



minno
LIFE GUIDES

Spiritual Practices

The Exercise of
Growing with God

Written by

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Letter from the Editor

For a long time, *discipline* was one of my least favorite words. The idea of having to strive to meet a certain standard or expectation overwhelmed and discouraged me. Pairing the idea with the word *spiritual* made it even worse for this fly-by-the-seat-of-her-pants daughter of God.

I didn't like the label, but I still participated in what I knew to be the "spiritual disciplines"—Bible reading, prayer, worship, service . . . even fasting. I understood the importance of exercising my faith, I just didn't want anyone to label how or how often I needed to do it. What a rebel!

Then several years ago I started to notice a shift in the language used to describe the act of living out faith in a variety of ways that connect us to God. The methods were the same but the new vernacular was like a key that unlocked my heart toward the disciplines.

Spiritual Practices.

Now that's an idea I could get excited about: *practice*. No pressure. No expectations. Just lots of opportunities to get better . . . to grow with God.

I admit I went back and forth on whether to title this guide *Spiritual Disciplines* or *Spiritual Practices*. Despite my aversion to the label, the idea of Spiritual Disciplines is foundational to our faith. Yet when we're teaching our kids how to have a vibrant life in God, accessibility is important. At Minno, we believe that words matter, especially to kids. So if a child might be more attracted to the idea of exercising their faith rather than checking boxes off a list of requirements, I'm all for leaning into the nuance of language. And who knows . . . maybe the shift will open your grown-up heart to practicing the disciplines that will help you go deeper in your faith.

I pray this resource inspires you and your children to develop life-changing exercises that help you grow with God. It starts with small, daily habits that will plant deep roots of connection—the kind of connection we read about in John 15.

Be sure to visit gominno.com for more resources for your family.

Praying your family will grow strong in God,



Editorial Director, Minno Life
gominno.com/blog

Introduction

My daughter, who is six, loves all things baking. She pours over cook-books, watches as many baking television shows as we will let her, and helps me in the kitchen every night. Recently we were decorating cookies, and she kept looking over at me, frustrated, asking, "Why are yours so much better than mine, Mom?"

First, mine were not that "good." But they certainly looked better than hers, as my decades of experience would warrant. It is, of course, the practice of decorating cookies and cakes for the better part of my life that has made me, objectively, better than my six-year-old. But compare my cookies to those of someone who has been a professional decorator, or perhaps has been a casual decorator but for much, much longer, and mine will most certainly pale in comparison.

So I'm working with my daughter, and together we are learning how to be better at the craft we have chosen. We'll try new recipes, new decorating methods, practice, and we should keep getting better.

Practicing anything requires discipline, curiosity, and persistence. These characteristics apply to the Christian life as well. While we can't become "more" Christian than we are the first moment we believe in Jesus, we can practice the elements of a Christian life and become more like Jesus as we know Him and His Word better.

Spiritual practices are inward and outward expressions of faith, rooted in Scripture and tradition, that draw us closer to God. They are disciplines, practices that require work and repetition, that we get better at and grow more comfortable with the more we do them. And they are a critical part of the Christian life, helping us to mature in godliness.

1 Timothy 4:7b-10 (ESV) tells us this:

Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

But spiritual practices aren't just for grown-ups! Kids can develop their spiritual muscles as well, practicing these helpful exercises alongside their parents or on their own. Childhood provides ample opportunities to develop other lifelong habits (like exercise, eating well, table manners, chores, etc), and many of the same concepts parents use to encourage their kids to develop those habits can be applied to teaching them spiritual practices!

Contents

This Minno Life Guide will take you through the basics of the most kid-friendly spiritual practices, and offer practical suggestions for teaching and doing them with your family.

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- Introducing Spiritual Practices to Kids

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- Sabbath
- Worship
- Prayer
- Fasting
- Simplicity
- Fellowship
- Service

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PART 1

INTRODUCTION TO SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

What are Spiritual Practices?
What does the Bible say about Spiritual Practices?
Introducing Spiritual Practices to Kids

What Are Spiritual Practices?

Spiritual practices are personal and communal exercises that help us know God and experience life with Him in a deeper way. They help us become more like Jesus. Spiritual practices are often called spiritual disciplines. Much in the same way that physical disciplines like exercise and eating well take care of our body, spiritual disciplines like reading the Word and prayer take care of our spiritual lives.

Richard Foster, in his wonderful book *Celebration of Discipline*, wrote: "God has given us the Disciplines of the spiritual life as a means of receiving his grace. The Disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that he can transform us."

Spiritual practices are both personal (practices we do individually) and communal (ones we do together with other believers). In this Minno Life Guide, we will focus on practices that are most attainable for kids and families, but you can learn more about a variety of practices by reading some of the books listed on the resources page.

What Does the Bible Say About Spiritual Practices?

Practices draw us closer to God so that God can work in us and through us. James 4:8a (NIV) says: "Come near to God and he will come near to you." Practices are specific, intentional ways that we can come near to God and experience His nearness.

