

Simple Spirituality

*Maintain your personal peace
And lovingly serve others*

By Barbara Henderson

Simple Spirituality

My Story

After asking people “what do they know for sure about God” or “what do they use in their everyday life”, I developed materials for a support group for people who are trying to make sense out of God and life. I call this – Simple Spirituality. This approach is designed to help Christians become more real in their spirituality while also providing a safe place for non-Christians to discuss their spiritual experiences.

Simple Spirituality is built on the 7 Practices. These 7 Practices flow out of basic fundamental beliefs about God. The practices are important to practice even before the beliefs are acknowledged. Doing so can trigger surprises, unexpected coincidences and God anonymously showing up.

Simple Spirituality grew out of these influences.

- I watched my mother-in-law’s spiritual transformation through AA.
- I asked myself, after years of sermons and lots of Bible, “What do I really use?”
- I wondered, “What’s really portable?” In other words, “What can go with me in my heart, wherever I go? Could my beliefs sustain me under any circumstance?”
- If I had to explain what I use and what spiritually sustains me on a daily basis, how would I articulate it?

This is how Simple Spirituality was born.

This is how the Practices came to be.

They sustain me.

I hope your experience with Simple Spirituality will be helpful to you.

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Simple Spirituality

Our approach

Overview of Simple Spirituality

Simple Spirituality helps to cultivate a *practical* spirituality

The touchstones of Simple Spirituality are...

Maintaining your personal peace and lovingly serving others.

The process of Simple Spirituality is...

Do a practice and Tell your story

Our goal is to become *better human beings*

We use *the seven practices*. We meet each week to share our stories about *practicing the practices*.

Group Values

- Humility: There is a God and I am not it.
- Honesty: I'll try not to hide who I really am.
- Honor: I'm interested in hearing your story.

Group Rules

- No Converting
- No Correcting
- Yes to Clarification* (page 31)

Simple Spirituality is based on the premise that God is a personal God. You discover who He is, how he talks with you, helps you and is present.

Our values and rules provide *the container of respect* necessary for people to be able to talk honestly about their experience with God. Our hope is that their relationship with God will become more personal, real and practical.

Simple Spirituality

Our approach

The Practices

When we come to group we share about our own spiritual reality. We begin by sharing small everyday experiences. We listen to other people's stories. This might encourage us or confuse us. In either case we are in the real world where God is intersecting with people. We begin to learn that God is not afraid of our differences or our humanity. We loosen up and watch God work. We start noticing that our spiritual life is getting richer. While doing this our beliefs become more real and more personal.

In order to get God out of our heads and into our lives we must practice doing what we say we believe. We have found that when we *practice the practices*, these beliefs take root and grow in our minds and hearts.

1. **God is good** – I will practice trusting Him with my life
2. **God loves me** – I will practice taking care of myself and loving others
3. **God is always with me** – I will practice peace and not being afraid
4. **God wants to talk with me** – I will practice listening to Him and talking with Him
5. **God always forgives** – I will practice forgiving myself and others
6. **I feel blessed with this Good News** – I will practice being thankful and celebrating moments
7. **God has a story of love, He tells it through us** – I will practice partnering with Him to bring it to others

Simple Spirituality

Getting started

Understanding The Practices

The Practices are divided into two parts

- The belief – a thought
- The practice - a response

For example

God is good is the belief

I will practice trusting him with my life is the response

Working a practice involves both parts.

You can work on either the thought or the response.

If you are working with Practice 1 on **the belief** side, you start by *Noticing* during the week what you really believe about this statement- *God is good*. How true is this statement for you?

What are the personal experiences that have led you to believe that God is good, or have left you wondering about the truth of this belief? Then you would share your story at group

If you are working on **the practice** side of Practice 1 you would begin by *Doing* small steps of trusting God for specific situations in your life; your children, finances or health. Then you would *Tell* your story about this at group

Simple Spirituality

Getting started

The Conversation Starters

The conversation starters are questions designed to help “get your story out”

Each practice includes several questions to help prime the pump

Use them to jump-start your thinking and interaction

The Readings

The readings are designed to illustrate the practices.

Each practice has one or more illustrations that help explain the ideas behind the practice.

They are designed to help get you in touch with your own story about your everyday interaction with God and your life.

Simple Spirituality
Conversation Starters

Practice 1 - God is good.
I will practice trusting Him with my life.

