



**FAITH
PRACTICES**

FAITH PRACTICES

What is Faith Practices?

This resource provides a series of activities to allow young people to do spiritual practices together as they seek to know Jesus. Ultimately, the activity itself is not the thing of value. Any practice will only be helpful if it draws young people to Jesus - "We must never stop looking to Jesus. He is the leader of our faith, and he is the one who makes our faith complete" (Hebrews 12:2).

Who is it for?

Faith Practices is for young people who are open to learning more. It focuses on practical activities and so could be helpful with a younger group or young people who are less experienced in church.

What will it look like?

It will look like a 10-15 minute slot in your youth programme. The slot will include a portion of Scripture to focus on, key points for the teaching and to explain the practice and then an activity to do together. The key points of the teaching is to help you develop a short talk to spark their imagination and lead them to focus on God. At the end there will be a way for the young people to follow on from this in their week.

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Session 1: Introduction and Celebration

Overall Introduction to the Series:

A lot of things in life we learn through doing or trying! We can learn lots about how a bicycle works but eventually you've got to jump on and give it a try. I wonder if you have heard lots about who God is and what it means to be a Christian? I wonder if you have tried searching for God or following Him? Maybe some of that has looked like action, connecting our thoughts about God and faith to actions in our lives.

Throughout history, one way the people who followed God grew to know more about Him was through spiritual practices. "No spiritual discipline (or practice) can make God love you. It's too late for that. God already loves you. But spiritual disciplines help us to live in God's love, and offer it to others" (Rich Villodas).

We want you to learn more about who God is. We'd love you to discover just how much God loves you. We want you to consider what this means for what you believe. We're inviting you to seek to experience God for yourself. We are going to do that through actions, practices which are recorded in the Bible. Many we see Jesus himself showing us. These allow us to live differently and I wonder what you'll make of them.

Scripture: Numbers 6:24-26

"May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord smile down on you and show you his kindness. May the Lord answer your prayers and give you peace."

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Session 1: Introduction and Celebration

Teaching Key Points & Explain Practice:

- When we celebrate, we mark a special moment, achievement or change.
 - Reflect on a time where you have been part of a celebration for yourself or someone else. Share how you celebrated and what made it special.
- Celebration is an action which helps us to look like God. We can see what God is like when we look at the life of Jesus and he went to plenty of parties and celebrations in his life. We know that God wants us to share in each other's joys and celebrate one another, just as Jesus did.
 - Refer to Numbers 6:24-26 to demonstrate where God's people have spoken celebration and blessing over one another.
- We also want to celebrate the glorious gospel and all that God has given to us. For those who follow Jesus, we have lots to celebrate!
 - Name one way you celebrate because of your faith and your decision to follow God.

Activity:

- Affirmations: Get a page for every leader and young person with their name at the top. Place these around the room. Give everyone a pen / pencil. Over 5 minutes ask everyone to work around the room and write affirmations or something they want to celebrate about the person on the page with their name on it. Once the time is up, ask everyone to find their page and take a moment to read what is written.
- Birthday Basket: Introduce the Birthday Basket where each week/month in the group you take the time to pray for and celebrate whoever has celebrated a birthday. You can have a basket with small gifts for each person to pick out something.

Follow On:

Challenge your young people to identify one thing they'd like to celebrate about their friend or mentor. Ask them to message or speak this to them!

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Session 2: Study

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:15-17

You have known the Holy Scriptures since you were a child. These Scriptures are able to make you wise. And that wisdom leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by God. And all Scripture is useful for teaching and for showing people what is wrong in their lives. It is useful for correcting faults and teaching the right way to live. Using the Scriptures, those who serve God will be prepared and will have everything they need to do every good work.

Teaching Key Points & Explain Practice:

- Studying and learning are amazing skills we have. While we may not love school, there's always something we want to know more about.
 - Include some references here to think you've learnt about or things your young people are enjoying learning about e.g. sports teams or hobbies.
- Christians are always looking to find out more about who God is and how he works. Studying the Bible is the best way to find this out. It is also helpful to find out how we should live and how we respond to God's incredible love.
- We study the Bible by regularly reading and seeking to understand what we've read. We make notes or ask questions from older Christians. We get books or resources to help us. We come to church each week to learn together.
 - Share what it has looked like for you to study the Bible. You might want to get a few leaders to share what this looks like.

