

# ACTIVATED

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE





## TAKE TIME TO BE HOLY

Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord;  
Abide in Him always, and feed on His Word.  
Make friends of God's children; help those who are weak,  
Forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.

Take time to be holy, the world rushes on;  
Spend much time in secret with Jesus alone.  
By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be;  
Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.

Take time to be holy, let Him be thy guide;  
And run not before Him whatever betide.  
In joy or in sorrow still follow thy Lord,  
And, looking to Jesus, still trust in His Word.

Take time to be holy, be calm in thy soul;  
Each thought and each motive beneath His control.  
Thus led by His Spirit to fountains of love,  
Thou soon shalt be fitted for service above.

# CONTENT

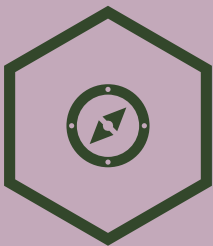
Continuing Spiritual Rhythms . . . . .	4
How To Use This Guide . . . . .	5
Activated: Group Process . . . . .	6
The First Missionary Journey . . . . .	7
Paul's First Sermon. . . . .	8
Christian Perseverance . . . . .	9
First Church Council . . . . .	10
Stay on mission even when . . . . .	11
The Oracle Showdown. . . . .	12
Paul's TED Talk. . . . .	13
Everyone on Mission. . . . .	14
The Fall of Hogwarts. . . . .	15
Paul's Fiery furnace . . . . .	16
Leading by Example . . . . .	17
Passing the Baton . . . . .	18
The Journey to Trouble . . . . .	19
Paul's Conversion . . . . .	20
When the Hard Hand is Dealt . . . . .	21
Before Leaders. . . . .	22
The Storm . . . . .	23
Resistance in Rome . . . . .	24
Be Witnessing . . . . .	25

# CONTINUING SPIRITUAL RHYTHMS

*"The goal of the Christian life is not so much a set of behaviors as it is an orientation of the soul toward God and His kingdom."*

— Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

Our previous sermon series experimented with spiritual rhythms. Our goal was not to create laws or formulas for ourselves, but to create new encounters with God. As we move into a new series we don't want these encounters to stop. We are not moving on to something new, we are continuing to pursue God.



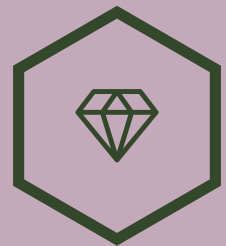
## INTENTIONALITY

Remember without intentionality and planning our spiritual health can become lopsided or weak. Periods of regular assessment can be helpful for identifying areas of our spiritual life that are weak and in need of strengthening.



## GENEROSITY


As we continue to shape our lives around encountering God, He promises to empower us. God graciously gives spiritual rhythms to help us meet with Him in deeper and more intimate ways. He longs to fill us up and send us out to be a blessing to those around us.



## EXCELLENCE


God has given us these practices as a means by which He can transform us – a transformation that only happens through an ever-deepening relationship with Him. Our role in this relationship is simply to place ourselves before Him so he can transform us.

# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE




Continue practicing your individual spiritual rhythms.

- Continue to pursue God through spiritual rhythms.
- Build upon the rhythms you established during our last series.




Notice how God's moving in your everyday activities and share this with your group.

- Each week you will find an open-ended question intended to explore your personal rhythms.
- Be prepared to reflect on how your rhythms are impacting your awareness of God.



Engage in the weekly group rhythm.

- Each week you will find a summary of a spiritual practice designed for groups.
- Use the suggested process to practice this rhythm as a group during your time together.



Reflect on your experience.

- Each week will contain a set of steps to help process the experience together.
- Keep an open mind and help determine if this rhythm is something your group wants to continue to incorporate.

*"The life that is pleasing to God is not a series of religious duties. We have only one thing to do, namely, to experience a life of relationship and intimacy with God." — Richard Foster*

# ACTIVATED: GROUP PROCESS

1

How is God activating your group this week?

2

Share how you are sensing God's call on your life this week. Listen as others share with you.

3

Lean into the Holy Spirit and spur one another on. This may include encouragement or asking questions.

4

Pray over these specific activations in the lives of one another.

## SELF-REFLECTION

How did God get your attention during your personal rhythms with Him this week?

What is one thing God brought to your attention while listening to the sermon this week?

## HOW DID THAT GO?

What did you enjoy about this group experience?

What was uncomfortable?

How do you think a regular practice of this could benefit our group?

# LECTIO DIVINA

## THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

2/14/2021

ACTS 13:1-12

Lectio Divina is a spiritual practice developed by St. Benedict in the sixth century as a way to meditate on and engage with the Word of God. As a group you will read through a passage of Scripture slowly three times, pausing between each reading to reflect and share. While theology may inform what you hear, this encounter is meant to highlight what the Word is brushing up against right now in your life. Expect this practice to take 15-20 minutes. Specific details for your group are laid out below.

### STEP ONE

Select one person to read Acts 13:4-12. Take a 10-15 second pause before you begin reading slowly through the passage. If you are not the one reading, feel free to follow along in your own Bible. While the passage is read, pay attention for a word or phrase that jumps out to you. When the passage is complete, pause for another 10-15 seconds. Go around your group and invite everyone to simply share the word or phrase that stuck out to them or say "pass."

