

SALEM ALLIANCE CHURCH

LEARNING & BELONGING

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 best characterized as a time of Learning and Belonging.

In this stage we learn about God with others and through people we respect and trust. We are apprentices. Because we are relatively unsure and insecure at first in our growth and in what we believe, it is very useful to include others in this phase. In fact it is crucial to this phase of the journey that we are taught by others. Sometimes we learn from getting together and talking, or sometimes we learn from others' writings.

At this stage, we clearly are the learners, not the teachers. This is a filling stage. It can feel like a one-way street. This means vulnerability, and some feelings of fear and even inadequacy accompany the excitement of new learning. But learning with others helps mitigate those feelings. We learn to be obedient disciples; to trust the teacher or leader and to follow their example as they follow Christ.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: READING SCRIPTURE

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

"The Bible is not an end in itself, but a means to bring men to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God, that they may enter into Him, that they may delight in His Presence, may taste and know the inner sweetness of the very God Himself in the core and center of their hearts." —A. W. Tozer

Description

The Bible is divine revelation—God's own word to us. It reveals who God is, who we are and why we are here. Through Bible study we gain insights into God, human nature and creation. Studying Scripture can equip, guide and reveal how to live in lifegiving ways that deepen our friendship with God and others. Both the Old and New Testaments encourage regular study, meditation, contemplation and memorization of God's Word. The benefits of Bible study are directly related to how open, attentive, and obedient we are to what we read.

A FEW WAYS TO ENGAGE

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 P

INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

Inductive Bible study is a method of studying the Bible that allows you to discover for yourself what Scripture says, what it means, and how to apply its truths to your life. It involves three steps: observation, interpretation, and application.

- **1. Observe. This step is about observing exactly what the text is saying**. Ask yourself the four W's and H: Who? What? Where? When? How? As you do, also make note of:
 - Repeated words & themes
 - Contrasts & comparisons
 - Conditional statements
 - Commands

- Emotions & emphatic statements
- Figures of speech
- Illustrations
- Lists
- 2. Interpret. Interpretation is not asking what it means to us today, but what it meant to the original hearers and readers. It involves understanding the author's viewpoint, as well as the viewpoint of their audience. Understanding the historical context is essential to good interpretation. A couple of interpretive questions that are helpful to ask:
 - Why did the author...?
 - What is the significance of this to the original readers?
- **3. Apply. Application is the goal of inductive Bible study.** The study of Scripture should result in changed lives (**James 1:22-25**). After observing and interpreting, we should ask ourselves, "So what? What am I going to do as a result of what I've learned?" Spend quality time on this step. Pray and ask God how He would have you respond by using the following questions:
 - In light of my observations and interpretation, what is a timeless truth that is being revealed through the text?
 - What is God saying to me through this timeless truth?
 - How is God inviting me to respond to and/or apply this truth in my life?

Example:

Philemon

1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother. To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker— 2 also to Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier—and to the church that meets in your home. 3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, 5 because I hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus. 6 I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. 7 Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people.

8 Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, 9 yet I prefer to appeal to you on the basis of love. It is as none other than Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus—10 that I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. 11 Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me. 12 I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you.

13 I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. 14 But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do would not seem forced but would be voluntary. 15 Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever— 16 no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord.

17 So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. 18 If he has done you any wrong

or owes you anything, charge it to me. 19 I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back—not to mention that you owe me your very self. 20 I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. 21 Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

22 And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers.

23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. 24 And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers. 25 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

OBSERVE

Who:

- Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus (v. 1)
- Philemon, dear friend and fellow worker (v. 1)
- Apphia, our sister and Archippus
- Onesimus, a spiritual son to Paul (v. 10) and slave to Philemon (v. 16)

Where:

• To the church in Philemon's home (v. 2)

Contrast:

- I could order you...but I prefer to appeal (v. 9)
- No longer a slave but as a dear brother (v. 16)

Conditional Statement:

So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me.
 (v. 17)

INTERPRET

Why did Paul write this to not only Philemon, but to the church that meets in his home?

