



# RELATIONAL RESILIENCE: SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

“It is not we who change ourselves into the image of God. Rather, it is the very image of God, the form of Christ, which seeks to take shape within us (Gal. 4:19). It is Christ’s own form, which seeks to manifest itself in us. Christ does not cease working in us until he has changed us into Christ’s own image. Our goal is to be shaped into the entire **form** of the **incarnate**, the **crucified**, and the **risen one**.” ~Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*

## Introduction

In Ephesians 3, the Apostle Paul prays that you “may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.”

*Inner strength. Rooted and grounded in love. Christ and his Spirit dwelling within.*

For Jesus’ people, those are the ingredients of resilience—our ability to stay grounded in chaotic times and to overcome when we feel overwhelmed.

Our Lenten series, *Relational Resilience*, is an invitation into a wholistic conversation about resilience and an opportunity to learn simple spiritual exercises that build our personal and relational resilience.

In addition to our Sunday and Wednesday worship services this Spiritual Practices Guide is designed to help guide you on that inward and outward journey of faith as together we discover that *inner strength, rooted and grounded in love, as Christ and his Spirit dwell within*. These Spiritual Practices in and of themselves will not change you more into the likeness of Christ. Rather these Spiritual Practices seek to bring you into the presence of God where the Holy Spirit can work to transform you into the image of God as each day you die more to yourself and take up the invitation to carry the cross and follow Jesus daily.

**WEEK 1: FEBRUARY 25-MARCH 3**

# **LECTIO DIVINA/SACRED READING**

**L**ectio Divina is the Spiritual Practice that involves connecting your mind with your heart and your spirit. So often when reading we engage our minds and fail to move to engaging our hearts and spirits in response to what we have read. Occasionally, we may read an article from the news or read a piece of poetry that moves us emotionally or intellectually to act. Yet, the intentional slow, repetitive reading of our beloved sacred text of the Holy Bible has the unique ability to connect us to the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of the world.

Each day this week we invite you to read a short passage of Scripture. You may choose to read each one of the passages suggested or repeat one or two of the passages each day. First, find a quiet place. Close your eyes for a few moments and concentrate on your breathing. Allow yourself to simply be in God's presence. When you're ready open your eyes and begin reading the passage slowly and out loud to yourself. Is there a word or phrase that jumps out to you? Close your eyes again and hold that word or phrase in prayer as you offer to God.

Next, read the passage again, slowly and out loud. This time pay attention to what feelings emerge for you. Does it cause you feel joyful? Sad? Calm? Irritated? Excited? Once again offer those feelings to God in prayer.

Finally, read the passage a third time slowly and out loud. As you do so, try to imagine yourself present in the passage. If there are characters mentioned in the story, do you see yourself as one? Which one? What might you be able to see if you were in the story? Or smell? Or touch? What does this passage reveal to you about who God is and who God created you to be?

Use the empty space on the pages to write any prayers, thoughts or convictions you have as you live into this Spiritual Practice this week.

**Thursday, February 25—Genesis 1:26-31**  
**(The Message)**

26-28 God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image,  
make them reflecting our nature

So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea,  
the birds in the air, the cattle,

And, yes, Earth itself,  
and every animal that moves on the face of Earth."

God created human beings;

he created them godlike,

Reflecting God's nature.

He created them male and female.

God blessed them:

"Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge!

Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air,  
for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth."

