

## Basic Spiritual Formation Workshop [Planned for 90 minutes]

- I. Introduce yourself
- II. Introduce Workshop (*Change the script to suit your group and experience.*)

Having a relationship with God is a lifelong learning and growing experience. We realize the value of longevity for maturity in all other long-term relationships. We do not spring fully formed from the mind of God from the moment we say, “I believe”; but I suspect that rarely does anyone deliberately teach us how to have a relationship or to cultivate it. I think we as the church make some huge assumptions that when a person claims Christ, he or she naturally gravitates toward at least some Christian spiritual practices, such as Bible study and prayer; but I don’t think people necessarily do. (I would love to be wrong about this.) But if I’m not, we see why we need workshops such as this. And regardless of what goes before, no one can actually do the relating for us, so we just need to learn about a practice and try it.

*Luke 11:1-4.* Disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray. They already knew how to pray the set prayers of the synagogue; this is a request for another set prayer (as John the Baptist had provided his disciples) or for how to pray more extemporaneously, but within a pattern.

*Acts 2: 42-47.* Early church defines at least one rule of life for the community. (We’ll get back to this concept.)

- III. Introduce Group
  - ❖ Who is here because you are completely content with your relationship with God? (**Raise hands.**)
  - ❖ Because you want to enlarge your relationship?
  - ❖ Because a relationship comes easily enough, but you want to learn a few new approaches?
  - ❖ Because you struggle with your relationship with God?
- IV. To Whom Do We Relate?
  - ❖ May help us get started on understanding why some spiritual practices seem comfortable and some seem foreign if we start with the One to whom we are trying to relate. Who is God to you? [**List responses on newsprint.**]
  - ❖ Add some of the negative images, if necessary—judgmental parent, distant control figure, child abuser who let son die, joyless, stern...
  - ❖ Our experiences always have the potential to affect and frame our understanding of God.
  - ❖ Discuss briefly the images people have of God and how those images affect their relationship and cultivation of spiritual life.

## V. How Do We Relate?

- ❖ **Read aloud John 20:25.** We can say the same thing about the variety of Christian spiritual practices and the volumes of titles and billions of words that have been written about them. So, for our purposes, since this is a Christian education event, we will use the seven ways of learning to get into Christian practices.
- ❖ Our spiritual type also makes a difference, but we don't have time to get into it. See the bibliography, especially for *Discover Your Spiritual Type* by Corinne Ware.
- ❖ First, let me repeat that in 90 minutes, there is no way to give you any in-depth experience or information with the whole realm of spiritual disciplines, so we'll try a practical experiment. I have supplemental information in the handouts and bibliography that will give you plenty to think about and to try at your leisure.
- ❖ Handout on **Multiple Intelligences:** There are many factors that influence our comfort level with learning and with relating to God.
- ❖ Establishing a **Rule of Life:** "A rule of life is a pattern of spiritual disciplines that provides structure and direction for growth in holiness. When we speak of patterns in our life, we mean attitudes, behaviors, or elements that are routine, repeated, regular.... A rule of life is not meant to be restrictive, although it certainly asks for genuine commitment. It is meant to help us establish a rhythm of daily living, a basic order within which new freedoms can grow. A rule of life, like a trellis, curbs our tendency to wander and supports our frail efforts to grow spiritually." (Marjorie Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995.)

## VI. The Practical Experiment: Explain the Devotional Centers

- ❖ Each devotional center has the necessary supplies for you to engage in Christian spiritual practices that should fit someone with that particular kind of learning preference. You have a handout that explains each practice at each center, so please decide you want to go and stay for a bit before you go to a particular center. There are two or three choices at each center.
- ❖ I would like you to take about 15 minutes at each of three centers, although if you want to stay longer (or shorter), I will not monitor you. I would prefer not to have a lot of movement, like most of us window-shopping for a few minutes at each place, because that will disturb focus and concentration for others of us. I will let you know when the 15 minutes are up. It's fine to try something familiar; please do so, but try something that sounds intriguing and also something that seems foreign.