The stakes were high for Onesimus returning to Philemon. In that culture, it was common for returning slaves to be severely punished. By including others in his correspondence, Paul is ensuring this wouldn't be a private matter. Philemon would be accountable to a community of believers for how he receives Onesimus.

What was the significance of Paul appealing to receive Onesimus back as a brother in Christ?

What Paul is asking of Philemon was unheard of in this culture. Slaves were property and inferior to their masters. To receive Onesimus as a "dear brother" in Christ would be extremely counter cultural.

APPLICATION

In light of my observations and interpretation, what is a timeless truth that is being revealed through the text?

8

The gospel invites us to live counter-culturally and challenge the relational norms.

What is God saying to me through this timeless truth?

It's so easy as a follower of Jesus to go along with the cultural norms and only ever spend time with people who think like you, have the same socioeconomic status as you and even dress like you. I feel challenged to re-think how I act toward others who are different from me.

How is God inviting me to respond to and/or apply this truth in my life?

As I listen for God's voice, I sense Him inviting me to show hospitality toward others who are often overlooked in society. There are a number of people who live on my street who are refugees or who don't have homes that I feel led to develop relationships with and learn more about their stories.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Who wrote the book of Philemon?

• I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand (v. 19)

When was the book written?

- Paul describes himself as in prison and as an old man (v. 9)
- Philemon most likely was written during Paul's imprisonment in Ephesus (*Tyndale Bible Dictionary*)

Who was the book written to?

- To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker (v. 1)
- To the church that meets in your home (v. 2)
- Philemon was a church leader in Colossae (Tyndale Bible Dictionary)

What is the cultural, social, political and geographical situation?

 Onesimus was a runaway slave (v. 15). If a slave ran away and then was returned to their master, there would be severe consequences (*IVP Bible Background Commentary*). Paul was appealing to Philemon to receive Onesimus back no longer as a slave but a brother in Christ (v. 16).

Read through Philemon and engage with the three steps of Inductive Bible Study, making your own observations, interpretations, and application.
OBSERVE As illustrated in the example, you may like to use a color code to identify your observations in the text.
INTERPRET

TIME TO PRACTICE:

APPLICATION

In light of my observations and interpretation, what is a timeless truth that					
is being revealed through the text?					
What is God saying to me through this timeless truth?					
How is God inviting me to respond to and/or apply this truth in my life?					

LECTIO DIVINA: DEVOTIONAL READING

Lectio Divina, also known as devotional reading, is not an exercise in mentally critiquing or understanding the text but is a practice of hearing and responding to the loving voice of God through the words of Scripture. It's an invitation to deeper communion with God and provides opportunity for greater experiential knowing of His love for us like Paul describes in **Ephesians 3:19**: "to know this love that surpasses knowledge."

Lectio Divina is traditionally made up of four steps:

- 1. Read. Read the passage slowly and carefully. Take your time. As you move through the text, pay close attention to what words and ideas draw your attention in unique ways. When your focus is drawn to a particular word or thought, pause momentarily and make note of what you are noticing.
- 2. Reflect. Return to the beginning and read again. On your second reading through the text, allow the text to connect with you personally. Which words or phrases assume a particular resonance in your heart, your season of life, your person in this moment. Ask, "What do I need to know, be, or do in light of the text? What does this mean for my life today?"
- **3. Respond. Talk to God about your experience.** If you're confused, say that. Moved? Express gratitude to God. Upset? Tell Him about it. Compelled to worship? Worship. If the text has brought something else to mind, talk to God about that.
- **4. Rest. Pause to sit in God's presence before moving on.** Allow yourself to feel and experience these things quietly with God.

TIME TO PRACTICE:

Choose a psalm or story from the gospels and follow the four steps above.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: COMMUNITY

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 drawing near."

"Spiritual formation occurs primarily in the context of community. People who remain contented with their brothers and sisters in the local church almost invariably grow in self-understanding, and they mature in their ability to relate in healthy ways to God and to their fellow human beings. This is especially the case for those courageous Christians who stick it out through the often messy process of interpersonal discord and conflict resolution. Long-term interpersonal relationships are the crucible of genuine progress in the Christian life."

