



Our Partnership
with the
Holy Spirit
week three

Reading John 14:15-21

15 "If you love me, keep my commands. **16** And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever - **17** the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. **19** Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. **20** On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. **21** Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them." (NIV)

Reflection

Have you ever experienced a moment when the world around you crumbles? Reality blurs into a watery haze as tears overwhelm your eyes. You feel that the atmosphere around you is irrevocably changed, altered to a new state where there is not enough oxygen to fill your lungs. You are an infant again screaming into the cold, bright, shapeless world after leaving your mother's womb. Countless events or revelations can force shifts in our foundation. Death, job loss, betrayal, global or local events, illness, the list is long, limitless.

Job understood the sensations of cracking and fracturing delivered by bad news. Everything that Job held close, his children, his livelihood, his health, were taken from him in the span of a couple verses. So great was his sorrow and suffering that he spoke a refrain that echos in our own day and age. "I wish I had never been born."

Can you empathize with Job? Can you feel his pain in your own body as you remember seasons of darkness and upheaval in your life? What brought you comfort in these moments? What did you cling to for stability? Who rushed to your side?

It was Job's three friends who responded to his devastating situation.

"When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him. When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was." (Job 3:11-13)

Job's three friends are notoriously criticized for their response to Job in the later portion of the story. They do not believe Job when he tells them that he is not responsible for his own misfortune. They are relentless in their attempts to persuade Job. Despite their eventual lack of support, Job's three friends' initial response is a beautiful picture of bearing suffering with those you love. They weep, tear their robes, and put ashes on their heads, a physical sign of deep distress and heartbreak. For seven days and nights, they are by Job's side and they are silent. They do not attempt to persuade Job to feel better or take action to change his situation. Job's friends comfort Job by being by his side and sharing his sorrow.

While Reading...

1 PAUSE AND READ AGAIN

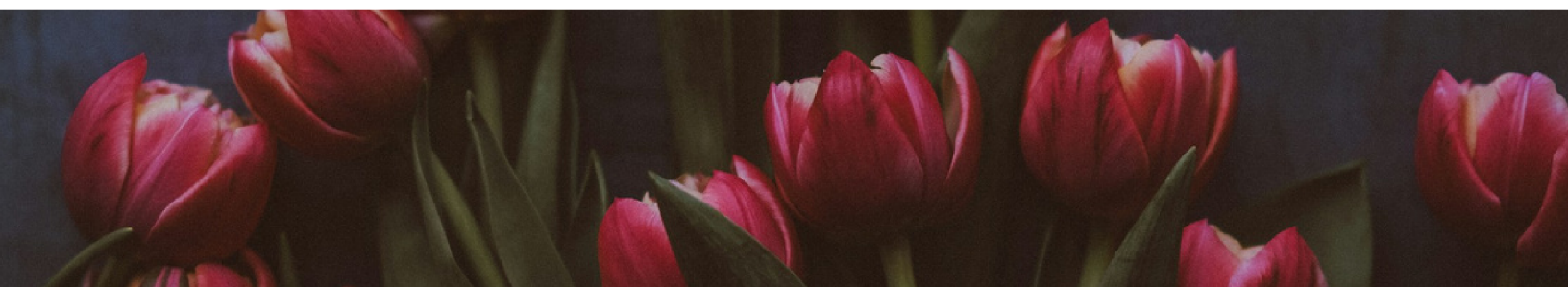
If you are able, read the passage out loud.

2 CONSIDER

What are some words or phrases that stand out to you as you read this passage?

3 PAUSE AND PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you as you read.



The word Jesus uses to describe the Holy Spirit can be translated as advocate or comforter. We usually associate the role of advocate with legal proceedings or being a voice for the voiceless. This is an important aspect of the role of the Holy Spirit but the term Jesus uses also implies coming to be by someone's side in their distress.

The Holy Spirit is by our side when we are suffering or in pain. The Holy Spirit is the best of friends who responds to our heartache with the reassurance of presence. We can depend on the Holy Spirit to come to our aid and provide comfort even in the worst of circumstances.

Questions to Consider with God

How does the Holy Spirit serve as a comforting presence who comes to be with you in heartache?

