

Rest and Renewal: A Youth Retreat on Mental Well Being and Spiritual Practices

RETREAT MODULE INTRODUCTION

Dear Retreat Leader;

You rock. Seriously. Saying yes to serving as a leader for this retreat module is a huge ask, and you said yes. Thank you. Thank you for setting aside time and prayerfully preparing so that middle and high school youth are invited to a safe space to explore their faith.

Purpose

This module will provide the tools for you and other congregational leaders to tackle hard topics of faith and spiritual well being in a retreat format at a camp or conference center.

Why Retreat

A retreat refreshes and revitalizes, taking us out of the daily grind of our normal lives and provides an enjoyable breathtaking experience. Retreats are important for our minds, bodies and souls. They provide a restful setting, experiences in the out-of-doors, time exploring God's Word, and activity that engages us in community - rekindling and deepening relationships with one another and with God.

Why Retreat at a Camp or Conference Center

The setting of a camp or conference center enhances the experience of God spiritually, mentally, and physically. The center lets us step away and encounter a place of wonder and discovery, rest and renewal. It opens up an opportunity for individuals and groups to be outdoors connecting with one another, creation, and the Creator.

Shared Leadership

Team leadership is ideal, spreading out the work load and sharing in the ministry. There is joy in hearing different voices and in equipping others to serve alongside

one another. The community that is built can overflow into other ministries as well as into other retreats in the future. This model envisions the inclusion of members of a team with varying gifts.

Flexibility is the Key

Be flexible throughout your retreat, giving the Holy Spirit space to enter into the retreat experience and community being built. Activities are designed for both inside and outside (weather permitting) with opportunities to spend quality time in the environment of the camp or conference center, especially outdoors.

What You Will Find

Here is what you will find in the module to assist in planning your retreat:

- List of supplies/resources
- Sample schedule
- Song suggestions
- Additional resources
- Options like adapting for various sized groups
- Spaces of free time to just relax or participate in some of the activities provided at the camp or conference center
- Scripture readings are provided for convenience - leaders may use other biblical translations and/or invite participants to bring their own Bibles

Planning a Retreat

1. Create a team to help plan, administer and lead the retreat:
 - Make reservations at the camp or conference center
 - Develop a registration form and process
 - Arrange travel for leadership and participants
 - Design a schedule with gatherings, activities, meals, and rest
 - Gather supplies needed
 - Consider any safety concerns especially for your group at this location
 - Invite leaders to assist before, during and after the retreat
2. Get the Word Out:

They say that the average person needs to hear and/or see something 7 times before it is ingrained in their memory. That means you need to share the invitation for your retreat in as many places as you can, in as many forms as you can.

- Identify your audience by determining who should be invited to participate
- Work backwards from your retreat date to calculate required deadlines for invitations, registrations, and advertisement prior to the retreat
- Use newsletters, flyers, bulletin inserts, bulletin boards to get the word out
- Include an informational flyer with the registration form
- Use email notices, social media and websites to advertise
- Follow-up as registration dates get close with reminders to register
- Confirm registrations and include a what to bring list
- Build excitement as you send a reminder closer to the retreat date

3. Retreat Schedule:

Begin with the provided sample schedule and adjust it to best meet the needs of your group. Don't forget to include meals and free time so there is rest in the midst of activities.

4. Evaluation:

Follow-up after the retreat, with a paper, electronic, or verbal evaluation. Ask what was most meaningful, least meaningful, what might be changed for a next retreat. This will provide you with an overall sense of how the retreat was received, as well as notes for any future events.

Use of Space

- Inside & outside – take advantage of the outside space as well as the various activities provided at the camp or conference center
- Safe space for your retreat – both physically in your location as well as for the conversations, interactions and experiences
- Worship space – remember that worship is a central part of our community; keep familiar rhythms while at the same time introducing new ways of worshipping in a different setting
- Small groups – create a safe and welcoming space for sharing; invite all voices to be heard; instill respect for various opinions to be voiced and heard
- Special needs – consider what hearing, sight, mobility etc. needs exist in your group; be inclusive with all of your spaces and adapt activities as necessitated

Gathering in Community

- Gather in circles when possible – around a table, standing or sitting, circles provide a sense of community; we can see one another's faces, listen to and hear one another better
- Music – select songs that are easy to sing, and have word sheets or music sheets available; introduce new songs by teaching them and listening to the music before singing

Provide Hospitality

Hospitality is important for all participants to have a comfortable and grace-filled experience. Consider what simple things will make people feel welcome and comfortable.

- Hospitality area – provide water/beverages and snacks; find out whether the camp or conference center can provide this or whether you will need to bring them
- Locations – provide maps and information on where everything is located; consider a tour or scavenger hunt for your group to learn where to find locations for the retreat; good signage and clear directions can make a big difference
- Get acquainted – everyone may not know everyone else, so assume that you need name tags and activities to get to know one another
- Safety – bring first aid kits, safety equipment and instructions for any special activities
- Schedule – make copies available for those who wish to have a printed schedule of the retreat with meeting locations and times
- Greeters – these welcoming faces are necessary for anyone who is unable to attend the entire retreat and coming for only part of it; be sure to have someone who will greet them and help them get settled in when they do arrive; also be sure to welcome them into the group and fill them in on what you are doing as they join the retreat in progress
- Participation – encourage everyone to fully participate and to share concerns with leadership if they are not comfortable with certain activities; most activities can be adapted to meet the needs of your group
- Be aware – there may need to be some adjustments made to include those with mobility, dietary, hearing, etc. concerns for your particular group; ask the questions during planning in order to address these to the best of your ability

Openings & Closings

The strength of your retreat is often determined by how you start and finish. Open strong with an organized plan for the retreat, including opportunities for everyone to get acquainted/re-acquainted and to build community.

Closing strong can wrap up the experiences of the retreat and encourage participants to take home what they have discovered to share with others. Shape your closing with a summary of the experiences you have shared and leave space for goodbyes.

Above all, have an amazing, fun-filled and God-filled experience playing in creation, exploring God's word, enjoying activities, sharing experiences and building community in the beauty of your camp or conference center.

Blessings on your retreat experience!

MENTAL WELL BEING & SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

A Retreat of Rest and Renewal

This retreat is designed as a three-day weekend retreat: Friday evening arrival/ Saturday full day/Sunday mid day departure. It is written for both middle and high school ages in mind. The setting involves community space, outdoor activity space, and various areas where small groups could gather.

This retreat guides participants to:

1. have an opportunity for rest and renewal.
2. hear scripture that shows how God is present with those who are weary, those who are overwhelmed, and those who hope.
3. engage in/try out a variety of spiritual practices.

Biblical and Theological Introduction

We hear in the story of Creation (Genesis 1) that God creates for six days, admires what has been created, and at the end of each day, affirms, “It is good.” We then learn that on the seventh day, God rests. The Almighty One who has formed everything from the heavens to the earth to bodies of water; every type of tree, plant and more; who dreamed up kookaburras, koalas, and even kangaroos - honors the need for rest. God’s been go, go, going, and we can imagine, now pauses to sit and truly see, “It is good.”

We live in a go, go world, and our youth are not immune to the busy-ness of it all. A time set aside for rest and renewal is deeply needed, especially when we can be exposed to any and everything 24/7.

In a world where FOMO (fear of missing out) is a thing, maybe we should encourage a little more JOMO (joy of missing out).

The theme for this week is, “Morning by Morning” borrowing from Lamentations 3:21-23 (New Revised Standard Version Update Edition)

²¹ But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: ²² The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, God’s mercies never come to an end; ²³ they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

Definitions for the Retreat:

This is not a retreat on mental health, but it is a retreat that acknowledges that our mental health is affected by our mental wellbeing, and our mental wellbeing matters to God. The following definitions may be helpful as you play, and facilitate this retreat.

Well-being: According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC); “there is no consensus around a single definition of well-being, but there is general agreement that at minimum, well-being includes the presence of positive emotions and moods (e.g., contentment, happiness), the absence of negative emotions (e.g., depression, anxiety), satisfaction with life, fulfillment and positive functioning. In simple terms, well-being can be described as judging life positively and feeling good.”¹

Mental Well-being: Most academic institutions² use mental health and mental well-being interchangeably. Recognition of the stigmas attached to “mental health” is needed as one plans and prepares to use this retreat module.