- ❖ A brief overview of what is at each center. [Look at your handout. Supply list at the end of next page.]
- ❖ **WORD SMART:** Devotional Bible study; write your own creed or statement of faith; journal on specific Scripture passage.
- ❖ **NUMBER SMART:** Identify stages of your own spiritual growth and how you have come to know God better; create a litany of confession; pray a rosary.
- ❖ **PICTURE SMART:** Icons for contemplation that focuses on an awareness of the divine mystery. Contemplation is not about words, but about images; Art supplies for focusing on the images and meanings in Bible study. Pray about or consider the vision of who you feel God is calling you to be and how to bring that vision to fulfillment
- ❖ **MUSIC SMART:** A variety of CDs - some Charles Wesley, some contemporary Christian music - and hymnals (for quiet humming and singing to yourself) to meditate on the theology and image of God evoked in the music or the lyrics. Meditation differs from contemplation because it has to do with reasoning, thinking, making meaning. Write your own psalm to a familiar tune.
- ❖ **BODY SMART:** Small labyrinth to “walk” with your hand as you reflect on whatever the labyrinth evokes. It may just be the movement, or you may consider a Scripture or hymn phrase as you move or work with God on some life issue that has come in your path. Take a prayer and reflection nature walk; dance to a hymn.
- ❖ **PEOPLE SMART:** You obviously need at least two people at once for this center. You may use Christian conferencing on an aspect of God that you would like to understand better or for some other God/self-expanding issue. Guided Bible discussion.
- ❖ **SELF-SMART:** Fruits of the Spirit review; or work on your own personal rule of life as you pray for God’s insight and guidance (which I know we can’t just summon, but we can ask. It will come when it comes, and you’ll probably get nudges if you pay attention).

## VII. Time for Centers

## VIII. Group Reflection on the Experiment and Sending Forth

- ❖ What surprised you? puzzled you? disappointed you? inspired you? challenged you? intrigued you? How did the discipline help you get an initial understanding of how it can help you relate to God and to grow in faith?
- ❖ Close by using a prayer or other benediction from a participant.

## Supply List for the Workshop and Centers

### For the Leader

- ✓ You need a room big enough for seven centers
- ✓ Newsprint and marker
- ✓ Bible
- ✓ Handout on Multiple Intelligences (Included below)
- ✓ Timer or watch
- ✓ Make signs for the centers (Word Smart, Number Smart, and so on) and a way to make them visible (bookstand, for example)
- ✓ Handouts of instructions for the centers (included below)

### For the Centers

- ✓ Word: Two or three Bibles, blank paper, and pens
- ✓ Number: Growth Chart/Timeline handout (included below); rosary or other tangible items that can be the focal point while praying; blank paper and pens
- ✓ Picture: Icons or religious pictures, art supplies, paper
- ✓ Music: Tape or CD player and cassettes or CDs of various kinds of religious music, including traditional, contemporary, chants, etc.; several copies of *The United Methodist Hymnal*
- ✓ Body: Small labyrinth, tape or CD player and cassettes or CDs (may be able to borrow from the Music Center if not in use)
- ✓ People: Two or three Bibles
- ✓ Self: Two or three Bibles; blank paper and pens; a copy of *Soul Feast* by Marjorie Thompson, if available

# Center Instructions

## CENTER ONE: WORD SMART

### Word Smart: Devotional Bible Study (Lectio Divina)

Read one of these Bible passages several times, each time with a different focus.

- ❖ **Psalm 1.** The two ways
- ❖ **Malachi 3:1-5.** God's messenger is coming
- ❖ **Matthew 15:21-28.** Jesus heals the daughter of the Canaanite woman
- ❖ **Romans 5:1-5.** When we are justified by faith

*Lectio (Hearing the Word):* (You may want to read the passage more than once to truly hear it, with a time of silent rest between readings.) What does the passage say? Who is there? What's happening? How do the people present respond to what is happening? How can you see yourself there? As you read another time, what word, phrase, or image calls you to attention? Rest with this phrase or image in silence.

*Meditatio (Pondering the Word):* How do you feel about this Scripture? What images, ideas, and perceptions of God does it evoke? Ponder more deeply on the phrase or image that caught your attention. How is God speaking to you through it?

*Oratio (Dialogue with God):* What prayer emerges from your meditation? What is your response to what God is saying to you?