How can you allow your heart to be molded by the Holy Spirit's example and respond to others in their moments of distress?



Creative Reflection

Throughout scripture, the Holy Spirit is associated with the wind. The wind can be a mysterious force of nature that moves in unexpected paths and surprises us with its disturbances. The wind can also provide relief on a hot day and make the world around us come alive with sound and movement.

I invite you to spend time outside today and pay special attention to the wind. Notice how the wind feels on your skin. Listen closely for the sound of its movement. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you learn more about its presence through the wind.

Reading Acts 1:1-11

1 In my former book, *Theophilus*, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach **2** until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. **3** After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. **4** On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. **5** For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." **6** Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" **7** He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. **8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." **9** After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. **10** They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. **11** "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (NIV)

Reflection

Sometimes, no matter how many times someone tries to explain something to us, we still ask the wrong questions. We think we are listening and we want to understand, but we carry preconceived ideas in our heads that become the filter through which we listen, and we miss what we are supposed to be learning. It kind of seems like that was happening with Jesus and his disciples on the day he went to heaven.

I love that Jesus stayed around for forty days, giving his friends convincing proof that he was alive. I wonder, too, if he had more to teach them about the kingdom of God and he wanted to make sure they got it before he left. For those forty days after his resurrection, Jesus spoke to his apostles about the kingdom of God. Luke, the author of Acts, recorded in his first book (the Gospel of Luke) over 30 instances where Jesus had already taught his disciples about the kingdom of God. What was it about the kingdom that his followers could only begin to understand more fully after his death and resurrection? How did Jesus's teaching become more clear when they could think about it through the lens of the cross and the empty tomb?

The Bible doesn't tell us what Jesus said during those forty days, but it sounds like the disciples were still struggling to understand Jesus's words. For generations, Israel believed that the Messiah would come to put Israel back on the governing seat in Jerusalem. Every time Jesus spoke about his kingdom, the picture in his listener's heads was of the palace in Jerusalem back in Old Testament times. Their hope still rested in political power. They were stuck on getting the timeline right. It was just before Jesus was taken up into heaven when they asked, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (verse 6)

It makes me love Jesus more that he did not smack his forehead in disbelief wondering how his disciples could still be asking the wrong questions. These were his guys. They were the ones who knew him best and would eventually give their lives to make his kingdom known. So he redirected the conversation and told them what they needed to know for the moment. ❤️

While Reading...**1 PICTURE THE SCENE**

What are the sights, sounds, smells, textures that surround you when you envision yourself in this scene?

2 READ THE PASSAGE AGAIN

Read the passage again while immersing yourself in the scene.

3 BECOME A DISCIPLE

Place yourself in the place of one of Jesus' disciples. What is it like to share these final moments with Jesus?



"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

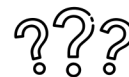
The power needed for this kingdom would not come from a new government but through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. It would be a power that, in just over a week, would translate the only words the apostles knew how to speak into transforming messages of hope and good news so that 3,000 people who did not even speak their language would put their faith in Jesus. This same power would enable them to bear witness to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus in all Judea, and Samaria. Wait. Samaria? As in the Samaritans? What kind of power would they need to go to the people they despised? In the kingdom of God? Power to love their enemies of course. In order to take God's kingdom to the ends of the earth, one of the first things they'd have to learn was to love their enemies.

The Holy Spirit would give them words when they did not know what to say, courage to persevere, and lots of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. This continues to be the power that builds and sustains the kingdom of God.

Also, just a side thought, doesn't the dinner table seem like a casual place to let the apostles know where they should wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit? It seems like such important information to talk about while you're passing the olives. It was an eternally significant conversation in an ordinary everyday space. The intersection of the infinite with the finite is a mind-boggling idea to grasp. We think it should occur in sacred spaces and we forget that anywhere God is, is a sacred space. I wonder if Jesus was trying to remind his friends that just as they'd had conversations with him around tables and on walks in the desert, those would continue to be the kinds of spaces where they might encounter the Holy Spirit. I think he wants us to know that too.

Questions to Consider with God

A prayer for today: Holy Spirit, be our teacher as we read and study Scripture. Give us wisdom to ask the right questions, and hearts to listen so we hear what you say.



