



strengthen
**YOUR
SPIRIT**

**BEACH BODY OF CHRIST:
TRAINING**

BEACH BODY OF CHRIST SERIES

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Order of Worship

3

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship

Spirit Strengtheners

Regather (around 10:15)

Message

Hymn

Benediction

Postlude

Guiding Scripture

8-9 As the saying goes,
*“Exercise is good for your body,
but religion helps you in every way.
It promises life now and forever.”*

These words are worthwhile and should not be forgotten. 10 We have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of everyone, but especially of those who have faith. That’s why we work and struggle so hard.

11 Teach these things and tell everyone to do what you say.

-1 Timothy 4: 8-11

Why Be Beach Ready?

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and how do we strengthen our spirits?)

WE START OUR “SPIRIT STRENGTHENING”
WITH SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES.

Spiritual Disciplines are for everybody. Seriously. Today is all about our discipline. How do we meet God? How do we refill spiritually? Many of us grew up thinking that spiritual disciplines were sitting quietly in a room and magically communing with God. It seemed like some people could do it, and some couldn't. Well, friends, you're in luck! There are actually many, many ways to connect with God. Today, you can try out a few practices and take a few home to see what your spirit responds to most!

Spiritual disciplines are like workouts for your soul. This is what we do to get to know God, God's will, and what our own heart needs. Our world is so busy that we don't often make time to just be with God.

In prayer time we may even end up talking more than listening. It's hard to get to know God if we only choose one way to show up. It's like nutrition: if you eat only one food group, even if it's a "healthy choice," it's still just one thing. If you eat only kale you still won't be truly healthy. Just like we need a balanced diet, we need balanced disciplines, or practices, to help us to be spiritually healthy.

Why does this matter? This is how we become a healthy Body of Christ. We can't really be the Body if we don't have strong spirits. So, let's get to work!

Today, spend some time at each location around our worship space. Check out practices that intrigue you. When you get home, make a plan to spend some time trying your favorites. Who knows what God will show you!

TIP: Don't let past boredom stop you from trying something new. We are constantly growing and evolving. Something that may have worked for you years ago may not fit you now, while something that you've never enjoyed may suddenly be exactly what you need. You never know what God is doing within you!

My Comfort Zone

Before we start, take a breath to think about what you *already* think and feel.

I am most comfortable in worship when....

I am most comfortable in prayer when....

I wish I were comfortable enough to...

To me, prayer is...

Church music is...

Prayer at home is...

The Big 4

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Scripture, Meditation, Prayer, Fasting

(If you've explored spiritual disciplines, you've heard of these.)

Scripture: reading your Bible, attending a Bible study, etc.

Prayer: spending quiet time with God. You can use memorized prayers, or talk to God casually.

Fasting: abstaining from something temporarily to remember that God is our true need.

Meditation: spending focused time listening to God internally.

These four are everywhere! We could do an entire sermon series on each of these. The options are endless! Most of the stations presented today will fall under the umbrella of these disciplines. Remember, if one way hasn't worked for you before, now is a great time to try something new. Prayer doesn't have to be sitting still in a dark room trying to talk to God. It can be in dance, music, art, journaling. Fasting is often co-opted into an unhealthy dieting measure. What if your fast was something lifegiving that allowed you to draw closer to God.

Holy reading of scripture at home

Don't let the name intimidate you! "Lectio Divina" simply means "holy reading." This is a chance to pray and read scripture in order to get to know God better.

TIP: Try listening to a podcast like, "Ruminate This." They will pick a scripture, read it to you, and walk you through some thinking and prayer!

- Read
 - Choose a passage to read. Something shorter than 20 verses.
 - Ask the Holy Spirit to give you insight as you read.
 - Read it more than once, maybe even out loud
 - Try picking characters and wondering about their perspective.
- Meditate
 - Let your brain get active! What is the story about? Who wrote it? What surprised you? What was familiar? Does it apply to you right now?
 - Is there a word that leaps off the page at you? If so, what is it?
 - Let this process be slow. Let God move through your thinking rather than trying to direct it.
- Pray
 - Respond to what God has shown you. Tell God what you've seen and felt.
 - Tell God what is comforting, concerning, or challenging in the passage.
 - Ask God to help you live the truths you've uncovered.
- Contemplate
 - Stop and be still. Let your brain slow down. Listen for what the Holy Spirit will say to you.
 - It may be helpful to set a timer for 5-10 minutes. This may allow you to truly slow down knowing that time won't get away from you.

