



SALEM ALLIANCE CHURCH

**CURIOUS &
SEARCHING**

RESOURCE GUIDE



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HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This guide is a compilation of spiritual practices and resources that are specifically curated to help you engage with the stage you find yourself in on the Discipleship Pathway.

For each spiritual practice, there is a brief explanation as well as opportunities to put it into practice. We encourage you to read through the Resource Guide and see if there are one or two things that you sense the Holy Spirit inviting you to engage with.

These practices and resources are not the end goal but a means of deepening connection and communion with God, who is the one that transforms us into people of Christ-like love.

ABOUT THIS STAGE

Like its title, this stage is characterized by an attitude of curiosity and searching.

At this stage many people experience a desire to explore faith. This stage can happen at any age; some children find they are drawn toward God, and sometimes it isn't until adulthood that one begins to search for a deeper meaning to life and our place in the world. It may be that there is discontentment with your life or a crisis that has led to this place. Or perhaps you have noticed and experienced something in a person of faith that you find compelling and want to know more about.

This stage is a time to ask the basic questions:

- Is there more to this world than meets the eye?
- Is God real?
- What do I believe?

In addition, this is the time to research and begin to figure out the answers to these questions.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: READING SCRIPTURE

2 Timothy 3:16 (The Message)

Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way.

Description

What is the Bible? The Bible is a group of books that chronicles the history of the people of Israel. But more than that, it is a story of the way God interacts with all of humanity. These texts tell an epic story about how God is working through the people of ancient Israel to bring order and beauty out of the chaos of our world. Ultimately, this was fulfilled by God sending His Son, Jesus. Jesus' earliest followers documented His life and the story of the early church. The compilation of these writings (the history of the people of Israel and the story of Jesus) are the Bible we have today.

The Bible is made up of 66 books that are divided into the Old Testament (before Jesus was born) and the New Testament (the story of Jesus and His followers). Each book is divided into chapters and verses. Printed Bibles have a Table of Contents to find the start of each book within the Bible. From there you can find the chapter (the big numbers on the page) and the verse (the smaller numbers). Therefore, the "address" of a specific verse is Book, Chapter, Verse (Ex: John 3:16).

Studying the Bible (Scripture) reveals to us who God is, who we are, and why we are here. The purpose of studying is to know what the Bible says, to interact with God through His Word, and to understand how those words intersect with your life.

A FEW WAYS TO ENGAGE

LOOK AT JESUS IN SCRIPTURE

If you are unfamiliar with Scripture and are unsure about where to begin, choose one of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John) to start. Read to discover all that you can about Jesus. As you read, ask yourself the following questions:

- **What do you notice about how Jesus responds to the people and situations in this Scripture?**
- **What questions does Jesus ask people? What questions do people ask Jesus?**
- **What questions about Jesus do you have after reading this story?**
- **Through this Scripture, how might Jesus be inviting you to respond to the people and situations in your life?**

TIME TO PRACTICE:

Read through the Scripture below and answer the questions about Jesus on the next page.

Luke 8:43-48

43 A woman in the crowd had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding, and she could find no cure. 44 Coming up behind Jesus, she touched the fringe of his robe. Immediately, the bleeding stopped.

45 "Who touched me?" Jesus asked. Everyone denied it, and Peter said, "Master, this whole crowd is pressing up against you." 46 But Jesus said, "Someone deliberately touched me, for I felt healing power go out from me."

47 When the woman realized that she could not stay hidden, she began to tremble and fell to her knees in front of him. The whole crowd heard her explain why she had touched him and that she had been immediately healed. 48 "Daughter," he said to her, "your faith has made you well. Go in peace."

What do you notice about how Jesus responds to the people and situations in this Scripture?

What questions about Jesus do you have after reading this story?

Through this Scripture, how might Jesus be inviting you to respond to the people and situations in your life?

Many people find that journaling as they read and process is helpful. Journaling can mean anything from complete sentences to a few thoughts to doodles or drawings.



BIBLE READING PLANS

There are so many different ways to engage with, and read, the Bible. One of the ways is by using a reading plan. There are many reading plans that take you through the Bible in a year or through the New Testament in a year. Any plan that helps you spend more time engaging with God's Word is beneficial.

TIME TO PRACTICE:

Below are links to three different reading plans where you can start.:

How to Read the Bible Reading Plan with video supplements from the Bible Project.
(<https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/29316>)



Writings of John Reading Plan with video supplements from the Bible Project.
(<https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/9098>)



Book of Romans Reading Plan with Podcast supplements from She Reads Truth.
(<https://shereadstruth.com/plans/romans-2/>)



Consider asking someone to do a reading plan with you. This is a great way to further process your questions and share your thoughts.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: ATTENDING CHURCH

Acts 2:42-47

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer. ... And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. ... They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people.

“We go to church so as not to be alone—alone in our joys, alone in our suffering, alone in the everydayness of our lives, alone in the important passages of our lives... We go to church to tell people we love them, and hopefully, to hear them tell us the same thing.”—**Ronald Rolheiser**

Description

The family of God is not just a theoretical concept. Rather, it is a living organism where every person belongs, contributes, and finds health in right relationship to each other. No one person is meant to function alone or in isolation. Though the church is made up of imperfect people, God's family is meant to show the world what true belonging and love looks like.

Church includes both community and worship. Community happens through connections with one another in authentic and loving ways that encourage growth in Christ (becoming more like Jesus). Worship happens when we intentionally cherish God and value Him above all else. Worship reveals what is important to us.

Attending church and connecting to the family of God gives us a safe place to learn more about Jesus and ask our questions in a loving environment.