1. How have you done trusting God with your life this week?
2. Tell us the story about when it first occurred to you that you might want to start trusting God with your life?
3. When you encounter kindness or goodness, do you ever sense “sacredness”? Tell us about that.
4. Where did you experience any type of kindness or goodness this week? Give us some details.
5. Have you noticed God being good to you?
6. Which part of your life do you find the most difficult to trust God with?
7. On a scale of 1-10 choose a number that represents where you are in your belief that God is good. (1= not at all 10 = strongly believe)
How did you arrive at that number? What would you have to experience to move up the scale by one number?
8. Who or what inspires you to believe that God is good?
9. Who or what inspires you to trust God?

Simple Spirituality

Readings that illustrate practice 1

Smiling at God

I visualize God in the Heavens smiling a big happy smile.
His eyes are very kind...
He sees me.
I practice smiling back at Him.

I give Him a big smile. I really use my facial muscles.
A “moment” of peace comes...
It helps.

Or there can be times that I get off the phone after hearing a particularly unsettling piece of news. I feel concerned and confused.

I stop and smile back at God.

I again hold this smile for a few seconds until it registers in my body
It helps

It's a way I connect with the truth that God is good and that I really can trust Him with the details of my life, even at that moment.

Try smiling at God, and then come to group and let us know if it helped you.

Simple Spirituality

Readings that illustrate practice 1

Nothing is lost or wasted

What about this notion that “nothing is lost, nothing is wasted.” What do we mean by that? What difference will it make for us?

The dilemma we all run into is that we are human. We make mistakes. We plan, think and pray. We attempt to do our best and still we might not get it right. So what do you do when you can’t make sense out of life or yourself?

This is the context where “nothing is lost or wasted ” comes in handy for me. My job is just to *try*, not to be perfect.

I have this belief in a “good “God, who says that there is *good news* and that everything is ok. Jesus has taken care of it. It’s called ‘grace. It’s called redemption.

I just have to trust him with my humanness, with myself, with my life. Nothing is ultimately lost or wasted. Those wasted years, decisions, mistakes are redeemed by Jesus...The master artist, the kind Father takes our life and uses every bit of it. What a relief! I can rest in Him.

I have to practice this over and over.

I have come to the conclusion that we all just do “life attempts” and “God attempts”. *We just are on a journey trying.* And I think that’s good enough to God. I don’t think he is surprised at all.

My husband likes to say that when Jesus welcomes him into heaven his opening words will be “nice try “

Simple Spirituality

Readings that illustrate the practice 1

Bitter or Better

I'm convinced as we go through life that we repeatedly face one basic choice. Do I want to end up at the end of my life: bitter or better.

When I talk to elderly people I see them also in two main categories: bitter or better. And as I unearth their life stories, there is not a direct correlation between smooth circumstances and a better person.

When listening to an elderly person's story, notice the details, the amount of time between events and the number of circumstances that didn't go right.

Then stop, and look at that older person with their twinkling eyes, their ready smile, and their strength of soul. Did they really experience the death of that child or the long illness, loss of a job, depression, or divorce?

It gives me perspective and a challenge to living my own life.

Do I want to be bitter or better at the end of my life?

The practices are a door to becoming that better person at the end of your life. It will happen slowly over time; thousands of little choices to be thankful, to forgive, to see the good, to trust God, to practice peace, to celebrate moments, to share with others, to love.

We invite you to join with us as we attempt to become *better human beings* by maintaining our personal peace and lovingly serving others.

Simple Spirituality
Conversation Starters

Practice 2 - God loves me

I will practice taking care of myself and loving others

- 1.If it were true that God loved you (liked you), what difference would it make for you?
- 2.Give an example of how you intentionally took care of (loved) yourself this week?
- 3.How did you in a practical, doable way love (show kindness) to another person this week?
4. How did you experience God loving you this week?
5. Loving others can be a mask for co-dependency. How have you learned to tell the difference?
6. Where are the places you most often experience God's love?
7. Practicing loving yourself and loving others can seem confusing. How have you learned to blend these two truths in you life?

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Readings that illustrate practice 2

God loves me

Meditate. Think on. Wonder about this truth.

Try it on.

Act as if it were true.

That God loves you.

That the most kind, wise,

Good, wonderful,

Smart and creative

Person of the entire universe

Loves you

Values you

Thinks about you.