Spiritual Journaling

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When silent prayer gets distracting

wait, what's on my shopping list? Did I follow up with that person? Did I clean the lint out of the dryer?

It can be hard to focus on talking with God when so many thoughts come in and out. If this is you, spiritual journaling may be helpful! This is all about letting go of your filters and being open with God. If you google “spiritual journaling” or “prayer journaling” you’ll find as many templates as there are believers.

Here is one way to start:

- Grab a journal or a piece of paper. Find a place where you aren’t likely to be interrupted. I like to set a timer (5-10 minutes to start!) so I’m not watching the clock. Get cozy!
- Take a deep breath and dedicate this time to God. Whatever you do until you’re finished journaling, it is a gift to God.
- Write down everything on your mind in “laundry list” style. It might be:
 - grocery planning
 - turn over the laundry
 - I think my friend is mad at me
 - do I really have time for this?
 - Thaw the chicken

Spiritual Journaling

- Take a moment to look over your list. Now, set it aside and start talking to God about whatever is on your mind. For me, its best if I free associate and let go of punctuation and spelling.
 - If I worry about writing perfectly, I'll forget the point: talking to God. Often, this can be one, long, run-on sentence with paragraph breaks.
- If you'd like direction for your prayer writing, you can try these:
 - God, everything is just so....
 - I really wish...
 - God, could you help me with...
 - God, you are amazing because...
- When time is up, you have a few options. You can simply look over your writing and thank God for this time, or you can decide to keep writing until you are done.

My Practice

God, everything is just so....

I really wish...

God, could you help me with...

God, you are amazing because...

Contemplative Walking-from Richard Rohr

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Christine Valters Paintner describes the ancient and accessible contemplative practice of *walking or moving slowly through the natural world as a way of connecting with God*. This is clearly the "road not taken" by too many of us in the modern world, even though it shaped and sustained the faith of our ancestors for millennia. If you find it difficult to sustain a practice of seated meditation, I encourage you to begin by moving outdoors.

In [the contemplative] path we cultivate intimacy with the Earth and her creatures, and we allow ourselves to fall in love with nature. It is one of my deepest beliefs that we will not be able to address the environmental crisis we currently face without this intimacy, without learning how to cherish nature, without love.

I encourage you to make time each day to be outside. One of the ways to do this is to go on a contemplative walk with an intentional and reverential heart.

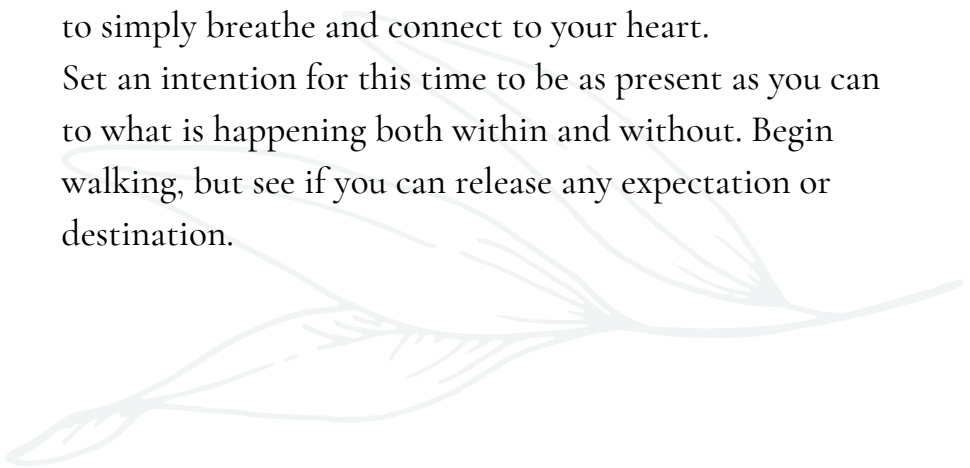
Contemplative Walking

There is something about getting our bodies out into the world, in close contact with trees, bushes, flowers, squirrels, pigeons, and crows, that can invigorate us and offer us a new perspective on life. In the book of Jeremiah, God asks, “do I not fill heaven and earth?” (Jeremiah 23:24). These walks are really time to experience that truth.