### STEP TWO

Select a new person to read Acts 13:4-12. Pause for 10-15 seconds before beginning to read slowly through the passage. During this reading let an image come to mind. This image may or may not be literal; figurative images can help you process the passage and hear what God has to say. Not everyone has a visual mind, so if an image doesn't surface, that's ok. When the passage is complete, pause for another 10-15 seconds. Again, go around your group and invite everyone to share the image that came to mind. If nothing came to mind or you do not want to share, just say "pass."

### STEP THREE

Select a new person to read Acts 13:4-12. Again, pause for 10-15 seconds before starting. This time listen for an invitation from God. To what is He inviting you today? At the end of this reading, pause for 30-45 seconds to allow everyone a few moments to be still and quiet with God. Invite everyone to share what they experienced during this time through the passage. Limit this time of sharing to just one minute per person so everyone gets a chance to share.

### NEXT

Open the conversation to the group. Are there ways God is trying to activate you or your group? The "activated" group processing questions (page 6) are a helpful guide as your group engages with this material and with God.



# DWELL IN THE WORD

## PAUL'S FIRST SERMON

2/28/2021

ACTS 13:13-52

This spiritual practice is characterized by reading Scripture together, asking questions, and listening to the answers of others. Inside spiritual practices as a group, no one individual gets to be the authority. We honor the indwelling Holy Spirit at work in the heart of our group members and allow the questions and thoughts that arise from God to have jurisdiction over the moment.

### STEP ONE

Select one person to read Acts 13:13-52. During this reading you will be looking to answer one of the following two questions:

- What may someone who is far from God ask about this passage?
- What would you tell 'the you' from 10 years ago about this passage?

Read through the passage and then allow a minute or two for everyone to jot down or think about these two questions.

### STEP TWO

Split your group up into pairs. This could be with the person next to them, with their spouse, or any other creative way your group can imagine. The goal is for it to be two individuals sharing together. Once you have split up you will each take a turn sharing your answers without being interrupted and listening without interrupting. Here is a format to help:

- Decide who will share first and who will listen first
- Set a timer for 2 minutes.
- Share your answers to the question uninterrupted
- When the timer goes off, switch

### STEP THREE

Come back together as a big group. Each person will now take a turn sharing a summary of what their partner said. It may be tempting to help your partner remember correctly what you said. It could also be tempting to add meaning to what you heard your partner say. This may feel uncomfortable or intimidating, just do your best.

### NEXT

Process this experience as a group. Are there ways God is trying to activate you or your group? The "Activated" Group Process questions on the next page may be a helpful guide as your group engages with this material and with God.



# IMAGINATIVE PRAYER

## CHRISTIAN PERSEVERANCE

3/7/2021

ACTS 14:1-20

This spiritual practice was created by St. Ignatius in the 1500s. His desire was to find a way to experience the presence of God and did so by entering the biblical narrative with his imagination. Imaginative prayer brings the Bible narrative to life in our mind and offers an opportunity to engage in a new experience with the Word. Hebrews 4:12 describes the Word of God as active and alive. There are occasions when coming to Scripture in a new way reveals something vibrant that we may have missed through our normative practices. Below you will find the steps to lead your group through this experience.

### STEP ONE

Select one person to read Acts 14:8-18. During this reading find a comfortable position to sit and close your eyes. The process for listening will be given next. If you are reading the passage, do so *slowly and carefully*.

### STEP TWO

As you listen to the Scripture, keep the following in mind:

- Feel free to have a way to make notes - some people find it helpful to jot things down as they go.
- Imagine yourself entering into biblical times. You may become a person or animal in the story or an object along the way.
- Use all five of your senses to engage fully with what it would be like to be there. Notice what you see, smell, hear, touch and taste as you're in the story. Notice sounds other than voices. What do you hear in the distance? Is there something you can taste, touch or smell? As the story is read, become a part of it as best you can.
- Notice the facial expressions of people in the story. Notice who you are near and who is far away from you in the story. Notice who you are drawn to and who repels you. Notice tones of voices as you hear the voice, not of the person reading, but of the actual people in history.

### STEP THREE

The reader should instruct everyone to open their eyes at the end of the story and note some things that affected them. Then process these questions together:

- Is there anything anyone would like to share with the group that happened as you became a part of the biblical story?
- Who were you in story?
- What did you see?
- What did you touch?
- Where did you find yourself in the story?
- Who was close to you and who was far away?
- Whose facial expressions did you see?

\*\*If you did not get anything out of this practice or found it really challenging, that is ok. Some practices work better than others for different people.

### NEXT

Process this experience as a group. Are there ways God is trying to activate you or your group? The "Activated" Group Process questions on page 6 may be a helpful guide as your group engages with this material and with God

# OPEN SHARING

FIRST CHURCH COUNCIL

3/14/2021

ACTS 14:21-15:35

This spiritual practice is adapted from a group structure implemented by the Samson Society. The Samson Society is a fellowship of Christian men who are serious about authenticity, community, humility & recovery. You can discover more or participate in an online meeting at their website: [samsonsociety.com](http://samsonsociety.com) The goal of this practice is to allow space for open, honest sharing of how God is getting your attention. Sharing how you see God at work in your life aids in connection and growth. A specific topic is given in order to help direct and guide the process.

## STEP ONE

Select one person to read Step 2 and Step 3. The steps below are taken directly from the Samson Society meeting format so some of the language may feel new. The discussion topic was selected from Jay's message on Sunday. Feel free to use this topic, select your own topic, or discuss the passage specifically.

