



SALEM ALLIANCE CHURCH

DISCOVERING & FOLLOWING

RESOURCE GUIDE

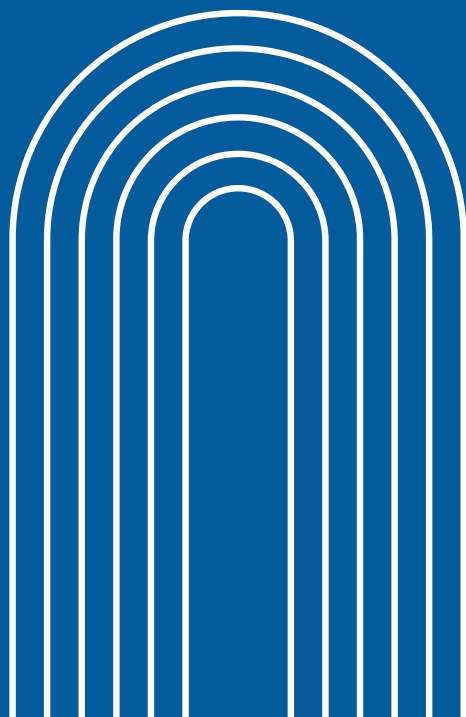


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HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

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

This stage is characterized by Discovery & Following.

While this stage continues to include learning and curiosity, it is often hallmarked by a sense of awe and acceptance about the reality of God in our lives. In this stage, we decide to embark on this spiritual journey and begin to grasp that there is a God who knows and loves us. This discovery of God leads us to accept the reality of Jesus as King and make a commitment to following Him.

Typically we come to this stage in the journey in a childlike way. There is an innocence, a freshness, and a vitality in this stage. We simply know and trust that God is there. And because of that, we have the opportunity to grow and learn as we begin our journey with Jesus.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: ATTENDING CHURCH

Hebrews 10:25

And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is fulfilled.

“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 email 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 email Josh 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: WORSHIP

Ephesians 5:19-20

Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 12:1-2 (The Message)

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out.

“If worship does nothing else for us, it helps us discover the things that are important. Real worship will transform your life.” —**Warren Wiersbe**

Description

Worship is a word most often associated with religion. But everybody worships something. Everyone looks to something or someone to give their lives meaning. Worship—what we love, adore, and focus on—reveals what we value most.

True worship happens when we put God first in our lives. Worship is how we are transformed into the likeness of God. Discipline, willpower, giftedness, and going to church can be good things, but they do not guarantee transformation.

The heart of worship is to seek to know and love God in our own unique way. Each one of us reflects a part of God's image. Each one of us loves and glorifies God in a particular way that no one else can.

WHAT DO I VALUE MOST? EXERCISE

Human beings cannot help but assign ultimate value and worth to someone or something. That doesn't mean everyone worships God. One's ultimate devotion can rest in money, success, a person, a garden, a creed, a cause, and so forth. Ultimately, what we are devoted to will shape our lives.

TIME TO PRACTICE:

1. Come before God with an open and listening ear. Answer this question: "What do I value most?" To help you discern what you value most, consider what you spend the most time, money, and attention on.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

2. Next ask your kids, spouse, colleagues, family members, church friends, and/or God the same question about yourself. What do they think you value most? Where are there similarities and differences to the things you wrote down above?

3. As you reflect on your values and the things others say that you value, what could or does it look like to express worship to God as your highest value? Is there something that needs to change in your life for this to happen? Ask the Holy Spirit to bring His conviction and guidance.

CELEBRATION & GRATITUDE

One way to worship—to love and adore God above all else—is through celebration and gratitude.

As we celebrate and give God our gratitude, we join in with the Heavenly realms, giving glory and honor to the Creator of all things. This kind of worship is not dependent on our circumstances. Throughout Scripture we are encouraged to be thankful in every situation and to rejoice always (**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**).

TIME TO PRACTICE:

Here are a few ideas of how you could try practicing Celebration & Gratitude:

- 1. Attend a corporate worship service and sing praises to God.** You may also like to use your body in worship. Raising your hands, kneeling, lying down, dancing, and other bodily expressions are all forms of worship that the people of God have used to praise Him throughout history.
- 2. Spend some time in nature thinking about the Creator and thanking Him for what you notice.**
- 3. Consider how God celebrates you.** Read **Zephaniah 3:17**. Then be still and listen. How is God celebrating you? Celebrate the God who celebrates you. Intentionally ask for the gift of appreciating yourself the way God does.
- 4. Begin a gratitude journal by keeping a record of the “abundances” God has given you.** What do you want to say to God about these things?
- 5. End every day by saying thank you to God for at least one thing.** Then tell God what that one thing meant for you.

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.

Psalms 119:97

Oh, how I love your instructions! I think about them all day long.

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) 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

MEMORIZATION

Memorization allows us to choose the words and images that shape our minds and hearts. It gives the mind somewhere to go when all the media and noise of the world is turned off. In addition, memorizing God's Word lets us access divinely inspired thoughts and wisdom, even when we aren't aware of it.

TIME TO PRACTICE:

Here are a few ideas of how you could try practicing Memorization:

- 1. Memorize some of the hymns or worship songs that include Scripture.** Sing the bits you remember. Listen again to the bits you forget. Write them out if it helps you. When you have committed the song to memory, notice when the song simply pops into your mind. Let the song be a way God enters into your life and speaks to you.
- 2. When you find yourself captivated by a Scripture, write it on a card that you can tape to a mirror, a window, or even the shower wall.** Every day read the verse or passage, rehearsing it in your mind and heart. On a daily basis remind yourself of this Scripture until you know it by heart.
- 3. Memorize a chapter of the Bible.** Take your time with this. Let the words sink into your soul. If singing helps you to remember things, don't be afraid to sing the words.