1 Timothy 4 offers the best Scriptural understanding for spiritual practices. Paul likens the spiritual life to physical training, saying in verses 6-16 (NIV):

*If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed. Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but **godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.** This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance. That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.*

Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Spiritual Practices

Here is a non-exhaustive list of some spiritual practices:

Personal Practices:

- Reading Scripture
- Fasting
- Prayer
- Sacrifice
- Service
- Simplicity

Communal Practices:

- Confession
- Worship
- Feasting/Celebration
- Service
- Fellowship

Paul, talking to the younger Timothy, gives practical advice for the spiritual life. Paul values truth and good teaching and encourages Timothy to pursue it. He also explains that training in godliness, which requires labor and striving, adds value to our lives in the present and our future life with God. Paul uses words like “diligent, persevere, train, devote,” which indicate that the spiritual life is a lifelong journey. Paul doesn’t say, “You will master this!” Instead, he refers to progress. Be encouraged that spiritual practices and training are not guarantees of salvation or “success” in the Christian life; rather, they lead us further in pursuit of knowing Jesus and becoming more like Him.

Put it into Practice

Read the above passage out loud as a family. Try reading it in The Message by Eugene Peterson, which puts it this way: “Exercise daily in God—no spiritual flabbiness, please! Workouts in the gymnasium are useful, but a disciplined life in God is far more so, making you fit both today and forever. You can count on this. Take it to heart. This is why we’ve thrown ourselves into this venture so totally.” 1 Timothy 4:7-9 (MSG)

Ask each other these questions:

- What does it mean to “exercise daily in God”?
- Why is exercise important for your physical body? What are some of your favorite ways to exercise?
- How can we exercise spiritually? What are some of the benefits Paul says come from spiritual training?

Introducing Kids to Spiritual Practices

As you read the next section, you’ll find eight examples of spiritual practices you can engage in as a family. Bring your kids along for the journey as you learn, but don’t put too much pressure on yourself to be perfect! We engage in spiritual practices for our whole life. They are not a list of tasks to check off, nor will they always be easy and comfortable. You may choose one or two habits to cultivate over the course of an entire year, and that is perfectly okay! Each of these practices offers us opportunities to draw closer to the heart of God and to be transformed by Him. It is important to remember that God does the transforming. Pray for Him to work in and through you, and in and through your kids.

At the back of this guide, we’ve provided some table talk cards for each practice. Use these to shape your conversations about each practice, introducing your kids to the concepts and simple ways to engage in each one.

PART 2

PRACTICING THE PRACTICES WITH KIDS

Reading Scripture
Sabbath
Worship
Prayer
Fasting
Simplicity
Fellowship
Service

1: The Spiritual Practice of Reading Scripture

Why Read Scripture

God's Word is a means of grace; it helps us know God more and draw closer to Him each time we read it. Scripture helps us know God better, understand how to live in His world, and believe the good news about Jesus.

Bible Verses About Reading Scripture

Psalm 119:105 (NIV)

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

Hebrews 4:12 (NIV)

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Romans 15:4 (NLT)

Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promise to be fulfilled.

Put it into Practice

Use the verses above to talk to your kids about the importance of Scripture. Read them out loud together and discuss them.

How to Read Scripture with Kids

There are so many ways to engage your kids in the beauty and wisdom of Scripture, no matter what their age!

For the youngest kids, you can read board book story Bibles, like the *Laugh and Grow Bible for Little Ones*, or Sally Lloyd Jones' *Hug-A-Bible*. Exposing them to God's Word from the very beginning, on a daily basis at bedtime or naptime, will help build a rhythm that they can anticipate every day.

For preschool and elementary kids, the *Laugh and Grow Bible for Kids* is a wonderful way to encourage kids to read and reflect on Scripture. It has a companion discussion page for every Bible story, so your kids can take the next step from reading Scripture to applying it to their lives. This is also a great age for your kids to start seeing you read your Bible (or listen to it) on a daily basis. Kids are imitators and they are always watching. Build Scripture reading into your day. Invite them to sit quietly with you, or read or look at pictures in their own Bible.

For older elementary kids, get them their own full text Bible! One of my favorites for girls is the *My Creative Bible for Girls*, which gives them the chance to doodle, color, and trace as they read. This engages the

Kids are imitators. Let them see you reading your Bible daily and invite them to join you.

creative side of their brain, which is super helpful in cultivating a love of Scripture! For boys, check out the *Action Bible*, which combines Bible stories with graphic novel illustrations.

Older elementary and preteens can also read full text Scripture alongside grown-ups. Encourage your older kids to ask questions, reflect, and pray through the Bible with you. Make it a goal to read a book of the Bible together and discuss it!

Isaiah 55:11 tells us that the word of God will not return empty. It always has something to say to us about God and His love for us. The spiritual practice of reading the Bible is accessible to kids of all ages. It can be followed by studying Scripture, memorizing verses, and praying through the Word. But don't feel pressure as parents to gain certain outcomes, like memorizing 10 verses or being able to name all the books in order. Those are important skills, but as your kids are young, focus on sharing your own love of the Bible with them. Pray that God would work through His word in their lives, and pray that your kids would grow in love and knowledge of Scripture. The Bible is not a book to be mastered or a test to be passed. It is a living letter, written on paper and in our hearts. It is a gift, a grace, and a way to orient your child's heart toward the Lord.

The Bible is a living letter that will orient your child's heart toward the Lord.

2: The Spiritual Practice of Sabbath

What is the Sabbath?

Within Christian and Jewish tradition, the Sabbath is a day set aside for God's people as a day to rest. God instituted the sabbath during the creation story in Genesis; having completed the creation of the world and everything in it, God rested.

