

## Go Deeper:

### Practical Ideas for Exploring the ‘When’ of Discipleship

Here are some more ideas about being a disciple within time. Some spiritual writers speak of us having two sides to the life of discipleship: the ‘active’ and the ‘contemplative’ life. I have used this structure to provide two suggestions for each time period.

What can I do with...?	Ideas for the Contemplative Life	Ideas for the Active Life
<b>Seconds?</b>	<p>‘The events of every moment bear the impress of the will of God, and of his adorable Name... It is right, therefore, to bless it, to treat it as a kind of sacrament by which its own virtue sanctifies those souls which place no obstacles in its way’ (Jean-Pierre de Caussade). Stop whatever you are doing: what is God saying to you NOW? In what way is the present moment a ‘sacrament’ (i.e., a channel for God’s grace) for you?</p>	<p>Right where you are now, who can you see around you who you can pray for, or show practical love and care?</p>
<b>Minutes?</b>	<p>Nathan Foster writes: ‘Distraction is the curse of our age. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of efficient people, or busy people, but for present people.’  <a href="https://renovare.org/articles/the-cure-for-distraction">https://renovare.org/articles/the-cure-for-distraction</a>.</p> <p><b>Try playing the ‘Game with Minutes’</b> suggested by American missionary educator Frank Laubach (1884-1970): ‘We try to call Him to mind at least one second of each minute. We do not need to forget other things nor stop our work, but we invite Him to share everything we do or say or think. Hundreds of people have experimented until they have found ways to let Him share every minute that they are awake. In fact, it is no harder to learn this new habit than to learn the touch system in typing, and in time one can win a high percentage of his minutes with as little effort as an expert needs to write a letter’. See: <a href="https://levoire.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/The-Game-with-Minutes-Frank-Laubach.pdf">https://levoire.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/The-Game-with-Minutes-Frank-Laubach.pdf</a> and <a href="https://conversatio.org/awareness-game-with-minutes/">https://conversatio.org/awareness-game-with-minutes/</a></p>	<p>Technology can be a gift but also a curse. <b>Do an audit of your mobile phone use and browsing time.</b> Can you identify any habits which are getting in the way of you loving God and others? What practical steps could you take to prevent your phone getting in the way of your discipleship? Try the ‘Dumbphone Challenge’ from John Mark Comer’s book, <i>The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Disable the email function on your phone.</li> <li>• Delete all social media apps your phone; switch to desktop.</li> <li>• Disable your web browser.</li> <li>• Delete all notifications, including text alerts</li> <li>• Delete news apps, or at least news alerts.</li> <li>• Delete every single app you don’t need or that doesn’t save you time. Keep all the wonder apps that make life so much easier—maps, calculator, etc.</li> <li>• Consolidate your remaining apps into a few simple boxes and move them to your second screen, so your home screen is free and clear—basically, a phone with a nice photo in the background.</li> <li>• Set your phone to grayscale mode”. [makes phone less visually stimulating – and saves battery life too!]</li> </ul>