29-30 Then God said, "I've given you  
every sort of seed-bearing plant on Earth

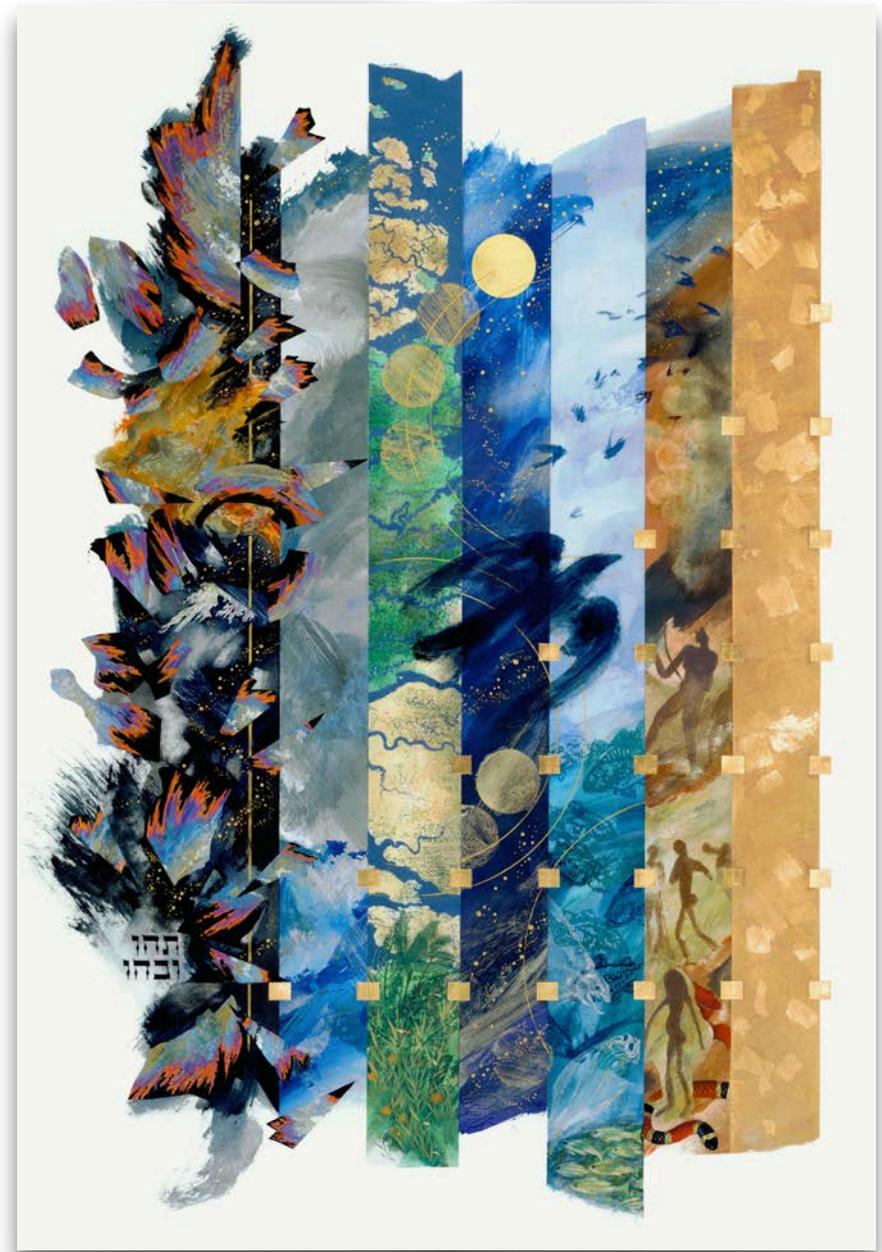
And every kind of fruit-bearing tree,  
given them to you for food.

To all animals and all birds,  
everything that moves and breathes,

I give whatever grows out of the ground for food."

And there it was.

31 God looked over everything he had made;  
it was so good, so very good!



**Friday, February 26—Psalm 27:1-5, 13-14  
(The Message)**

1 Light, space, zest—that's God!  
So, with him on my side I'm fearless,  
afraid of no one and nothing.

2 When vandal hordes ride down  
ready to eat me alive,  
Those bullies and toughs  
fall flat on their faces.

3 When besieged,  
I'm calm as a baby.  
When all hell breaks loose,  
I'm collected and cool.

4 I'm asking God for one thing,  
only one thing:  
To live with him in his house  
my whole life long.  
I'll contemplate his beauty;  
I'll study at his feet.

5 That's the only quiet, secure place  
in a noisy world,  
The perfect getaway,  
far from the buzz of traffic.

13-14 I'm sure now I'll see God's goodness  
in the exuberant earth.  
Stay with God!  
Take heart. Don't quit.  
I'll say it again:  
Stay with God.

**Saturday, February 27—Psalm 100  
(NRSV)**

1 Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.  
2 Worship the Lord with gladness;  
come into his presence with singing.

3 Know that the Lord is God.  
It is he that made us, and we are his;  
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving,  
and his courts with praise.  
Give thanks to him, bless his name.

5 For the Lord is good;  
his steadfast love endures forever,  
and his faithfulness to all generations.

**Sunday, February 28—Zephaniah 3:14-17**  
**(The Message)**

14-15 So sing, Daughter Zion!  
Raise your voices, Israel!  
Daughter Jerusalem,  
be happy! celebrate!