Activity:

Painting Stones: Gather stones or buy something like [this](#). Ask the young people to think about one thing they know about God and paint it on a stone. It might be a truth about God's character depicted as a picture or a name for God. You might want to have some Bible verses printed out so young people can look up different verses to help them.

Follow On:

Issue out 'Find out about' cards. These are a challenge to encourage the young people to study and learn about something from the Bible. You can use the attached resource which includes blank copies where young people want to investigate something of their own choosing or cards which have something for them to find out about.

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Find out about...
Eternal Life

Isaiah 65:17-25
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Revelations 21:1-5

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Find out about...
What angels do

Luke 1:11-13
Psalm 34:6-7
Acts 12:6-7

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Find out about...
Water of Life

Genesis 2:10-14
Revelation 22:1-3

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Find out about...
The Holy Spirit

Genesis 1:1-2
Luke 3:21-22
John 16:13-14

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Find out about...
The Temple

Exodus 15:17-18
Revelation 21:22
Ephesians 2:19-22

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Find out about...
The Image of God

Genesis 1:27
Colossians 1:15-20

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Find out about...
Holiness

Exodus 3:1-6
Isaiah 6:1-7

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Find out about...
The Messiah

Isaiah 53
Matthew 4:17
Matthew 7:50-54

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Find out about...
The Covenant

Genesis 9: 8-17
1 Corinthians 11:23-26

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Session 3: Giving

Scripture: Mark 4:23-25

“Are you listening to this? Really listening? Listen carefully to what I am saying—and be wary of the shrewd advice that tells you how to get ahead in the world on your own. Giving, not getting, is the way. Generosity begets generosity. Stinginess impoverishes.”

Teaching Key Points & Explain Practice:

- Giving and receiving gifts are common throughout the year - birthdays, Christmas, special events.
 - Share about some of the best gifts you've given or received.
- Giving involves sacrificing something of our own to give away to someone else. It might involve giving time, energy, care, thought, actual presents.
 - When we give to others, it puts the focus on them and gives us an opportunity to demonstrate our care for them. It means we become less focused on ourselves and it can challenge our selfish thinking.
- By giving to others, it reminds us of what God has given to us and gives an example of what God's love looks like.
 - Refer to Mark 4:23-25 and see how God's ways are different to what we often hear. God encourages us to give more than we receive and giving helps us to live well.

Activity:

- Wrapping: Get a gift for a few key people in your church or community. Invite the young people to wrap the gift and write a card of thanks. Provide an opportunity for the young people to give the gift to those people from church or your community.
- God's Good Gifts: split up the group into 2's or 3's. Give them 2 minutes and get them to list all the good things God gives to everyone and those who follow Him. Do a round robin, getting each group to shout out one idea until they run out and give a prize to the last group.

Follow On:

Invite the group to say a prayer each day of gratitude. Encourage them to personalise it each day

“Thank you God for all the blessings in my life. Thank you today for _____”

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Session 4: Worship

Scripture: Psalm 15

“Praise the Lord! Praise God in his Temple! Praise him in heaven, his strong fortress! Praise him for the great things he does! Praise him for all his greatness! Praise him with trumpets and horns! Praise him with harps and lyres! Praise him with tambourines and dancing! Praise him with stringed instruments and flutes! Praise him with loud cymbals! Praise him with crashing cymbals! Everything that breathes, praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!”

Teaching Key Points & Explain Practice:

- We will always be worshipping something. No matter what our lives look like, there's always something we're pursuing or lifting up.
- Worship for those following God means declaring how God good is.
- Worship can be a physical experience - singing, kneeling, shouting. It can also be a personal experience, in those moments by ourselves, or an experience we share together. The together experience might look like Psalm 15, a crash of noise and declaring God's goodness.
- Our lives can declare how amazing God is. So in every decision we make, we decide whether to worship or whether to sin and turn against what God wants for us.

