

The background is a dark charcoal grey. It features several overlapping circles of varying shades of grey and blue. In the center, there is a circular emblem containing a stylized tree with many leaves. The text 'Lenten Practices' is centered over this emblem in a white, serif font.

Lenten Practices

Community Covenant Church
1835 Granite Hills Drive
El Cajon CA 92019

LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina is an age-old practice of reading and reflecting on Scripture. For this practice, we read the same passage multiple times. Relax and sit comfortably and breathe deeply to relax your body. Invite God's presence. In the first reading, notice when a word or phrase grabs you, becomes vibrant. Maybe it feels not like one that you choose but one that chooses you.

Listen to the passage, and reflect as you identify the word or phrase. Write the word down and, if you feel led, say it out loud.

Listen again as you read the Scripture a second time. This time, imagine you are present in the Scripture. Tap into as many senses as you can. Let an image attract you to look at it deeper or longer. Is there an image that attracts you? Draw it.

The final reading is a time to listen for God's invitation. "What is God calling me to do or to be today? This week?" Be aware of resistance. Open your heart to the call invitation. What is God inviting you to? Write it down and throughout this week, be reminded of this invitation.

MOUNTAINS AND VALLEYS

“And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

During our lives, we experience times of joy, when we feel like we are flying above the highest mountaintop, our hearts full of gratitude. There are also times when we feel overwhelmed, walking alone through valleys and we need help. Although it is hard to see, God is present in each of these times, and in the times between the valleys and mountaintops. Taking the time to acknowledge each of these times brings God’s presence to the surface. Draw a mountainscape on the next page.

What are the mountaintops of your life, when you have been overwhelmed with gratitude? Take a moment and write your thanks to God for these times next to the mountaintops. What are the valleys of your life, when you have needed God’s hand to guide, comfort, or lift a burden? Take a moment and ask God for help in these valleys. Write these requests prayers next to the valleys.

MOUNTAINS AND VALLEYS

LISTENING PRAYER

Take a moment to quiet yourself. Think of a question that has been on your mind and write it down. Maybe this is a question you would like to ask God or it is a question you have had for a long time or maybe a new question that you want God to help you figure out.

As you continue throughout the day, consider the question that you have written. Pause for a moment and picture God sitting right there with you. What might He have to say to you about this question? He might even ask a question in response. Have a dialogue with Him on a piece of paper. Let Him write down what He might have to say to you, and see what happens. You might end up having a long conversation with God. It might feel like you have no idea what God might say so His voice seems silent.

Be patient; keep listening. See what God has for you. He might just give you one small word or a short phrase. Whatever you think of, take the risk of writing it down to see what God might have to say.

IMAGINATIVE PRAYER

Choose a passage of Scripture. Take some time to read the passage through once to get an idea of the story. After you have read it once, take a moment to see if you can picture in your mind actually being in the story. What does it feel like, can you feel what you are walking on? What is the temperature in the air? What do you smell? What can you hear when you listen beyond just the words, can you hear other people, or animals that might be nearby? What do you see? Can you taste anything as you read? Read it a second time if you need. Take a moment to draw anything that came to mind as you read the passage.

WRITE A PSALM

This exercise can help you become more aware of your feelings in relation to God, and give you permission to express them in prayer. If you have held on to feelings like grief, anger, or a desire for revenge, believing it would be dangerous to express them to God, try writing your own prayer in psalm form.

Select a psalm that voices the feelings you are afraid to speak (Psalm 13, 22, 42, 77, 88, and 94 are possibilities). Ask God to help you accept the reality of your feelings. Get acquainted with this psalm, especially the verses that best express your attitudes.

Lay it aside and begin to write your own psalm to God. Let it emerge for your experience, your feelings, and your faith. Be as honest as you can. If you want your feelings to change, include that desire in your psalm. If you find your feelings changing as you express them to God, include the changes of heart, too. You may end with a different perspective than you began with. Offer your personal psalm to God as heartfelt prayer, asking the Spirit to take your feelings in a direction that will be for your healing and God's glory.

PARAPHRASE A PSALM

A related exercise is to paraphrase a psalm by putting yourself into it personally. Use the Psalm structure, but simplify and modify the words to make it express your own experience.

Here is a simplified example, based on Psalm 44 (a national lament):

I have heard with my ears, O God, what deeds you performed in the days of old. Yet you have rejected and abased me. You have made me the taunt of my relatives, the laughing stock of my neighbors. All this has come upon me, yet I have not forgotten you. Why do you forget my affliction and misery? Come to my help, for the sake of your love!

Psalms are always honest. There are times when the writers felt more alone than ever, and they cried out, even in despair, to God. They also have written of the overwhelming joy that comes from knowing God and seeing His works.

JOURNALING PRAYER

Journaling is a practice many know well. Journaling as a spiritual practice, however, allows us to record and think through all that God has showed us. It is an opportunity to reflect on the occurrences of our lives and Scripture.

If journaling and reflection does not come naturally to you, be patient. Take a deep breath. Begin with Scripture. Choose a passage and read it slowly, listening to each word. What is God saying to you? Ask the Holy Spirit to breathe life into the passage. Begin journaling through these thoughts and reflections.

How can you live into this passage today? What are tangible steps to help you remember this practice this week? Close your time journaling in prayer. Ask God to help you as you seek to live differently this week in light of the Scripture.

CENTERING PRAYER

The centering prayer is an ancient practice developed primarily in monasteries. It is difficult to remain focused on God when there are so many tasks and worries pelting us at all times. Taking the time to focus and meditate can bring the other needs of life into perspective. This practice can take years before seeing the fruit of centering. Do not be discouraged, and be patient.

Choose a word on which to focus. For example, if your life feels chaotic, perhaps you can choose the word Peace or Rest.

Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Invite God into the space and introduce your word to Him. He knows our needs and is not surprised by the word you have chosen. Repeat the word silently and rest in God's presence. As your thoughts begin to drift, gently refocus yourself and repeat the word. At the end of your prayer time, offer your gratitude for God's presence beside you.