God has reversed his judgments against you  
and sent your enemies off chasing their tails.

From now on, God is Israel's king,  
in charge at the center.

There's nothing to fear from evil  
ever again!

God Is Present Among You

16-17 Jerusalem will be told:

"Don't be afraid.

Dear Zion,  
don't despair.

Your God is present among you,  
a strong Warrior there to save you.

Happy to have you back, he'll calm you with his love  
and delight you with his songs.

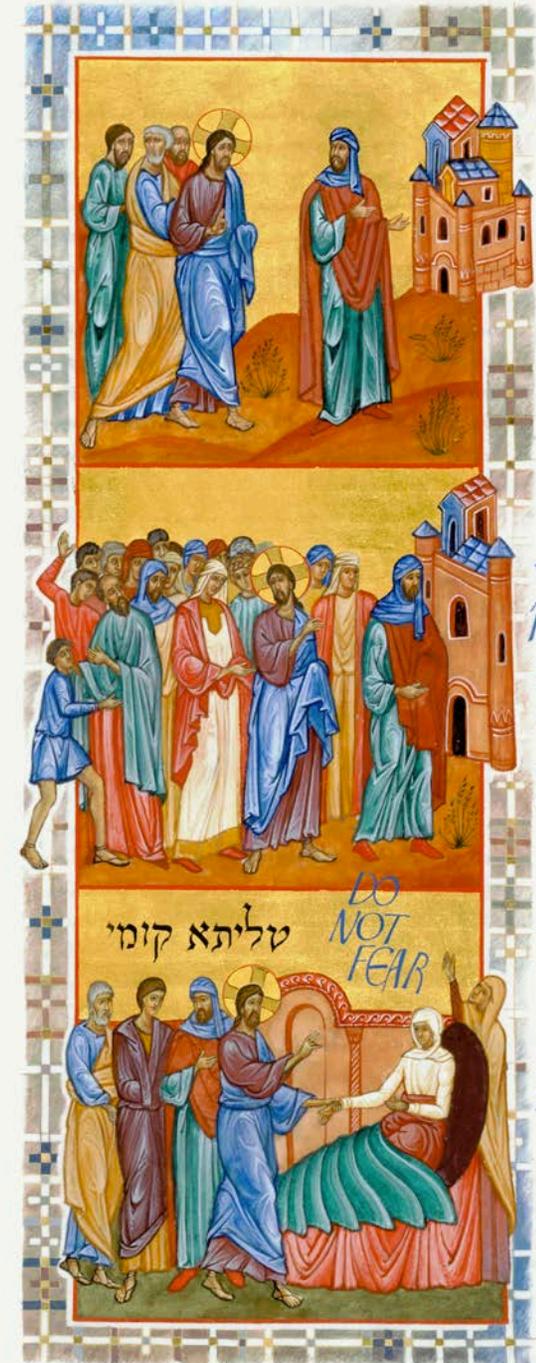
## Monday, March 1—Matthew 9:18-26

### (The Message)

18-19 As he finished saying this, a local official appeared, bowed politely, and said, “My daughter has just now died. If you come and touch her, she will live.” Jesus got up and went with him, his disciples following along.

20-22 Just then a woman who had hemorrhaged for twelve years slipped in from behind and lightly touched his robe. She was thinking to herself, “If I can just put a finger on his robe, I’ll get well.” Jesus turned—caught her at it. Then he reassured her: “Courage, daughter. You took a risk of faith, and now you’re well.” The woman was well from then on.

23-26 By now they had arrived at the house of the town official, and pushed their way through the gossips looking for a story and the neighbors bringing in casseroles. Jesus was abrupt: “Clear out! This girl isn’t dead. She’s sleeping.” They told him he didn’t know what he was talking about. But when Jesus had gotten rid of the crowd, he went in, took the girl’s hand, and pulled her to her feet—alive. The news was soon out, and traveled throughout the region.



**Tuesday, March 2—Luke 15:1-10**  
**(NRSV)**

1 Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. 2 And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

3 So he told them this parable: 4 “Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? 5 When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ 7 Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

8 “Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? 9 When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ 10 Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

## **Wednesday, March 3—John 6:1-13**

### **(The Message)**

1-4 After this, Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee (some call it Tiberias). A huge crowd followed him, attracted by the miracles they had seen him do among the sick. When he got to the other side, he climbed a hill and sat down, surrounded by his disciples. It was nearly time for the Feast of Passover, kept annually by the Jews.