The World Health Organization states that, “Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in. Mental health is a basic human right. And it is crucial to personal, community and socio-economic development.”³

Spiritual Practice: Lacy from *A Sacred Journey* says it best, “A spiritual practice is a regular rhythm that calls us to return and remember—to return to our intention and remember what it is that we seek.” She continues, saying, “If the spiritual journey is something to be lived, then spiritual practices help bring us back to our intention. They serve as an invitation to actively journey, to open ourselves toward Sacred Encounter, and to listen deeply to our Inner Witness—the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the place within us where the true self and the Divine meet.”⁴

(See the appendix for more on what she has to say about Spiritual Practices.)

What does this mean for this retreat module? Our goal is to introduce youth to sustainable ways to connect and reconnect with their Creator as they journey and to sustain their whole-selves (mind, body and spirit) along the way.

Recommended Personnel & Supplies

All retreats require a leader and some additional helping hands depending on the size of the group. This retreat would also benefit from having either a licensed counselor or someone with a background in the area of mental health/pastoral care. Sometimes talking about our mental well-being can open a door and a youth might need a little more care/attention than the leader is able to give. While this is not the ideal setting to address individual struggles, we don't want to open the door and then slam it shut. Have a follow up plan for youth who might need more time to talk/share.

Supplies

- Newsprint/Whiteboard
- Markers
- Paper
- Writing/Drawing Utensils
- Deck of Cards
- Small Object (that can be grasped in a hand)
- Coin
- Supplies for Selected Prayer Stations (see p. 21)
- Bible/Printed Scriptures
- Music – Live or Recorded (w/ a speaker)
- Snacks
- Playdoh, Fidget toys, Crayons and Paper

Before the Retreat

- Read through the games/activities suggested.
- For Saturday evening, think about your group needs as you plan your prayer stations. Decide on prayer stations ahead of time so that you can plan and prepare accordingly.
- Setting up space is important. Think about how you might add to the space to change the dynamics. Battery operated tea lights can go a long way when creating calming spaces to engage in.
- Decide if you're providing Bibles or print outs, or encouraging participants to bring a Bible with them.
- It might be helpful to know ahead of the retreat some favorite recreational activities of the group so that you can come prepared. For example: frisbee, puzzles, coloring activities, hammocks, etc.

Sample Schedule

Friday Evening (1½ to 2½ hours)

Session 1: All Who Are Weary

Primary Text: Matthew 11:28-30 (Come to me, all who are weary)

Secondary Text: Lamentations 3:21-23 (Morning by morning new mercies we see)

Saturday Morning (1 to 1¼ hours)

Session 2: Play!

Primary Text: Psalm 104:1, 24-26 (God gave us a big wide world to play in...and boats)

Saturday Afternoon (1¼ hours to 3 hours)

Session 3: Rest & Renewal (40 to 60 minutes)

Primary Text: I Kings 19:3-9 (Elijah eats and rests)

Saturday Evening (1¾ to 2¾ hours)

Session 4: When the World Asks Too Much of You

Primary Text: I Kings 19:11-15 (Elijah encounters God)

Sunday Morning (50 minutes to 1½ hours)

Session 5: Morning by Morning, Great is Thy Faithfulness

Primary Text: Lamentations 3:21-23 (Morning by morning new mercies we see)

Secondary Text: Luke 24:13-35 (Walk to Emmaus)

DAY 1 (Resource pages located in the Appendix p. 30)

Before the first session, allow the group to unpack/settle in.

DAY 1 (Resource pages located in the Appendix p. 30)			
SESSION	TIME	CORE IDEA	SCRIPTURE
Friday PM	1½-2½ hours	All Who are Weary	Primary: Matthew 11:28-30 Secondary: Lamentations 3:21-23
CONTENT	5-10 min	Group gathers together for the first time in this space as this group.	
ACTIVITY	10-15 minutes	<p>Introduce each other by playing <i>Categories</i>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Divide your group up into separate teams of about 5 people each. Ideally you should end up with at least 4 different teams with a minimum of 4 people per team. Tip: Try to make teams of people that are not already close with each other. This makes the game more fun and serves as a great icebreaker for people to get introduced to one another! 2. Instruct each team to talk amongst themselves and find out at least 6 things that every single group member has in common with the other members. Tip: You might consider not allowing teams to use simple things like physical height, hair color, current clothing items worn, etc. Limiting the similarities to non-physical things helps people to learn more about each other and engage in active, more meaningful conversations that will promote inclusion and lasting connections between team members. 3. This game is played as a race and each team is competing to come up with their 6 similarities before the others. The game ends once every team has come up with 6 things they have in common, or once the time set aside for the game has expired. 	
CONVERSATION	5 minutes	<p>Post game, share with the group that the emphasis of this retreat is exploring rest and renewal, specifically looking at how our mental health impacts our daily living and our spiritual life.</p> <p>Often it feels like there are not enough hours in the day to do all we need/have/want to do, so this weekend is a space to unpack our weekly schedules/worries and check in on how we are doing individually, both mentally and spiritually.</p>	

ACTIVITY	10-15 minutes	<p><i>What do you need?</i></p> <p>As a group, we're going to introduce ourselves and check in with one another by asking, "What do you need?"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the group define the difference between a want and a need. • While a simple question, it can become complex quickly. Some youth answers might be silly, some might be super serious. Encourage youth to stay in the moment thinking about what they need in this immediate moment/time. • While there is no right or wrong answers, there might be a time to ask a participant if it's truly a need or a want disguised as a need. • Some examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "I'm Jonah, and I need to eat something!"; "I'm Jacob and I need to pass my exam I took today."; "I'm Peter and I need sleep."; "I'm Ruth and I need a hug!"
BREAKING IT DOWN	10-20 minutes	<p>Take a few minutes to break down the game:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did it feel like to say out loud what you need? • How did it feel sharing with others? • Did anything surprise you? • Would you want to change your answer now? • Can anyone share a time when they had a need met by someone or they were able to help someone meet a need?
SCRIPTURE SET-UP	5 minutes	<p>There are numerous stories in our Bible where we see God meet people where they are, and is able to meet their needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can anyone think of a story in scripture where someone/a group of people's needs are met? (It's okay if there are crickets here.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Few that come to mind: People of Israel (escape from Pharaoh, and in the wilderness; Exodus), Jesus and the loaves and fishes (Matthew 14:13-21), Naomi and Ruth (Ruth 1), Jesus being born (Luke 2), etc. • Share the context of scripture: We're going to read from the Gospel of Matthew and hear of a time when Jesus is doing his preaching and teaching in Galilee.
<p>SCRIPTURE</p> <p><u>Supplies:</u> Bible (or scripture print out)</p>	10 minutes	<p>Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 11:28-30</p> <p>Matthew 11:28-30 (New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition) ²⁸ "Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."</p>

		<p>As a whole group or small groups, discuss the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you hear in this scripture? • What stands out to you? • What seems confusing? • What do you think this means?
BREAKING IT DOWN	10 minutes	<p>Jesus gives the invitation, “Come to me...and I will give you...”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We hear the struggle of being weary and heavily burdened. • Jesus meets them as they are and offers what they need, rest. • It is the same for me, the same for you, the same for anybody and everybody: Jesus invites you to come as you are and say what you need. <p>For the leader: Ideally we want to stay away from “Jesus = Santa Clause.” This promise is not a guaranteed answer to what you want nor is it an immediate answer. But it is a promise of hope. It’s helpful to be mindful of this thinking if someone is in need of healing.</p> <p>Oftentimes we’re not given the opportunity to say what we truly need. Maybe we fear we won’t be heard, taken seriously, or have a need met. Especially when it comes to mental wellbeing, the truth about what we’re feeling isn’t always welcomed. We don’t want to bring the group down, or have our anxiety catch fire.</p> <p>Jesus reminds us that “all y’all” are worthy of rest, are worthy of saying what you need, are worthy of letting go of the burdens of the world so that you might have a moment of peace.</p>
<p>SCRIPTURE</p> <p><u>Supplies:</u> Music/Way to play music Mental Well Being Playlist</p>	15-20 minutes	<p>Introduce the passage from Lamentations 3.</p> <p>The book of Lamentations was written by and for people who had survived an unimaginable trauma with personal, political, social, and theological dimensions. What if everything you relied upon for your security, comfort, identity, sense of God’s presence, and hope in the future simply vanished overnight? For the residents of Jerusalem in 587 BCE, who watched the Babylonians smash the walls of Jerusalem, burn down the temple, knock down the houses in the city, and execute the Davidic royal family, the world seemed to lose all sense of order and coherence. Life suddenly felt chaotic, brutal, meaningless, and hopeless. These emotions and the questions that arose from the traumatic destruction of Jerusalem are reflected in the book of Lamentations.</p> <p>Lamentations 3:21-23 (New International Version) ²¹ Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope:</p>