—Joseph Hellerman

Description

Spiritual transformation is not a solo event. God works in us through others. We all need a circle of friends to encourage, support, and speak the truth. Without their authentic voices, we may never truly see who we are. It is the unconditional love of a small community that can give us the courage to name the good, the bad, and the ugly about ourselves. Community can help us press into God's love when it seems beyond us.

ENGAGING IN COMMUNITY AT SAC



Life Groups

We as Salem Alliance church have been called to do life with Jesus, together, and on mission so that Salem would be transformed into a city at peace with God. A primary way for this transformation to take place is through Life Groups. For more info, scan the QR code or contact Sam and Sarah at lifegroups@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 info, scan the QR code or contact Josh Mann at jmann@salemalliance.org.



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 info, scan the QR code or contact Morgan Tyler at mtyler@salemalliance.org.



International Prayer Gathering

A Sunday gathering where refugees, immigrants, and friends from Salem & all over the world meet together. We share a meal, learn from scripture, worship, and pray in multiple languages. For more info, scan the QR code or contact Doug Holcomb at dholcomb@salemalliance.org



Online Communities

An online community for those who watch the livestream at Salem Alliance. For more info, scan the QR code or contact Greg Gallagher at ggallagher@salemalliane.org.



Partner Class

Becoming a partner is an opportunity to make a formal declaration that you are invested in Salem Alliance Church and its growth and success. For more info, scan the QR code or contact Cary Wood at nextsteps@salemalliance.org.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: PRAYER

1 Thessalonians 5:17 *Pray without ceasing.*

"Prayer is awe, intimacy, struggle—yet the way to reality. There is nothing more important, or harder, or richer, or more life-altering. There is absolutely nothing so great as prayer." —**Timothy Keller**

"The real 'work' of prayer is to become silent and listen to the voice that says good things about me."

—Henri Nouwen

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 (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

A FEW WAYS TO ENGAGE

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

When the disciples asked Jesus, "Teach us to pray," in Luke 11, Jesus replied, "This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name...' He

gave them a pre-made prayer, or what some call a liturgy, to pray to God.

Liturgies can look like praying the Lord's Prayer, singing through the Psalms or using a prayer app on your phone. This way of praying can be incredibly helpful in various seasons of our lives: when we're learning to pray, when we're exhausted or sick, when we're traveling and find it hard to focus, or when we're living with grief and doubt. Any time we are searching for the right words to talk to God. "The prayers of the saints," as some call them, can carry us through.

TIME TO PRACTICE:

Pray through the Lord's Prayer by following the prompts below:

"Our Father in heaven"

- Think about the idea of God as your loving parent, one who has good and kind intentions toward you.
- If you like, imagine Him embracing you, or smiling at you. Picture His face. Make eye contact with Him.

"Hallowed be your name"

- Sit with your Father in joyful, grateful worship.
- You might want to sit in silence for a few moments, or sing a chorus, or rattle off a list of things you're grateful for, or praise God with specific things you love about Him.

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"

- Allow the Spirit to lead you toward people, places, and situations that He longs to deliver, heal, and provide for
- If you don't have a sense of God's leading, that's okay;
 think of specific things you're aware of in your life and others to pray for.

"Give us each day our daily bread"

- Now spend some time asking God for things you need.
- Your daily bread may be physical, relational, financial, emotional, or spiritual.

"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors"

- Spend a few minutes in quiet asking God for forgiveness in specific areas in your life.
- You can do that by speaking out loud the specific areas of sin and shame in your life, or by asking the Spirit to search your heart and reveal them to you.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"

 Ask for God's strength and resolve to resist temptation from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

"For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen"

- Take a moment to verbally declare the reality of this in your own words.
- Finish with a prayer of thankfulness and gratitude for God's presence with you during this time.

LISTENING PRAYER

There comes a point in our relationship with God where we desire not just to speak to Him, but also to listen—to hear His voice. As Jesus said in John 10:27, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." But how do we hear God's voice? While He doesn't always speak in the ways we're used to, He does speak in a variety of ways—through Jesus, then Scripture, circumstances, desire, prophecy, dreams, visions, the "still small voice," and more.