*Contemplatio (Heavenly Rest):* Rest heart and mind and just be in God's presence.

*Incarnatio (A Calling Forward):* After resting in God's word, how do you emerge more confidently as an agent of God's love and reconciliation?

### Word Smart: Write Your Own Creed or Statement of Faith

This statement of Christian faith beliefs can be done as a list, a narrative of your own theological discoveries, or a poem, for example. The historic creeds generally cover statements about God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Crucifixion and Resurrection, the community of faith, and eternal life.

### Word Smart: Journal on a Specific Scripture Passage

Write your own reflections on one of these passages. You can write about what it means to you, how it makes you feel as a child of God, how it reveals God to you, and/or how it inspires you to your own discipleship and action.

- ❖ **Judges 6:36-40.** Gideon and the sign of the fleece
- ❖ **Daniel 1:1-17.** Daniel and companions are tested in matters of food and drink in a foreign court
- ❖ **Mark 10:46-52.** Healing of Bartimaeus
- ❖ **Ephesians 2:11-22.** Being one in Christ

## **CENTER TWO: NUMBER SMART**

### **Number Smart: Identify Stages of Your Own Spiritual Growth**

Use the Growth Chart/Timeline on the table in the center to note places of significance in your own spiritual journey. At what places has God seemed especially present or especially absent? What meaning did you make of these significant events, insights, circumstances that enriched your relationship to God?

### **Number Smart: Create a Litany of Confession**

Prepare, then pray, a litany of confession that could be yours alone, or used by another person or group. Include, for example, matters related to personal life, vocation, family, community, church, nation, world. At the close of the prayer, read these words as an assurance of pardon: "God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life. As a child of God, you are forgiven."

### **Number Smart: Pray a Rosary**

The Roman Catholic Church has more than one specific pattern for praying the rosary. For our purpose, the rosary will serve as the device by which to organize the number and types of prayer. Starting with the cross, give thanks to God that God is God. Then moving to the first cluster of beads, pray a prayer for each bead on a specific theme or of a particular type. The first cluster, for example, could be devoted to prayers for family (theme) or prayers of intercession (a type, asking something of God for the sake of others). Other themes: personal guidance; victims of violence or disaster; leaders of church, community, nation, world; and so on. Other types: prayers of confession and pardon, petition, thanksgiving, praise.

## CENTER THREE: PICTURE SMART

### **Picture Smart: Use an Icon for contemplation.**

Choose one of the pictures or icons for contemplation, which is a focus on an awareness of the divine mystery. Contemplation is not about words, but about images. What images of God or of Christ and of yourself in relationship to God are evoked by the picture? How can you rest in that awareness and allow it to soak into your sense of being (not thinking)?

### **Picture Smart: Use Art Supplies to Draw Your Understanding of Scripture.**

Read and reflect on one of these Scriptures and put into a picture what it tells you about God, Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit. How do you see yourself in this picture and how does that feel?

- ❖ **Genesis 11:1-9.** The Tower of Babel
- ❖ **Exodus 3:1-12.** Moses at the burning bush
- ❖ **Mark 2: 1-12.** Jesus heals a paralyzed man
- ❖ **John 15:1-11.** Jesus, the true vine

### **Picture Smart: Envision the Self God Is Calling You to Be**

Create an image in your mind (or on paper) of the person you feel God is calling you to be. What are your gifts and weaknesses; your preferences; your sense of vocation? How does your life now live out what you think God would want for you? As you compare your vision of your godly life with your current reality, what would it take to get from here to there and how would you need to call upon God to help you live into fulfilling that envisioned life?

## CENTER FOUR: MUSIC SMART

**Music Smart: Listen and reflect on the message in a hymn or Christian song.**

Use one of the CDs at the center, listen to the words (which may also be printed in the jacket), and reflect on what the music and lyrics convey to you about God and your relationship with God and the Christian community.

**Music Smart: Sing your prayers or statement of faith.**

Use the hymnal to select one or more hymns that deal with a theme of importance to your faith right now. *The United Methodist Hymnal* is arranged thematically, so you can use the index (p. 934) to find hymns that relate to forgiveness, healing, or trust, for example. Sing or hum these as your prayer. How do the hymns help you feel God's presence and influence in this area?