Contemplative walking does not necessarily mean walking slowly, although at its heart it is not a rushed activity. When we walk contemplatively, we give ourselves over to the experience. This is not walking for fitness. It is walking to immerse ourselves in an encounter with whatever is calling us in the moment.

As you begin a contemplative walk, allow a few moments to simply breathe and connect to your heart.

Set an intention for this time to be as present as you can to what is happening both within and without. Begin walking, but see if you can release any expectation or destination.



Contemplative Walking

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As you walk, imagine that with each step your feet are both blessing the ground and being blessed by it. Let your breath be long and slow. Bring your awareness to the earth monastery all around you.

Notice what draws your attention. Look for what shimmers or with the Japanese poet Basho called, “a glimpse of the underglimmer.” Listen for the sounds of life around you. Even if you are walking through a city, pay attention to the rustle of the breeze, the caw of the crows, or any subtle elements of creation singing their song.

Pause regularly simply to receive this gift. Breathe it in. Let it have some space in your heart. Then continue on until something else causes you to stop.

This is the whole of the practice: simply [moving], listening, and pausing. We practice presence so that we might cultivate our ability to really hear the voice of nature speaking to us. That sounds simple, and yet we so rarely make the time to develop this skill.

I love to curl up with a good book. Books can make us think, help us to relax, or take us to another world. They can also help our spiritual growth. While there are a lot of Christian books in the world, it can be hard to vet them for ones that fit our theology or reading preferences. Sometimes its great to read something just to be stretched in a new direction while other times we are looking for comfort.

If you haven't spent time reading books for your soul, there are a number of books on the table church members have recommended. We'll also send a list later.

Once you pick a book, what makes it a spirit strengthener rather than just reading?

As with most workouts, it becomes what you make it. If you show up to reading with the intention of letting God work on your spirit, you will grow. If you show up irritated and frustrated, you'll still get a "workout" but you won't benefit as much as you may otherwise.

With books, I suggest having some focus questions in mind:

- Wait, what?!
- Where do I see God?
- How is this similar to or different from how I've thought of God before?
- What is most challenging to me? What is most inspiring?
- What do I feel resistant to?
- What makes me excited?

You won't necessarily apply each question to every book. However, each question is about letting God work through your emotions and curiosity. Get in touch with you and see what God is saying.

You may want to journal about what you've read or share your thoughts with a friend. Joining a group like the Covenant group or Bible Study gives you a chance to share what you've gleaned and to listen to others.

Do you have books you've really loved? Write them on the list on the table so we can share them with others later in the week!

Daily Devotions

This practice is common, and commonly quit! What leads some folks to stick with it? Have you tried daily devotions? If you don't have a daily devotion practice-you are not alone! If you've ever been curious about it, now would be a great time to test it out. Grab an Upper Room devotion for this quarter and decide to start. Perhaps ask someone else to be your "reading buddy" and decide to chat about the readings weekly or monthly.

When you think of daily devotions, what do you picture?

My Thoughts

Testimony

I don't remember when I first started reading a devotional, but about 5 years ago, I started taking the Upper Room with me on Metro when I went to work. Being on furlough now for over a year has not stopped that practice. It is so easy to get discouraged watching the news, and I no longer end my day with negative thoughts. I like to read them in the morning, and before bed to start, and finish my day! One of my favorite devotional books is one my cousin gave me called "Be Still and Know." It starts by saying, "God loves to meet us in every moment of every day. He encourages us to come close and confidently ask him for everything we need. He wants to hear what is on our hearts." My father passed onto me an appreciation for nature, and that is where it is easiest for me to see God, in his creation. Whether it is listening to the birds singing, watching a spectacular sunrise or sunset, or just sitting outside with the sun on my face; it makes me thankful for all that God has given me. If you currently don't read a daily devotion, I would encourage you to pick up an Upper Room from church, believe me, it will be the best part of your day!

-Mary Kay Abramson

“thy Kingdom come” work

In the Lord's Prayer, we pray, “thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” As the body of Christ, we actually have a role in that!
We are God's plan for God's will!

It's cool... and it's a little scary sometime, too. It's a lot of responsibility! Sometimes, we look at the world, see the problems, and just shut down because fixing it all just seems impossible.

Well, you're right, it is impossible for one person to take on an entire systemic problem and expect to eradicate it. But we're not just one person. We're the body of Christ. Through Christ, all things are possible.