Wants good things for you

On this foundation of belief

Practice loving yourself.

Become an expert on knowing and loving and taking care of yourself.

God wants you to do this.

He is love and He wants you to love whom he loves

And he loves you.

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Readings that illustrate practice 2

Become an expert on taking care of yourself

This appears so simple in print, but to live in this reality is another story. Our lack of self esteem, our sadness, our anger, our addictions, all point to people who don't like or respect themselves, who do not take care of themselves.

It is not hard to understand our inability to enjoy life and to love others if we can't even take care of ourselves.

That means you will have become an expert on knowing what you need to do to take care of yourself

What do you enjoy?

What do you like to do to relax?

What do you like to read?

What do you like to do to be social?

What do you like to eat?

How good are you at asking for what you need?

How good are you at letting someone know you are hurt, or angry?

What do you do with your anger?

How do you fight your lack of self-esteem?

What have you learned about taking care of yourself. How do you do it in a practical everyday way?

Do you wait for others to make you happy or for life to change?

When you take responsibility for yourself, for your emotional health and life you start to become free to love others better.

Simple Spirituality

Readings that illustrate practice 2

Love is at the center

If love is at the center and everything is connected, then love is a potent force. Whatever we do, no matter how big or small, the motivation that counts is love. *This is spirituality.* That unseen motivation of the heart, unseen and seemingly ineffective is the greatest effective force in the universe. I think we will be surprised at the end of time when we see what has been accomplished from the secret place of people's hearts. Proverbs 4:23 "Guard your heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life.

Because of this core belief that love is at the center and that everything is connected, the value, purpose and power of each individual person is immense. No circumstance can limit the effectiveness for good of each person. When we keep our hearts connected to loving, the actions that flow from our lives are powerful. Lives are not measured by external accomplishments but from the motive of our heart. Everyone's life counts. The smallest smile, the gesture of kindness, the prayer, all stand equal to great accomplishments of social or religious heroes. My life can have such purpose, even in constrained and limited circumstances.

Wherever you find truth, love, goodness, kindness, you find a touch of God. Learn to value goodness wherever you find it! Learn to see God wherever you see love. God is love period! Learn to see the sacred everywhere...Our God is the most humble person in the universe. He is there working, and present even before someone knows his Name.

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Readings that illustrate practice 2

Blessing

Blessing is a form of loving.

You can bless anyone, anywhere, at anytime.

You can even bless yourself.

It's a sacramental action. It brings the spiritual world into the now.

You can ask God's blessing on others as you go through your ordinary day.

When you stand in the check out line at the grocery store...Take time in your heart to bless the checker.

When you are stuck in traffic, bless the car in front of you.

When you walk around the lake with your dog, bless that jogger who passes by.

When you pass a small shop, bless the owner.

It's a matter of stopping in your mind and heart and participating in an intentional hidden act of loving...It counts...

There is a whole world out there to bless.

Practicing blessing others is a wonderful hidden habit to develop.

It makes a difference to others. It will also make a difference to you.

When you come to group, share with us who you've blessed this week.

How you've worked the practice of loving others through blessing them.

Practice 3 - God is with me
I will practice peace and not being afraid.

1. What have you found helpful to do in order to maintain your personal peace?

2. Were you anxious or afraid this week? Describe the situation in detail. What did you do to calm yourself?

3. Did you practice assenting to the belief, (thought) that God is with you? When, where, how do you practice this? Do you talk to yourself, do you sing? Did you feel better?

4. What has been your practical journey from anxiety to peace?

5. Where do you go to find peace?

6. Finish these sentences.
Personal peace comes from...
Moments of peace...
I feel most peaceful...

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Readings that illustrate practice 3

Conversation with a Feeling

Fear, or anxiety, or sadness, I know you are here with me.
I can feel you all around me.

But I know you are not me, you are like a cloud that is around me. But I am separate from you.

I am looking with my spiritual eyes and heart and mind to the truth that a good loving God is with me.

I will practice this practice by ignoring you and looking to the truth of God being with me right now.

I am not afraid of you “feeling of fear” “feeling of sadness”
If you stick around I will not pay any attention to you.

I will keep on going through my routine of the day ignoring you.
Walking through you like I would walk through fog into the sunshine!