<p><b>Hours of a Day?</b></p>	<p>Do you set aside some <b>time every day for personal prayer, study and reflection?</b> Many people find that the key to this is a regular habit (a set time of day and place, a particular routine). There are many prayer apps and online resources which can help you develop a daily rhythm of prayer – including <i>Lectio365</i>, <i>Dwell</i>, <i>Hallow</i> and <i>Pray As You Go</i>. Apps like <i>PrayerMate</i> can also be useful in helping you organise your intercessions. For those who like to Prayer Walk, the <i>Holy Here</i> app allows you to map your prayer walk (a bit like Strava or other running apps) and shows where others have prayer walked in your area.</p>	<p>In a future session we'll explore the '<b>up, in, out</b>' triangle a bit further. During a typical day, try to plan in some of each of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Up</b> – time of prayer, worship, meditation or study about God</li> <li>• <b>In</b> – time for family, friendship, relationship or community (whether in person or online/on the phone)</li> <li>• <b>Out</b> – times of looking outwards, taking part in the mission of God through prayer, words and/or deeds, either in your neighbourhood, workplace, or beyond</li> </ul>
<p><b>Days of a Week</b></p>	<p>Do you <b>take a 'sabbath' every week?</b> Sabbath has been unpopular for most of our lifetimes, sometimes not helped by the dullness and petty rules of the Victorian Sunday (e.g., swings tied up in the park, only 'improving reading matter' allowed...). But in today's fast-paced world we are increasingly discovering the value of a day to 'stop, rest, delight and worship'. <i>Practicing the Way</i> offers a variety of free resources to help you form a life-giving habit of Sabbath (most of the material is free although you'll need to sign up with an email address): <a href="https://www.practicingtheway.org/sabbath">https://www.practicingtheway.org/sabbath</a></p>	<p><b>Keep a diary of your activities for a week</b> – you don't need to write much; just note down what you did with each waking hour.</p> <p>Look back at your activities over the week. Does anything surprise you? What, if anything, would you want to change? Do you see opportunities for living out your faith in new ways?</p> <p>The point of this exercise is not to make us feel guilty, and a balance of work and rest is vital. Instead, the point is simply to notice how we are living, lay that before God, and respond to anything God is showing you.</p>
<p><b>Seasons of a Year</b></p>	<p>The seasons of the Christian year provide a great opportunity for prayer, study and celebration of some of the major events and doctrines of the Christian faith. Some churches find that people will gather for a Lent or Advent group even if they don't meet in regular small groups.</p> <p><b>Choose a Christian season or festival on which your church doesn't currently tend to observe.</b> Create some way of marking that together (choose something simple and easy to repeat without requiring tons of additional time or resources). Share with your diocese what you did and what you learned from it.</p>	<p>Churches are used to thinking about the Christian seasons as opportunities for discipleship and mission. But what about the many days which go to make up the 'secular' calendar of the UK? Some of these are widely-recognised occasions for public reflection (e.g., Remembrance Sunday, Holocaust Memorial Day); others are well-known charity fundraising occasions (e.g., Children in Need, or Movember); others are just plain bizarre (Telegraph Pole Appreciation Day, anyone?!). Look at an online calendar (e.g., <a href="https://www.thereisadayforthat.com/countries/united-kingdom">https://www.thereisadayforthat.com/countries/united-kingdom</a>), and <b>plan a community outreach event on a widely-observed date</b> that's relevant to your own local community.</p>
<p><b>The next 1-2 years</b></p>	<p>Could you benefit from a <b>soul friend, Christian coach or spiritual director?</b> Consider identifying someone who might be able to journey with you over the next few years (it doesn't have to be a lifetime</p>	<p>Consider creating a <b>rule of life</b>. This is an ancient monastic practice designed to help you identify what matters most and 'scaffold' your life with a set of practices and activities which mean that you live out your priorities.</p>

	<p>commitment). Sometimes this can be as simple as meeting regularly with a trusted friend to pray together and check in with each other about how life is going. Sometimes it could be a more structured relationship.</p> <p>Read more about soul friendship at: <a href="https://anamcara.com/the-invitation-to-soul-friendship/">https://anamcara.com/the-invitation-to-soul-friendship/</a> or Soul Care’s Spiritual Friendship Reflection Guide (<a href="https://www.soulcare.com/spiritual-friendship-guide">https://www.soulcare.com/spiritual-friendship-guide</a> - you have to enter your email to get the latter).</p> <p>For spiritual direction, your diocese will be able to put you in touch with experienced local contacts.</p>	<p>A rule of life is different from (and much more than) a list of rules; the point is to live with purpose, rather than just ticking off a list of activities or goals. There are many good resources to help you, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northumbria Community, <a href="#">What is a Rule of Life?</a></li> <li>• Practicing the Way, <a href="#">Rule of Life Builder</a></li> <li>• Steve Macchia’s <a href="#">ruleoflife.com</a> website</li> <li>• Elizabeth Ross, <a href="#">Building a Rule of Life: An Ancient Practice for a Contemporary Life</a></li> <li>• Chris Webb, <a href="#">How to Create a Rule of Life Based on the Six Streams</a></li> </ul> <p>Do suggest other resources you have found helpful, and we will add them here!</p>
<p><b>Your Current Stage of Life</b></p>	<p>A classic book on the stages of spiritual life is Janet Hagberg and Robert Guelich’s <i>The Critical Journey</i> (2005). Janet Hagberg developed this ‘<b>Spiritual Life Inventory</b>’ to help people reflect on the current stage of their spiritual life. You can download a copy free at: <a href="https://janethagberg.com/uploads/3/9/3/4/39346357/spiritual_life_inventory_120910.pdf">https://janethagberg.com/uploads/3/9/3/4/39346357/spiritual_life_inventory_120910.pdf</a></p>	<p>How does your own church community provide <b>both peer group and intergenerational opportunities for discipleship?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for people at the <b>same life stage</b> to meet together, pray and share experiences?</li> <li>• Opportunities for people of <b>different life stages</b> to enjoy each others’ company and learn from each other?</li> </ul> <p>(NB: depending on the demographic profile of your church, you might look beyond your church community to bring people of different ages and stages of life together).</p>
<p><b>Key Life Transitions</b></p>	<p>Mark Earey’s book <i>Worship that Cares</i> (2012) includes many suggestions on <b>creating worship and liturgy which recognises key turning points in life</b> – including ones which we don’t usually recognise in church.</p> <p>Try creating a time of prayer and worship (for yourself or for others) for a key life transition (see right for suggestions). Earey suggests this might include the following elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Gathering</b> (exploring why we have gathered)</li> <li>2. <b>Word</b> (what does God have to say, especially through Scripture)</li> <li>3. <b>Response</b> (how do we change in response to God’s story?)</li> <li>4. <b>Dismissal</b> (how will we now live/put into practice what we’ve experienced?)</li> </ol>	<p>In church we are used to key Christian rites of passage such as baptism, confirmation, marriage and funerals. Sandra Millar’s book <i>Life Events: Mission and Ministry at Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals</i> (2018) contains some excellent practical advice on these key occasions.</p> <p>But what about other life transitions which we don’t as often recognise in church, but which can still be hugely important? <b>How could your church mark, and support people through key life moments and transitions such as:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moving from one school to another</li> <li>• Becoming a teenager</li> <li>• First job</li> <li>• Living independently for the first time</li> <li>• Losing a child</li> </ul>