Activity:

- Writing in Sand: Have several trays filled with sand. Taking it in turns in small groups, ask each young person to write a worship statement to God and then brush the sand flat again.
- Church Band: Get a range of instruments, ideally simple percussion instruments as well as other instruments. You can invite any musicians in your group to bring their instruments for this week. Play a simple Christian song that you think most of your group would know. It might be a kids song or one they might have heard in school. Have music available for any musicians amongst your group. Read Psalm 15 and invite them to use this song to worship God (knowing it's good to have fun while doing it!).

Follow On:

Make a playlist of some of your favourite worship songs and share it with the group to listen to throughout the week.

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Session 5: Journaling

Scripture: Philippians 4:8-9

“Summing it all up, friends, I’d say you’ll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse. Put into practice what you learned from me, what you heard and saw and realised. Do that, and God, who makes everything work together, will work you into his most excellent harmonies.”

Teaching Key Points & Explain Practice:

- Journaling is a way of recording your life! The big events, what you’re feeling, your hopes and dreams. It allows us space to think about all that has happened and what we feel about it.
- Anne Frank wrote one of the most famous journals ever. She said “I think a lot but I don’t say much”, and “I can shake off everything if I write; my sorrows disappear. My courage is reborn.” I wonder what impact journaling could have for you?
- While there’s lots and lots of letters written to different people in the Bible, there isn’t a mention of people journaling. But lots of Christians today use it to reflect on how God has been at work, what they’re learning about their faith and how they want to live.
 - Could you invite a leader or member of your Parish to share about the impact journaling has had on their spiritual life?
- It is an opportunity to process the difficult things in life but also as Philippians 4 says it can be a way for us to think about the great things in life. This fuels our gratitude to God for all he has provided to us.

Activity:

- Free Writing Challenge: Give each young person 1 minute to write about the most beautiful place they’ve visited or the best food they’ve eaten. Ask them how they found it. A second challenge is to give them one more minute to free write focusing on how they see God and what they believe about Him.

Follow On:

Give out notebooks to every young person. Encourage them to spend 5 minutes journaling each day about what has happened. If you have time you could write each young person’s name in the notebook and a small message from the leaders with reference to Philippians 4.

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Session 6: Prayer

Scripture: Matthew 6:7-8

"With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply. Like this: Our Father in heaven, Reveal who you are. Set the world right; Do what's best— as above, so below. Keep us alive with three square meals. Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others. Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil. You're in charge! You can do anything you want! You're ablaze in beauty! Yes. Yes. Yes."

Teaching Key Points & Explain Practice:

- In the hardest moment, the darkest times, we may well have prayed. When we are at the end of our options, sometimes prayer is the last thing left to try.
- Prayer is simply talking to God. We speak to God, either out loud, by writing things down or through thinking a prayer in our heads.
- There are lots of different ways to pray. We can thank God for what He has done, we can ask for help, we can pray for other people. We can pray through reading and repeating prayers from the Bible like from Matthew 6:7-8, or we can make up our own prayer.
 - Share about the difference prayer has made in your life - this could be an answered prayer or the comfort of knowing you could share your thoughts with God and he promises to listen.
- As we pray, we know we are not alone. The amazing, powerful, good God is listening to us and he cares.

Activity:

- Light a candle: give each young person a tealight candle. Take it in turns to let them light the candle. As they do, encourage them to focus their attention on God and pray. You might want to encourage them to pray in their head or out loud.
- Saying "grace": Lots of people pray before they eat a meal. Share any fun grace prayers that you know. For example, the Superman Grace. Then have some food together!

Follow On:

Ask the young people to consider what would be a challenge to them this week and to give it a try! You might want to add some options, but here is a few to get started: Pray for someone they know in need / Pray the Lord's prayer each day / Ask someone to pray for you / Talk to God when they brush their teeth

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Session 7: Silence

Scripture: Psalm 46:10-11

"He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."
The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."

Teaching Key Points & Explain Practice:

- When you're sleeping - that's maybe the only time it happens. Pure silence. If you snore this probably isn't even true. Generally though there probably isn't a lot of time in your week where there's silence.
- Silence is a traditional practice done by Christians over thousands of years. To do this, it means to be quiet, not having any noise and withdrawing distractions. Often it's helpful to close our eyes and be on our own to fully embrace silence.
- Silence is one way for us to take away all the other distractions, the random thoughts that pop into our mind, the negative things we think about ourselves or others, the fears or worries we have. Instead we try to be silent. We might listen for God's voice. We might repeat a bit of a Bible passage. But ultimately it reminds us that we don't need to *do* something for God to love us. In that moment of silence, he loves us more than we can imagine.