I don't think God is going to sweep God's hand across the world to fix all the world's problems. That doesn't seem like God's style. Jesus came to earth to redeem us, not by forcing or changing us, but by giving us the opportunity to change our hearts. “thy Kingdom come” will come through individual hearts turning towards God and opening to God's will. Then we'll change the systems together.

Rev. Emily... what does that even mean?

That means God is going to take the long way. God is going to help each person to become awake. This is what grace does in our lives. Grace helps us to see and wonder.

Journal Page

Here are some questions to prayerfully consider to strengthen this part of your spirit:

- What problems do I see in the world?
- Where do I see God?
- What am I most passionate about?
- What is God calling me to do?

You can do this with spiritual journaling, meditation, conversations with others, or anything else that helps you to focus.

Images Shape Us:

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With our world its really easy to avoid people or groups that make us uncomfortable. We spend most of our time with people who share our appearance and values. With Facebook and other social media, we can descend further into our echo chambers until, suddenly, other views seem wrong, rather than just different. Have you experienced this?

If we are the Body of Christ, then we need to know about people not-like us. It's not a suggestion, its vital. We can't really care for people that we don't know. If we expect people to be like us, then the body can't function.

Remember the passage from 1 Corinthians 12:17? "If our bodies were only an eye, we couldn't hear a thing. And if they were only an ear, we couldn't smell a thing" (CEV).

If we all think like Salem UMC members and attendees, then where is the Russian Orthodox portion? Or the Pentecostal portion? The Orthodox church shows us that God shows up in expected ways and that we can show up for God with beautiful rituals. The Pentecostals remind us that God is not confined to our Sunday service. God is going to show up and make changes whether we're ready or not! All we can do is hang on and agree to keep going. United Methodists sometimes miss both perspectives. We need each other.

Who is God?

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Sometimes this can start with how we see God. Close your eyes and picture God, Jesus, or the Spirit. Often, we picture members of the trinity, especially Jesus, as looking like us. That's fine! Cultures all over the world paint God in their own image. However, Genesis says that we're made in God's image, not the other way around. Our imaginations are limited compared to God's. If we want to imagine God, we'll need to stretch ourselves and look at other cultural images.

This matters because if God only looks like me then it doesn't make sense for God to care for my neighbors in other countries. If God only looks like me, then perhaps I'm set apart or above others because God looks like only me. This can become a problem quickly. Also, it's not good for strengthening our spirits. It's like walking a maze blindfolded. Perhaps we'll get through, but we may miss all the cool stuff along the way. God created a world full of diversity: people, plants, animals, cells. What if that means we are created in the image of God's diversity?

Journal Page

Start thinking about this with different images of God. Look for images of God from different countries and traditions. Look for images that make you comfortable and uncomfortable. Start asking what these different images mean. Find a solid mix of images and display them somehow: perhaps as your computer background, on your refrigerator, or around your home. Practice imagining God through these different images.

Try asking some of these questions:

- If God looks like _____, does that make a difference?
- If God looks like me, does that make a difference?
- Do any of these images make me uncomfortable?
Comfortable?

As you practice, invite God into your heart. Ask God to help you see. After looking, take a moment to jot down some thoughts.

Who is my Neighbor?

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Look back just one page and you'll see what you already know: what we see, who we're with, that shapes us.

Studies say that we are the sum of the five people we spend the most time with. Who do you spend time with? Are you intentional about your companions, or do you let your circle decide itself? Everyone (naturally) does it differently.

What if being intentional about who you spend time listening to was a way to strengthen your spirit? Just as looking at different images of God may stretch you, looking at, getting to know, and listening to people with different backgrounds may stretch you, too. Have you been on a mission trip? Do you remember the people you met? Did you learn from them? My guess is that you did. Widening your sense (our sense) of the Body of Christ is vital! God isn't here for just us—you know this already!

Our baptismal vows tell us that we're all connected in Christ. If that's true, we'll have to get to know others as if they are our family. Sometimes that means feeling uncomfortable. We have deep-seated gut feelings that are hard to combat (check out "The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion" by Jonathan Haidt).

Journal Page

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The only way I know to overcome our built-in discomfort:

- 1.ASK: What actually makes me uncomfortable?
- 2.ASK: Is my discomfort based on an experience?
- 3.ASK: What experiences might these “other” people have?
- 4.Get to know people on a genuine level.