## STEP TWO

As Christians, we meet at other times for worship, for teaching, or for corporate prayer. Today, however, we meet to talk. Our purpose is to assist one another in our common journey. We do so by sharing honestly, out of our own personal experience, the challenges, and encouragements of daily Christian living in a fallen world. Our faith rests in the love of God, as it is revealed in His Word and in the life of His Son. This is the Great Fact of the Gospel, which is the foundation of our Charter.

### The Fact

God exists. In the timeless mystery of the Trinity, He is perfectly harmonious, perfectly whole. God is our Creator. He designed us to live in eternal harmony with Him and each other, and to care for the rest of His creation. Spurning God's fellowship, we all have sinned, forfeiting our created place and losing our spiritual lives. I myself have personally defied God's law and rejected His love. Alienation from Him has produced darkness and chaos in my life, for which I have often blamed others. God has continued to love me, even in my active rebellion, and in Christ has done everything necessary to restore me perfectly to Himself. As I accept responsibility for my sin and find forgiveness in the finished work of Christ, I experience reconciliation with God and am progressively restored to harmony with myself and others. Despite the lingering effects of sin, I am a restored son of the sovereign Lord, whose Spirit is at work in my weakness, displaying His glory and advancing His kingdom.

## STEP THREE

In sharing, we speak honestly out of our own experience. We tell the truth about ourselves, knowing that our group will listen to us in love and will hold whatever we say in strictest confidence. We try to keep our comments brief, taking care to leave plenty of time for others. We address our statements to the group as a whole rather than directing them toward any one person. As a rule, we refrain from giving advice to others or instructing them during the meeting, believing that such conversations are best reserved for private moments between friends. The suggested topic today is **ADDING TO THE GOSPEL**. But we are not confined to that subject. You may speak about any issue that is currently commanding your attention. The floor is now open for anyone who wishes to speak.

## NEXT

Process this experience as a group. Are there ways God is trying to activate you or your group? The "Activated" Group Process questions on page 6 may be a helpful guide as your group engages with this material and with God.

# LECTIO DIVINA 2

**STAY ON MISSION EVEN WHEN**

**3/21/2021**

**ACTS 16:6-15**

Lectio Divina is a spiritual practice developed by St. Benedict in the sixth century as a way to meditate on and engage with the Word of God. As a group you will read through a passage of Scripture slowly three times, pausing between each reading to reflect and share. While theology may inform what you hear, this encounter is meant to highlight what the Word is brushing up against right now in your life. Expect this practice to take 15-20 minutes. Specific details for your group are laid out below.

## STEP ONE

Select one person to read Acts 16:6-15. Take a 10-15 second pause before you begin reading slowly through the passage. If you are not the one reading, feel free to follow along in your own Bible. While the passage is read, pay attention for a word or phrase that jumps out to you. When the passage is complete, pause for another 10-15 seconds. Go around your group and invite everyone to simply share the word or phrase that stuck out to them or say "pass."

## STEP TWO

Select a new person to read Acts 16:6-15. Pause for 10-15 seconds before beginning to read slowly through the passage. During this reading let an image come to mind. This image may or may not be literal; figurative images can help you process the passage and hear what God has to say. Not everyone has a visual mind, so if an image doesn't surface, that's ok. When the passage is complete, pause for another 10-15 seconds. Again, go around your group and invite everyone to share the image that came to mind. If nothing came to mind or you do not want to share, just say "pass."

## STEP THREE

Select a new person to read Acts 16:6-15. Again, pause for 10-15 seconds before starting. This time listen for an invitation from God. To what is He inviting you today? At the end of this reading, pause for 30-45 seconds to allow everyone a few moments to be still and quiet with God. Invite everyone to share what they experienced during this time through the passage. Limit this time of sharing to just one minute per person so everyone gets a chance to share.

## NEXT

Open the conversation to the group. Are there ways God is trying to activate you or your group? The "activated" group processing questions (page 6) are a helpful guide as your group engages with this material and with God.

# IMAGINATIVE PRAYER 2

## THE ORACLE SHOWDOWN

3/28/2021

ACTS 16:16-40

This spiritual practice was created by St. Ignatius in the 1500s. His desire was to find a way to experience the presence of God and did so by entering the biblical narrative with his imagination. Imaginative prayer brings the Bible narrative to life in our mind and offers an opportunity to engage in a new experience with the Word. Hebrews 4:12 describes the Word of God as active and alive. There are occasions when coming to Scripture in a new way reveals something vibrant that we may have missed through our normative practices. Below you will find the steps to lead your group through this experience.

### STEP ONE

Select one person to read Acts 16:16-40 or play an audio version from someone's phone. During this reading find a comfortable position to sit and close your eyes. The process for listening will be given next. If you are reading the passage, do so *slowly and carefully*.

### STEP TWO

As you listen to the Scripture, keep the following in mind:

- Feel free to have a way to make notes - some people find it helpful to jot things down as they go.
- Imagine yourself entering into biblical times. You may become a person or animal in the story or an object along the way.
- Use all five of your senses to engage fully with what it would be like to be there. Notice what you see, smell, hear, touch and taste as you're in the story. Notice sounds other than voices. What do you hear in the distance? Is there something you can taste, touch or smell? As the story is read, become a part of it as best you can.
- Notice the facial expressions of people in the story. Notice who you are near and who is far away from you in the story. Notice who you are drawn to and who repels you. Notice tones of voices as you hear the voice, not of the person reading, but of the actual people in history.

### STEP THREE

The reader should instruct everyone to open their eyes at the end of the story and note some things that affected them. Then process these questions together:

- Is there anything anyone would like to share with the group that happened as you became a part of the biblical story?
- Who were you in story?
- What did you see?
- What did you touch?
- Where did you find yourself in the story?
- Who was close to you and who was far away?
- Whose facial expressions did you see?