Bible Verses About Sabbath

Genesis 2:2-3 (NIV)

By the seventh day God had finished the work He had been doing; so on the seventh day He rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

When God gave Moses the law in the books of Exodus and Leviticus, He called out the sabbath as a crucial part of the life of God's people:

Exodus 16:23 (NIV)

He said to them, "This is what the Lord commanded: Tomorrow is to be a day of Sabbath rest, a holy sabbath to the Lord. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning."

When giving the 10 Commandments, this is what God said:

Exodus 20:8-11 (NIV)

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

We practice the Sabbath because God tells us to, first. He created our bodies for rest, and He desires to spend time with us. The goal of a Sabbath is to experience both of those things: rest and communion with God.

Put it into Practice

Read with your kids the story of creation, either in a full-text Bible or storybook Bible. Then talk about why God would create the idea of rest. Ask: *Why is rest important?*

How to Practice the Sabbath with Kids

Does the idea of pausing for a weekly day of rest seem absolutely impossible? Especially with kids?

It certainly isn't the most natural thing in the world, and like practicing anything (sports, cooking, playing an instrument), it requires discipline. It might seem counterintuitive to practice rest, but it is the only way to make it part of your life in a meaningful way. It will be hard, messy, and uncomfortable. We live in a society hard-wired to produce and perfect, but there's often nothing to "show" for a day of rest, a day spent communing with God.

Maybe a whole day isn't realistic right now, but perhaps you can set aside an evening or an afternoon each week to serve as a pause. Sabbath rest can look like different things: a hike in the woods, a bike ride, a lazy afternoon playing board games, or reading books out loud. It can look like ordering pizza or takeout on Sunday night, and sitting around a candlelit table telling stories and singing songs. What God asks of us on the Sabbath isn't perfection, but progress . . . Intentional slow times where you remember who God is and enjoy the world He made and the family He gave you.

Here is an acronym to help you and your kids with your Sabbath practice . . . to help you REST!

R: Reflect
E: Experience God's Goodness
S: Spend Time Together
T: Talk to God

Remember to REST!

Remember this acronym to help you practice Sabbath REST:

R: Reflect
E: Experience God's Goodness
S: Spend Time Together
T: Talk to God

Reflect

Use your Sabbath hours (or day) to reflect on the week behind you and the week ahead. Share the best and hardest parts of your week. Reflect on what you learned in church or school, or a book you are reading, or something you are studying in the Bible. Invite the whole family to reflect on who God is and what He has done. For the littlest kids, this probably means asking them what they want to thank God for or ask God for. As kids get older, engage them in more active reflection. You can read Scripture or a devotional book together, or keep a Sabbath journal as a family. Write down prayer requests, what you are thankful for, and how you've seen God working in your lives.

Experience God's Goodness

Experience the goodness of God and His creation together! Use your Sabbath to spend time outside, enjoying creation through a hike, a walk, a bike ride, or driving a scenic route. *Live in the city?* Walk around and marvel at a museum, try a new food, or explore a new neighborhood. *Stuck inside?* Listen to music, like a symphony! Or read poetry or stories together. Experience God's goodness through creation and the created, the beautiful ways God works through people to make extraordinary things.

Spend Time Together

The Sabbath is, at its core, about spending time communing with God. But by engaging in this spiritual practice together, as a family, you invite your kids to start their own journey of spending time with God. When you spend time together, focus on the people in the room. Put your phones away, and engage in a fully present way. Even a few hours of dedicated, engaged rest will be transformative for your family.

Talk to God

When you Sabbath, invite God into it. Spend time praying, reading God's word, and journaling. Maybe each member of the family has their own journal or paper, and spends time writing or drawing pictures for God. Sing and pray together. Spend time together and with the Lord, and see how He meets you in your practice of Sabbath. No matter how short, messy, hard, and uncomfortable it is, God will meet you in it. He delights in spending time with His children. Pray that you will grow in your delight for spending time with Him.

By engaging in this spiritual practice as a family, you invite your kids to start their own journey of spending time with God.

3. The Spiritual Practice of Worship

What is worship?

Worship means showing reverence and awe to God, and God alone. In worship, we enter God's presence and focus our attention only on Him. We give thanks, we praise, we sing, we dance, we bring our whole selves (mind, body, and spirit) to spend time with God.

Bible Verses About Worship

Luke 4:8 (NIV)

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

2 Chronicles 7:3 (NIV)

When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the Lord above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying,

"He is good;
his love endures forever."

Psalms 99:9 (NIV)

Exalt the Lord our God
and worship at his holy mountain,
for the Lord our God is holy.

Hebrews 12:28 (NIV)

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.

Put it into Practice

Read through these verses with your kids and spend time talking through what each one means. Ask your kids if there are any words they don't know, or things they don't understand. Learning about worship together as a family will increase your shared experience of worshiping God!

How to Practice Worship with Kids

Worship is a practice, which means it is something we should do regularly. Your family may have a weekly rhythm of attending a worship service at church on Sundays, or you may have other daily or weekly ways of worshiping at home, school, or other church programs. Here are some ideas for helping your kids engage in the practice of worship:

Bring Your Body and Mind to Worship

Help your kids engage in worship fully by going through a little routine before each time of worship, whether you are at home or in a church service. Point to different parts of your body and ask your kids what it should be doing during worship:

Where do your eyes go? (Toward the screen or the musicians, or they can be closed!)