5-6 When Jesus looked out and saw that a large crowd had arrived, he said to Philip, "Where can we buy bread to feed these people?" He said this to stretch Philip's faith. He already knew what he was going to do.

7 Philip answered, "Two hundred silver pieces wouldn't be enough to buy bread for each person to get a piece."

8-9 One of the disciples—it was Andrew, brother to Simon Peter—said, "There's a little boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But that's a drop in the bucket for a crowd like this."

10-11 Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." There was a nice carpet of green grass in this place. They sat down, about five thousand of them. Then Jesus took the bread and, having given thanks, gave it to those who were seated. He did the same with the fish. All ate as much as they wanted.

12-13 When the people had eaten their fill, he said to his disciples, "Gather the leftovers so nothing is wasted." They went to work and filled twelve large baskets with leftovers from the five barley loaves.



WEEK 2 MARCH 4-10

# THE IGNATIAN EXAMEN

**S**T. Ignatius in the 16th century developed a four week prayer retreat that invites participants to perform an in-depth look at their life of faith. The retreat is led by an experienced Jesuit priest who serves as the spiritual director for the participants. While spending four weeks on a spiritual retreat is a laudable goal for all disciples of Christ, it may not be always be possible for us. Therefore, this week we recommend adapting some of the spiritual practices that one might experience on the retreat.

You can choose to do the same practice every day or experiment with more than one. There are no *assigned* days for these specific practices like there were assigned readings for *Lectio Divina* that you experienced last week. Read through all of practices listed below and then choose which one(s) will be most meaningful to you. Although there is no “magical time” to enter into these practices, due to the nature of them it will serve you better to do them at night. This is because these practices ask for a great deal of internal reflection. However, if your daily rhythm is better suited to morning devotions, then simply use it as an opportunity to reflect on what transpired the day before.

## CONSOLATION AND DESOLATION

**Consolations** are all of the moments throughout your day in which you experienced God’s nearness. It can be described as being *filled with joy* through an action that you were performing, or a *wave of comfort* your experienced as God’s spirit moved in you. It may also be the moment when your passions in life were used in service to God’s Kingdom.

**Desolations** are the opposite experiences of Consolations. Desolations are those moments you experience throughout your day when you recognize that you are far from God. It could include specific sins that you have committed, but even more than that it includes the moments and experiences of *separation from God and God’s will*.

In this practice recall to mind the movements within your day. When did you feel *closest* to God? What emotions did that create within your spirit. *What are the consolations that you can celebrate with God today?* Next, recall the moments and experiences throughout the day when you felt distant from God. What *feelings* came up for you as you named them before God? Guilt? Shame? Regret? Offer those feelings to God as well, trusting that Christ, who hung on the cross for you, bears that burden for you.

## GUIDED BY THE COMMANDMENTS

*"Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"~Isaiah 6:5*



The Prophet Isaiah says these words of Confession as he comes into the presence of the Holy and Living God when he served as priest on the Day of Atonement in the Holy of Holies. The Prophet recognizes in that moment how Holy God is, and how utterly depraved he is. Once he confesses his sin to this Holy God we read how God purifies him through sending an angel to touch his lips with a burning hot coal. Once forgiven, Isaiah is ready to answer God's call:

*"Then I heard the voice of the LORD saying,  
'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?'  
And I said, 'Here am I; send me!'"~Isaiah 6:8*

Throughout the season of Lent we turn our attention towards confession as we prepare ourselves to celebrate and encounter the resurrected Jesus. Another practice from the Ignatian Retreat involves a deep reflection on the Ten Commandments. The participant is invited to meditate on each one of the Ten Commandments and confess all of the ways in which they have broken the specific commandment to a spiritual director. After the confessor is done considering each of the Commandments, the spiritual director would assure them of God's grace and forgiveness.