Day 2 – Saturday Morning (Resource pages located in the Appendix p. 31)

SESSION	TIME	CORE IDEA	SCRIPTURE
Saturday Morning	50 minutes to 1¼ hours	Play	Psalm 104: 1; 24-26 God gave us a big wide world to play in...and boats.
CONTENT		Gather back as a group post breakfast, explore how play helps our mental well being. Begin with a breath prayer.	
PRAYER	3-5 minutes	Breath Out: <i>God knows my needs.</i> Breathe In: <i>I am worthy of play.</i>	
CONVERSATION	5-10 minutes	<p>Ask if anyone remembers some of the words from Jesus, that were read last night.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Come to me, all who are heavy burden, and I will give you rest.” <p>Does anyone remember the Lamentations passage?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Morning by morning, God’s mercies are made new.” <p>For the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you get good rest? • Have you seen evidence of God’s mercies this morning? (A shelter from the storm/outdoors, staff that served breakfast, no snoring, the sun rising, etc.) <p>Rest is one of the ways we can take care of our mental well being. Rest can be physical sleep but we can also find things restful that we enjoy, like play.</p> <p>Play is defined as: to engage in activity for enjoyment and recreation rather than a serious or practical purpose.⁶</p> <p>So, let’s play!</p>	

<p>ACTIVITY</p> <p><u>Supplies:</u> Coin Small soft object</p>	<p>15-20 minutes</p>	<p>Begin with a Game: <i>Electricity</i></p> <p>You will need a coin and an object that can be grasped with one hand for this game. One person will be the flipper of the coin. Two lines join hands with the tosser at one end and the object within an arm's reach for both teams at the other end. The tosser flips the coin and shows it to the first person in each line at the same time, while the rest of the group should be looking down towards the object.</p> <p>If the coin lands as tails, nothing should happen. If the coin is heads up, the groups will pass a hand squeeze down the line to the last person. The last person in line will then grab the object. The team that grabs the object first rotates, so that everyone will have a turn to serve in both roles.⁷</p>
<p>CONVERSATION</p> <p><u>Supplies:</u> Newspaper/Whiteboard Markers</p>	<p>25 minutes</p>	<p>Post game, ask the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are some things you like to play? (document as a group on newsprint or whiteboard) - See if there are commonalities among the group. (a shared sport, card game, board game, instrument, etc.) <p>If you want to go deeper:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What was your favorite toy as a child? Why did you like it? - How do you take time for play now? <p>Read the selected verses from Psalm 104:1, 24-26 (New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition)</p> <p>¹ <i>Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, you are very great!</i></p> <p>²⁴ <i>O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.</i></p> <p>²⁵ <i>Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great.</i></p> <p>²⁶ <i>There go the ships, and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it.</i></p> <p>In small groups have them re-write/draw the scripture in their own unique way. If groups are willing, have them share with everyone their interpretation.</p>

		<p>For Reflection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think it means that God created a world for us (and the Leviathan) to play in? • What is something you appreciate in God’s creation? • How do you feel after you get to play? <p>Circling Back:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lamentations reminds us that, “I call to mind and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; God’s mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” • How do you think play could be an example of God’s mercies? • How could play be an example of God’s faithfulness? <p>Transition to Play!</p>
<p>ACTIVITY</p> <p>*When planning, look at what the conference center offers in terms of play: swimming, hiking, canoeing, ropes course, a field for some kind of ball game.</p>	<p>As long as you need it to be</p>	<p>Freetime/ Recreate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on what your space allows, go outside and play! • If it’s rainy (and safe), play in the rain! • Recreation comes in different forms; provide activities/options that reflect this diversity. <p>Group Games: Low Ropes Initiative Activities (See Initiative Activities in the appendix)</p>

Day 2 – Saturday Afternoon (Resource pages located in the Appendix pp. 32-35)

SESSION	TIME	CORE IDEA	SCRIPTURE
Saturday Afternoon	40-65 minutes	Rest and renewal	1 Kings 19:3-9; Elijah needs some food and a nap.
<p>ACTIVITY</p> <p><u>Supplies:</u> Coloring pages Crayons/markers Group game Deck of cards</p>	<p>Intro to Sabbath Time: 5-10 minutes</p> <p>Sabbath: as long as leadership decides.</p> <p>(It's recommended to provide at least 1½-2 hours for Sabbath.)</p>	<p>Sabbath Time</p> <p>If we're going to talk about rest, renewal, and what we need, we need to put it into practice. That's the idea for this session: it's an organic set of time with some parameters. There are sleepers, early morning risers, hikers, helpers, talkers and introverts in your group. So, we're creating space for that.</p> <p>Participants can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a nap (with a set time everyone needs to be awake) • Help (offer to set up the prayer stations) • Hike (with a boundary/buddy/set way of communicating) • Talk (have a game ready as people wake up and can join in; Apples to Apples is great for this kind of thing) • Introvert (no social media, but read a book, color, do their own thing) <p>Leaders: Allow for flexibility in these plans. <u>This is not wasted time.</u> This is an opportunity for participants to meet their needs as they choose. It is recommended that this be screen free time.</p>	
COME TOGETHER	15-25 minutes	<p>At the designated time, come back together and reflect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you enjoy your sabbath? • How are you feeling? • Do you feel rested? • Did you get what you needed for this afternoon? 	

<p>SCRIPTURE</p> <p><u>Supplies:</u> Depends on how you decide to “read” scripture</p>	<p>5-20 minutes</p>	<p>Introduce the story of Elijah: This passage finds Elijah in a mess. Elijah has just had one of the most intense periods of his life – standing up against 450 prophets of Baal; calling down fire from heaven; watching as God brings a rainstorm after years of drought and famine; running 17 miles ahead of a chariot, receiving a death-threat from the queen, fleeing for about 100 miles and finally finding himself alone in the wilderness!</p> <p>Read I Kings 19:3-15, by having a volunteer, act it out or see the appendix for “10 Creative Ways to Read Scripture.”</p>
<p>BREAKING IT DOWN</p>	<p>5 minutes</p>	<p>Post Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does God treat this exhausted man? God supports Elijah very practically – with food and rest. <p>Once Elijah is starting to feel better, God takes him to a very special place – Mount Horeb. This is the same place as Mount Sinai – where God met Moses, giving him the Ten Commandments and confirming God’s covenant with the people of Israel. Standing in that place, Elijah would no doubt have been reminded of God’s promises and His past faithfulness. But unlike God’s appearance to Moses, which was marked by wind, fire and earthquakes, this time God comes in a gentle wind. Finally, once fully recovered and renewed, God gives Elijah an important new task, showing God’s not done with him.⁸</p>
<p>ACTIVITY</p> <p><u>Supplies:</u> Group Snack Space to spread out Fidget gadgets Play-doh Crayons & paper</p>	<p>15-25 minutes</p>	<p>Putting Into Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share a snack as a group. • Meditation exercise <p>Last night in our community, we talked about what we need. We’re going to take a few minutes and spend some time quietly with God now, and seek that “still, small, voice.” Sometimes, like Elijah, we need a space set aside to sit with God.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide some art supplies (crayons/pencils/play-doh) for those who might need to keep their hands busy. <p>The group can spread out, within hearing distance. Encourage people to sit comfortably and close their eyes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After a few moments of silence, say, “Think of a time when you felt exhausted, isolated, maybe unable to see a way forward.”

		<p>Allow space for silence in between each question as you continue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was going on? • How did you feel? • How did you get through it? • Did someone reach out to you? • Now think of someone who may be feeling alone, worn out, at their wits' end, or maybe struggling with depression. • How could you reach out to them? • What is a way you might connect with them?
PRAYER	5-10 minutes	<p>Keeping the person brought to mind in the question above, create a breath prayer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breathing in, pray: Creator God be with [name of person] • Breathing out, pray: Give them rest from [name their struggle] • Example: Creator God be with Anne/ Give her rest from anxiety.
INVITATION	5 minutes	<p>Invite the participants to continue holding the person they prayed for, in prayer for the rest of this week.</p>

Day 2 – Saturday Evening (Resource pages located in the Appendix p. 36)

Prior to the evening session, the prayer stations need to be chosen and set up.