What should your ears do? (Listen)

Where do your hands stay? (Close to your body or extended toward God)

What do you do with your mouth? (Worship and sing)

Sing

While worship does not just mean singing, singing praise is an important part of a life of worship. Music engages our brains (and especially kids' brains!) in a beautiful and creative way, which is why it is such a

significant part of worship services. For kids, singing may be the part of a worship service they are most engaged with. Dancing, singing, doing motions to songs, and hearing important truth sung all around them invite kids to worship God in a fun and meaningful way.

Singing as worship can be practiced corporately and individually, making it a wonderful spiritual practice for kids to engage in on their own. And singing worship does not have to be formal! Perhaps it looks like having worship music playing while your kids play or while you make dinner. Maybe it's what you sing together on the way to school in the morning. Everyday small moments of worship can be deeply effective in helping your kids understand how accessible God is and how we can be with Him anytime and anywhere.

Confess and Pray

Confession and prayer are important parts of both corporate and individual worship. Confession brings our heart in line with God, by remembering how He loves and forgives us. Prayer draws us into communion with God by inviting Him into the moment with us. Teach your kids to confess their sins to God, either out loud or silently. Practice corporate confession through the line from the Lord's Prayer, *"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."* Then take a moment or two for kids to confess silently to God. A regular practice of confession reminds us of our brokenness and God's love and mercy.

4. The Spiritual Practice of Prayer

What Is Prayer?

Prayer is one of the most incredible parts of faith, because it allows us to spend time with God, who loves us more than we could ever know. As you begin to teach your kids about prayer, start by praying for them: that God would reveal Himself to them through prayer, and that He would strengthen their faith through the daily practice of prayer.

God created prayer as a way for His people to speak to Him, to share with Him, and to hear from Him. Talking to the God who created us and loves us is a beautiful gift! And it is a gift God gave us because of how much He loves us.

Bible Verses about Prayer

Philippians 4:6 (NLT)

Do not worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.

James 5:16 (NIV)

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

**As you
begin to teach
your kids about
prayer, start by
praying for
them.**

Matthew 6:9-13 (NIV)

This, then, is how you should pray:

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.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.

Put it into Practice

Explain to your kids that prayer is talking to God. Ask your kids who they like to talk to and why. Then connect the “whys” to how we can talk to God through prayer. For example, if your child says they like to talk to you because you are a good listener, share that God is the best listener, and He loves listening to His people.

How to Pray with Kids

When teaching our kids to pray, we can follow a formula. As they grow, they will find more and more ways to express their own thoughts and feelings to God through prayer, but when they start out, begin with a salutation like “Dear God,” and end with “In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

What goes in between?

One of the most tried-and-true methods of constructing a prayer follows the acronym ACTS:

Adoration
Confession
Thanksgiving
Supplication

1. Adoration:

Praise God! Give Him glory for creating the world, for loving you, for the beauty around you.

2. Confession:

Take a moment to confess your sin to God. He promises to forgive our sin when we confess it to Him.

3. Thanksgiving:

What do you want to thank God for? Spend a few minutes listing things you are grateful for.

4. Supplication:

This is where we ask God for our needs or the needs of others. One beautiful way to structure this type of prayer is by starting with your personal need, then moving out to your family, community (school, church, neighborhood), then your city or country, then around the world.

Write out ACTS on a piece of paper or a wipe-off board. As you pray, go through each letter of the acronym with your kids and pray out loud together. For older kids, get them their own small prayer journal (such as a composition notebook) and have them go through the ACTS practice every day.

More Prayer Practices

- 1.** Draw names from a bowl in the middle of the table to choose who leads the dinnertime prayer! Or take turns and let a different person pray each night.
- 2.** One of the best ways to encourage your kids to pray alone is by inviting them to witness your private prayer time. No, you don't have to pray out loud in front of them! But if you journal your prayers, or use a prayer app, show it to your kids. Let them know that prayer is an important part of your life, so they can see the richness of a life of prayer.
- 3.** Make prayer visible in your home. Write your prayers down on sticky notes and put them on your mirror. Let your kids catch you praying through God's Word. *Feel like praying in the car or while you're making dinner?* Try praying out loud so your kids can hear. Modeling a life of individual prayer is a wonderful way to inspire a life of prayer in your kids.

The spiritual practice of prayer offers us a chance to draw close to God's heart and commune with Him. By inviting your kids into prayer, teaching them how to pray, and helping them practice prayer, they will have the opportunity to know God better and develop their own rich relationship with Him. And above all, remember to pray for your kids as you pray with them. Ask God to draw near to them as they pray. Pray that they would fall more in love with God every day, that they would love prayer, and that they would enjoy a rich relationship with God for their whole life.

Praying Alone + Praying Together

One beautiful aspect of spiritual disciplines is that they can be both individual and corporate, practiced alone or in a larger body of believers (a family, a local church, or even the whole global church). Prayer is an example of both individual and corporate practice, and you can teach your kids the value of both types of prayer.

Encourage your kids to participate in corporate prayer by inviting them to pray with your family. Take turns around the table praying so that every person gets comfortable praying out loud and listening while others pray.

5. The Spiritual Practice of Fasting

What is Fasting?