Learning to sift through all the "voices" in our head and to discern how God is speaking to us is a key task of discipleship. But learning to hear is just the beginning; learning to obey is the even greater task. Our intention must be to really listen to God with a heart of loving surrender and trust.

TIME TO PRACTICE:

- **1. Start in Silence.** Ask God to silence the voice of the enemy in your mind, to to keep you from distractions, and to shield and guard your imagination.
- 2. Ask the Spirit to speak to you.
- **3. Open your mind and heart to listen. 1 Corinthians 6:19** tells us our body is a "temple of the Holy Spirit." The Spirit within you has direct access to your imagination. Wait quietly with a surrendered heart. He may come to you with a word or phrase, Scripture, thought or picture in your mind, feeling in your heart, or a sensation in your body.

If nothing comes, don't judge yourself, or God. Just give thanks for His love and try again later. Our job is to be present to God and to listen for His voice when He desires to speak to us.

- 4. Test whatever you "hear" against Scripture and in community.
- 5. Obey. Finally, if God's word to you was directional, obey. Go do what He said.

GOD LANGUAGES

There isn't a one size fits all approach to connecting and communing with God. Your God language—or spiritual temperament—are the unique and different ways you best relate to God.

Below is a list of some of the different God languages, or ways that we can naturally connect with God:

- Naturalists connecting with God through nature.
- Sensates connecting with God through the senses.
- Traditionalists connecting with God through ritual and symbol.
- Ascetics connecting with God through solitude and simplicity.
- Activists connecting with God through confronting injustice.
- Caregivers connecting with God through loving others.
- Enthusiasts connecting with God through celebration.
- Contemplatives connecting with God through contemplation.
- Intellectuals connecting with God through the mind.

TIME TO PRACTICE:

1. Take a God languages assessment. If you're are not sure what your God language is, a great place to start is to take the Spiritual Temperment test. (Scan the QR code to take the test.)

2. Try out spiritual practices based on you God languages. Once you are aware of some of your God languages, try out a few of the spiritual practices suggested for those God languages. (Scan the QR code to find these practices.)



VISIO DIVINA: HOLY SEEING

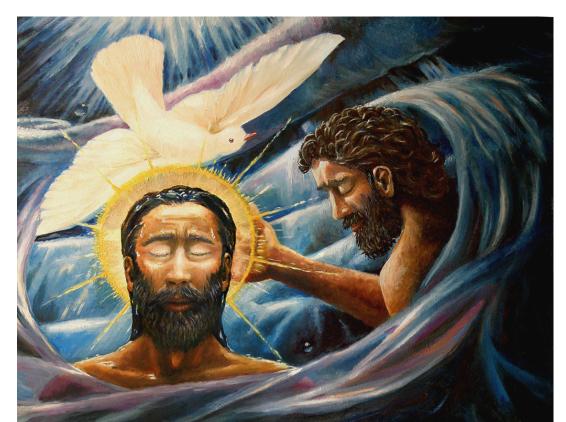
Visio divina, holy seeing, is a way to pray using our eyes. For centuries the church has put icons, the cross, stained glass, mosaics, art, and statues in churches as invitations to pray using our eyes.

- **1. Be still.** Let your inside noise quiet and put yourself in God's presence. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you.
- 2. Gaze. Gaze at the image with openness and seek to see with God's eyes.
- **3. Ponder.** Notice what stirs within you. What responses, memories, and feelings does the image evoke? What connection does the image make with your life? Take your time.
- **4. Respond to God.** Respond to God about what you are seeing and sensing. Ask Him what He is revealing to you through this experience. Let the image draw you into deeper communion with God throughout your day.