SOAP METHOD

The SOAP method is a great way to engage with Scripture. Whether you are brand new to the Bible or you are a seasoned veteran, SOAP's provide an easy, practical and interactive way to not only study the Bible, but to also respond to the voice of God as He speaks to us through it.

S - Scripture. Read a Bible passage. Write down a word, phrase, or scripture reference that jumps out to you.

O - Observation. Take a few moments to observe in more detail the scripture you're focusing on. What are you noticing about this particular scripture? What do you think the main message is? What verses, words, or ideas jump out to you?

A - Application. Now begin to reflect on application. How might the Holy Spirit be prompting you to respond? What is a next step you could take to apply this truth to your life? (You may find there are some times when reading Scripture that this step doesn't apply.)

P - Prayer. End by writing out a prayer to God in response. What do you want to tell God as a result of what you've read and He's revealed to you during this time?

Example:

S - Proverbs 14:31 *Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.*

O - Father God, I see that You are someone who identifies with the poor and oppressed. You are a God who desires to deliver the afflicted.

A - How are You calling me today to honor You through my generosity to the poor?

P - Holy Spirit, give me eyes to see the poor among us. May I be generous toward them when I do. Give me wisdom to know how to respond. May I see Your image in them and treat them as I would Christ.

TIME TO PRACTICE:

Choose a Scripture and write your own SOAP below

S

O

A

P

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: 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.

BREATH PRAYER

Breath prayer is a way to use the simple act of breathing to commune and communicate with God. They are short, one-sentence prayers, rooted in Scripture that are aligned with our breath—the first half is prayed while inhaling, the second half is prayed while exhaling. They remind us that each breath we are given is God’s gift and that God’s Spirit is nearer to us than our own breath. These prayers can be easily repeated throughout our day as a way of meditating on God’s Word and reminding ourselves of His presence with us.

TIME TO PRACTICE:

Find one or two phrases you want to communicate to God; as you breathe in, say one; as you breathe out, say another. Focus on the words you are praying and offer them sincerely to God. Try one of these below or come up with one on your own.

Lord, help me be still, and know You are God.

God, I need You.

Lord, give me wisdom (or strength or patience).

God, I know You are good; please carry me.

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

In the earliest days of the church, believers were taught to pray the Scriptures. Since the Bible is divinely inspired, they believed that praying Scripture deeply connected them to the mind and heart of God.

TIME TO PRACTICE:

Psalm 23 is a beautiful expression of the kingdom of God, in which God is with us, caring and providing for us, and blessing us, even in trying circumstances.

Try to recite this psalm before you fall asleep each night and first thing when you wake up in the morning. Recite it so often this week that it becomes second nature. You will notice that you start to pray it at unique times.

*The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need.
He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams.
He renews my strength.
He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name.
Even when I walk through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me.
Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.
You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies.
You honor me by anointing my head with oil.
My cup overflows with blessings.
Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life,
and I will live in the house of the LORD forever.*

This is just one example of praying Scripture. Feel free to use any Scripture that speaks to you and let God speak through it.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: RECEIVING MENTORING

Colossians 3:16

Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.

“The Creator arranged things so that we need each other.”—**Basil of Caesarea**

Description

We don't automatically change just because we learn something new. Most of us need more help with transformation than that. We need examples, relationships, hands-on experience, support, and empowerment.

Godly mentors and friends help people grow. They believe in you. They share their lives, experiences, and God-given resources to help nurture your faith and journey with Jesus.

RECEIVING MENTORING AT SAC



Discipleship Coaching

Discipleship is the journey of following and becoming more like Jesus. We would love to invite you to discuss your discipleship journey with a coach. Scan the QR code or contact Cary Wood at cwood@salemalliance.org.



Next Steps Ministries

If you are looking for next steps to growing in your faith, we have a variety of people who are prepared to meet with you. To connect with someone, contact Cary Wood, nextsteps@salemalliance.org.



Pastoral Care

Many of our pastoral staff are equipped and ready to listen and pray with folks who are seeking spiritual care and discernment. To connect with a pastor, contact Gordon Bergman, gbergman@salemalliance.org.



Life Groups

Life Groups is the way to get connected to a smaller community at Salem Alliance and people who are a little further down the road than you. For more information, scan the QR code or contact Sam and Sarah at lifegroups@salemalliance.org.

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?

WHERE DO I SEE EVIDENCE OF MYSELF BECOMING A PERSON OF CHRIST-LIKE LOVE THROUGH THIS PRACTICE?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

BOOKS

- **Life Application Study Bible**
- **Your New Life with Christ booklet** from Salem Alliance Church
 - Email Next Steps: nextsteps@salemalliance.org
- **Two Page Bible** by Joel Kaziro
 - <https://twopagebible.com/>
- **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
- **Start Here: Beginning a Relationship with Jesus** by David Dwight & Nicole Unice
 - This book has discussion questions. 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.
- **Practicing the Way: Be with Jesus, Become like Him, Do as He Did** by John Mark Comer
- **How to Pray: A Simple Guide for Normal People** by Pete Greig

VIDEOS

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

PODCASTS

- **How to Read the Bible series:**
<https://bibleproject.com/podcast/series/how-to-read-the-bible-series/>

APPS

- **YouVersion Bible**
- **The Bible Project**
- **Bible Gateway**
- **Lectio 365**

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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