

# Abide: Developing Spiritual Rhythms

Week 1 – Sabbath, Centering Prayer, Prayer Labyrinth

## **SABBATH**

### **The invitation to slow down:**

Shabbat (Sabbath) – To stop

*“Sabbath is more than just a day; it is a way of being in the world. It’s a spirit of restfulness that comes from abiding, from living in the Father’s loving presence all week long.”*

- John Mark Comer, Ruthless Elimination of Hurry, pg. 149

### **Key Texts**

**Genesis 2:2-3:** God rested in the creation story

**Exodus 20:8-11:** Sabbath included in 10 Commandments

**Exodus 31:12-17:** Instructions on observing Sabbath

**Leviticus 25:1-5:** A Sabbath practice for the land

**Mark 2:23-28, Matthew 12:9-14:** Jesus confronted around the Sabbath

### **How to Build a Sabbath Day**

*“A Sabbath is carving out space to intentionally stop what you are doing so that you can move into a passive receiving of God’s living water... It’s in the sabbath where we don’t just imitate our Father, but we meet him.”*

- Dr. Shane Wood

**Stop**

**Rest**

**Delight**

**Worship**

### **Practice:**

What are activities that bring you life? What moments in life do you find the most fulfilling?

What things will be difficult to ‘stop’ doing if you want to begin this rhythm?

What fears or reactions come up when you think about beginning something like this?

**Sabbath Reach Exercise:** Practice a half day or full day of sabbath in the next two weeks. What things would you include? What things will you have to set down?

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## **CENTERING PRAYER**

**Two rivers, two traditions of prayer in the history of Christian spirituality.**

Apophatic

Kataphatic

### **Centering Prayer / Contemplative Prayer as a Spiritual Discipline**

A newer experience of encounter with God, “in essence, contemplative prayer is simply a wordless, trusting opening of self to divine presence.” (Bourgeault, Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening p. 5)

Silence is God’s first language (St John of the Cross)  
Ignatius in Spiritual Exercises

### **Emergence of Centering Prayer – Mains, Pennington, Keating (Merton)**

Finding God at the Center: Our theme is the center, that is, the place of meeting of the human spirit and the divine Spirit, and, in that meeting, the place where the Christian at prayer meets the whole of reality, divine and human, persons and things, time and space, nature and history, evil and good. (80)

God dwelling in us is a foundational Christian belief  
Romans 8.11  
1 Corinthians 6.19

### **Centering Prayer in Three Steps** (Pennington’s essay in book)

First Step: At the beginning of the prayer take a minute or two to quiet down and then move in faith and love to God dwelling in our depths, and at the end of the prayer we take several minutes to come out, mentally praying the Our Father (p. 31)

Second Step: After resting for a bit in the presence in faith-full love, we take up a single, simple word that expresses our response and begin to let it repeat itself within (p. 38)

Third Step: Whenever in the course of prayer we become aware of anything else, we simply gently return to the prayer word (p. 40)

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# **Prayer Labyrinth**

## **What Is a Prayer Labyrinth?**

It is simply a place to walk and pray. It gives you the freedom to walk around while focusing your mind on God without worrying about getting lost. It has many turns, but unlike mazes, does not have dead ends and there are no choices to make. A labyrinth contains just one path that leads to the center.

## **Purposes of a Prayer Labyrinth**

The prayer labyrinth is like a journey through which we walk towards God's love and then back again to our world to share the love of God we've discovered.

- Pray the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) or a Psalm (i.e. Psalm 23)
- Lectio Divina
- Sing a hymn or worship song
- To help clarify a concern or question
- Worship God as you walk in and then intercede for people or concerns as you walk out
- To be a mini "Sabbath" to rest and focus on God
- Jesus behind me; Jesus beside me; Jesus in front of me
- To transition from one role to the next
- To calm yourself after an emotional experience

## **Guidelines for Using a Finger Prayer Labyrinth**

- Decide on your purpose before using labyrinth.
- Place the index finger of your non-dominant hand at the entrance to the labyrinth on the page; slowly trace the pathway with your finger from the entrance to the center. Breathe slowly and deep while your finger moves through the labyrinth.
- Once in the center, take your hand from the labyrinth and sit with your hands folded in your lap, eyes closed, paying attention to your purpose for using the labyrinth. What do you hear in your mind or sense with your body?
- When you are ready, place the same index finger back to the center and retrace the path out to the entrance. When your finger exits the labyrinth, give thanks for this time.

*May we walk with you O God. Guide us; teach us; lead us. We know that you are with us and in us and for us. Your love for us is never ending. We make this prayer. Amen.*