We think we have to figure out how to put ourselves in a place where we can hear from God, but what if sometimes he just talks to us at the dinner table? Or on a walk in the park? What if every place is a sacred space because God can meet us anywhere? Is there an ordinary space where you've enjoyed being with God? A walk in nature? School? On your drive to work? Your backyard? Ask him to help you notice his presence in familiar places.

Creative Reflection

Ponder the fruits of the Spirit in the list below. Color them in as you think about them if that is something you like to do. For each one, ask God to help you see how these attributes can be powerful in his kingdom. Choose one or two of these characteristics and ask the Holy Spirit to give you a place to put these qualities into practice.



LOVE



JOY



PEACE



PATIENCE



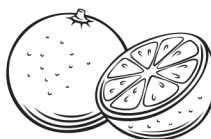
KINDNESS



GOODNESS



FAITHFULNESS



GENTLENESS



SELF-CONTROL

Reading Romans 8:9-17

9 But you aren't self-centered. Instead you are in the Spirit, if in fact God's Spirit lives in you. If anyone doesn't have the Spirit of Christ, they don't belong to him. **10** If Christ is in you, the Spirit is your life because of God's righteousness, but the body is dead because of sin. **11** If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your human bodies also, through his Spirit that lives in you.

12 So then, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but it isn't an obligation to ourselves to live our lives on the basis of selfishness. **13** If you live on the basis of selfishness, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live. **14** All who are led by God's Spirit are God's sons and daughters. **15** You didn't receive a spirit of slavery to lead you back again into fear, but you received a Spirit that shows you are adopted as his children. With this Spirit, we cry, "Abba, Father." **16** The same Spirit agrees with our spirit, that we are God's children. **17** But if we are children, we are also heirs. We are God's heirs and fellow heirs with Christ, if we really suffer with him so that we can also be glorified with him. (CEB)

Reflection

From my earliest childhood imaginations, I knew adoption would be part of my adult life. At night, my canopy bed converted into my orphanage boathouse; twenty-three Cabbage Patch dolls became my adopted children. Together, we sailed on many late-night adventures. Fast forwarding more than twenty years, that dream finally came to fruition when my husband and I adopted Amaya Nicole through foster care in 2016, adding a fourth daughter to our young family.

As I have reflected on our own family adoption story (the highlights of which I'd be glad to share over coffee sometime), I have come to understand my adoption into God's family in a new way. Here are a few connections I've made through the adoptions both in my biological family and my spiritual one.

Adoption is a beautifully complex, messy, ongoing process. Simply defined, adoption is the action of legally taking another's child and bringing it up as one's own. However, anyone who has had a front row view of the process will tell you it is far from simple. Much like marriage or parenthood, adoption has a specific date of occurrence, followed by a lifetime of living into that decision. Adoption involves loss and grief and joy and healing and requires loads of grace and understanding. Adoption stories are unique to each individual. So it is, I think, with our Christian lives. Building from this foundation helps set our expectations for the inevitable ups and downs that occur as we seek out our place in God's family.

**While Reading...**

1 PAUSE AND READ AGAIN
If you are able, read the passage out loud.

2 CONSIDER
What are some words or phrases that stand out to you as you read this passage?

3 PAUSE AND PRAY
Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you as you read.



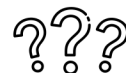
We must work through those parts of our old and new identities. Having access to a new identity does not erase our old one. Through adoption, we are given the opportunity to create a new, healthier future for ourselves, one that would not have been possible under our old circumstances. Obviously, some parts of these identities are in conflict with one another. The author in our passage describes how we must choose to put aside those traits of our old identities that no longer serve us well, such as selfishness and fear. No one else can do this for us. It is a difficult, painful process. Sometimes we may cling to past habits and perspectives, even when we want to let go. But our gracious Father is always there, supporting, guiding, and loving us along the way.

The Holy Spirit is a constant reminder of Whose we are. Adoption can bring about uncertainty and confusion as we try to figure out our place. All humans are drawn to certainty, whether or not it is ultimately for our good. As Christians, we try to move forward but may find we are holding ourselves back due to the comfortability and certainty of our past identity. It's what we know. God gives us the Holy Spirit, our Comforter, to remind us that we belong to Him. We were chosen by the Creator of the universe to bear His name. We are being changed into His image day by day, and one day we will be heirs with Christ in His eternal glory. Our identity is in God Himself, who, through the gift of His Spirit, reminds us that we are His, and that we belong.