SESSION	TIME	CORE IDEA	SCRIPTURE
Saturday Later Evening	1¾-2¾ hours	When the world asks too much of you	1 Kings 19:11-15 Elijah encounters God
<p style="text-align: center;">COME TOGETHER</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Supplies:</u> Solo Cups (at least 36 per group) Table</p>	<p>25-35 minutes</p>	<p>As everyone gathers back together, open with the <i>Reverse Pyramid Game</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some find it helpful to see this game in action. You'll find a link to a YouTube video of it being played in the appendix. <p>Instructions for <i>Reverse Pyramid</i>: Needs Per Group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 36 cups – It is good to have extra cups available in case more building levels can be achieved. 1 rectangular table – These tables work out the best, allowing a group to be closer to their pyramid structure. <p>Numbers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create small groups of five to seven players. <p>Procedure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give each group a nested stack of 36 cups and a designated building area. For each small group, the objective is to build the tallest pyramid using the cups provided. In our definition, a pyramid consists of stacked rows of cups (not a nested stack) in which each row will have one less cup than the row below it. For this build however, you are required to start from the top row of the pyramid – one cup. To begin, set this one cup down on your building surface. Then, anyone in you group can lift this first cup so that two cups can be placed under it, forming the second row of the pyramid. From this point forward you are only allowed to lift the bottom row of your pyramid structure – the row touching the table – to add the next row underneath. All other cups in the pyramid can be 	

		<p>touched or supported by any player's index fingers (only) before, during and after a lift, but they may not be grabbed and/or lifted in any way. Again, only the bottom row of the pyramid can be lifted. If any part of your pyramid structure falls apart you must start your building process over from one cup. If you manage to use all the cups provided at the start of the build, more will be given to you. After questions about directions have been answered, you will have 15 minutes of building time to see how high you can get your pyramid.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run the build for about 15 minutes to see how well each group can perform. Success is fairly certain for the first three or four rows. After four rows it's up to the creativity, focus and tenacity of the group. Cups will be falling. Keep encouraging attempts as long as there is time to build. <p>Competitive Version: Allow the small groups four to five minutes to practice and form a building plan. Then we give a 10-minute building window to achieve the tallest pyramid possible. They can use their 10 minutes in any way they like, as long as they stay around their building area (table) during the build. When the 10 minutes is up (i.e., when we say "Stop") all the cups standing are worth a point value. How you score it will be up to you. You can give one point for every cup that is touching another cup in a row above or below it. Or, simply count the number of rows – there are more ties in this scoring method.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once the game is over, and giggles are out, set the scene...
SCRIPTURE	10 minutes	<p>Act Out: 1 King 19:11-15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We're picking up where we left off in Elijah's story earlier today. • Ask for the volunteers to help act out this scripture. • Make sure to express gratitude (snaps/clapping) for those who volunteered their services.
BREAKING IT DOWN	15-25 minutes	<p>Walk through the Elijah story with the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What? (what is this story about/what is going on?) • So What? (so what does it mean?) • Now What? (now what do we know/do having heard this story?)
WHEN IT ALL FEELS LIKE TOO MUCH	20-30 minutes	<p>In the story:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elijah was a prophet of God. He was sent to speak truth to the corrupt King of Israel—Ahab—and his wife Jezebel. Their reign was violent. Bloodshed and war tore the countryside apart. Elijah was sent to confront the throne and the prophets of Baal who had taken over the country. Yet, even after Elijah's victory, Queen Jezebel ordered his execution.

For a deeper look, check out the quote from Father Shay in the appendix.

- Elijah ran for his life for 40 days through wilderness, hunted like an animal. He took refuge on Mt. Horeb, the same mountain where Moses encountered Yahweh, and hid there, terrified and feeling defeated. God told him to step outside. There was a great whirlwind, a great earthquake, and a great fire, but God's voice was not in these.
- Then there was silence. Notice something important. The text does not say that God's voice was in the silence. It says that there was "the sound of sheer silence." Then a voice spoke to Elijah.
- God is not about all that noise. The silence invited Elijah to take a deep breath and refocus. The rest of the story tells us that God reassured Elijah that he was not alone and did not strive in vain.

One takeaway: A tsunami of voices overwhelm us. We are caught in the whirlwind of voices and world views, twisting every which way and upside down. We are shaken by the deconstruction and the violence that inevitably ensues. Our world is scorched by the fire of hatred and war.

- And we are tired and afraid.
- God invites us to unplug. Take a deep breath. Listen for the still, small voice.

Let's Wonder (*Adapted from Godly Play*⁹)

- I wonder what part of this story you liked best?
- I wonder what part of this story is the most important?
- I wonder what part of this story was about you- or what part was especially meant for you to hear?
- I wonder if we ever worship other gods without meaning to-- if we ever act like things or people are more important than God.
- I wonder what this story teaches us about what God is like?

Additional Questions:

- Have you ever been in a situation like Elijah, where it felt like you were running away or felt like you weren't in a safe place?
- Can you share a time you have felt the presence of God?
- What are ways you create designated space or time to connect with God?
- Do you feel like there isn't enough time to connect with God?
- What are ways you connect with your spiritual side?

		<p>In the past day or so, have you found another way to connect with God through something we've done? (play/rest/meditation,etc.)</p> <p>Transition: We're going to spend some time discovering some additional ways to connect with God through spiritual disciplines or practices.</p>
<p>SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES/PRACTICES</p>	<p>5 minutes</p>	<p>Spiritual disciplines do not mean 'time out.'</p> <p>"What are spiritual disciplines? They have their foundation in the Spirit, <i>ruach</i> in the Old Testament, <i>pneuma</i> in New, which calls people to respond to the presence, call and rhythms of God within us.</p> <p>The mystic Brother Lawrence refers to spirituality and "the practice of the presence of God.</p> <p>Disciplines can feel like a more antiquated word. It refers to practices, things we do with rigor because we believe they are sacred, things we allow to govern our thinking and actions.</p> <p>There are several biblical spiritual disciplines: fasting, prayer, sabbath-keeping, worship, tithing and others. But there are also practices created by groups and individuals that perform a similar purpose to draw the practitioners into the presence and promise of God."¹⁰</p>
<p>ACTIVITY</p> <p>For inspiration on Prayer Stations, see Saturday Evening Resources as well as the appendix.</p> <p><u>Supplies:</u> Depends on Prayer Stations</p>	<p>25-45 minutes</p>	<p>Spiritual Practice Prayer Stations (See Station Cards in the Appendix on pp. 26-29 and the Resource Page in Appendix on p. 36)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer stations will be set up in advance for participants to engage in. • Think about your group needs as you plan your prayer stations. • Middle Schoolers might need more movement based prayer stations, while High Schoolers could have more self-discipline. • Having soft instrumental music in the background helps set the tone. • Some of what is created in these stations will be used in worship the following morning.
<p>CLOSING</p>	<p>5 minutes</p>	<p>Come back together and close in prayer as a group.</p> <p>Closing Song: <i>Bind Us Together</i> (see appendix for more information)</p>

Day 3 – Sunday Morning (Resource pages located in the Appendix pp. 37-38)

SESSION	TIME	CORE IDEA	SCRIPTURE
Sunday Morning		Morning by Morning, Great is Thy Faithfulness!	Primary: Lamentations 3:21-23 Secondary: Luke 24:13-35 (Walk to Emmaus)
Option #1 - Sunrise Worship Service			
SUNRISE WORSHIP		Worship in a way that works for your group/your faith tradition. For sample ideas of sunrise worship, see the appendix.	
AS PART OF WORSHIP		<p>Here are some ideas for discussion during Worship:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisit the scripture heard in previous sessions and ask what has stood out. • Read the Emmaus story found in the Gospel of Luke together. • Revisit the question, “What do you need...as we leave this place?” • Revisit Spiritual Practices experienced last evening, and ask how we might take these home with us. <p>Notes on Emmaus: The companions on the road to Emmaus may well have been in despair. They’d built their hopes on Jesus, but were now disappointed that He didn’t appear to be all they’d dreamt of. Had they made the biggest mistake of their lives? Did they feel as if they’d just watched their whole world, their hopes and dreams, just crumble away?</p> <p>Jesus’ approach is an interesting one: We see him actually physically walking alongside them, asking them questions – letting them speak, really listening to understand their pain. At any point in the journey, He could have revealed His glory, dispelling all of their doubts. But instead He chooses to start by listening. Then Jesus gently meets them where they are at – taking the time to explain the scriptures to them – helping them see things from another perspective. When we interact with people, do we take the time to walk alongside them? Are we patient and listen to their stories? Do we meet them where they are, with all their questions and heartbreaks?¹¹</p> <p>(If it isn’t possible to have this discussion during worship, try setting aside a time for some closure, around 20-30 minutes.)</p>	