Fasting means abstaining from something (most often food) for a period of time. You may fast before having blood drawn at the doctor's office, for example. But fasting has deep spiritual roots and is found all throughout Scripture and church tradition.

It is a common practice for some to fast during the 40 days of Lent leading up to Easter. Traditionally, Catholics fast from meat during this season. Many Protestant believers also choose something to fast from to help focus their minds and hearts on Jesus. You can fast from television, social media, or a certain type of food or beverage during Lent. But fasting isn't limited to certain times of the year. In Scripture, people fasted while mourning, praying, or seeking God's wisdom.

Bible Verses About Fasting

While fasting appears regularly throughout Scripture, here are a few verses showing different purposes for fasting.

Daniel 9:3a (NLT)

So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and fasting.

Joel 2:12-13 (NIV)

"Even now," declares the Lord,

"return to me with all your heart,

with fasting and weeping and mourning."

Rend your heart

and not your garments.

Return to the Lord your God,

for he is gracious and compassionate,

slow to anger and abounding in love,

and he relents from sending calamity.

Matthew 6:16-18 (NIV)

When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Acts 14:23 (NIV)

Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust."

Put it into Practice

Introducing kids to the concept of fasting starts with modeling and discussing it as a family. It's important to be careful and prayerful because there are some pitfalls for kids, particularly with fasting from food and inadvertently teaching unhealthy habits and relationships with food.

How to Practice Fasting with Kids

Here are a few ideas for how to practice fasting as a family:

- Start with the church calendar, like the forty days of Lent. Your kids may have peers participating in Lent as well, and it may be referenced in church services or other places. By joining a larger group of people in fasting during a specific time period, kids can learn that it's a practice many different Christians do to draw nearer to God at the same time.
- Pick one thing the whole family can fast from together. You could choose to fast from movies, or desserts, or something that even the youngest kids in your family will understand that you are giving up but won't create too much disruption. The practice of fasting should be age-appropriate and attainable!
- During your fast, spend some time each day focusing on God. As a "replacement" or during times you miss the thing you are fasting from, stop and say a prayer together, read Scripture, or think of something you can do to love your neighbor during that time. Use the time to not just remove something, but to add to your spiritual life.
- If you choose to fast from something personally, share about the experience with your kids. Tell them why you are fasting, and ask them what questions they have. Modeling and intentionally having conversations about spiritual practices are great ways to teach your kids.

Use the practice of fasting to not just remove something, but to add to your spiritual life.

6. The Spiritual Practice of Simplicity

What is Simplicity?

Simplicity is easiest to understand by knowing what it isn't. Simplicity isn't the relentless pursuit of material possessions, of financial gain, of fame or influence, or of power. Simplicity is resting and being content with what God has given us, and focusing primarily on Him. Simplicity focuses our mind not on what we have or don't have, but on God and His glory. Simplicity frames our lives not by what we have or don't have, but by who God is. Our desires for fame, power, social media influence and likes, money, and "more" or "better" hinder our spiritual growth.

Richard Foster wrote, *"Jesus Christ and all the writers of the New Testament call us to break free of mammon lust and live in joyous trust . . . They point us toward a way of living in which everything we have we receive as a gift, and everything we have is cared for by God, and everything we have is available to others when it is right and good. This reality frames the heart of Christian simplicity."*²

Bible Verses About Simplicity

Haggai 1:5-6 (NIV)

Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never

have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.”

Luke 16:13 (NIV)

No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

1 Timothy 6:9-10 (NIV)

Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Hebrews 13:5 (NLT)

Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you."

Practicing simplicity as a family looks mostly like modeling and talking about money, frugality, and generosity. Depending on your stage of life, socioeconomic status, whether you live in a city apartment or a big farm in the country, "simplicity" will look different. There is not a magic formula of how many toys or games or clothes equals simplicity. Because at the root, simplicity isn't about *stuff* (having it or not having it). Simplicity is a spiritual practice.

Put it into Practice

How to Practice Simplicity with Kids

Rather than a prescription for exactly what a simple life looks like, we want to offer some ideas for cultivating a spirit of simplicity that is rooted in Scripture and trusting God.

Here are a few ideas:

Read and discuss what Jesus said about money.

Many of Jesus's parables are about money, giving us a picture of how God desires for us to relate to wealth, poverty, and each other. Read these together, then discuss them:

- The Parable of the Vineyard Workers (Matthew 20:1-16)
- The Parable of the 10 Gold Coins (Matthew 25:14-20)
- The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37)
- The Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21)
- The Parable of the Wedding Feast (Luke 14:7-14)

Ask these questions:

- What stood out to you from the parable?
- What did the parable have to say about how we spend our money?
- What did the parable say about how we treat others?

Don't buy more than you need.

This one is pretty straightforward, but it is also important to talk about it when you do it!

If you are shopping for clothing, include your kids in your decisions. *Do you need one in every color, or just one?* The balance here can be tricky to find, between having what you need, enjoying gifts and good things, and not being overly materialistic. Most of us will struggle with that balance for our whole lives, but acknowledging the struggle is part of the practice of simplicity. You can also try habits like gifting experiences instead of toys, or rotating toys/books to keep your home simplified.

Give generously.

When simplicity takes root in our hearts, we see our money and resources as a way to give, not just get. Talk to your kids about how skipping a meal out could pay for meals at a homeless shelter, for example. But invite your kids into a posture that honors God and honors His image-bearers, avoiding giving as an occasional act or a token. Instead, remind yourself and your kids how much God has given you, how little you really need, and how God has equipped you to give with a generous spirit.