	<p>He also suggests thinking about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Including words which 'do' something: e.g., saying 'I forgive you')</li> <li>• Using symbolic actions and symbolic objects</li> <li>• Bringing our story and God's story together</li> <li>• Using music, words and prayers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mid-Life</li> <li>• Menopause</li> <li>• Becoming a grandparent</li> <li>• Retirement</li> <li>• Moving into a care home/nursing home</li> <li>• ... and more...</li> </ul>
<p><b>A Lifetime</b></p>	<p>Use the <b>Spiritual Journey Map practice/tool</b> to re-tell the story of your life so far. What do you notice?</p> <p><b>NB:</b> This activity can bring up powerful emotions and memories. Make your first priority to care for yourself and your feelings.</p>	<p>What is going to sustain you for a lifetime commitment to following Jesus? In the 1990s, four US researchers interviewed 100 people who had demonstrated a <b>clear commitment to the public good over a long period of time</b>. They noticed the following characteristics were common across many of their interviewees. What thoughts do these spark off for you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They encountered people and places which expanded their horizons to helping others</li> <li>• Whilst they often had a strong community around them, they also moved beyond their own 'tribe' in a way that encouraged them to love everyone, not just people like them.</li> <li>• They understood that the world is a complex place, that not everyone thinks like them, but they didn't let this paralyse them into inaction.</li> <li>• They drew on images, symbols and stories that encouraged them that taking responsibility for others was not about 'being brave' but about simply 'doing what needs to be done'.</li> <li>• Although they were aware of their own limitations, they didn't become preoccupied with them.</li> <li>• They felt they were part of something bigger than themselves; that they had a higher calling or purpose. This was what they thought was 'really real', even if the wider world didn't think so.</li> <li>• They did not have grand, detailed visions of the future, but instead just sought to be responsive to the needs that were opening up in front of them.</li> <li>• They preferred working collaboratively, rather than as solo operators.</li> <li>• They had a 'holy urgency' about their work (not 'hurry', but that they felt they could not simply sit back and let others get on with the work).</li> <li>• They believed that the work they were doing was bigger than the 'here and now'/any individual lifetime – they were part of a</li> </ul>

		<p>bigger struggle/mission through time.          Laurent Parks Daloz, Cheryl Keen, James Keen and Sharon Daloz Parks, <i>Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World</i> (1996)</p>
<p><b>Your Generation</b></p>	<p><b>How does your generation differ from other generations alive in the UK today?</b>          In 20212, sociologist Prof. Bobby Duffy wrote a book on this topic, called <i>Generations</i>. He has published some of the data online (for period up to 2018) for others to explore in an accessible way. See: <a href="https://generations-book.org/">https://generations-book.org/</a> where you can also find a quiz to test your knowledge of different generational attitudes.</p> <p>If you would like a more biblical reflection on generations, read the Old Testament <b>book of Ruth</b> through in one sitting. Reflect on the love between Naomi and her Moabite daughter-in-Law Ruth, and the generational blessings which result.</p>	<p>The Church of England’s Church Support Hub and Growing Faith project websites provide learning, good practice examples, case studies and research on <b>creating intergenerational churches and strengthening the relationships between church, school and home</b>. You will need to create an account for the Church Support Hub but it’s free.</p> <p><a href="https://churchsupporthub.org/">https://churchsupporthub.org/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.nse.org.uk/growing-faith-foundation">https://www.nse.org.uk/growing-faith-foundation</a></p> <p>Alternatively, <b>plan in a conversation with someone from a different generation to you</b>. Ask them about...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- what life was like when they were growing up</li> <li>- big events in society or church that shaped their lives</li> <li>- what are the things they love, and the things they find more challenging, about their particular stage of life.</li> <li>- whether there are any patterns (or differences) within their generation as to how they see the world, and what they prioritise.</li> <li>- If the person you’re speaking with is a Christian, you could also ask them about their generation’s experience of church growing up.</li> </ul>