Weekend Services

Saturdays: 5:00 pm

Sundays: 8:00, 9:30, and 11:00 am

Join us for a weekend service, either in person or on Livestream on Sundays at 9:30 am. We're excited to worship with you!



Women's Ministries

A community of women growing together in heart, soul, and mind. Join us at The Gathering, a prayer night, women's retreat, or in a Life Group. We have ways to connect all year long. *For more information, scan the QR code or contact Morgan Tyler at mtyler@salemalliance.org.*



Men's Ministries

Wherever you are in your life, on top of the world or in the pit, close to Jesus or far away, come join with other men at Salem Alliance as we follow Christ. *For more information, scan the QR code or contact Josh Mann at jmann@salemalliance.org*



Life Groups

Life Groups is the way to get connected to a smaller community at Salem Alliance and plug into Life Together. *For more information, scan the QR code or contact Sam and Sarah at lifegroups@salemalliance.org.*

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: PRAYER

Philippians 4:6-7 *The Message*

Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 *The Message*

Be cheerful no matter what; pray all the time; thank God no matter what happens. This is the way God wants you who belong to Christ Jesus to live.

“Think often on God, by day, by night, in your business and even in your diversions. He is always near you and with you; leave him not alone.”—**Brother Lawrence**

Description

One of the most important elements of any relationship is communication. Prayer is communication and engagement with God. It is an opportunity for us to share our hearts with God as well as listen to His voice. Most simply, it is an ongoing conversation with the Creator of the universe.

The good news is that we do not need to be actively talking to God to be in prayer. We can simply be with God. That is the nature of communion with God. It is not dependent on constant verbal communication. Anything that draws our attention into deeper awareness of God is a form of prayer—whether that's being out in nature, cooking or cleaning, sitting quietly by ourselves or celebrating with friends. This is what Paul described as prayer without ceasing, in **1 Thessalonians 5:17**.

A FEW WAYS TO ENGAGE

P.R.A.Y.

God invites us to share our hearts with Him. A great way to learn more about prayer is to try it out for yourself. When you are first starting out, it can be helpful to have a structure to follow. Use the following template as an example of how you might pray during the day.

P: Pause. Take some time to center your thoughts on God and be present.

R: Rejoice. As you experience or reflect on your day, think about what you are thankful for and share it with God.

A: Ask. God loves you and likes you. Bring your requests, wonders, and questions to Him, He wants to hear them.

Y: Yield. The final step is to yield to God's presence and holiness.

TIME TO PRACTICE:

1. Decide on a time and a place to pray. If possible, pray every day this week using the prompts above. Choose somewhere that is free from distractions and helps you focus on God.

2. Decide on and commit to a time duration. Don't overreach. Start where you are. Aim for 5-10 minutes.

3. If you are more kinesthetic you may find it helpful to pray while walking, inside or in nature, or with something to keep your hands busy, like knitting or drawing.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

If you hope to get the most out of these spiritual practices, reflection is a helpful tool.

After engaging with one of these practices for a while, take five to ten minutes to journal your answers to the following three questions.

“We don’t change from our experience, we change when we reflect on our experience.” —Trevor Hudson

WHERE DID I NOTICE RESISTANCE AS I ENGAGED IN THIS PRACTICE?

WHERE DID I FEEL DELIGHT?

HOW WOULD I DESCRIBE THE CONNECTION AND COMMUNION WITH GOD I EXPERIENCED THROUGH THIS PRACTICE?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

BOOKS

- **Life Application Study Bible**
- ***Simply Jesus: A New Vision of Who He Was, What He Did, and Why He Matters*** by N.T. Wright (previously *Simply Christian*)
- ***Encounters with Jesus*** by Tim Keller
- ***Confronting Christianity: 12 Hard Questions for the World's Largest Religion*** by Rebecca McLaughlin
- ***Mere Christianity*** by C.S. Lewis
- ***The Case for Christ*** by Lee Strobel
- ***Start Here: Beginning a Relationship with Jesus*** by David Dwight & Nicole Unice
 - This book has discussion questions available. If you are interested please contact Next Steps nextsteps@salemalliance.org or 503.683.7406
- ***The Jesus Storybook Bible*** by Sally Lloyd-Jones or ***The Biggest Story Bible Storybook*** by Kevin DeYoung and Don Clark
 - While these books are written primarily for younger audiences, they both do a great job of making the Scriptures understandable. We suggest reading the chapter(s) in these books alongside the Scriptures they come from.

VIDEOS

- **Alpha Course:** <https://alphausa.org/try/>
- **The Chosen series:** <https://watch.thechosen.tv/>
- **The Bible Project:** <https://bibleproject.com/>
 - How to Read the Bible series: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/how-to-read-the-bible/>
- **The Prayer Course** by Pete Greig: <https://prayercourse.org/home/>

PODCASTS

- **Tim Keller's Questioning Christianity Podcast:**
<https://qcpodcast.gospelinlife.com/>

APPS

- **YouVersion Bible**
- **The Bible Project**
- **Bible Gateway**

YOU'RE INVITED TO JOURNEY WITH US AS WE PURSUE LIFE WITH JESUS, TOGETHER AND ON MISSION.

JESUS

- Baptism Class
- Exploring Faith Ministries
- Healing & Prayer Ministries

TOGETHER

- Weekend Services
- Partner Class
- Life Groups
- Age & Stage of Life Ministries

ON MISSION

- In Church
- In the Neighborhoods
- In the Nations
- Baraka (Refugee Ministries)



Find out more

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