7. The Spiritual Practice of Fellowship

What is Fellowship?

Fellowship means living in community with other Christians and engaging in communal spiritual practices together. By living out all of life together—celebrating and mourning, feasting and fasting, confessing and praying, serving and being served—Christians grow closer to each other and also experience God's love through others.

Fellowship and community require intentionally and purposefully identifying believers with whom your family will walk through life. And there are so many benefits for kids! Research out of Fuller Youth Institute shows that a relational "web" of five trusted adults helps engage kids in lifelong faith³. Intergenerational relationships help our kids observe (and build) resilient faith, when they see how God has sustained and provided for people in a variety of experiences, both good and difficult.

Bible Verses About Fellowship

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NIV)

Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their labor:
If either of them falls down,
one can help the other up.
But pity anyone who falls
and has no one to help them up.
Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.
But how can one keep warm alone?
Though one may be overpowered,
two can defend themselves.
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Acts 2:43-47 (NIV)

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Ephesians 4:15-16 (NIV)

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Put it into Practice

Practicing fellowship as a family can be immensely rewarding, but it does require being intentional and focused on relationships that point you and your kids to Jesus. Committing to community means prioritizing, developing, and investing in friendships with other Christians with whom you can share joy, sadness, struggle, prayer, and hope.

How to Practice Fellowship with Kids

Here are a few practical ideas for practicing fellowship as a family:

Get involved in a local church and small group.

If you aren't involved in a local church, find one! Investing in a local faith community will be a rich experience for everyone in your family. If you are involved in a local church, try getting involved in a small group or Bible study. Prioritizing time in the church and with your church friends will help your kids develop their own relationships in the church. Modeling what is important, including Christian fellowship and all the spiritual practices, will help your kids grow in their own prioritization of faith.

Church and small groups can often be messy, because they are made up of messy, sinful people. But God created the church and works through it for the good of His people and for His own glory. Pray that God will bring you into a church community that is healthy, vibrant, and safe, where you can be encouraged and challenged.

Commit to praying for fellowship.

This one is pretty straightforward! Make it a priority to pray that God would bring Christian fellowship into your life. Include your kids in praying for them to have Christian friends. God is faithful to answer when we pray!

Practice fellowship in your own family.

Review the elements of fellowship⁴: sharing, praying, studying God's Word, encouraging, and helping each other grow in faith. They are all

things that you can do in your family! To practice, just be more intentional about it. Call out what you are doing and why. For example, say, "We're going to take some time to pray for each other now. Everyone can share something they want prayer for, and we can all take turns praying. This strengthens us as a family, and brings us closer to God together!"

8. The Spiritual Practice of Service

What is Service?

As a spiritual practice, service means intentionally working toward the good of others. Serving others is a way to show our love for God and to live out what Scripture says about loving others. But the spiritual practice of service doesn't just mean our physical, tangible actions. It also reflects the orientation of our hearts toward others.

Kids think and act in concrete ways, and teaching your kids to develop a heart of service looks a lot like engaging in tangible ways to serve other people. But it is important to do so in a way that honors others and teaches kids that service doesn't mean one-time or occasional actions. It means living your life every day and in every way to love other people more than yourself.

Service means intentionally working toward the good of others in physical, tangible ways but also deep within our heart.

Bible Verses About Service

John 13:34-35 (NLT)

So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.

Galatians 5:13-14 (NIV)

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

1 Peter 4:8-10 (NIV)

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

Put it into Practice

Helping your kids grow in faith and service is more about shepherding their hearts than adding service projects and volunteer opportunities to your already-busy life! Developing a posture of servant-heartedness is a lifelong, ongoing process that involves being intentional about the ways you talk, work, give, and engage the world around you.

How to Practice Service with Kids

Here are a few practical ideas for incorporating the spiritual practice of service with your family:

Look to Jesus.

As we serve others, we grow closer to the heart of Jesus, who was the ultimate suffering servant. And we can look to Jesus for the best example of how to live, love, and serve others. Read some of these stories about Jesus (or that Jesus told) in a Bible or a storybook Bible.

- The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)
- Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man (John 5:1-9)
- Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet (John 13:1-17)

Ask these questions as you read the stories above.

- Who was served in this story? Who did the serving?
- What did Jesus say about serving in this story?
- How can we serve like Jesus says to serve?

Talk and reflect regularly.

Cultivating a servant heart in your kids involves intentional talking and reflecting. The more we are aware of our actions and how they hurt or help others, the more wired our hearts become toward caring for others. When your kids do something kind for someone else, call it out. Point to good examples of putting others first. Offer gentle correction when the opposite happens, encouraging your kids to think about others and their needs. As you read books, watch stories on the news or in movies, point out times people put others first. Start developing the reflexive muscles of thinking about others first. When a friend or sibling is sad, ask, "How can you serve that person?" Pray for God to help your whole family develop an others-first mindset.

Tangibly serve on an ongoing basis.

Engage in serving as a family. This one seems straightforward, but to truly transform your heart, it should be a practice, which means a regular and ongoing part of your life and your faith journey.

Find a local opportunity to serve regularly, like at a food pantry or an after-school program. Develop relationships with the people you serve. Focus on programs that give people dignity, work, and respect.