Move on – Even when the feelings Hang on 😊

Simple Spirituality

Readings that illustrate practice 3

Turn your pain into prayer

Being human means living with incompleteness, seeming contradictions, sadness, disappointment and limitations. Sometimes we experience these longer than we expect and more profoundly than we could ever guess. It is here in this ‘no man’s land’ of unanswered prayer that we grapple with the question of “Where is this God whom I’ve entrusted with my life?”

What has been so encouraging to me has been faith in a incarnational God. It is faith in a God who became man and hides himself in humanity. Therefore he is uniquely present with me in the unanswered places of my life I can embrace this reality of unanswered times an sacred and spiritual because I can find God there.

This paradoxical place of unanswered prayer is also a place of suffering It is where the mystery of the Cross is revealed in my life. The Cross is central because it is at the Cross that all pain, suffering, sickness, disappointment are absorbed into the body of our God.

And when I face a Cross experience, suffering of any sort, I not only draw strength that God is with me but also that this time can be used as prayer for others. As long as I have to “bear” the suffering or to “carry” it as it were, I can participate with my God and embrace it as redemptive and use it for the good of others. My suffering is neither wasted nor meaningless. I practice noticing whom I can pray for through my suffering. I always find someone who needs God’ help. I am free because my pain is not using me I am using it. This brings me great freedom and great joy.

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Readings that illustrate practice 3

This spiritual practice operates in either the dramatic or the mundane of our lives.

How does it look? We had a sick child. It was very sad and painful for us. We did everything from doctors to prayer, prayer to doctors and back again. But after all is said and done we still had to “bear”, “carry” the worry, sadness, not knowing, the suffering with us for two years. That was our reality. That was a spiritual “no mans land” As I carried that pain I would often put my hand quietly on my heart and say to God, I use this pain to pray for that homeless person I see, or for that person in that accident.

I was using my pain to pray for others. This practice enabled me to feel free as well as spiritually useful. It brought me great freedom and joy in the midst of the pain.

This practice of turning our pain into prayer also applies in the mundane sufferings each of us experience in our daily life. As we “carry” or “bear” the suffering of everyday life it is uplifting to learn to use it to pray for others We can say to God, “take this disappointment” use it, count it as prayer for that checker at the store or for that child in the hospital.

God use this chronic pressure I feel around finances to help my friend in her marriage. The possibilities are endless when we turn our pain into prayer. .

Simple Spirituality
Conversation Starters

Practice 4 - God wants to talk with me

I will practice listening to Him and talking with Him.

1. When did you first suspect that God was trying to get your attention or “talk” with you?

2. Are there different ways that God talks to you?
Does He have a favorite way? Tell us about that..

3. How often do you take time to talk to God? Where do you talk to Him? Do you feel like you have to talk with Him or do you want to?

4. How does it help you when you talk with God or listen to Him?

5. What are your frustrations around this issue?

6. What methods or approaches to listening to God have you used in the past but now find unworkable? What have you replaced it with?

7. Does prayer work for you?

Simple Spirituality

Readings that illustrate practice 4

Talk to us

Talking to Him is easy enough to experience. We just open our mouth and talk aloud, or talk to him in our mind or heart.

But his talking to and with us is another story

I am intrigued with how God talks to individuals. I am intrigued with how He talks to me.

Only you can discover for yourself how God talks to you.

It's more art than science.

“I can't tell you the number of times I've been in a bookstore and suddenly come across a book I knew nothing about yet felt drawn to; and it has proven to be just the right book, a book that inspires and instructs me.

I am convinced that this is one of the ways God speaks to me and directs me.

The Holy Spirit seems to have unique ways of talking with us.

He uses people, coincidences, our minds, books, a whisper in our heart, the Bible, nature, dreams, comments from friends, and sometimes even a complete stranger. There is no limit to the way he can talk to us personally.

Tell us your story of how God talks to you.

Simple Spirituality
Conversation Starters

Practice 5 - God always forgives
I will practice forgiving myself and others

1. Tell us a story of forgiveness, a big or little story from your life.
2. Which do you struggle with the most? Believing in God's forgiveness or believing that another person could forgive you? Tell us a story from your life.
3. What thoughts do you cycle through your mind to help you get to a place of forgiveness.
4. What practical measures do you use to help you forgive yourself or to help you forgive someone else?
5. What have you learned about "letting go of grudges?"
6. Forgiveness is a tricky issue. Sometimes we forgive but still find it unsettling or even unsafe to be with the "forgiven". What have you learned about this kind of situation?