Option #2 - Alternative to a Sunrise Service

WORSHIP PLANNING	30-45 minutes	<p>Using the resources from the prayer stations, divide the group up for planning worship that reflects your faith tradition. See the appendix for a sample worship outline.</p> <p>Here are some ideas to have the groups discuss/focus on in their planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revisit the scripture heard in previous sessions and ask what has stood out.• Read the Emmaus story found in the Gospel of Luke together.• Revisit the question, “What do you need...as we leave this place?”• Revisit Spiritual Practices experienced last evening, and ask how we might take these home with us.
CLOSE IN WORSHIP	20-30 minutes	Close the weekend with worship together.



**"YOU ARE FEARFULLY
& WONDERFULLY MADE."**

-PSALM 139:14

No two fingerprints are alike! That's how unique you are to this world.

1. Take a peice of clay in your hands. Mold it into a ball.
2. Press a finger into an ink pad and then gently press it into the ball of clay, leaving your mark.
3. Take a moment to pray and give thanks to God for who you uniquely are!

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**WHEN YOU PASS THROUGH THE
WATERS, I WILL BE WITH YOU; AND
WHEN YOU PASS THROUGH THE
RIVERS, THEY WILL NOT SWEEP
OVER YOU. WHEN YOU WALK
THROUGH THE FIRE, YOU WILL
NOT BE BURNED; THE FLAMES WILL
NOT SET YOU ABLAZE.**

ISAIAH 43:2

God journeys with us through it all. At this station, we invite you to dip your hands into the water, and grab a stone. As you hold it in your hands, think of a time you felt underwater. How did you feel God at work, keeping you afloat? Through a friend? A song? A team?

When you feel ready, move to the table and light a candle in gratitude that God walks alongside us in our darkness and provides us light.

You are invited to keep your stone.

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PRAYER WALL

- Take a moment to close your eyes, and just seek God's presence.
- Think about what worries you. What brings your joy. Who is in need of help or healing.
- What would you like to ask God for this night? Peace? Help? Courage? Rest? Joy? Healing?
- When you're ready, write what you would like to pray for on the ribbon.
- Tie the ribbon onto the frame and say, "Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers."

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THE ART OF FRIENDSHIP BRACELETS

You've Got a Friend in Me

We know we have a friend in Jesus! Let's celebrate that by making a friendship bracelet. Don't know how to begin? Scan the QR code below for some suggestions.



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Supplication

"Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks." (Philippians 4.6 CEB)

Take a moment to pause in silence.

Feel God's presence with you. What prayers do you have for God? Who is on your heart to pray for?

Light a candle or candles as a symbol that Christ's light shines around you and hears your prayers.



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Planting Hope

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." - Jeremiah 29:11



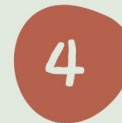
Grab one or two of the egg cups provided and pick a seed to plant.



Using the scooper, fill the cup with soil until about 1/2-2/3 filled.



Place your seed on top of the soil and lift a prayer of hope to God.

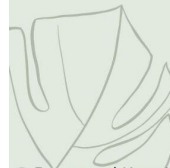


Add a little soil with the scooper on top of the seeds.



Spritz lightly with the water provided.

You can leave your seed at church for our garden or take it home and care for it.



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Prayer Beads

Prayer beads are a form of beadwork used to count the repetitions of prayers, chants, or mantras by members of various religions. We invite you to make your own set, and use them to pray to our God.

1.

Cut the length of string you need.

2.

String your beads however you feel called. As you string them, you can pray for someone, or pray one of the prayers on the paper.

3.

When you're done, tie a knot at the end and take your beads with you.

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Promise

God took Abram outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then the Lord said to him, "So shall your offspring be." - Genesis 15:5

Our God is a God of promises. God made a promise to Abram (Abraham) that his family throughout the ages would out number the stars.

God has made the promise that "not one star is missing" from the sky.

Add your name (or a friend's) to a star and place it in the night sky.

*"The cosmos is within us. We are made of star-stuff. We are a way for the universe to know itself."
— Carl Sagan*

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APPENDIX

DAILY RESOURCE PAGES

FRIDAY RESOURCES

²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Matthew 11:28-30 (New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition)

²¹ But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: ²² The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases his mercies never come to an end; ²³ they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Lamentations 3:21-23 (New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition)

Great is Thy Faithfulness Hymn Lyrics

¹ “Great is Thy faithfulness,” O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

Chorus:

“Great is Thy faithfulness!” “Great is Thy faithfulness!”
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—“Great is Thy faithfulness,” Lord, unto me!

² Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love. (CHORUS)

³ Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside! (CHORUS)

SATURDAY MORNING RESOURCES

¹ *Bless the Lord, O my soul!*

O Lord my God, you are very great!

²⁴ *O Lord, how manifold are your works!*

*In wisdom have you made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.*

²⁵ *Here is the sea, great and wide,*

*which teems with creatures innumerable,
living things both small and great.*

²⁶ *There go the ships,*

and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it.

Psalms 104: 1, 24-26 (New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition)

SATURDAY AFTERNOON RESOURCES

Then Elijah was afraid; he got up and fled for his life and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there.

⁴ But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." ⁵ Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." ⁶ He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. He ate and drank and lay down again. ⁷ The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, or the journey will be too much for you." ⁸ He got up and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. ⁹ At that place he came to a cave and spent the night there.

Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁰ He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."

1 Kings 19: 4-10 (New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition)

"10 CREATIVE WAYS TO EXPLORE A BIBLE PASSAGE"¹²

1. DECODE THE STORY

- a) Remember how you learned the parts of a story in high school English class? This same structure is present in many biblical stories. Read through a passage and then list some basic plot elements: setting, main characters, conflict, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution.
- b) Identifying all of these elements can help you clarify the overall message of a story and see the application for your life.

2. DECIPHER THE ARGUMENT

- a) Not every passage in the Bible is a narrative with conflict, climax and resolution. Much of the Bible (especially the New Testament) is in the form of a classical argument. Like the traditional narrative plot, the classical argument has a standard structure that can help clarify the overarching point of a confusing passage. You can make a similar list of the different elements you will find: background (the context relevant to the specific issue), thesis (the evidence for the claim being made),

antithesis (refutation of the opposing viewpoint) and conclusion (the final wrap-up restating the thesis in light of the antithesis).

- b) This can be particularly helpful for Scripture passages that primarily argue for a specific point of view with little attention to the opposing view. Once you can identify them both, the main point becomes clearer.

3. DESIGN A COMIC STRIP

- a) This method can be great when used with the first two ideas. Break the passage into eight or fewer discrete scenes and draw the key action of each scene paired with dialogue or important narration. This is all about exploring the passage by imagining what else is happening in the surroundings. What are the reactions of the other people? Do any props come into play? How are they held/used? How does the setting shape the scene?
- b) Don't be afraid to use stick figures! If the passage inspires you to create something brilliant, you can always hire an artist to develop the concept.

4. CREATE A MEME

The current trend of placing a catchy word or phrase on top of an image is not only fun, but can also help you explore the Bible. Imagine that you are encouraging people to read a specific passage of the Bible. What phrase would hook people to read more? What image both matches the theme of the verse, and inspires curiosity? Once you have an idea, you can use Photoshop or one of many free online meme generators to superimpose the text onto the image. You can also download an app such as Meme Factory, that's extremely easy to use.

5. BECOME A BIBLE TRANSLATOR

Don't worry; we're not arguing that you need to take several years of biblical languages to understand the Bible. However, translating the Bible into your context and vocabulary can make any passage come to life. The goal here is to translate every piece of the text into your current vocabulary. This extends beyond the words to the metaphors. If you don't know anyone who is a shepherd, think of an image from your life that conveys the same ideas and emotions and use that instead. Once you have finished translating the words and metaphors, review your work to see how close you can come to matching the overall feel of the narrative or rhythm of the poem or other passage.