Grownups can read books like *When Helping Hurts* by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert to help develop a perspective on living a life of service, rather than participating in one-off or distanced service projects.

Developing a posture of servant-heartedness is a lifelong, ongoing process that involves being intentional about the ways you talk, work, give, and engage the world around you.

REFLECT & RESPOND

Use this space to write down your thoughts and ideas.

PART 3

NEXT STEPS



Conclusion

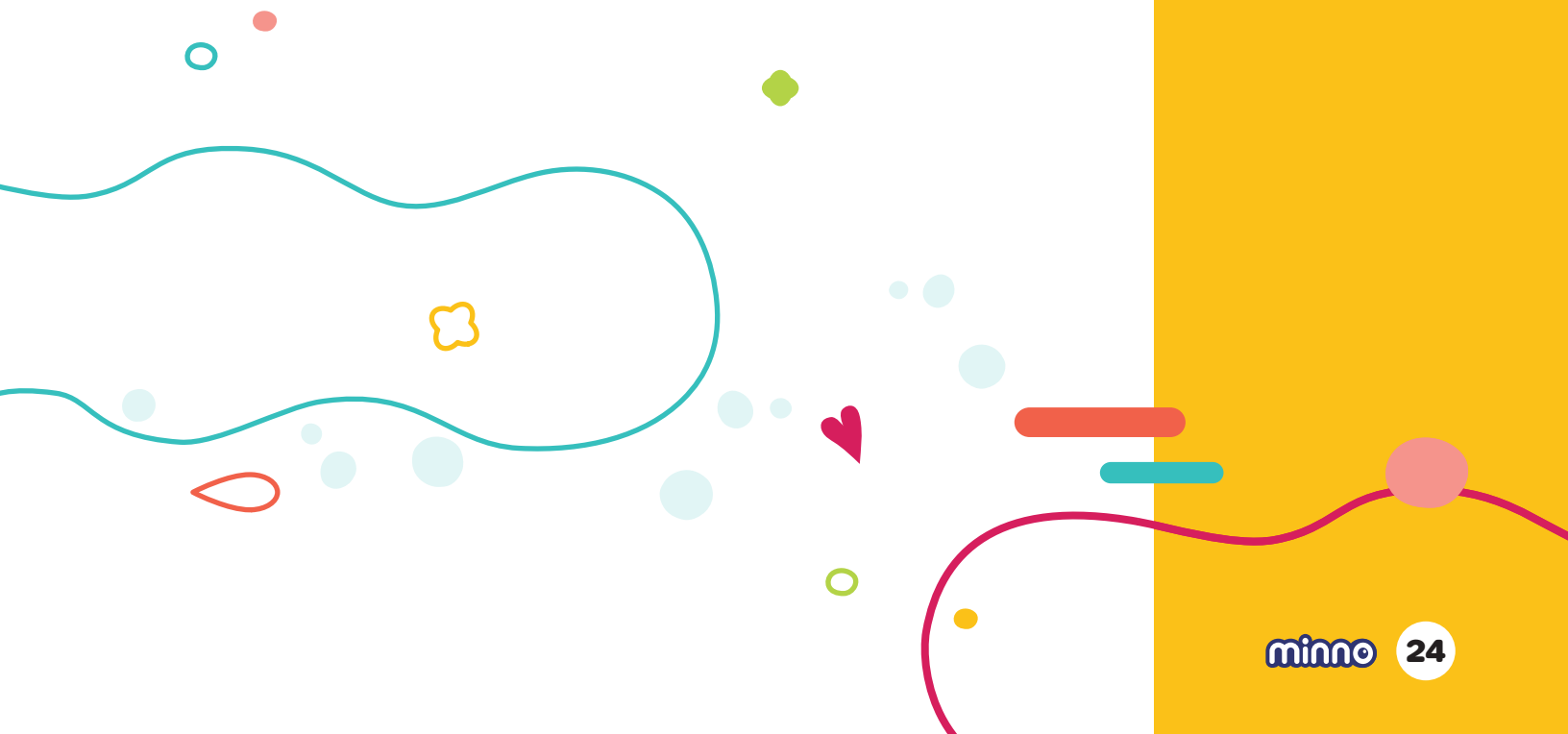
Spiritual practices help our lifelong journey of growing closer to God and becoming more like Jesus. As we “spiritually exercise,” our faith muscles become stronger and God works to transform us. Spiritual practices are for everyone, even kids!

Kids are sponges, soaking up the environment, habits, and motivations of the people around them. Just like I spend time every week with my daughter, helping her learn to bake and cook, I can set aside time to help her learn to practice her faith. It won't be perfect. In fact, it's likely to be very messy, and I'll be learning right alongside her. But my prayer for her, and for you, is that God will meet you as you endeavor to practice. God is so faithful to meet us right where we are and guide us along our journey of growing in Him.

What's Next?

Use the Reflect and Respond page to journal your ideas for how to integrate spiritual practices into your daily or weekly family rhythm.

Print and cut the Spiritual Practices Discussion Cards at the end of this guide and keep them at your kitchen table or in the car. Use the cards to talk about these important exercises and how you can grow in them together!



REFLECT & RESPOND

Use this space to write down your thoughts and ideas.