Take each one of the Ten Commandments in turn and confess your sin to God in the ways that you have fallen short. You could work your way through all Ten of them in one sitting, or space them out throughout the day or days. After confessing your sins trust in these words of forgiveness:

*"As far as the east is from the west, so far God removes our transgressions for us." ~Psalm 103:12*

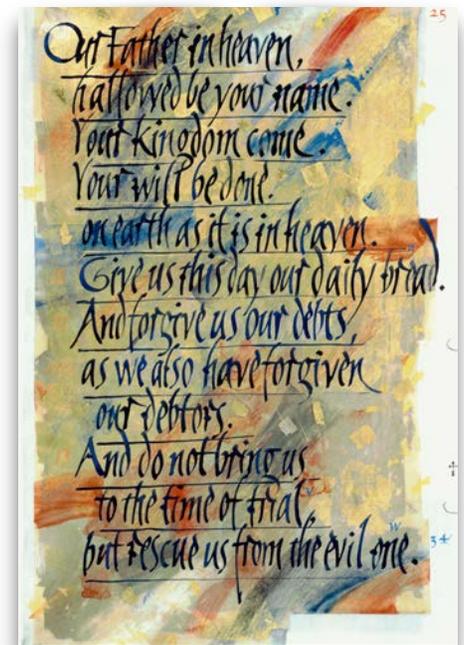
WEEK THREE: MARCH 11-17

# THE LORD'S PRAYER MEDITATION

*"Jesus was praying in a certain place and after he was done praying one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord teach us to pray as John has taught his disciples.'"~Luke 11:1*

**D**ivide up the Lord's Prayer phrase by phrase and meditate on each one of the phrases all day long. Use the phrase as a mantra that you can repeat to yourself over and over again throughout the day. Whenever you feel tempted, or whenever you find your mind wandering, repeat that day's mantra to yourself and allow yourself to be centered in God's presence. For example, this week our speaker emphasized how guilt and forgiveness work together. Consider the line "Forgive us our sins as we we forgive those who sin against us." Meditate on the meaning of that phrase throughout one of your days and consider how the Lord's Prayer can bring life What are those things that you need to confess to God to be free of the guilt that you experience? What are the things that have been done to you that you need to forgive others for so they can be free of guilt and experience God's love and grace?

Our Father in Heaven,  
Hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come  
Your will be done  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins . . .  
As we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
And deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom  
the power  
and the glory  
Are yours, now and forever.  
Amen.



### **Space for Lord's Prayer Reflection:**

1. Which of these phrases was most meaningful to you this week?
2. What did you find helpful about living into this Spiritual Practice this week?
3. As you say the Lord's Prayer what emotions come up for you throughout the prayer? Wonderment? Guilt? Peace? Comfort? How do these emotions help you to connect more with the Living God?
4. Was there a time throughout this week when repeating the mantra helped you be more aware of God's presence in your life? What was that like? What were the circumstances that brought that about? What was your frame of mind when that happened? Do you think it's something that can be replicated again?
5. One of the things we believe happens when we align our will with God's will, is that God then calls us to act in some way in this world. How has this spiritual practice caused you to be more open to ministering to others? Were you convicted of anything as you were saying some of the mantras? Did you choose to act on those convictions?

WEEK FOUR: MARCH 18-24

# BREATH PRAYER MEDITATION

Theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer asserts that, “. . . a situation in which faith is possible is only a description of the reality contained in the following two statements, both of which are equally true: *only the believers obey*, and *only the obedient believe*.”<sup>1</sup> Our faith grows exponentially as we discover new ways in which God calls us to simple daily acts of obedience. Perhaps as you were meditating on the Ten Commandments, or reflecting daily on those moments when you felt more deeply connected with God’s spirit you noticed an increase in your faith. Maybe your willingness to place more trust in God grew as you discovered what the Apostle Paul calls, “a peace that transcends all understanding.” That experience of peace is a direct outcome of the habit of performing these Spiritual Practices daily.

For the first three weeks you have been invited to focus more on the inward part of your journey of faith. Seeking to align your own will with God’s will. For the next two weeks we invite you to shift your focus to the outward journey. This week we invite you to use a simple breath prayer as a form of meditation in order to slow yourself down and listen to God speak to you and through you. The key to this spiritual practice is not only listening to God, but then respond to God’s calling with simple acts of obedience throughout your day. We will use the Prophet Isaiah’s words as our prayer of meditation, “Lord, here am I, send me.”

Every day this week, find a calm space for you to be in. Light a candle recognizing that Christ meets you in this space. Close your eyes. Take a few slow and deep breaths. Calm your mind. Open your hands to receive whatever God has to give you this day. Then, breathe in while saying, “Lord, here am I.” Then breathe out saying, “Send me.” Allow the words of the this prayer to sweep over you as you repeat it.