**Music Smart: Write your own psalm to a familiar tune.**

Select a familiar tune (or make up a new one!) and put words to a psalm, hymn, affirmation, confession, or other act of devotion to that music. Sing or hum it to yourself as a way to focus on God.

## **CENTER FIVE: BODY SMART**

### **Body Smart: “Walk” the labyrinth.**

Trace the path in the labyrinth with your finger. As you “walk” the labyrinth, be aware of how and where your spiritual focus is and how it draws you to God. You may find you are focused on the “journey” itself and how you move toward and away from God at times or how the path leads to the center, which could be seen, and the heart of God. Each person finds his or her unique experience.

### **Body Smart: Take a prayer and reflection walk (and be sure to come back).**

If space and weather permit, take some time to walk and talk to God. If the walk itself is what helps you focus on God, use the movement to reflect on how you and God have moved together, and when, and where. What has that meant for your own spiritual life? If the environment in which you walk is what helps you focus on God, you may be able to walk outside.

### **Body Smart: Dance to a Hymn**

Choose a hymn that you can sing to yourself or one of the CDs and create your own spiritual/prayer dance. How do you feel God’s presence as you move with the music?

## CENTER SIX: PEOPLE SMART

### **People Smart: Engage in Christian conferencing.**

With at least one other person, engage in conferencing on a faith issue of importance to you. Conferencing involves deep listening, prayer for God's light in the discussion, support, and accountability as well as a "simple" discussion of what one thinks or feels. It always seeks to discern God's will and way over one's own.

### **People Smart: Engage in a guided Bible discussion.**

Select one of these Scriptures and discuss the following questions with at least one other person.

- ❖ **1 Kings 3:1-15.** Solomon's request for wisdom
- ❖ **Jeremiah 29:1, 4-9.** God's word to the exiles in Babylon
- ❖ **Luke 4:1-13.** The temptation of Jesus
- ❖ **Acts 20:5-12.** Paul meets with believers in Troas and restores Eutychus.

1. What happened as the people (including God) interacted?
2. What is the essential faith message in this passage (from your perspective)?
3. What does the passage reveal to you about God?
4. What message might God have for you through this passage? What will you do about it?

## CENTER SEVEN: SELF SMART

### **Self Smart: Gifts of the Spirit Review**

Galatians 5:22 mentions the fruits of the Holy Spirit as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Choose at least one of them (patience? self-control?) and review your life through that lens. How much of what you do and who you are reflects that fruit of the Spirit? Do others see this in the same way you do; that is, would your faith community confirm and support your observations? What might you need to do to better receive that fruit of the Spirit and then to demonstrate it genuinely?

### **OR**

Consider your spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:27-31; 13:13; Eph 4:11-13). What special gift has God given you for building up the Kingdom? How much of what you do and who you are reflects that gift of the Spirit? Do others see this in the same way you do; that is, would your faith community confirm and support your observations? What might you need to do to better receive that gift of the Spirit and then to demonstrate it genuinely?

### **Self Smart: Work on your own rule of life.**

“A rule of life is a pattern of spiritual disciplines that provides structure and direction for growth in holiness. When we speak of patterns in our life, we mean attitudes, behaviors, or elements that are routine, repeated, regular. A rule of life is not meant to be restrictive, although it certainly asks for genuine commitment. It is meant to help us establish a rhythm of daily living, a basic order within which new freedoms can grow. A rule of life, like a trellis, curbs our tendency to wander and supports our frail efforts to grow spiritually.” (Marjorie Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995.)

Skim Chapter 2 of *Soul Feast* for more information, if necessary. What activities, attitudes, and commitments might you include in your daily or weekly regimen to be more intentional about cultivating your spiritual life? How much do you value having an intentional relationship with God? What fears or resistance do you have? How might a regular discipline of spiritual practices help you value the relationship and overcome obstacles to that relationship? Put in writing your own rule of life.

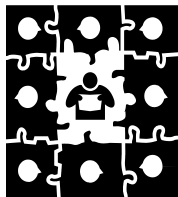
### **Overview of the Seven Core Intelligences (and the debated Eighth)**

Following is a brief description of each style of learning.