\*\*If you did not get anything out of this practice or found it really challenging, that is ok. Some practices work better than others for different people.

### NEXT

Process this experience as a group. Are there ways God is trying to activate you or your group? The "Activated" Group Process questions on page 6 may be a helpful guide as your group engages with this material and with God

# DWELL IN THE WORD 2

**PAUL'S TED TALK**

**4/2/2021**

**ACT 17:16-34**

This spiritual practice is characterized by reading Scripture together, asking questions, and listening to the answers of others. Inside spiritual practices as a group, no one individual gets to be the authority. We honor the indwelling Holy Spirit at work in the heart of our group members and allow the questions and thoughts that arise from God to have jurisdiction over the moment.

## STEP ONE

Select one person to read Act 17:16-34. During this reading you will be looking to answer one of the following three questions:

- What may someone who is far from God ask about this passage?
- What would you tell 'the you' from 10 years ago about this passage?
- What would you ask a Bible scholar about this passage?

Read through the passage and then allow a minute or two for everyone to jot down or think about these three questions.

## STEP TWO

Split your group up into pairs. This could be with the person next to them, with their spouse, or any other creative way your group can imagine. The goal is for it to be two individuals sharing together. Once you have split up you will each take a turn sharing your answers without being interrupted and listening without interrupting. Here is a format to help:

- Decide who will share first and who will listen first
- Set a timer for 2 minutes.
- Share your answers to the question uninterrupted
- When the timer goes off, switch

## STEP THREE

Come back together as a big group. Each person will now take a turn sharing a summary of what their partner said. It may be tempting to help your partner remember correctly what you said. It could also be tempting to add meaning to what you heard your partner say. This may feel uncomfortable or intimidating, just do your best.

## NEXT

Process this experience as a group. Are there ways God is trying to activate you or your group? The "Activated" Group Process questions on page 6 may be a helpful guide as your group engages with this material and with God.



# OPEN SHARING 2

EVERYONE ON MISSION

4/11/2021

ACTS 18:1-28

This spiritual practice is adapted from a group structure implemented by the Samson Society. The Samson Society is a fellowship of Christian men who are serious about authenticity, community, humility & recovery. You can discover more or participate in an online meeting at their website: [samsonsociety.com](http://samsonsociety.com) The goal of this practice is to allow space for open, honest sharing of how God is getting your attention. Sharing how you see God at work in your life aids in connection and growth. A specific topic is given in order to help direct and guide the process.

## STEP ONE

Select one person to read Step 2 and Step 3. The steps below are taken directly from the Samson Society meeting format so some of the language may feel new. The discussion topic was selected from Andrew's message on Sunday. Feel free to use this topic, select your own topic, or discuss the passage specifically.

## STEP TWO

As Christians, we meet at other times for worship, for teaching, or for corporate prayer. Today, however, we meet to talk. Our purpose is to assist one another in our common journey. We do so by sharing honestly, out of our own personal experience, the challenges, and encouragements of daily Christian living in a fallen world. Our faith rests in the love of God, as it is revealed in His Word and in the life of His Son. This is the Great Fact of the Gospel, which is the foundation of our Charter.

### The Fact

God exists. In the timeless mystery of the Trinity, He is perfectly harmonious, perfectly whole. God is our Creator. He designed us to live in eternal harmony with Him and each other, and to care for the rest of His creation. Spurning God's fellowship, we all have sinned, forfeiting our created place and losing our spiritual lives. I myself have personally defied God's law and rejected His love. Alienation from Him has produced darkness and chaos in my life, for which I have often blamed others. God has continued to love me, even in my active rebellion, and in Christ has done everything necessary to restore me perfectly to Himself. As I accept responsibility for my sin and find forgiveness in the finished work of Christ, I experience reconciliation with God and am progressively restored to harmony with myself and others. Despite the lingering effects of sin, I am a restored son of the sovereign Lord, whose Spirit is at work in my weakness, displaying His glory and advancing His kingdom.

## STEP THREE

In sharing, we speak honestly out of our own experience. We tell the truth about ourselves, knowing that our group will listen to us in love and will hold whatever we say in strictest confidence. We try to keep our comments brief, taking care to leave plenty of time for others. We address our statements to the group as a whole rather than directing them toward any one person. As a rule, we refrain from giving advice to others or instructing them during the meeting, believing that such conversations are best reserved for private moments between friends. The suggested topic today is **Staying on Mission or Personal Gifting**. But we are not confined to that subject. You may speak about any issue that is currently commanding your attention. The floor is now open for anyone who wishes to speak.

## NEXT

Process this experience as a group. Are there ways God is trying to activate you or your group? The "Activated" Group Process questions on page 6 may be a helpful guide as your group engages with this material and with God.

# DWELL IN THE WORD 3

## THE FALL OF HOGWARTS

4/18/2021

ACTS 19:1-22

This spiritual practice is characterized by reading Scripture together, asking questions, and listening to the answers of others. Inside spiritual practices as a group, no one individual gets to be the authority. We honor the indwelling Holy Spirit at work in the heart of our group members and allow the questions and thoughts that arise from God to have jurisdiction over the moment.

### STEP ONE

Select one person to read Acts 19:11-22. During this reading you will be looking to answer one of the following three questions:

- What may someone who is far from God ask about this passage?
- What would you tell 'the you' from 10 years ago about this passage?
- What would you ask a Bible scholar about this passage?