Questions to Consider with God

What part(s) of your old identity do you cling to, even though they no longer serve you well? Talk to God about this.

Consider about different names the Holy Spirit is given in Scripture such as Comforter, Advocate, Counselor, Helper, Spirit of Truth. Which of these resonates with where you are today and why? Write your thoughts below.



What roles does the Holy Spirit play in your life?



Reading 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

12 "I have the right to do anything," you say - but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but I will not be mastered by anything. **13** You say, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both." The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

14 By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. **15** Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! **16** Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." **17** But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. **19** Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; **20** you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies. (NIV)

While Reading...**1 PAUSE AND READ AGAIN**

Slowly read through the passage multiple times.

2 SKETCH

Use the space provided to sketch images, symbols, or words that come to your mind as you read this passage.

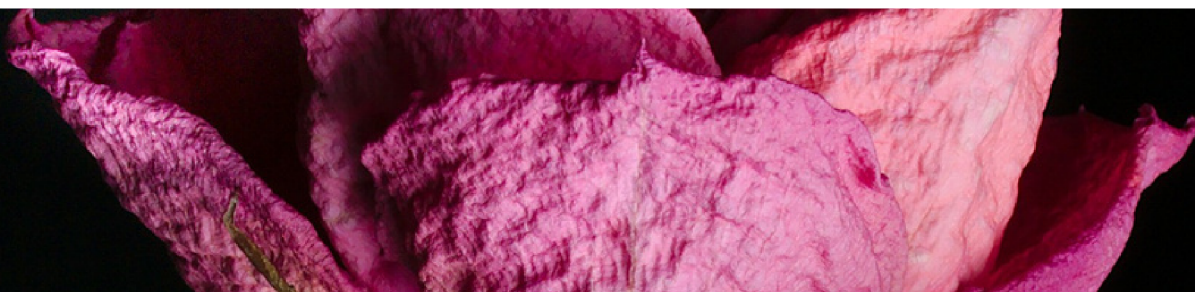
3 PAUSE AND REFLECT

What image pulls at your heart as you reflect on this passage?

**Reflection**

It's a bright sunny day on the playground. You're in line for The Slide. Not just any slide, we're talking THE SLIDE - the tall twisty slide that EVERYONE wants to play on. You're almost at the front of the line and you've been waiting for what feels like an eternity. Suddenly, That Kid shows up and cuts in line in front of you. Not just any kid, we're talking THAT KID - the bully that's a few inches taller and thicker than all the others. As he steps in front of you he blocks out the noontime sun, casting you in shadow. Your stomach burns with anger, tiny rage taking over. "Hey," you yell, "You can't do that!"

"It's a free country," says That Kid just before he blows a wet raspberry in your face.



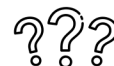
Freedom is a high value in our western world and impositions on our freedom are considered a high sin. It's easy to read this passage of scripture and think, "well I'm not visiting prostitutes so surely this doesn't apply to me." While that may cover the surface of Paul's topic there are deeper things to consider here. How do we live in our freedom both as Christians and as Americans while also honoring that "we are not our own; we were bought with a price." Our bodies - in fact, our whole selves - belong to God. And still God gives us the freedom to choose - choose to cut in line, choose to fight back, choose to help or to hurt.

One study suggests that the average adult makes upward of 35,000 decisions each day. With so much choice, how do we choose to use our bodies and our freedom in tandem with the Holy Spirit instead of following our every whim and instinct?

Questions to Consider with God

What part of your body do you have the hardest time keeping under control?

Consider things like: Hands (envy, greed), Mouth (gossip, cursing), Ears (gossip, knowledge accumulation), Arms/torso/feet (laziness, apathy), Stomach (unhealthy relationship with food, alcohol, etc), Brain (thinking poor thoughts of self or others).