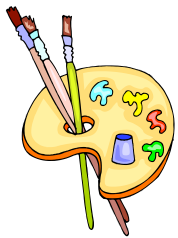
#### **Verbal/Linguistic – Word Smart**

This is our most widely used intelligence and includes anything we do in writing, reading, speaking, or listening. Students who prefer this style of learning enjoy working and playing with words. They love to read and write and enjoy finding derivations of words. To help students translate information, allow them to do extensive research, write out their learning, or discover where words or names originate. The Internet is a great tool for this learner.



#### **Logical/Mathematical – Number Smart**

This intelligence includes more than just numbers. It revels in problem solving, pattern distinction and creation, and understanding the reasoning behind what is happening. Students who prefer this style of learning enjoy discovering what lies behind and beneath the surface. They look to find connections and solve problems. To help students translate information, allow them to create relational guides in the form of grids, charts, mind maps, etc., to aid in making connections.



#### **Visual/Spatial – Picture Smart**

More than just pictures, this style of learning helps us see things. We can see with our physical eyes, our inner eye, or our physical presence by knowing how we fit into the space of our surroundings. Students who prefer this intelligence enjoy looking at pictures, maps, graphs, and videos. They also like to know where things are located in relation to other things. They can easily see with their inner eye as in guided imagery. To help students translate information, provide pictures, mind maps, or let them draw their own pictures to aid memory.



#### **Musical/Rhythmic – Music Smart**

This intelligence helps students assimilate information through music and rhythm. Music may include thinking to music, writing musical formulas for information, or tapping out rhythms. Students who prefer this way of learning enjoy listening to music as they work, and they often tap out their thoughts in a rhythm or beat as they think. To help students translate information, allow them to put their information to music, rap, or a beat.



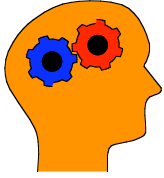
#### **Body/Kinesthetic – Body Smart**

This way of knowing incorporates movement and tactile sensations. Students who prefer this intelligence need to move, to touch, to experience the way something feels. To help these students translate information, give them something to touch or mold or create as they learn a concept. Allow them to move in prescribed areas and ways.



#### **Interpersonal – People Smart**

This intelligence is enhanced when students can work together. These students are adept at reading others' emotions and nuances. Students who prefer this style of learning learn from/with one another. They work well in cooperative learning settings. To help students translate information, allow them to work in pairs or teams or to share their thoughts with others.



### **Intrapersonal – Self Smart**

This style of learning thrives on reflection and self-knowledge. Students who prefer this intelligence learn best through self-reflection, figuring it out for themselves, and understanding themselves and their needs. To help students translate information, allow “think time” and time to reflect and record answers in silence.



### **Naturalist – Nature Smart**

This style of learning appreciates nature and the natural world, including the “heavens.” Students who prefer this intelligence learn by observing and interacting with nature and natural elements (living and not living), by categorizing the order of things (species, types), by understanding the relationship between patterns of growth and development and the natural consequences, by recognizing the elemental nature of things.

### **Intelligences are formed in a specific developmental order.**

Researchers believe intelligences are formed and developed in the following order:

- **Musical/Rhythmic** - Formed *in utero*, the fetus hears the rhythm of the mother’s heartbeat. After birth, an infant quickly learns to discern the rhythm and tone of familiar voices, particularly the voices of Mom and Dad.
- **Visual/Spatial** - Bright colors and black and white patterns pull a child’s attention and stimulate the brain.
- **Body/Kinesthetic** - A child learns about his or her world by touching it and often tasting it.
- **Verbal/Linguistic** - Speech begins as babbling sounds, which connect into patterns, which eventually form simple, then more complex words. A child is capable of learning any one of hundreds of languages at birth.
- **Logical/Mathematical** - Children begin to recognize cause and effect and learn what makes Mom come quickly.
- **Intrapersonal** - Children begin to make discoveries about themselves - that they have definite likes and dislikes. They learn what makes them laugh and cry, what makes them feel safe or anxious, and what comfort and discomfort are.
- **Interpersonal** - Children learn to interact with others, to share, and to communicate. This takes a while (some may argue a lifetime).

# Growth Chart / Timeline

Birth 

  
Your life midpoint, according to your current age

 Today