Read through the passage and then allow a minute or two for everyone to jot down or think about these three questions.

### STEP TWO

Split your group up into pairs. This could be with the person next to them, with their spouse, or any other creative way your group can imagine. The goal is for it to be two individuals sharing together. Once you have split up you will each take a turn sharing your answers without being interrupted and listening without interrupting. Here is a format to help:

- Decide who will share first and who will listen first
- Set a timer for 2 minutes.
- Share your answers to the question uninterrupted
- When the timer goes off, switch

### STEP THREE

Come back together as a big group. Each person will now take a turn sharing a summary of what their partner said. It may be tempting to help your partner remember correctly what you said. It could also be tempting to add meaning to what you heard your partner say. This may feel uncomfortable or intimidating, just do your best.

### NEXT

Process this experience as a group. Are there ways God is trying to activate you or your group? The "Activated" Group Process questions on page 6 may be a helpful guide as your group engages with this material and with God.

# IMAGINATIVE PRAYER 3

## PAUL'S FIERY FURNACE

4/25/2021

ACTS 19:23-41

This spiritual practice was created by St. Ignatius in the 1500s. His desire was to find a way to experience the presence of God and did so by entering the biblical narrative with his imagination. Imaginative prayer brings the Bible narrative to life in our mind and offers an opportunity to engage in a new experience with the Word. Hebrews 4:12 describes the Word of God as active and alive. There are occasions when coming to Scripture in a new way reveals something vibrant that we may have missed through our normative practices. Below you will find the steps to lead your group through this experience.

### STEP ONE

Select one person to read Acts 19:23-41 or play an audio version from someone's phone. During this reading find a comfortable position to sit and close your eyes. The process for listening will be given next. If you are reading the passage, do so *slowly and carefully*.

### STEP TWO

As you listen to the Scripture, keep the following in mind:

- Feel free to have a way to make notes - some people find it helpful to jot things down as they go.
- Imagine yourself entering into biblical times. You may become a person or animal in the story or an object along the way.
- Use all five of your senses to engage fully with what it would be like to be there. Notice what you see, smell, hear, touch and taste as you're in the story. Notice sounds other than voices. What do you hear in the distance? Is there something you can taste, touch or smell? As the story is read, become a part of it as best you can.
- Notice the facial expressions of people in the story. Notice who you are near and who is far away from you in the story. Notice who you are drawn to and who repels you. Notice tones of voices as you hear the voice, not of the person reading, but of the actual people in history.

### STEP THREE

The reader should instruct everyone to open their eyes at the end of the story and note some things that affected them. Then process these questions together:

- Is there anything anyone would like to share with the group that happened as you became a part of the biblical story?
- Who were you in story?
- What did you see?
- What did you touch?
- Where did you find yourself in the story?
- Who was close to you and who was far away?
- Whose facial expressions did you see?

\*\*If you did not get anything out of this practice or found it really challenging, that is ok. Some practices work better than others for different people.

### NEXT

Process this experience as a group. Are there ways God is trying to activate you or your group? The "Activated" Group Process questions on page 6 may be a helpful guide as your group engages with this material and with God

# LECTIO DIVINA 3

## LEADING BY EXAMPLE

5/2/2021

ACTS 20:1-12

Lectio Divina is a spiritual practice developed by St. Benedict in the sixth century as a way to meditate on and engage with the Word of God. As a group you will read through a passage of Scripture slowly three times, pausing between each reading to reflect and share. While theology may inform what you hear, this encounter is meant to highlight what the Word is brushing up against right now in your life. Expect this practice to take 15-20 minutes. Specific details for your group are laid out below.

### STEP ONE

Select one person to read Acts 20:1-12. Take a 10-15 second pause before you begin reading slowly through the passage. If you are not the one reading, feel free to follow along in your own Bible. While the passage is read, pay attention for a word or phrase that jumps out to you. When the passage is complete, pause for another 10-15 seconds. Go around your group and invite everyone to simply share the word or phrase that stuck out to them or say "pass."

### STEP TWO

Select a new person to read Acts 20:1-12. Pause for 10-15 seconds before beginning to read slowly through the passage. During this reading let an image come to mind. This image may or may not be literal; figurative images can help you process the passage and hear what God has to say. Not everyone has a visual mind, so if an image doesn't surface, that's ok. When the passage is complete, pause for another 10-15 seconds. Again, go around your group and invite everyone to share the image that came to mind. If nothing came to mind or you do not want to share, just say "pass."

### STEP THREE

Select a new person to read Acts 20:1-12. Again, pause for 10-15 seconds before starting. This time listen for an invitation from God. To what is He inviting you today? At the end of this reading, pause for 30-45 seconds to allow everyone a few moments to be still and quiet with God. Invite everyone to share what they experienced during this time through the passage. Limit this time of sharing to just one minute per person so everyone gets a chance to share.

### NEXT

Open the conversation to the group. Are there ways God is trying to activate you or your group? The "activated" group processing questions (page 6) are a helpful guide as your group engages with this material and with God.

# OPEN SHARING 3

## PASSING THE BATON

5/9/2021

ACTS 20:13-38

This spiritual practice is adapted from a group structure implemented by the Samson Society. The Samson Society is a fellowship of Christian men who are serious about authenticity, community, humility & recovery. You can discover more or participate in an online meeting at their website: [samsonsociety.com](http://samsonsociety.com) The goal of this practice is to allow space for open, honest sharing of how God is getting your attention. Sharing how you see God at work in your life aids in connection and growth. A specific topic is given in order to help direct and guide the process.

