

ACTIVITIES



Faith Practice One—Honoring the Body

- ◇ Hand Massage
- ◇ Walking the Labyrinth



Faith Practice Two—Keeping Sabbath

- ◇ Lectio Divina, Psalm 90
- ◇ Manna Time



Faith Practice Three—Forgiveness

- ◇ Lectio Divina, Psalm 51
- ◇ Exploring Forgiveness in the Bible



Faith Practice Four—Healing

- ◇ Laying On of Hands



Faith Practice Five—Dying Well

- ◇ If I Died Today...
- ◇ Bedtime Ritual



Faith Practice Six—Singing Our Lives

- ◇ Singing Shapes Our Faith



Faith Practice One: HONORING THE BODY

“Hand Massage” 15 minutes

Participants will take turns massaging each other's hands with lotion while the leader reads scripture texts. These texts underscore the importance of the human body in God's good created order and invite us to reflect. Create a meditative mood as instructions are given to participants.

Leader may start by massaging the hands of the person to the right and to the left, to demonstrate, and start a small bottle of lotion down each side.

NOTE: You may want to determine ahead of time if anyone is sensitive to scented lotion and have an unscented bottle on hand.

Scripture texts to read (or those of your own choosing):

Genesis 1:1-5, 26-31
 Psalm 103:1-14
 Psalm 139: 1-6, 13-18
 Jeremiah 1: 4-10
 James 5:14
 John 1:1-5, 14, 16-18

These scripture references could be written on the board so participants could make notes for their own reference.



“Walking the Labyrinth”

10 minutes

The labyrinth is a devotional tool, often called a body prayer, connecting kinetic activity with meditation.

Introduce participants to the labyrinth through a hand labyrinth if one can be obtained, pictures of labyrinths, or printed diagram found on website. Distribute handout “Labyrinth Background Information” and highlight its uses and three-fold approach of releasing, receiving and reviewing.

Demonstrate how hand-held (or printed diagram) labyrinths are used. Distribute handout “Desktop Finger Labyrinth” and invite participants to trace with their finger as they reflect.

Indicate if there is a labyrinth nearby (e.g. at a nearby church, cathedral, college, university, or seminary) and encourage participants to walk a labyrinth. You may want to arrange to do this as a group activity outside of session time.



Faith Practice Two KEEPING SABBATH

“Lectio Divina, Psalm 90”

15 minutes

Distribute copies of Psalm 90, or have participants turn to the passage in Bibles available in the same translation. To make a copy of the Psalm, you may download it from www.devotions.net/bible.

Leader will read the passage through once while participants listen.

Participants will then prayerfully read the passage to themselves.

Read these instructions to participants before beginning:



“Read the passage slowly and thoughtfully until you are attracted by a particular phrase, sentence, or longer section when you sense unusual power, beauty, or truth there.

Stop reading and sit quietly for a moment. Read that passage over, slowly, again and again.

Do not reason about the text. Do not analyze it. Just listen to the words and meaning. Let it do its work in you.

Stay with those words as long as they hold your attention. When this section of the passage has finished with you, simply resume reading.”

(from *Receiving the Day* study guide)



“Manna time” 10 minutes

Days are like manna: once they’re gone, you can’t get them back. And you also can’t hoard them. They arrive fresh and new each morning, a gift.

Read Exodus 16:4-31, the story of how God provided the Israelites with manna in the wilderness. Then, wherever the word **manna** appears, substitute the word **time**, as in the following excerpt:

“Then the Lord said to Moses, I am going to rain hours, time from heaven for you, and each day the people shall rise up and have time enough for that day On the sixth day, when they gather up time, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days. Then Moses said to Aaron,

“Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, ‘Draw near to the Lord, who has heard your complaining about lack of time ... ’” The Lord spoke to Moses and said, “At twilight you shall eat with plenty of time, and in the morning you shall have your fill of time stretching out before you; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.” In the evening time came up and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of time upon the camp. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?”

Moses said to them, “It is the time that the Lord has given you. This is what the Lord has given you. This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Take as much time as you need for the day.’” Those who had too much time on their hands measured it in hours and had nothing left over, and those who had little time discovered as much as each of them needed. And Moses said to them, “Let no one leave any of the time over until morning.” But they did not listen to Moses; some used up the hours of the night until morning, and the time became to them foul; for they were tired and irritable. The house of Israel called it “time”; it was a new gift every day. [Adapted from Exodus 16:4-31]”

- from *Receiving the Day* study guide





Faith Practice Three: FORGIVENESS

“Lectio Divina, Psalm 51” 15 minutes

Distribute copies of Psalm 51:1-17, or have participants turn to passage in Bibles available in the same translation. To make a copy of the Psalm, you may download it from www.devotions.net/bible.

Leader will read the passage through once while participants listen. Then participants will prayerfully read passage to themselves.

Read these instructions to participants before beginning:

“Read the passage slowly and thoughtfully until you are attracted by a particular phrase, sentence, or longer section when you sense unusual power, beauty, or truth there.

Stop reading and sit quietly for a moment. Read that passage over, slowly, again and again.

Do not reason about the text. Do not analyze it. Just listen to the words and meaning. Let it do its work in you.

Stay with those words as long as they hold your attention. When this section of the passage has finished with you, simply resume reading.”