6. EXPLORE THE TEXT, CO-TEXT AND INTERTEXT

- a) Lifting a verse or two from the surrounding material can cause very

erroneous interpretations and applications. This method helps you place any text firmly in its place in Scripture. Step 1 is determining the logical boundaries of a text. Often, chapters and verses are not placed at the most logical break points. Take a moment to determine a section's appropriate boundary.

- b) Next, take a look at the "co-text" of those passages that come immediately before and after. How does this passage logically flow from the preceding material and connect clearly with what follows?
- c) Finally, place it in its "intertext" in the larger canon of Scripture. This is where you try to find parallel passages in other books of the Bible and make connections (often by examining cross references in your study Bible) between the Old and New testaments. The goal is to ask how this passage is clarified by its place in relation to the rest of Scripture.

7. GET IT DOWN TO A SENTENCE (OR TWO)

- a) It is difficult to imagine how many billions of other words the Bible has inspired. Most of the time, our posture toward Scripture is to multiply the words; however, Jesus does the opposite. When asked for the greatest commandments, Jesus gives two sentences that he says summarize all of the law and the prophets. Sometimes the best thing we can do is get super simple. For this method, you boil down an entire passage to a single sentence. This can be fun to do with chapters or entire books. When taking a larger chunk, it is easiest to start by tackling several sentences or paragraphs first, then boiling down those summaries to a single sentence.
- b) The entire Noah story might boil down simply to "Noah obeyed God." The 23rd Psalm begins with its own summary, "The Lord is my Shepherd." And you might find a summary of the sheep and the goats account in Matthew 25:31-40, in Matthew 22:37b-39 (NRSV), "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. ... You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

8. EXPERIENCE IT WITH ALL FIVE SENSES

Far too often, we only engage our eyes when exploring the Bible. Next time you open the Bible, try to experience the passage before you with all five senses. What might you hear? Are there birds or waves or the crackle of a fire close enough to hear? Is it cold or hot? Is there sand between your toes or wind blowing through your hair? Are you close enough to the sea to smell the air, or are you getting ready to taste a meal? What do you smell? Do you smell livestock or flowers? Is the disturbing smell of sickness or death in the air? Once you build the

scene through your senses, new pieces of the narrative come to life or are given deeper meaning, and the whole passage becomes very real.

9. PRACTICE LECTIO DIVINA (DIVINE READING)

One of the most ancient ways to experience the Bible comes through a practice called *lectio divina* (Latin for “divine reading”). The practice moves through four phases with an underlying confidence that God speaks to us whenever we read the Bible. The first step is to read the passage over and over, savoring each word and waiting for one to rise above the rest. Once a single word or phrase sticks in your mind, you begin to explore the word. What feelings, emotions or memories does it evoke? After a time of experiencing the word, it’s time to ask and listen to God for the answer to what this word is meant to say to you. Why this word? What is God saying? Finally, use the word as a focus point to let go of every distracting thought so that you can rest in the presence of God.

10. SCRAPBOOK IT

- a) For the crafty people, it’s time to pull out your curvy scissors and glue sticks and get to work. Take a passage or verse and use all the tools at your disposal to illustrate it. You might decide to make the key word the center of your page or use pictures from your own life to convey the emotions behind the passage. The goal is to create a visual expression of the truth in the passage using as much crafty creativity as you can.
- b) Whether you use scissors or the classical story structure, breaking out of the box of your normal method for exploring the Bible can bring a new perspective to the Scripture, new life to your study time and new clarity to your teaching.

SATURDAY EVENING RESOURCES

¹¹ He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind, and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake, ¹² and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire, and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁴ He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." ¹⁵ Then the Lord said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram.

1 Kings 19: 11-15 (New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition)

Prayer Station Supplies

All stations need copies of the Instruction Cards, found on pages 26-29.

- 1. Fearfully and Wonderfully Made Station:** Small balls of self hardening white clay, Washable ink on a pad, Hand wipes
- 2. Walk through the Waters Station:** Large wide bowl of water, Small river stones, Candles, Lighter
- 3. Prayer Wall:** 1-2" wide ribbon cut into 1' lengths, Fabric markers, Picture frame (without the glass insert) large enough for your group to tie ribbons around it
- 4. Friend In Me Station:** Embroidery floss in several colors, Scissors, Safety pins
- 5. Supplication Station:** Candles, Lighters
- 6. Planting Hope Station:** Egg cups, Seeds, Soil, Small spoons
- 7. Prayer Beads Station:** Lanyard or beading string, Scissors, Assortment of beads, Towel (to work on and prevent beads from rolling away)
- 8. Promise Station:** 4-5' piece of blue or black bulletin board paper, 2-3" die-cut yellow or white stars, Blue markers

SUNDAY MORNING RESOURCES

- ²¹ *But this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:*
- ²² *The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases
his mercies never come to an end;*
- ²³ *they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.*

Lamentations 3:21-23 (New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition)

¹³ *Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him.*

¹⁷ *He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"*

They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

¹⁹ *"What things?" he asked.*

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. ²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

²⁵ *He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*

²⁸ As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

³³ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴ and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” ³⁵ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Luke 24:13-35 (New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition)

ON SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Lacy Clark Ellman from *A Sacred Journey* says: “Naming various types of spiritual practices doesn’t really answer the question of what a spiritual practice actually is.

It’s likely we all first encountered the word ‘practice’ in childhood, when we practiced sports to become better athletes or piano each day to prepare for the big recital. I, for one, wasn’t a fan of practicing piano (and I didn’t like sports enough to want to practice them, either). I was supposed to practice piano for thirty minutes each day, and I hated practicing so much that I wanted to quit taking piano lessons all together.

I remember expressing this to my mother more than once as I slumped at the piano bench in resignation after losing out to the metronome once more. ‘No,’ my mother would reply from the other room. ‘You can’t quit piano because my mother let me quit when I wanted to and I’ve regretted it ever since.’ (I will confess, she was right. I’m glad she told me no, and I’m glad she made me practice.)

My days of taking piano lessons and having to practice each day are long behind me, but my younger brother, on the other hand, has turned practicing piano into a full-time job. He recently graduated from college, where he was a piano performance major, and is off to graduate school in the fall for the same thing. He practices eight hours a day when he’s able—the same pieces day after day, hour after hour, until the time comes to perform them for a recital or juried performance. And then he starts all over again.

He becomes better and better with each session, no doubt. But between you and me, I couldn’t imagine anything worse. No wonder people struggle with the idea of spiritual practices when practice in our culture is a means toward achieving a goal. While routine is at the root of all practice, spiritual practice is not about perfection. Practice as a means to perfection is great for mastering a tennis serve or a piano fugue, but the spiritual journey is an entirely different paradigm.

The spiritual journey is a never-ending pilgrimage—a continuous cycle of departure, arrival, and return. It isn’t something to be mastered; rather, it is something to be lived. This is where intentional living comes in. If the spiritual journey is something to be lived, then spiritual practices help bring us back to our intention. They serve as an invitation to actively journey, to open ourselves toward Sacred Encounter, and to listen deeply to our Inner Witness—the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the place within us where the true self and the Divine meet.”¹³

FATHER SHAY ON ELIJAH AND DEPRESSION

Father Shay, from *Queer Theology*¹⁴, hears the story this way: “There’s a lot in this passage for me. I love the fact that we have, in the scripture, an example of someone who is a great prophet, considered one of the patriarchs of the faith, who is very, very clearly in this passage going through a depressive episode. Like, a really serious one.

Growing up, I was always kind of taught that if you were depressed it was because you weren’t right with God. You were not praying hard enough, your faith wasn’t right, because if it were, you’d be joyful and happy. And I think here we have Elijah, who is the only prophet left, who’s clearly right with God, and is depressed.

And we don’t see God rebuking him for his depression. Instead, we see God trying to call him out of it and back into remembering why it is that he exists, and what it is that he’s meant to do. And I think that that’s really powerful. And the fact that God takes the time to show up for Elijah, and to be with Elijah in the midst of his depression, and to be with him in a thin and quiet way. So often people come to us when we’re depressed and they’re like, ‘You just need to get out more, right? You just need to go for a walk and be in nature and exercise more.’ It’s like... thanks for that. But I can’t really get out of bed. So I love that there’s this image of thin and quiet. And there’s also this repetition which I think is really fascinating. God says to Elijah, ‘Why are you here?’ and Elijah answers, ‘I’ve been abandoned,’ then he has this huge moment of strong wind and earthquakes and fire and this thin quiet....”