### STEP ONE

Select one person to read Step 2 and Step 3. The steps below are taken directly from the Samson Society meeting format so some of the language may feel new. The discussion topic was selected from Andrew's message on Sunday. Feel free to use this topic, select your own topic, or discuss the passage specifically.

### STEP TWO

As Christians, we meet at other times for worship, for teaching, or for corporate prayer. Today, however, we meet to talk. Our purpose is to assist one another in our common journey. We do so by sharing honestly, out of our own personal experience, the challenges, and encouragements of daily Christian living in a fallen world. Our faith rests in the love of God, as it is revealed in His Word and in the life of His Son. This is the Great Fact of the Gospel, which is the foundation of our Charter.

#### The Fact

God exists. In the timeless mystery of the Trinity, He is perfectly harmonious, perfectly whole. God is our Creator. He designed us to live in eternal harmony with Him and each other, and to care for the rest of His creation. Spurning God's fellowship, we all have sinned, forfeiting our created place and losing our spiritual lives. I myself have personally defied God's law and rejected His love. Alienation from Him has produced darkness and chaos in my life, for which I have often blamed others. God has continued to love me, even in my active rebellion, and in Christ has done everything necessary to restore me perfectly to Himself. As I accept responsibility for my sin and find forgiveness in the finished work of Christ, I experience reconciliation with God and am progressively restored to harmony with myself and others. Despite the lingering effects of sin, I am a restored son of the sovereign Lord, whose Spirit is at work in my weakness, displaying His glory and advancing His kingdom.

### STEP THREE

In sharing, we speak honestly out of our own experience. We tell the truth about ourselves, knowing that our group will listen to us in love and will hold whatever we say in strictest confidence. We try to keep our comments brief, taking care to leave plenty of time for others. We address our statements to the group as a whole rather than directing them toward any one person. As a rule, we refrain from giving advice to others or instructing them during the meeting, believing that such conversations are best reserved for private moments between friends. The suggested topic today is **serving the Lord with all humility**. But we are not confined to that subject. You may speak about any issue that is currently commanding your attention. The floor is now open for anyone who wishes to speak.

### NEXT

Process this experience as a group. Are there ways God is trying to activate you or your group? The "Activated" Group Process questions on page 6 may be a helpful guide as your group engages with this material and with God.



# LECTIO DIVINA 4

## THE JOURNEY TO TROUBLE

5/16/2021

ACTS 21:1-40

Lectio Divina is a spiritual practice developed by St. Benedict in the sixth century as a way to meditate on and engage with the Word of God. As a group you will read through a passage of Scripture slowly three times, pausing between each reading to reflect and share. While theology may inform what you hear, this encounter is meant to highlight what the Word is brushing up against right now in your life. Expect this practice to take 15-20 minutes. Specific details for your group are laid out below.

### STEP ONE

Select one person to read Acts 21:17-26. Take a 10-15 second pause before you begin reading slowly through the passage. If you are not the one reading, feel free to follow along in your own Bible. While the passage is read, pay attention for a word or phrase that jumps out to you. When the passage is complete, pause for another 10-15 seconds. Go around your group and invite everyone to simply share the word or phrase that stuck out to them or say "pass."

### STEP TWO

Select a new person to read Acts 21:17-26. Pause for 10-15 seconds before beginning to read slowly through the passage. During this reading let an image come to mind. This image may or may not be literal; figurative images can help you process the passage and hear what God has to say. Not everyone has a visual mind, so if an image doesn't surface, that's ok. When the passage is complete, pause for another 10-15 seconds. Again, go around your group and invite everyone to share the image that came to mind. If nothing came to mind or you do not want to share, just say "pass."

### STEP THREE

Select a new person to read Acts 21:17-26. Again, pause for 10-15 seconds before starting. This time listen for an invitation from God. To what is He inviting you today? At the end of this reading, pause for 30-45 seconds to allow everyone a few moments to be still and quiet with God. Invite everyone to share what they experienced during this time through the passage. Limit this time of sharing to just one minute per person so everyone gets a chance to share.

### NEXT

Open the conversation to the group. Are there ways God is trying to activate you or your group? The "activated" group processing questions (page 6) are a helpful guide as your group engages with this material and with God.

# DWELL IN THE WORD 4

## PAUL'S CONVERSION

5/23/2021

ACTS 22:1-21

This spiritual practice is characterized by reading Scripture together, asking questions, and listening to the answers of others. Inside spiritual practices as a group, no one individual gets to be the authority. We honor the indwelling Holy Spirit at work in the heart of our group members and allow the questions and thoughts that arise from God to have jurisdiction over the moment.

### STEP ONE

Select one person to read Acts 22:1-21. During this reading you will be looking to answer one of the following three questions:

- What may someone who is far from God ask about this passage?
- What would you tell 'the you' from 10 years ago about this passage?
- What would you ask a Bible scholar about this passage?

Read through the passage and then allow a minute or two for everyone to jot down or think about these three questions.

### STEP TWO

Split your group up into pairs. This could be with the person next to them, with their spouse, or any other creative way your group can imagine. The goal is for it to be two individuals sharing together. Once you have split up you will each take a turn sharing your answers without being interrupted and listening without interrupting. Here is a format to help:

- Decide who will share first and who will listen first
- Set a timer for 2 minutes.
- Share your answers to the question uninterrupted
- When the timer goes off, switch

### STEP THREE

Come back together as a big group. Each person will now take a turn sharing a summary of what their partner said. It may be tempting to help your partner remember correctly what you said. It could also be tempting to add meaning to what you heard your partner say. This may feel uncomfortable or intimidating, just do your best.