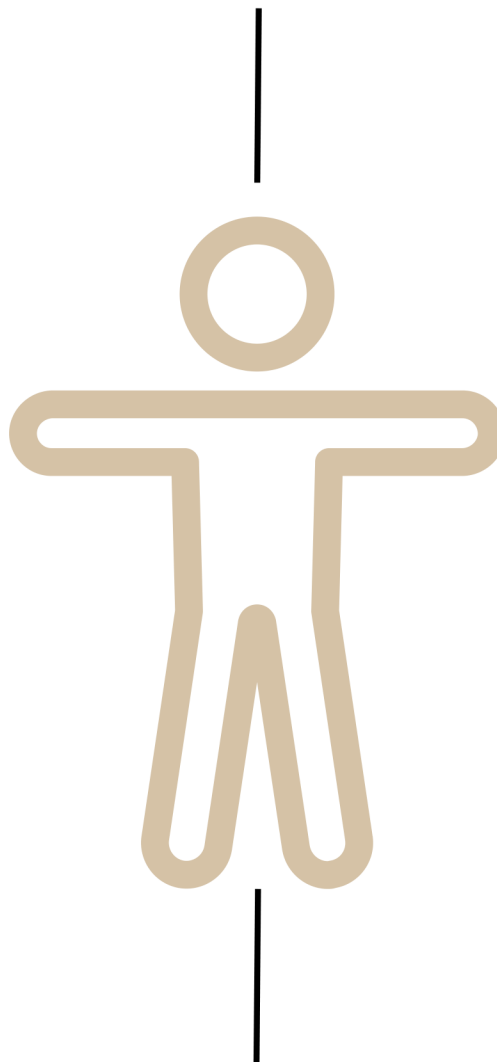


What help do you need from the Spirit within you to use your freedom and your body for the good of yourself and the world?

Creative Reflection

On one half of the diagram draw, color, or label the sections of the body where you struggle to use your freedom well.

Allow the Holy Spirit to show you where you are already using your body and your freedom well. Consider what alternatives the Holy Spirit wants to show you in the areas you can grow in. Draw, color, or label these sections on the other side of the diagram.



Reading Galatians 5:13-26

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **25** Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. **26** Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Reflection

Unlike Arizona, Arkansas is a lush landscape. The trees are tall and reach their limbs out towards one another creating sun catcher canopies where the light leaves speckles on your skin. In summer, the air is thick and every leaf and blade of grass is coated in a thin layer of moisture that glistens in the daylight. I often miss the vibrant green of Arkansas but there is one natural phenomenon that Arkansas cannot boast over Arizona, fruit trees.

A stroll down any neighborhood in Tempe in spring will flood your senses with the rich scent of orange blossoms. The backyard of the Oasis is home to a large and temperamental pomegranate tree whose fruit reflects amount of rain in the valley. Neighbors leave cartons of grapefruit next to their mailboxes for hungry passers by and I crave homemade fig jam. Fresh fruit is in abundance.

Have you every heard an area described as a food desert? A food desert is a place where the residents have limited access to fresh, nutritious foods. These areas are usually populated by residents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and are viewed as undesirable locations for larger supermarkets or suppliers of fresh foods. There were portions of my childhood in Arkansas where I grew in a rural food desert. The closest grocery store with a larger variety of produce and vegetables was a thirty minute drive. The town boasted two restaurants, a classic burger joint and an Italian inspired spaghetti and pizza shack. As a child, I couldn't begin to imagine the taste of a fresh fig plucked from a tree from a friend's backyard. Diverse and fresh foods help our bodies thrive, our minds focus, and our hearts experience comfort and connection with others.

Can you imagine a community where the fruits of the spirit where in abundance like the oranges and grapefruits that grow in Arizona. Can you imagine keeping kindness in buckets on our doorsteps ready for anyone to take what they need. Can you imagine patience flourishing in our hearts like lemons ready to make lemonade? Food is designed to nourish. Fruit is designed to be picked, to feed, and to spread seeds so new life can grow in new places.

The fruits of the spirit are designed to nourish our souls, sustain our communities, and spread so new life can grow in new places

Are our souls and our communities fruit deserts where gentleness and self-control are scarce? Or are our souls rooted in the deep well of relationship with Jesus so he can cultivate the fruits of the spirit in us? Are we nurturing our inner environments so that the fruits of the Spirit flourish in abundance in our communities? Are we cultivating relationships where love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are being produced in such abundance that everyone we encounter can take what they need for nourishment and strength?