PRAYER STATION IDEAS

- Presbyterian Mission Agency on Spiritual Disciplines: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/pt-0218-spiritual/>
- UKirk (College Ministry) Information on Spiritual Practices: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/exploring-spiritual-practices-with-college-students/>
- Bind Us Together (Song): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHJJzD46-qU>
- Prayer Stations (To Be Inspired!): <http://tinyurl.com/ywew3dz8>

MUSIC NOTES

- *Great is Thy Faithfulness*, The Worship Zone, The Celebration Choir, Chris Rice, Carrie Underwood, Cece Winans, Jordan Smith, Celtic Worship, Anthem Lights
- *Bind Us Together*, Bob Gillman

- *Be Still My Soul*, multiple artists
- *Abide with Me*, Audrey Assad
- *I've Got Peace Like a River*, multiple artists
- *Human*, Christina Perri
- *Keep Breathing*, Ingrid Michaelson
- *Everyday People*, Morgan Harper Nichols
- *Whatever Keeps You Going*, Donovan Woods
- *Guiding Light*, Foy Vance
- *True Colors*, Cyndi Lauper
- *Brave*, Sara Bareilles
- *Come as You Are*, Crowder
- *Grow as We Go*, Ben Platt
- *How Great Thou Art*, Pentatonix, Jennifer Hudson
- *I Am*, Beautiful Chorus & India.Arie
- *I Worship You Almighty God*, Charity Gayle
- *Eye of the Tiger*, Survivor
- *Long and Winding Road*, The Beatles
- *Over the Rainbow*, Israel Kamakawiwo'ole
- *Rewind*, Delvin, Diane Birch
- *That's What Friends are For*, Diane Warwick
- *Try*, Colbie Caillat
- *Weary Traveler*, Jordan St. Cyr

SAMPLE CLOSING WORSHIP

Call to Worship

Lamentations 3

*Your steadfast love, Lord, never ceases,
Your mercies never come to an end;
They are new every morning; so let us proclaim –
Great is Your faithfulness. Great is Your love.
Great is Your mercy.
And greatly is Your name to be praised!*

Song

Confession Sequence

Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession¹⁵

God of all the saints, God of all the sinners, hear our prayer. We would be saintlike – holy, good, patient, loving. But we end up feeling more like sinners – full of failures of morality, selfish, mean. Perhaps You see us simply as human – as beloved, and flawed, and

trying, and failing, and succeeding. In all of this, forgive the wrong that we have done, and the bless the good we have accomplished. Keep on loving us, and helping us, and molding us more and more into the image of Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Friends, hear this Good News: the love of God is beyond measure, and you are included in that love. Know that you are forgiven and thus freed to love and serve. Alleluia! Amen.

Passing of the Peace

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture Reading

Reflection

Song

Prayers of the People

Sending Song

Benediction

GO DEEPER: MORE RESOURCES

- Center for Disease Control on Well Being: <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/>
- So, What is a Spiritual Practice? <https://www.asacredjourney.net/what-is-a-spiritual-practice/>
- Ice Breakers (Used Friday): <https://www.icebreakers.ws/get-to-know-you>
- Lamentations Commentary: <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revision-common-lectionary/ordinary-13-2/commentary-on-lamentations-322-33-5>
- Mental Well Being Playlist on Spotify (requires a Spotify Account): <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/12voVSZbOIkJZljzHeOoS1?si=0QBkPV7ISzWoED9s5IV5cQ>
- Instrumental Guitar Worship Playlist: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfCflwlp8e8>

COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES

Reverse Pyramid¹⁶

Needs Per Group:

- 36 cups (It will be good to have extra cups available in case more building levels can be achieved.)
- 1 table for each small group – rectangular tables work out the best allowing a group to be closer to their pyramid structure. However, wooden platforms, flat-top benches, or picnic tables are other options.

Numbers:

- Create small groups of five to seven players.

Time:

- 20-30 minutes

Note: We have done Reverse Builds off of the floor (solid concrete or tile), but it's a bit more challenging to get enough bodies around the structure to support the lifts. You could also use a 2×6-inch board about four feet long balanced across two chairs as a viable option for a building surface. Be creative in order to meet your needs.

Procedure:

Based on the dynamics of the *Reverse Build*, we consider this a small group activity (so far, anyway). Groups of five to seven players have worked well for us. If the situation arises where one group needs more hands, they can ask players from another group to help. This consideration might not work if the build is set up as a competitive activity. Notice, we did say “might not” work. We’ve seen competitors help each other.

Give each group a nested stack of 36 cups and a designated building area. Here is generally what we say when we present the activity:

“For each small group, your objective is to build the tallest pyramid using the cups provided. In our definition, a pyramid consists of stacked rows of cups (not a nested stack) in which each row will have one less cup than the row below it. For this build however, you are required to start from the top row of the pyramid – one cup. To begin, set this one cup down on your building surface. Then, anyone in you group can lift this first cup so that two cups can be placed under it, forming the second row of the pyramid. From this point forward you are only allowed to lift the bottom row of your pyramid structure – the row touching the table – to add the next row underneath. All other cups in the pyramid can be touched or supported by any players’ index fingers (only) before, during and after a lift, but they may not be grabbed and/or lifted in any way. Again, only the bottom row of

the pyramid can be lifted. If any part of your pyramid structure falls apart you must start your building process over from one cup. If you manage to use all the cups provided at the start of the build, more will be given to you. After I answer any questions you have about the directions, you will have 15 minutes of building time to see how high you can get your pyramid.”

Most facilitators will answer questions without giving solutions to the challenge. However, if the group’s objectives allow for help or “coaching,” answer in the way that will work for them. We often simply refer back to the rules provided. See Facilitation below for some typical inquiries.

This general presentation does not suggest any sort of competitive encounters. However, if you’ve been leading team building activities long enough, you know, in most cases, the competitive spirit does present itself. In the short life of this activity so far, we have yet to see groups help each other, but our hopes are still high. We typically run the build for about 15 minutes to see how well each group can perform. Success is fairly certain for the first three or four rows. After, four rows it’s up to the creativity, focus and tenacity of the group. Cups will be falling. We keep encouraging attempts as long as there is time to build.

When our program objectives include competitive activities, we set it up a bit differently. We allow the small groups four to five minutes to practice and form a building plan. Then we give a 10-minute building window to achieve the tallest pyramid possible. They can use their 10 minutes in any way they like, as long as they stay around their building area (table) during the build. When the 10 minutes is up (i.e., when we say “Stop”) all the cups standing are worth a point value. How you score it will be up to you. We give one point for every cup that is touching another cup in a row above or below it. Or, simply count the number of rows – there are more ties in this scoring method.

As you might have determined already, the *Reverse Build* does not require a high level of energy, but a determined amount of focus. So, choose wisely when programming this one – what groups will benefit from this type of activity and where do you place it in your sequence?

Facilitation:

During the *Reverse Builds* we have facilitated so far, we have found it important to provide our expectations of the pyramid structure. When beta testing this activity a number of groups spent a lot of time trying to find loopholes in the rules and spent little time building. We wanted this activity to help us work on the facilitated objective of working through/with failures – since, in most cases, cup tumbling does occur during the process. When we started sharing our expectation of a

pyramid more hands-on building ensued. The following sentence in the directions specifies our expectations: A pyramid is defined as each row (not a nested stack) of cups will have one less cup than the row below it.

All Catch (played with the same kind of ball for each participant)

Start off by putting the participants into small groups of 4-5 people. Give each participant a ball of some type (make sure that you have enough so that all of the participants can have the same kind of ball). Let each group start by having two of their members throw their balls to each other. When this is accomplished, have them add another person to their throwing group (a thrower can't catch their own ball). Have the group continue to add members to their throwing group until a ball is not caught. When this happens, have the group start again with two people. Allow them to come up with their own strategies for accomplishing the task. If most of the groups are able to get up to 4-5 people, consider having the small groups come together to set an "all group" record.

