affairs. They engage in regular and consistent times of shared intercession.

Prayer Partners include: confessing sin and praying for strength to face trials, sharing your burdens and joys with another in prayer, praying for particular events, people and concerns, and practicing thankfulness in prayer.

Mark 14:38; Colossians 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; James 5:13; 15-16.

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**Rest:** to honour God and human limitations through restful rhythms. By paying attention to the physical, mental and spiritual needs of the body, we learn when and how to rest.

Rest includes: setting aside unhurried time to rest and be refreshed rather than work, taking holidays and days off, develop an intentional rhythm of rest and work, setting margins in the day for moments of rest, taking time to delight in God, family, creation, and food.

Psalm 62:1; Deuteronomy 33:12; Psalm 116:7.

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**Retreat:** to make space in my life for God alone. Retreats are specific and regular times apart for quietly listening to God and delighting in God's company. Retreats remove us from the daily demands into times of refreshing, refocusing, renewing and unwinding.

Retreat includes: detaching from productivity and doing in order to be in the presence of God and attend to God's voice, freedom from the need to be seen and to produce, gaining perspective on God's work and ways in your soul, the ability to be and not just do.

Mark 6:31; Psalm 46:10; Zephaniah 1:7; Psalm 23:2-3.



**Sabbath:** to set apart one day a week for rest and worship of God. Sabbath is God's gift of repetitive rest. It is given for our delight and communion with God. It is a time for being in the midst of doing.

Sabbath includes: setting aside time for intimacy with God and with others you love, practicing restful activities such as walks, afternoon naps, family games, coffee with a friend, and quality time with your spouse.

Hebrews 4:1; 9-11; Mark 2:27; Exodus 20:8-10.

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**Self-care:** to value myself as my heavenly Father values me. Self-care honours God through nurturing and protecting the body, mind and spirit with their limits and desires.

Self-care includes: exercising and eating sensibly, giving and receiving love, encouraging rather than neglecting yourself, freedom from addictions that destroy your health and relationships.

Psalm 139:14; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Mark 12:30-31.

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**Simplicity:** to uncomplicate and untangle my life so that I can focus on what really matters. Simplicity cultivates the art of letting go. It aims at loosening excessive attachment to owning and having. Simplicity brings freedom and generosity.

Simplicity includes: setting priorities that flow from loving God above all else, removing distractions and preoccupations with things, experiencing freedom from envy and entitlement, being able to let go.

Matthew 6:19-21; Mark 10:21; Philippians 4:11-12.

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**Slowing:** to curb my addiction to busyness, hurry, and workaholism; to learn to savour the moment. Slowing is one way to overcome inner hurriedness and addictions to busyness. Through slowing the present moment is tasted and enjoyed to the full.

Slowing includes: giving eye contact, sitting longer at the table, receiving interruptions graciously, realizing that the work of the Spirit is not an instant work.

Mark 6:31; Psalm 46:10; Psalm 90:12.

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**Small Group:** to make my spiritual journey with a community of trusted friends. Small groups intentionally connect people, regularly gathering them to help one another grow in love for God and for doing God's will.

Small Groups include: intentionally opening myself to others and listening to their insights about God, developing a hospitable community in which a stranger can become known, growing in personal transformation, and increasing openness to people who are different from you.

Psalm 133:1; Ecclesiastes 4:12; Hebrews 10:25.

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**Stewardship:** to live as a steward of God's resources in all areas of life. It means to love out of the awareness that nothing I have is my own.

Stewardship is the generous offering of God's gifts of resources, time, talents and treasure for the benefit and love of God and others.

Stewardship includes: making offerings that go beyond the tithe, being liberated from greed, self-centeredness, money and other things so that the generous spirit of Jesus grows in you, embracing generous hospitality toward those in need, and thoughtfully investing resources to benefit the body of Christ.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7; Deuteronomy 8:17-18; Psalm 24:1; Matthew 6:19-20

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**Teachability**: to remain a lifelong learner who is continually open to the fresh move of the Holy Spirit. Teachability is a tendency and an openness to learn from God no matter who the teacher or what the experience may be.

Teachability includes: an appropriate openness to new ideas, opinions, styles and people; listening more, talking less; becoming aware of hardness of heart and an unwillingness to love and grow; being open to when the Holy Spirit wants to do a new thing.

Matthew 22:29; John 5:39; Mark 4:22-24.

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**Unity**: to live in harmony with Christ's desire for the church to be one, to be a bridge builder and peacemaker in the body of Christ. Unity is the mark that demonstrates to the world that the body of Christ has one faith, one hope, one baptism and one God and Father of all.

Unity includes: working with believers from various traditions to achieve kingdom purposes, sharing worship services with other Christian denomination, refraining from speaking unkind, slanderous and divisive

things against others in the Body of Christ, and focusing on the essentials while being gracious on the non-essentials.

Psalm 133:1; Ephesians 4:4-6; John 17:21; Colossians 1:20.

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**Unplugging:** to be fully present to and uninterrupted in my interactions with God and with others. Unplugging calls us to leave the virtual work of technology in order to become present to God and others.

Unplugging includes: unplugging or removing electronic devices that interrupt relationships. Creating face-to-face encounters with people, refusing to put sensitive human interaction into electronic form, giving the gift of presence.

Ecclesiastes 2:22-23; Ephesians 5:1-2; Deuteronomy 8:10-11.

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**Worship:** to honour and adore the Trinity as the supreme treasure of life. Worship happens whenever we intentionally cherish God and value God above all else in life. Worship reveals what is important to us.

Worship includes: focusing on and responding to God with your whole being, responding to God's truth with loving obedience, seeking first the kingdom of God and keeping secondary things second, loving God and enjoying God forever.

Revelation 4:11; Matthew 4:10; John 4:24; Hebrews 12:28-29.