While Reading...**1 PAUSE AND READ AGAIN**

If you are able, read the passage out loud.

2 CONSIDER

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3 PAUSE AND PRAY

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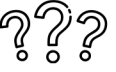


Questions to Consider with God

Can you envision a community where virtues such as kindness, patience, and love are as abundant and accessible as fresh fruit? What steps can we take to cultivate such a community?

Reflecting on the condition of your own heart, do you feel rooted in a relationship with Jesus that enables the fruits of the Spirit to grow within you?

How can we actively encourage and nurture an environment where the fruits of the Spirit flourish both individually and collectively?



Creative Reflection

Bake a delicious fruit pizza and then share it with someone as an expression of the fruits of the spirit!

Fruits of the Spirit Pizza (AKA Fruit Pizza)

Ingredients

- 7-10 Strawberries Sliced
- 1 Cup of Blueberries
- 2 Kiwis Sliced
- 1/2 Cup of Apple Jelly
- 2 Bananas Sliced
- 1 Cup of Grapes Halved
- 1 Roll of Sugar Cookie Dough (Can Substitute for Gluten Free Dough)
- 1 Container of Easy Whip Cream Cream Frosting

Directions

Heat oven to 350°F. Spray 12-inch pizza pan with cooking spray. Break up cookie dough in pan; press dough evenly in bottom of pan to within 1/2 inch of edge. Bake 16 to 20 minutes or until golden brown. Cool completely on cooling rack, about 30 minutes.

While the crust for the fruit pizza bakes, slice your fruit.

Once you base is cool, add the cream cheese icing like you would add tomato sauce to a pizza. Then arrange your fruit slices on the frosting! Brush the pizza with the apple jelly. Finally, place the pizza in the refrigerator to cool fully and enjoy!

Examine your week with God. Use the following prompts to reflect on the previous week with God.

Reveal

Ask God to open your eyes to where God was present throughout the week.

Ask God to deepen your awareness of yourself: your actions, your attitudes, your emotions.



Relish

What gifts did you receive this week? What are you thankful for from the past week?



Replay

Replay the events of the week with God.

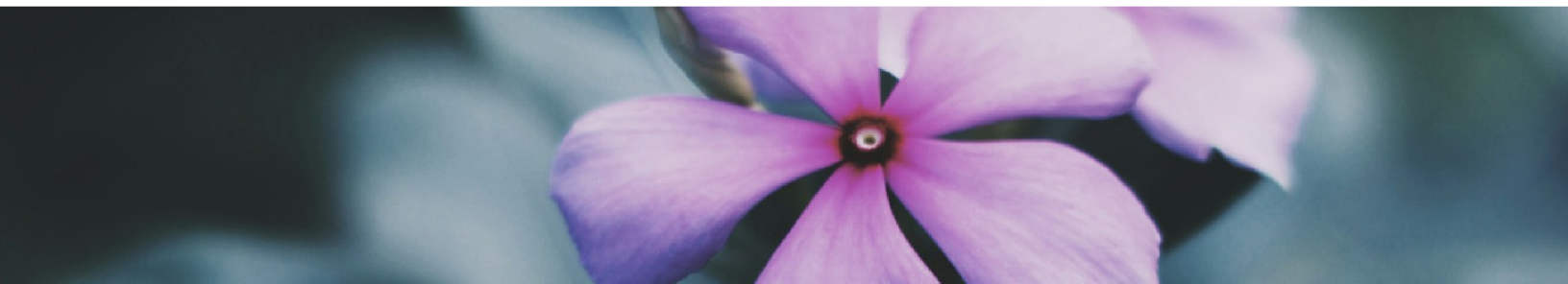
Pay attention to the moments when you experienced strong emotions. Notice where God was present.



Remorse

With grace and compassion, reflect with God over the difficulties of the week.

What actions or attitudes did not allow you to be a light in the world?



Resurrection

Ask God to give you direction on how to walk in resurrected life In the week ahead.




“We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.”

Romans 8:22-27



How do you
partner with
the Holy Spirit?