Activity:

- Labyrinth: provide a finger labyrinth for each young person. Ask them to use their non-dominant hand and start in the centre and work towards the outside. Encourage them to be silent while completing the labyrinth. Once they've completed it once, read Psalm 46:10-11 and ask them to use one word or phrase from Psalm 46 and repeat it silently while they do the labyrinth again.
- Noise Levels: Use Bouncy Balls or a similar tool to show how noisy it is. Challenge the group to be as loud as possible. Then to be as silent for as long as they can.

Follow On:

Challenge everyone to spend 30 seconds in silence during the week. Encourage them to journal about their experience.

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Session 8: Lament

Scripture: Psalm 13

How long will you forget me, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you refuse to accept me? How long must I wonder if you have forgotten me? How long must I feel this sadness in my heart? How long will my enemy win against me? Lord my God, look at me and give me an answer. Make me feel strong again, or I will die. If that happens, my enemy will say, "I beat him!" He will be so happy that he won. But I trust in your faithful love, Lord. I will be happy when you save me. Then I will sing to the Lord because he was so good to me.

Teaching Key Points & Explain Practice:

- Life isn't always easy. Many of us will have faced difficulty, grief, pain and hurt. The Bible shows how people respond when awful things happen. They lament. Lament is a practice where we can cry out to God with our frustration, hurt and anger with the problems and difficulty we face. We bring them to God and ask for his help. Ultimately we seek to hand those things over to God and trust in Him.
 - Read Psalm 13 and point out the different elements of the Psalm - the cry is directed to God, outlines despair and pain of the situation, ask for God's help, trust in God that he will act and be with us.
 - Share a moment where you've got comfort from being able to cry out to God in such an honest way.

Activity:

- Throwing & Holding: Set up a basin of water, with lots of towels around it and give everyone a pebble. Get everyone to throw their pebble into the water as hard as they can. Once they've thrown their pebble, ask everyone to pick up a wooden handheld cross. As we share our frustration, we are left open handed and pick up the hope we have in God.
- Ash: Get some ash and get a leader to go round each young person and allow them to use the ash to make a cross on the back of their hand. Consider the ways ash was used in the Bible to help in the act of lament.
- Taste Test: have a range of bitter and sour tasting things (a lemon slice, sour sweets, cherries). Offer for each young person to taste these. Then have a range of sweet items (squares of chocolate, honey, strawberries).

Follow On:

Print out some prayers of lament and allow young people to read them and choose one to take home. [A Liturgy for Those Battling Fear](#) / [A Liturgy for Those Struggling to Believe](#) / [Lament Prayers included in Covid resource](#)

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Session 9: Solitude

Scripture: Matthew 6:6

“Here’s what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won’t be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace.”

Teaching Key Points & Explain Practice:

- We can be different depending on who we are around. Being on our own might be bliss or it might be really difficult for you.
- Solitude is the act of being on our own and spending time away from others.
 - Read Matthew 6:6 and reflect on what this might look like.
- By taking time in solitude, we are inviting our attention to be solely on God. Of course we will still get distracted but we are choosing to minimise those distractions and be present. It might be that these moments bring you peace that Jesus promises, it might let you stop and feel like everything isn’t on your shoulders.

Activity:

- Sitting in a pew: If you meet in your Parish building, why not use the Church for this activity. Encourage each young person to find a pew separate from others. Ask them to sit on their own while you play a worship song.
- Reverse Sardines: Hide in the church, if someone finds you, you’re both out! You have one minute to hide, have to stay hidden for 3 minutes and then everyone has to find a new spot to hide from another minute before the final buzzer goes!

Follow On:

Build a den in your bedroom, just big enough for you. Spend some time there. You might want to listen to music, write in your journal, pray, read your Bible. Take a photo of your den and the best one wins a prize at the next session.