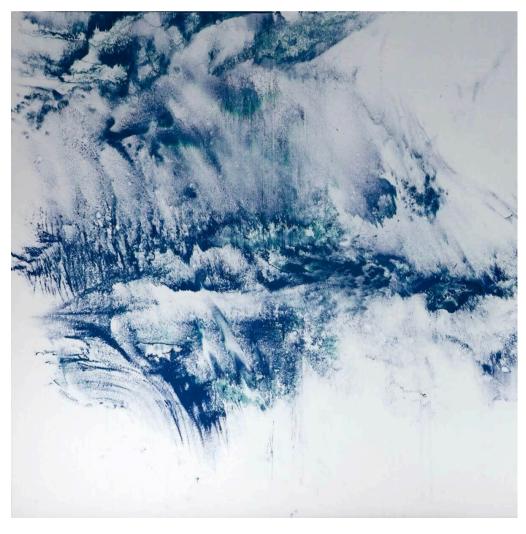
TIME TO PRACTICE:

Here are a few ways you could practice Visio Divina. Try one of the four options below:

- 1. Look at one of the works of art on the next page (or choose your own) and follow the steps for Visio Divina.
- **2. Open your heart to noticing how God speaks through nature.** If a sunset, a view, or a ray of sunshine grabs your attention, stop. Let God speak to you through this experience. Then respond to God about the stirrings that come up within you.
- **3. Visit a beautiful building with the express purpose of meeting God there.** Don't force anything to happen; simply be attentive. Your intention to meet God is what matters most. Trust that God will speak in His timing.
- **4. Gather with a group of people who want to learn Visio Divina.**Go to a museum and practice "holy seeing." What comes up for each of you? Share your experiences with each other.



The Baptism of Christ By David Zelenka



Walking on Water By Makoto Fujimura

ENGAGING WITH PRAYER AT SAC



Recognizing God's Voice Seminar

Connect with God more deeply and regularly. God loves to communicate with His people and has given each one of us a unique way of relating to His voice and His presence. *Email Laura Scharer at Ischarer@salemalliance.org for more details.*



Sunrise Prayer

We are a church committed to praying for our neighborhoods. We have an opportunity for you to join us in this call. Scan the QR code for more info or email Ashley Dalen at adalen@salemalliance.org.



International Prayer Gathering

International Prayer Gathering is a Sunday gathering where refugees, immigrants, and friends from Salem and all over the world meet together. Scan the QR code for more info or email Doug Holcomb at dholcomb@salemalliance.org.



The Upper Room

The Upper Room is a quiet place to pray and reflect. Located on the fourth floor of Broadway Commons, The Upper Room is open from 10:00 am-4:00 pm, Monday through Friday.



Prayer Lists

We receive and send out prayer requests on a weekly basis. To receive and pray those requests, contact Gordon Bergman at gbergman@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 DES This practice?	SCRIBE THE CONNECTION AND COMMUNION WITH GOD I EXPERIENCED THROUGH
WHERE DO I SEE ET PRACTICE?	VIDENCE OF MYSELF BECOMING A PERSON OF CHRIST-LIKE LOVE THROUGH THIS

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

BOOKS

- Practicing the Way: Be with Jesus, Become like Him, Do as He Did by John Mark Comer
- How to Pray, How to Hear God by Pete Greig
- Anything: The Prayer That Unlocked My God and My Soul by Jennie Allen
- The Good and Beautiful Community by James Bryan Smith
- The Pursuit of God by A.W. Tozer
- Gentle and Lowly, Deeper by Dane Ortlund
- Spiritual Disciplines Handbook by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun
- What's Your God Language? by Myra Perrine
- Tyndale Bible Dictionary & IVP Bible Background Commentary
- Life Application Study Bible NLT
- Believing God Day by Day: Growing Your Faith All Year Long by Beth Moore

VIDEOS

- Practicing the Way course (practicingtheway.org/course)
- The Prayer Practice by Practicing the Way (<u>practicingtheway.org/prayer</u>)
- The Bible Project
 - How to read the Bible Series (https://bibleproject.com/explore/how-to-read-the-bible/)
 - Tanak/Old Testament (<u>https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/old-testament-tanak/</u>)
 - New Testament Overview (<u>https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/new-testament-overview/</u>)
- The Lectio Course (https://www.24-7prayer.com/resource/lectio-course/)

PODCASTS

- Rule of Life Podcast Prayer series
 Ep 01-04
- Life Together sermon by Rob
 Bashioum
 (https://www.salemalliance.org/mes-sages/life-together/?action=listen)

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)



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