As you pray, pay attention to any images, thoughts, or ideas that come to mind. Allow the Spirit of God to bring to your imagination how it is that God is calling you this day to participate with God. Some days God may simply ask you to remain in God’s presence to be filled to overflowing with God’s love and grace poured out on you. Or to be reminded that you are God’s

---

<sup>1</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, ed. Geffery B. and John D. Godsey Kelly, trans. Barbara and Reinhard Krauss Green (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 63.

beloved and that with you God is well pleased. If so, accept that gift of grace and love confident of the richness of all that God has to give to you that day.

Perhaps other days you may be convicted of a sin that God desires of you to confess and seek forgiveness for. When this happens simply obey, confess your sin to God, receive the Good News that you have been forgiven, and when needed, seek for a way to reconcile with someone you have offended or sinned against.

Still, other days you may hear God's voice speaking directly to you to perform a specific action, or to be led to a specific place. Resist the temptation to create excuses for yourself to follow-up with an act of obedience. Rather, simply obey. Use the prayer as your motivation, "Lord, here am I, send me." Be sent out into the world to share the love of Christ through your actions.

Use the space below to write out your experiences of listening to God, and being sent out in this world to simply obey.

WEEK FIVE: MARCH 25-31

# SERVICE

*“Learn the lesson that, if you are to do the work of a prophet, what you need is not a scepter but a hoe.” ~Bernard of Clairvaux*

True service comes from an intimate relationship with the Tri-une God. It is in listening to the Divine whispers and urgings each day that seeks first the Kingdom of God. This is different than a “self-righteous service” which seeks to serve only for the well being of the self. As Richard Foster points out, “Self-righteous service is impressed with the ‘big deal.’ It is concerned to make impressive gains on ecclesiastical score boards . . . *True service finds it almost impossible to distinguish the small from the large service.*”<sup>2</sup>

The Spiritual Practice of *Service* invites the follower of Jesus into their outward journey of discipleship. It seeks to perform the invisible acts of service like: picking up a piece of trash by caring of creation, or serving a shift at Feed My Starving Children for the person suffering from malnourishment across the world, or providing for the needs of the person experiencing homelessness on your commute to work, or helping your neighbor across the street prepare their yard for the spring.

In John 13 as the disciples gathered together in the upper room. Their feet were caked with mud and dirt, yet no one was willing to humble himself for the sake of serving one another. That was the role saved for the lowest among them. In a world that is ruled by hierarchy and determining one’s worth by where they stand on the social ladder, none of the disciples were willing to serve one another. Jesus’ call to servanthood is an invitation to defy the normal pecking order of hierarchy. True service is an invitation to love one another just as Jesus loves us.

Each day this week we invite you to love another person or to love the community you live in through simple acts of service. Perhaps it involves picking up trash you see on the road as you go for a walk. Or as you drive around town and encounter a person in need you seek for a way to meet that person’s needs. Maybe it looks like making a meal for a neighbor who was just diagnosed with cancer. Or maybe it involves volunteering at the Ralph Reeder Food Shelf. Each day find a way to serve and reset the social hierarchy. Then take a few moments to reflect on your experience.

---

<sup>2</sup> Richard Foster, *Celebration of Disciplines: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 128. Italics added.

### **Space for Reflection on Service:**

1. What were some of the ways that you served creation, or others this week?
2. How did your acts of service lead you to connecting more fully with the Spirit of God working in the world around you?
3. Were you surprised by anything this week? Did you have any conversations with people that you served? What were those like?
4. In what ways were you tempted to perform acts of service for your own self-righteousness?
5. How was this Spiritual Practice different than the other ones you did during Lent? Why is it important to experience different types of Spiritual Practices in our journey of faith?

## **Copyright of Images**

*Creation*, Donald Jackson, Copyright 2003, *The Saint John's Bible*, Saint John's University, Collegeville, MN, USA. Used by Permission. All rights reserved. (Page 3)

*Lord's Prayer*, Donald Jackson, Copyright 2002, *The Saint John's Bible*, Saint John's University, Collegeville, MN USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved. (Page 12)

*Ten Commandments*, Thomas Ingmire, Copyright 2002 *The Saint John's Bible*, Saint John's University, Collegeville, MN USA. Used by permission. All Rights Reserved. (Page 11)

*Two Cures*, Aidan Hart with contributions from Donald Jackson and Sally Mae Joseph, Copyright 2002, *The Saint John's Bible*, Saint John's University, Collegeville, MN, USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved. (Page 6)