Touch the Frisbee (played with one frisbee and some smaller objects)

Place an object (like a frisbee) in the center of the room. Ask the participants to touch this object without touching one another (hair does not count). When this is accomplished, you could introduce progressively smaller objects for the same challenge. The group is allowed to come up with any strategy they desire (as long as it is safe). Whether they can pick up the object during this activity depends on the size of your group, their mobility and how much difficulty you desire for the group.

Knots (could be played with one length of waste hose per participant)

Divide the group into circles of no more than 10 people. Ask the participants to reach across the circle and grab the hands with other people. They should not end up with two hands from the same person or with either hand of a participant standing next to them. Working together as a group, the participants are to "untie" the knot they have created, without letting go of their hands. In some cases, the group may end up with more than one circle. If you are playing with a group that may have mobility issues, you could give each participant one leg of panty hose and ask them to use these to connect hand to hand with the other group members.

Tower of Babble (played with the same collection of building materials for each group)

Divide the group into teams of 4-5 people. Give each of the groups the identical amount of supplies (this can include sheets of newspaper, paper clips, tape, cans, bottles, string, etc.). Using only the items provided, the teams are to build the

tallest, free-standing, self-supporting tower. Give the teams about 30 minutes to create their structure. It might be interesting to put the materials in a pile in the middle of the group and tell them that during the first five minutes they are to discuss the construction of their tower without anyone on the team touching the materials. When a team has completed their tower, use a pole or measuring tape to calculate the height of the structure. After the time limit has passed, bring the teams together and discuss the group dynamics that take place when a team of people are assigned a project.

INITIATIVE ACTIVITIES

Incomplete Bridge (played with 2-3 platforms and 2 boards of different lengths)

The object of this initiative is for all of the group members to get from one platform to the next (and possibly to a third platform) without touching the ground. The only help that is given is two, strong wooden boards (one needs to be twice as big as the other), but neither of them are long enough to reach between the platforms. When you give instructions, be sure to always start by saying, “Working together as a group....” Allow the group to come up with their own strategies, but observe their group dynamics. The group members are not allowed to jump between the platforms or boards. When the group is ready to attempt to cross between the platforms, make sure that you and your assistants are ready to spot (one foot back - aim for the shoulder blades). If a participant should ever touch the ground during the initiative, the whole group must start over. The group may figure out that it is best to use the short board first and that participant weight has nothing to do with it (but DO NOT tell them until after the group is finished). The size of the platform(s) will need to be tailored to the size of the group. If you use three platforms, the middle one should be a smaller so that it can hold no more than four people. Whether the group is able to accomplish the task or not, debrief the group dynamics before moving on.

Zig Zag (played with five small platforms and three boards)

Place the platforms in a zig-zag pattern with an equal amount of space between the platforms, except between the third and fourth platform (these are slightly further apart). The object of this initiative is for all of the group members to get from the first platform to the last platform without touching the ground. The only help that is given is three, strong wooden boards (one needs to be slightly longer than the other two). When you give instructions, be sure to always start by saying, “Working together as a group....” Allow the group to come up with their own strategies, but observe their group dynamics. When the group is ready to attempt to cross between the platforms, make sure that you and your assistants are ready to spot (one foot back - aim for the shoulder blades). If a participant or a board should ever touch the ground during the initiative, the whole group must

start over. The group will eventually figure out that only the long board will make it between the third and fourth platforms. The size of the platforms will need to be tailored to the size of the group, but should be small so that only one or two people can fit on them. Whether the group is able to accomplish the task or not, debrief the group dynamics before moving on.

Game List compiled by: Joel Winchip, Executive Director, Presbyterian Church Camp and Conference Association

MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS NUMBERS

Keep these numbers handy and pass them out to your youth leaders so you can all be ready to help a youth during a crisis.

Crisis Textline (<https://www.crisistextline.org/>): Text HOME to 741-741

National Suicide Prevention Hotline (<https://988lifeline.org/>): Call 988 or 800-273-8255

The Trevor Project (<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>): Text START to 678-678 or call 866-488-7386 *Crisis intervention and suicide prevention for LGBTQ+ youth*

National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline (<https://www.loveisrespect.org/>): Text LOVEIS to 22522 or call 866-331-9474

Runaway Helpline (<https://www.1800runaway.org/>): Call or text 800-786-2929

National Child Abuse Hotline (<https://www.childhelpline.org/>): Call or text 800-422-4453

National Eating Disorders Association (<https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/help-support/contact-helpline>): Text NEDA to 741-741 or call 800-981-2237 (limited hours)

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National Eating Disorders Association (<https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/help-support/contact-helpline>): Text NEDA to 741-741 or call 800-981-2237 (limited hours)

End Notes

- ¹ Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, “Three Things to Know: Well-Being,” Hogg Staff, September 25, 2018, <https://hogg.utexas.edu/3-things-well-being>
- ² Mind, “What is Mental Health and Mental Well Being?,” Taryn Ozorio, January 24, 2011, <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/your-stories/what-is-mental-health-and-mental-wellbeing/>
- ³ World Health Organization, “Mental Health: Key Facts,” WHO, 2022, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response>
- ⁴ Lacy Clark Ellman, “So What is a Spiritual Practice Anyway?,” A Sacred Journey Website, 2003, <https://www.asacredjourney.net/what-is-a-spiritual-practice/>
- ⁵ Lacy Clark Ellman, “How to Practice a Breath Prayer,” A Sacred Journey Website, 2003, <https://www.asacredjourney.net/how-to-practice-breath-prayer/>
- ⁶ Google Dictionary, “Definition of Play,” Oxford University Press, 2023, <https://www.google.com/search?q=definition+of+play>
- ⁷ *Group Building Activities*; edited by Joel Winchip, Executive Director, Presbyterian Church Camp and Conference Association
- ⁸ *Six Bible Studies Exploring God’s Heart for Mental Health*, “Cared For,” pp. 10-11, collaboration between Mind & Soul and Livability, 2023, https://www.livability.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Livability-Mental-Health-Booklet_Web.pdf
- ⁹ Jerome Berryman, *Teaching Godly Play: How to Mentor the Spiritual Development of Children*, Moorehouse Education Resources; 2009.
- ¹⁰ Melissa Lauber, “Spiritual Disciplines Awakening to Life,” Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church, 2019, <https://www.bwcumc.org/article/spiritual-disciplines-awakening-to-life/>
- ¹¹ *Six Bible Studies Exploring God’s Heart for Mental Health*, “Listened To,” p. 14 , collaboration between Mind & Soul and Livability, 2023, https://www.livability.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Livability-Mental-Health-Booklet_Web.pdf
- ¹² Lacy Clark Ellman, “So What is a Spiritual Practice Anyway?,” A Sacred Journey Website, 2003, <https://www.asacredjourney.net/what-is-a-spiritual-practice/>

¹³ Jeremy Steele, “Creative Ways to Do Bible Study,” Resource UMC, 2023, resourceumc.org/en/content/10-creative-ways-to-explore-a-bible-passage

¹⁴ Father Shay, “A Depressed Prophet,” Queer Theology Podcast, August 13, 2017, <https://www.queertheology.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Aug-13-2017.pdf>

¹⁵ Beth Merrill Neel, “Prayer of Confession,” Hold Fast to What is Good Website, 2015, <https://holdfasttowhatisgood.com/liturgy/prayer-of-confession/>

¹⁶ Chris Cavert and Barry Thompson, “Reverse Pyramid Build,” Training Wheels Website, 2021, <https://training-wheels.com/reverse-pyramid-build/>

About the Author

Rev. Katy Walters serves as Pastor at Forest Hills Presbyterian Church, outside of San Antonio, TX. Katy has a love for all things beginning with the letter “C” such as coffee, Christ, children, churches, conferences, crafts, cards, cats, comedies, and collecting coffee cups. She recognizes the holy that happens in camp and conference ministry, and is an advocate for awareness and access to mental health resources. In her free time, Katy enjoys sitting in the sun and reading good books, watching Disney movies and British baking shows, negotiating peace between the cats and the dog, singing, and striving to love like Jesus every day.



**Campfire
Collective**



Presbyterian Mission
**Office of Christian
Formation**

This retreat module was developed by Presbyterian Church Camp and Conference Association/Campfire Collective and Presbyterian Youth Workers Association in collaboration with the Office of Christian Formation in the Presbyterian Mission Agency. The task force for this project was Emily Hooker, John Leedy, Christy Williams, Miatta Wilson, and Joel Winchip.

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