### NEXT

Process this experience as a group. Are there ways God is trying to activate you or your group? The "Activated" Group Process questions on page 6 may be a helpful guide as your group engages with this material and with God.

# IMAGINATIVE PRAYER 4

## WHEN THE HARD HAND IS DEALT

5/30/2021

ACTS 22:22 - 24:27

This spiritual practice was created by St. Ignatius in the 1500s. His desire was to find a way to experience the presence of God and did so by entering the biblical narrative with his imagination. Imaginative prayer brings the Bible narrative to life in our mind and offers an opportunity to engage in a new experience with the Word. Hebrews 4:12 describes the Word of God as active and alive. There are occasions when coming to Scripture in a new way reveals something vibrant that we may have missed through our normative practices. Below you will find the steps to lead your group through this experience.

### STEP ONE

Select one person to read Acts 24:1-27 or play an audio version from someone's phone. During this reading find a comfortable position to sit and close your eyes. The process for listening will be given next. If you are reading the passage, do so slowly and carefully.

### STEP TWO

As you listen to the Scripture, keep the following in mind:

- Feel free to have a way to make notes - some people find it helpful to jot things down as they go.
- Imagine yourself entering into biblical times. You may become a person or animal in the story or an object along the way.
- Use all five of your senses to engage fully with what it would be like to be there. Notice what you see, smell, hear, touch and taste as you're in the story. Notice sounds other than voices. What do you hear in the distance? Is there something you can taste, touch or smell? As the story is read, become a part of it as best you can.
- Notice the facial expressions of people in the story. Notice who you are near and who is far away from you in the story. Notice who you are drawn to and who repels you. Notice tones of voices as you hear the voice, not of the person reading, but of the actual people in history.

### STEP THREE

The reader should instruct everyone to open their eyes at the end of the story and note some things that affected them. Then process these questions together:

- Is there anything anyone would like to share with the group that happened as you became a part of the biblical story?
- Who were you in story?
- What did you see?
- What did you touch?
- Where did you find yourself in the story?
- Who was close to you and who was far away?
- Whose facial expressions did you see?

\*\*If you did not get anything out of this practice or found it really challenging, that is ok. Some practices work better than others for different people.

### NEXT

Process this experience as a group. Are there ways God is trying to activate you or your group? The "Activated" Group Process questions on page 6 may be a helpful guide as your group engages with this material and with God

# OPEN SHARING 4

BEFORE LEADERS

6/6/2021

ACTS 25:1 - 26:32

This spiritual practice is adapted from a group structure implemented by the Samson Society. The Samson Society is a fellowship of Christian men who are serious about authenticity, community, humility & recovery. You can discover more or participate in an online meeting at their website: [samsonsociety.com](http://samsonsociety.com) The goal of this practice is to allow space for open, honest sharing of how God is getting your attention. Sharing how you see God at work in your life aids in connection and growth. A specific topic is given in order to help direct and guide the process.

## STEP ONE

Select one person to read Step 2 and Step 3. The steps below are taken directly from the Samson Society meeting format so some of the language may feel new. The discussion topic was selected from Andrew's message on Sunday. Feel free to use this topic, select your own topic, or discuss the passage specifically.

## STEP TWO

As Christians, we meet at other times for worship, for teaching, or for corporate prayer. Today, however, we meet to talk. Our purpose is to assist one another in our common journey. We do so by sharing honestly, out of our own personal experience, the challenges, and encouragements of daily Christian living in a fallen world. Our faith rests in the love of God, as it is revealed in His Word and in the life of His Son. This is the Great Fact of the Gospel, which is the foundation of our Charter.

### The Fact

God exists. In the timeless mystery of the Trinity, He is perfectly harmonious, perfectly whole. God is our Creator. He designed us to live in eternal harmony with Him and each other, and to care for the rest of His creation. Spurning God's fellowship, we all have sinned, forfeiting our created place and losing our spiritual lives. I myself have personally defied God's law and rejected His love. Alienation from Him has produced darkness and chaos in my life, for which I have often blamed others. God has continued to love me, even in my active rebellion, and in Christ has done everything necessary to restore me perfectly to Himself. As I accept responsibility for my sin and find forgiveness in the finished work of Christ, I experience reconciliation with God and am progressively restored to harmony with myself and others. Despite the lingering effects of sin, I am a restored son of the sovereign Lord, whose Spirit is at work in my weakness, displaying His glory and advancing His kingdom.

## STEP THREE

In sharing, we speak honestly out of our own experience. We tell the truth about ourselves, knowing that our group will listen to us in love and will hold whatever we say in strictest confidence. We try to keep our comments brief, taking care to leave plenty of time for others. We address our statements to the group as a whole rather than directing them toward any one person. As a rule, we refrain from giving advice to others or instructing them during the meeting, believing that such conversations are best reserved for private moments between friends. The suggested topic today is **"appointed as servant and witness"** from Acts 26:16. But we are not confined to that subject. You may speak about any issue that is currently commanding your attention. The floor is now open for anyone who wishes to speak.

## NEXT

Process this experience as a group. Are there ways God is trying to activate you or your group? The "Activated" Group Process questions on page 6 may be a helpful guide as your group engages with this material and with God.