Spiritual Practice: READING SCRIPTURE

The Bible is a gift from God! Scripture helps us know God better, understand how to live in His world, and believe the good news about Jesus.

Key Verse: Romans 15:4 NLT

Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promise to be fulfilled.

Talk:

What are some of your favorite Bible stories?

What is something you have learned about God from reading the Bible?

Family Challenge:

Read the Bible or a storybook Bible together every day for a week. Track your progress here.

Day 1 Day 2 Day 3 Day 4 Day 5 Day 6 Day 7



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Spiritual Practice: SABBATH

Sabbath is a day set aside each week to rest and to enjoy time with God! Many people practice the Sabbath on Sundays.

Key Verse: Exodus 20:8-10a NLT

Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God.

Talk:

Why do you think God wants us to rest sometimes?

How can we add a Sabbath to our week?

Family Challenge:

Try adding a Sabbath to your weekly routine. Think you can commit a whole day? A whole morning? A few hours? Remember this acronym:

R: Reflect

E: Experience God's Goodness

S: Spend Time Together

T: Talk to God

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Spiritual Practice: WORSHIP

Worship means showing reverence and awe to God, and God alone. In worship, we come close to God and focus our attention only on Him.

Key Verse: Luke 4:8 NIV

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

Talk:

What are your favorite parts of a worship service?

How can we worship God in our home?

Family Challenge:

Have a family worship night! Take turns reading Bible stories, leading songs, and praying.

We will have our family worship night on _____!

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Spiritual Practice: PRAYER

Prayer is talking to God. God created prayer as a way for His people to speak to Him, to share with Him, and to hear from Him.

Key Verse: Philippians 4:6 NLT

Do not worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.

Talk:

Let's practice the ACTS acronym together to remember elements of prayer:

Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication.

What do each of those words mean?

Family Challenge:

Memorize the Lord's Prayer together! Check off each line as you memorize it:

- ☐ Our Father in heaven, help us to honor your name.
- ☐ Come and set up your kingdom.
- ☐ So that everyone on earth will obey you, as you are obeyed in heaven.
- ☐ Give us our food for today.
- ☐ Forgive us for doing wrong, as we forgive others.
- ☐ Keep us from being tempted and protect us from evil.

—Matthew 6:9-13 CEV

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Spiritual Practice: FASTING

Fasting means giving up something (most often food) for a period of time. In Scripture, people fasted while mourning, praying, or seeking God's wisdom.

Key Verse: Daniel 9:3a NLT

So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and fasting.

Talk:

Why do you think fasting helps us focus our minds and hearts on God?

Have you ever fasted? What was the experience like?

Family Challenge:

Choose something you do or eat every day that you can fast from tomorrow and spend that time focusing on God instead.

Tomorrow we will give up _____ and spend that time with God.

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Spiritual Practice: SIMPLICITY

Simplicity is resting and being content with what God has given us, and focusing primarily on Him. Simplicity focuses our mind not on what we have or don't have, but on God.

Key Verse: Hebrews 13:5 NLT

Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you."

Talk:

Why do you think God doesn't want us to love money?

How can we prioritize living simply and giving generously?

Family Challenge:

Go through your closets and toy boxes and set aside items you don't need or use anymore, then find a place to donate them!

We will spend _____ (day) going through our things to simplify and share.

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Spiritual Practice: FELLOWSHIP

Fellowship means living in community with other Christians, and engaging in spiritual practices together. Christians grow closer to each other and also experience God's love through others. .

Key Verse: Ecclesiastes 4:9-10a NLT

Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help.

Talk:

What are some things you enjoy doing with your friends?

Do you have good friends who encourage you in your faith? Who are they?

Family Challenge:

Make a list of people who encourage you in your walk with God. Then take time to write them a short note saying thank you!

I am encouraged by _____ because _____.

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Spiritual Practice: SERVICE

As a spiritual practice, service means intentionally working to help others. Serving others is a way to show our love for God, and to live out what the Bible says about loving others.

Key Verse: John 13:34-35 NLT

So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.

Talk:

What are some ways we can serve as a family?

Share a time someone in our family put you first! How did it make you feel?

Family Challenge:

Pray for a way you can serve together, and ask God to help you see more ways you can love your friends and community.

Our family will serve others by _____ this month.

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Resources

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Foster, Richard. *Celebration of Discipline (Anniversary Ed.)*. HarperOne, 2018.

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Warren, Tish Harrison. *Liturgy of the Ordinary*. IVP, 2019.

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My Creative Bible. Christian Art Publishers, 2016.

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The Prayer Map for Girls. Barbour Books, 2018.

The Prayer Map for Boys. Barbour Books, 2018.

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Vischer, Phil. *The Minno Laugh and Grow Bible for Little Ones*. Minno Kids, 2020.



Shows for Kids that Teach the Bible and Faith:

- Minno 5 Minute Family Devotionals
- What's In The Bible?
- Theo
- Superbook
- Bibleman

If you're already a Minno subscriber, you can watch these shows now!
Not a subscriber? What are you waiting for?! Sign up for your free trial at gominno.com.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Foster, Richard. *Celebration of Discipline (Anniversary Ed.)*. HarperOne, 2018.
- 2 Foster, Richard. *Freedom of Simplicity*. HarperOne, 2005.
- 3 Fuller Youth Institute. *Sticky Faith*. <https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/stickyfaith>
- 4 *The Elements of Fellowship*