



### **Think About...**

*(optional, depending on time, select one or more questions)*

- Tell about a time when someone inconvenienced themselves for you. What did it mean to you? What do you think the impact might have been on the other person?
- What are some things that we allow ourselves to be “inconvenienced” for?
- When or where are you most likely to feel a sense of God’s presence?
- What are the things that distract you or pull you away from spending time with God?
- Tell about a faith practice that you would like to learn about or try to bring into your life. What might get in the way? How could you work around those barriers?

### **Prayer**

Gracious God, we know that you want us to come to you in prayer. Thank you for being a God who answers prayers. Forgive us when we get caught up in lives that are focused on things that take us far from you. Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit who reminds us to reorient our lives toward you. Make us more aware of faith practices that help us to recognize your presence as we go about our daily lives. Help us to notice you more. Amen.

### **Connecting Faith with Daily Life...**

*(for individual reflection & action)*

Select something that would remind you to pray whenever you see it (red stoplights, a prayer rock, a picture in your office). For the next week, practice saying a prayer each time you see that object.

*Incarnation Mission/Vision/Values: Prayer  
Reflection written by Jeanne Hartfield*



# *Inconvenient Faith*



## **INCARNATION CONNECTS**

*Connect with God,  
Connect with One Another*



## **Opening Questions**

*(select 1 or 2 questions)*

- What wakes you up in the morning? What is something you like to do to start your day?
- What is something you try to do every day or every week (i.e. brushing your teeth, exercising, walking the dog, etc.)?
- Tell about a time when you attended a worship service in another faith tradition. What was familiar to you? What was new or different?

## **What Does the Bible Say?**

*Hebrews 13:21 (CEV)*

I pray that God will make you ready to obey him and that you will always be eager to do right. May Jesus help you do what pleases God. To Jesus Christ be glory forever and ever! Amen.

## **What Do Others Say?**

While in Tanzania, the Muslim call to prayer was broadcast in the neighborhood where I was staying, waking me each morning around 4 a.m. There is something beautiful about the Muslim call to prayer—a practice that calls the faithful to stop whatever they are doing five times each day and be reoriented to God.

Not long ago, I was driving home from the Mayo Clinic where my Mom had cancer surgery. My mind was cluttered and my body weary from a day at the hospital, and I found the long stretches of green fields and rolling hills soothing. Near dusk, I noticed a cab stopped on a small gravel parking lot far from any town. As I passed, I saw the driver getting up from his prayer position, and dusting himself off. He was facing east. In that moment, it struck me in a fresh way that faithfulness is not about convenience.

Allowing ourselves to be inconvenienced for the sake of the God who loves us is no small thing. We all have pulls and pressures in our lives. We all



struggle at times to be faithful to our commitments in the relationships with those closest to us—whose needs and concerns impact our lives and choices as well. How much more challenging is it to resist the daily demands of life for the sake of God, when God isn't in our faces demanding our attention and time?

Years and years ago, a pastor at the church where I grew up made the statement that you really only need to decide once if you are going to worship. If you decide once, then as each Sunday comes around the decision is already made, you don't have to decide each week. A long time ago, my parents shared that with me as one of the reasons we went to "church" each week. Over time, I have come to realize that it is not just about showing up because "that's what we do," but it is about making ourselves available, creating space for the Holy Spirit to reorient us to God whether through worship, prayer, or service.

Most faith traditions contain built-in ways to show faithfulness and provide time to connect with God on a regular basis. When we weave these faith practices into our lives, we take a break in our daily routine to remember that we belong to God. Benedictine monks set aside eight times throughout the day to stop whatever they are doing to pray and praise God before returning to their duties. Eastern Orthodox Christians may have icons in their homes as a way to remind them about the life of Christ and to draw them into the presence of God. Roman Catholics pray the rosary. What would remind you to connect with God during the day? How difficult would it be to inconvenience yourself just a little bit as you set aside time a few times each week to read scripture or journal along with your prayer time? Even if your daily routine doesn't allow the time to walk a labyrinth or seek out a chapel for prayer, maybe keeping a rock or a small symbol in your pocket would be just the reminder you need to connect with God throughout your day.

Watching the faithful man rise from his prayer mat in a dusty rural parking lot at dusk has become my own call to prayer—my own reminder that sometimes being inconvenienced for the sake of God is exactly what I need.



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