# IMAGINATIVE PRAYER 5

## THE STORM

6/13/2021

ACTS 27

This spiritual practice was created by St. Ignatius in the 1500s. His desire was to find a way to experience the presence of God and did so by entering the biblical narrative with his imagination. Imaginative prayer brings the Bible narrative to life in our mind and offers an opportunity to engage in a new experience with the Word. Hebrews 4:12 describes the Word of God as active and alive. There are occasions when coming to Scripture in a new way reveals something vibrant that we may have missed through our normative practices. Below you will find the steps to lead your group through this experience.

### STEP ONE

Select one person to read Acts 27 or play an audio version from someone's phone. During this reading find a comfortable position to sit and close your eyes. The process for listening will be given next. If you are reading the passage, do so slowly and carefully.

### STEP TWO

As you listen to the Scripture, keep the following in mind:

- Feel free to have a way to make notes - some people find it helpful to jot things down as they go.
- Imagine yourself entering into biblical times. You may become a person or animal in the story or an object along the way.
- Use all five of your senses to engage fully with what it would be like to be there. Notice what you see, smell, hear, touch and taste as you're in the story. Notice sounds other than voices. What do you hear in the distance? Is there something you can taste, touch or smell? As the story is read, become a part of it as best you can.
- Notice the facial expressions of people in the story. Notice who you are near and who is far away from you in the story. Notice who you are drawn to and who repels you. Notice tones of voices as you hear the voice, not of the person reading, but of the actual people in history.

### STEP THREE

The reader should instruct everyone to open their eyes at the end of the story and note some things that affected them. Then process these questions together:

- Is there anything anyone would like to share with the group that happened as you became a part of the biblical story?
- Who were you in story?
- What did you see?
- What did you touch?
- Where did you find yourself in the story?
- Who was close to you and who was far away?
- Whose facial expressions did you see?

\*\*If you did not get anything out of this practice or found it really challenging, that is ok. Some practices work better than others for different people.

### NEXT

Process this experience as a group. Are there ways God is trying to activate you or your group? The "Activated" Group Process questions on page 6 may be a helpful guide as your group engages with this material and with God



# LECTIO DIVINA 5

## RESISTANCE IN ROME

6/20/2021

ACTS 28

Lectio Divina is a spiritual practice developed by St. Benedict in the sixth century as a way to meditate on and engage with the Word of God. As a group you will read through a passage of Scripture slowly three times, pausing between each reading to reflect and share. While theology may inform what you hear, this encounter is meant to highlight what the Word is brushing up against right now in your life. Expect this practice to take 15-20 minutes. Specific details for your group are laid out below.

### STEP ONE

Select one person to read Acts 28:1-10. Take a 10-15 second pause before you begin reading slowly through the passage. If you are not the one reading, feel free to follow along in your own Bible. While the passage is read, pay attention for a word or phrase that jumps out to you. When the passage is complete, pause for another 10-15 seconds. Go around your group and invite everyone to simply share the word or phrase that stuck out to them or say "pass."

### STEP TWO

Select a new person to read Acts 28:1-10. Pause for 10-15 seconds before beginning to read slowly through the passage. During this reading let an image come to mind. This image may or may not be literal; figurative images can help you process the passage and hear what God has to say. Not everyone has a visual mind, so if an image doesn't surface, that's ok. When the passage is complete, pause for another 10-15 seconds. Again, go around your group and invite everyone to share the image that came to mind. If nothing came to mind or you do not want to share, just say "pass."

### STEP THREE

Select a new person to read Acts 28:1-10. Again, pause for 10-15 seconds before starting. This time listen for an invitation from God. To what is He inviting you today? At the end of this reading, pause for 30-45 seconds to allow everyone a few moments to be still and quiet with God. Invite everyone to share what they experienced during this time through the passage. Limit this time of sharing to just one minute per person so everyone gets a chance to share.

### NEXT

Open the conversation to the group. Are there ways God is trying to activate you or your group? The "activated" group processing questions (page 6) are a helpful guide as your group engages with this material and with God.

# DWELL IN THE WORD 5

## BE WITNESSING

6/27/2021

ACTS 1:8

This spiritual practice is characterized by reading Scripture together, asking questions, and listening to the answers of others. Inside spiritual practices as a group, no one individual gets to be the authority. We honor the indwelling Holy Spirit at work in the heart of our group members and allow the questions and thoughts that arise from God to have jurisdiction over the moment.

### STEP ONE

Select one person to read Acts 1:8. During this reading you will be looking to answer one of the following three questions:

- What may someone who is far from God ask about this passage?
- What would you tell 'the you' from 10 years ago about this passage?
- What would you ask a Bible scholar about this passage?

Read through the passage and then allow a minute or two for everyone to jot down or think about these three questions.

### STEP TWO

Split your group up into pairs. This could be with the person next to them, with their spouse, or any other creative way your group can imagine. The goal is for it to be two individuals sharing together. Once you have split up you will each take a turn sharing your answers without being interrupted and listening without interrupting. Here is a format to help:

- Decide who will share first and who will listen first
- Set a timer for 2 minutes.
- Share your answers to the question uninterrupted
- When the timer goes off, switch

### STEP THREE

Come back together as a big group. Each person will now take a turn sharing a summary of what their partner said. It may be tempting to help your partner remember correctly what you said. It could also be tempting to add meaning to what you heard your partner say. This may feel uncomfortable or intimidating, just do your best.

### NEXT

Process this experience as a group. Are there ways God is trying to activate you or your group? The "Activated" Group Process questions on page 6 may be a helpful guide as your group engages with this material and with God.