- from Receiving the Day study guide



“Challenges of Forgiveness” 10 minutes

Most of us have fresh experiences of situations where forgiveness did not happen. Have participants write down a personal experience where forgiveness did not happen. This is to be for their use only.

Then read to the group experiences of author Tom Long — first, with a pastoral care professor, (CR, p.29); then, with an incident on the street. (CR, pp. 30,31)

Read and discuss the quote:

“Part of the problem is that we are often less sure of what and whom we love than we are of what and whom we hate. Indeed, we too often stake our identity on being against some person or group.” (POF, p. 136)

“Exploring Forgiveness in the Bible”

15 minutes

Have participants divide into three groups.

Distribute the handout sheet “Exploring Forgiveness in the Bible.” Assign each group one of these topics.

- ◇ Forgiveness as divine
- ◇ Forgiveness and community
- ◇ Balancing justice and mercy

Have Bibles and resources from “Forgiveness,” *Christian Reflection* available to the groups as they work through their sheet.

Have someone in each group be a recorder to write down insights of the group.

Invite one from each group to share an insight of their group’s work.





Faith Practice Four: HEALING

“Laying On of Hands”

10 minutes

Have materials assembled: brightly colored paper, pencils, scissors

Have participants trace with pencil both of their hands on the colored paper. Then cut out the hands outlines.

Tell this story as they do so:

Bill is an elderly man with cancer. He has had great support from his congregation throughout his treatments. Several members wanted to know what specific things might help him to feel supported during his illness. As Bill pondered this, he happened to be walking through the halls of the church’s educational wing one Sunday. He noticed all the paper cutouts of the children’s hands displayed on the walls. They were bright and cheerful, lifting his spirits. He knew then what would be a meaningful gesture of support. He asked all the members of the church – young and old – to prayerfully make paper cutouts, tracing their hands (writing their names on them). Then they gave them to him, so that when he was having a treatment, or in the hospital, or feeling ill in bed at home, he could spread out those hands over his body and feel the support of the community. People

from far away heard about Bill’s request and began sending him paper cutouts of their hands as well. Members of the church began a ministry to others who were ill and would take paper cut-outs of hands and lay them on those in the ICU, or before surgery, or during rehabilitation as they prayed with them.

You may want to consider such a ministry in your congregation, taking the cutouts you have made and laying them on someone who is ill.



Faith Practice Five: DYING WELL

“If I Died Today...”

20 minutes

Distribute additional copies of handout if needed.

Participants may want to share the obituaries they have written (as this was assigned earlier). This is purely optional, though it can be a very moving experience for all involved.

NOTE: The time allotted for this activity may depend on how many want to share what they have written. What may be more important is to talk about what the process of writing one’s obituary was like.

Ask some of these questions:

- ◇ Was it hard to do?
- ◇ What resistance did you have?
- ◇ What feelings did it stir up?
- ◇ Did it help to reassess your priorities in life?
- ◇ Does what you wrote resemble your



“If I Died Today” cont. ...

pattern of life at present?

- ◇ Is there anything you want to ask God’s help to change in your way of life?

This could lead to a discussion of other questions flowing out of this like:

- ◇ How would you like to die?
- ◇ Whom would you like to have with you, and in what kind of place?
- ◇ What would you like the people most important to you to know, and what would you like them to tell you?
- ◇ How does your faith inform the way you envision this?

As a follow-up to these questions, you may want to distribute to participants copies of “Five Wishes” and “Isn’t It Time We Talk?” These are documents addressing advance directives for the end of life.



“Bedtime Ritual” 5 minutes

Play a recording of a lullaby (e.g. *Sleep Baby Sleep*).

Give the illustration of a mother teaching her daughter how to sleep as preparing to learn how to die. (RTD, p. 42, 43)

Talk about our childhood bedtime prayers (“Now I lay me down to sleep ... If I die before I wake”) and the idea of not fearing the grave more than one’s bed – something we have shied away from, even as we have changed the words to the bedtime prayer.

The mother mentioned in the above illustration believes that by teaching her daughters to sleep, she is teaching them to die. By teaching them to sleep now, she is giving them a gift that she hopes will one day allow them to relax into God’s own care without fear.



Faith Practice Six: SINGING OUR LIVES

“Singing Shapes Our Faith” 15 minutes

Have the group divide into pairs and ask them to talk to each other about their favorite hymn or song. You may want to remind them that new songs touch us as well and to consider them in their conversation.

Come back together and discuss how singing shapes our faith. Point out that the songs that we learn in childhood will stay with us in our old age, even when we cannot put two words together in a sentence because of dementia. Participants may have experienced loved ones being able to sing an entire hymn, even when they could no longer speak at all.

Tunes are just as important as the theology of words in molding us – for they speak to and from the heart.

Write on the board this quote by Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

“It is not you that sings, it is the church that is singing, and you, as a member . . . may share in its song.”

Refer participants to the rest of the quote in POF:

“Thus all singing together that is right must serve to widen our spiritual horizon, make us see our little company as a member of the great Christian church on earth, and help us willingly and gladly to join our singing, be it feeble or good, to the song of the church.” (p. 187).



Discuss the communal nature of song.

Discuss the quote from POF:

“Through this practice, music lends its power to all the other practices that shape and express who we are.” (p. 193)

Distribute the handout, “Ways to Practice Singing Our Lives,” indicating that these are things that participants may want to put into practice.