Today, check out the pictures on the table. Pray that God will give you open eyes. Ask the first three questions above and, “what makes me most comfortable?” Take a moment to write down your thoughts.

TIP: Sometimes memoirs are a great place to start listening! Recently, a book called “I’m Black. I’m Christian. I’m Methodist” was published. Some pastors from our conference have articles in the book as well. This is a book sharing stories of what it means to be a Black United Methodist. You may not agree with everything in the book; however, it is just people sharing their lived experiences and so is perfect for practicing “listening.”

God Jobs

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What's *that*?

At Salem, this idea has evolved over the last year as we've seen what is necessary to make outdoor worship possible.

Here's the basic idea: many hands make light work AND it may just change your life.

Showing up on Sunday morning just to sit in a pew may make you feel good (and it's certainly a good thing to do!), but that alone will not transform your life.

Transformation comes from being part of something. It comes from having a vested interest.

There are many, many opportunities to serve in conventional and non-conventional (necessary) roles. Through the pandemic, one person attended worship with the God Job of praying us through the service.

In the next month or so, you'll have an opportunity to sign up for God Jobs around the church. We'll send out an electronic form with a built-in reminder email! (if you prefer to sign up manually, no problem. Talk to Rev. Emily). Each job will have a description, expected time cost, suggested number of people needed, and suggested dates.

Jobs might be:

- Once-a-year garden clean up (weeding around the garden before planting, Spring, 4 hours, 4 people)
- Twice-a-year filter change (learn filter locations and replace, January and July, 15 minutes, 1 person)
- Official handyman call-er (something breaks, we call you, you call and schedule the handyman, as needed, hopefully under an hour each, 1-2 people).
- Sunday Hospitality (monthly commitment to greet people, help set up worship indoors or outdoors, and check contact tracing, come 30 minutes before service, 2-4 people each month)

Our church has chosen to care for our finances by doing most work around the church with volunteers or donations. However, as we get older, we are noticing some jobs are harder than they used to be. Some churches hire maintenance people, however, that is not how we've allocated our budget. So, another option is to open up the opportunity to pay for jobs as needed. Making sure a God Job happens by funding it is as vital as doing it physically (and likely better for your body!). Each job that can be funded will have a dollar amount associated with it as a guide. If you'd like to make a financial donation towards God Jobs, you can write a check and put "God Jobs" in the memo. The money will go towards funding anything left after sign up.

Top 5 Reasons to have a God Job

1. God calls us to be good stewards of what we are given. When we are responsible for our funds and resources, we honor God. This helps the church balance the budget. We are in the black and want to stay there! (*Thank you to everyone for being part of our recovery!*)
2. Working with others builds relationships and it's awesome (just ask "Team Sparkle"). If you sign up for a larger job (4 people), you'll get to spend time with other Christians doing God's work. It might even be fun (*gasp!*)
3. You are doing what Jesus did. Check out Mark 10:45 and John 13: 1-17. Jesus chose to serve even though he's a king! When we serve, we honor God.
4. Missions change us. Talk to someone who's done ASP or another mission. Sure, they built something, but I bet they'll talk about what changed in their hearts.
5. This work is a Spirit Strengthenener like nothing else! When you are working for God, for God's glory and it's a little fun, a little frustrating (sometimes), but necessary, it is going to deepen your understanding of how much God loves you. You will be serving your Creator and doing something mundane, but necessary. Like all our Spirit Strengtheners, you'll get what you put in.

What now?

Now that you've tried things... what do you think?

Right now I feel....

I want to try....

I am not interested in trying....

I'm curious about.... (but am not sure I'll do it)....

Other thoughts:

Want More?

This doesn't cover all the possible disciplines. However, we found an awesome resource you can download at home to learn more! The PDF has practices that range from Ritual Practices, to Movement, to Stillness, and more (even scrapbooking is included!).

If you'd like to check it out, you can either:

- type in this URL:
<https://tinyurl.com/ContPracticesDownload>
- or scan the QR code below.



Some practices we recommend checking out include:

- Set your watch/phone alarm to go off a couple of times a day then stop to breathe, pray, etc. p. 6/7
- Create a sacred space in your home p. 12 and 15/16
- What is a sabbath? p. 19/20