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Session 10: Serving

Scripture: Galatians 5:13-14

"It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom. Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that's how freedom grows. For everything we know about God's Word is summed up in a single sentence: Love others as you love yourself. That's an act of true freedom."

Teaching Key Points & Explain Practice:

- We might feel like serving or looking out for people is a burden or part of a boring life.
 - Read Galatians 5:13-14 and share how the passage shows us that serving and loving others is actually what it looks like to be free and live a full life.
- You've probably felt that feeling of being satisfied when you've been able to help someone out. That moment where you've been able to meet a need and they've been grateful for your help.
- One of the ways which God works is through His people serving one another, helping each other through the difficulties in life. By loving others, it helps us see God at work. He can use us to meet someone's needs. Or he might use someone to answer our prayer for help.

Activity:

- Making tea and toast: Get one half of your group to take orders from the other half. Get them to make the perfect tea and toast for the other half of the group. Encourage them to think about how they could go the extra mile to make it super special.
- Volunteer Fair: Consider the different ways that people help out in your Parish. Identify any gaps where the young people could be involved. Get different people from your Parish to come along and talk about the opportunities and what it's been like to serve in these ways.

Follow On:

Challenge the young people to use part of their pocket money / allowance to serve someone else.

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Session 11: Fasting

Scripture: Luke 2:36-38

Anna, a prophetess, was there at the Temple. She was from the family of Phanuel in the tribe of Asher. She was now very old. She had lived with her husband seven years before he died and left her alone. She was now 84 years old. Anna was always at the Temple; she never left. She worshipped God by fasting and praying day and night. Anna was there when Joseph and Mary came to the Temple. She praised God and talked about Jesus to all those who were waiting for God to free Jerusalem.

Teaching Key Points & Explain Practice:

- I wonder if you've heard or even ever practised Lent? It is the 40 days leading up to Easter when lots of Christians fast.
- Fasting means doing without. Lots of people practise fasting by doing without food, but fasting can take lots of other forms too.
- In the midst of doing without, it is best to seek to rely on God.
 - Ask someone to share what they've experienced as they've fasted and what difference it made to their faith.
- Read Luke 2:36-38 and talk about the life which Anna lived and what impact it made.

Activity:

- Walking without: Encourage every young person to take their socks and shoes off and take a few steps outside. Consider what it was like to do something without what we normally need.

Follow On:

Challenge the young people to do without something this week and in that time to focus their attention on God. It could be access to their phone or to a certain app, it could be doing without their favourite snack for 24 hours.

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Session 12: Rest

Scripture: Matthew 11:28-30

“Come to me all of you who are tired from the heavy burden you have been forced to carry. I will give you rest. Accept my teaching. Learn from me. I am gentle and humble in spirit. And you will be able to get some rest. Yes, the teaching that I ask you to accept is easy. The load I give you to carry is light.”

Teaching Key Points & Explain Practice:

- A duvet day or a chilled night in. Rest is a key part of our week. Rest means to stop. I wonder what you think of when you think about resting?
- God designed us to do activity (working, studying) but also to rest. Resting looks like taking a break from the regular activity and allowing ourselves to stop.
 - Read Matthew 11:28-30. Ask the group to close their eyes and imagine what this would feel like, read the passage again.
- For Christians, rest means to show that we know we aren't in control and that we can stop trusting that God will provide for us, even when we aren't earning or working or striving. A time of rest lets us focus on God and allow our trust in Him.

Activity:

- What are you carrying? Relay: Have one young person bring everything they need for their school week, PE kit, Art folders, binders and books. Have a backpack with a few nice things in it. Form 2 teams and have one team take on all the school equipment and the other take the backpack. Reflect on how God wants to give us a light load, it might still look like running the race and doing the relay, but we won't be overburdened.
- Drinking hot chocolate: Take time to stop your regular programme and have a cuppa hot chocolate together.

Follow On:

Ask the young people to plan a time of rest in the coming week and see it through!

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**Thank you for using this resource developed by Connor Youth.
If you have any questions please contact Christina Baillie on
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Additional Resources:

**Liturgies for Hope: 60 prayers for the Highs, the Lows and Everything in
Between
The Beautiful Disciplines**