Simple Spirituality

Readings that illustrate practice 5

Navigating Forgiveness

I think we've all been inspired and amazed by stories of forgiveness; the dramatic stories that come out of war, murder and tragedy.

They touch our heart and inspire us to become bigger persons.

Those who respond with forgiveness in the face of horror or tragedy can do so only as the result of thousands of hidden choices to forgive.

Most of life, however, is lived in ordinary, non-dramatic ways.

But the challenge of forgiveness touches every life repeatedly.

In order to become a "better" human being as opposed to a "bitter" one, one repeatedly makes choices to forgive himself or others. Practice 5 helps us to be intentional in learning how to forgive in our everyday lives.

For a lot of situations in life we might be able to do this in our own strength. But when loss overwhelms us, when harm comes our way, or when we make a mistake that has dire consequences, we lose our control and need something more to latch onto.

It is then that our authentic, interior life, with a personal forgiving God sustains us, and helps us to navigate our way to forgiveness.

Simple Spirituality

Readings that illustrate practice 5

God always forgives

How real is this picture of God for you?

It's been said; *if you can change a person's metaphor (the picture in their mind) you can change their life.*

Nowhere is this more important than in the arena of forgiveness.

The good news of Jesus is that he brings us a new picture of God. It's a picture of a hopelessly loving forgiving God.

We like this kind of God if it means we are forgiven of our mistakes, if our life and hopes and dreams are carried in his heart.

But it's offensive to us when it applies to those we don't like or who have harmed us.

The truth is, each of us are both the "prodigal son" and the "self-righteous elder brother" The scandal of the gospel; the scandal of the cross, is that the same Father loves them both. If we are honest we must admit that we are challenged by this kind of love.

And at no time does this hit us more than when we are unjustly accused or harmed and have to navigate our way to forgiveness.

However, it is in our experiencing the love of the Father that we also can enter into a lifestyle of forgiveness. We then *slowly learn* to work forgiveness out in our own hearts.

We *practice holding* the "others" good in our mind and heart. We practice doing this over and over and with God's strength we come to a place of forgiveness.

Practice 6 - I feel blessed with this good news

I will practice being thankful and celebrating moments

1. Do you think of thankfulness as a spiritual exercise? Where did you learn this and how has it helped you?
2. Do you practice thankfulness each day? What prompts you?
3. Give us an example of celebrating a moment this week?
4. Have you been experiencing more “moments” since you started noticing them?
5. Did you share your moment with someone else when you were having it?
6. What situations (work, marriage, children, family, life) challenge you the most when it comes to practicing gratitude? How have you improved in being thankful?
7. Notice several gifts in your life, write them down. Come and tell us about them at group.

Simple Spirituality

Readings that illustrate practice 6

Celebrating Moments

A moment is that experience that registers to your soul that “all is well”. I’m sure that you’ve have had a “moment.” I’ve celebrated many since I became a “momentologist” in my early forties.

At that time I realized that I couldn’t adequately “control “ life. I realized I felt sadness, loss and incompleteness about several things. I knew that some things needed to be changed and others accepted. I knew by this time that the business called “living” was a complicated matter requiring good judgment, right thinking, patience, good luck, counsel, and counseling!

But I wanted something simpler. I wanted something I could guarantee myself no matter where I was in this process called living. I first started noticing moments, then savoring them, celebrating them and finally sharing them. It became for me a lifestyle I now call “momentology.”

In “momentology” you “freeze frame” as it were a “snippet of life” that is telling you “all is well.” It happens serendipitously. You could be sipping that first cup of coffee in the morning, or looking at a sunset on a walk, or giggling with your five year old when suddenly a *moment* happens.

Don’t let the moment slip by unnoticed. Savor it. Say to yourself, “I want to stop and notice that I’m having a moment. This is nice. All is well right now at this moment. “Thank you God.”

Life becomes richer when you stop and notice your moments. Everything doesn’t have to be in place before you can experience a moment. Anyone, anywhere, under any circumstance can still have a “moment”.

It’s a wonderful way to live. Practice stopping and noticing moments when they come your way. Be thankful for your moments. Share them with a friend or bring the details of your moment to the group. We’ll eagerly listen to you. For we are committed momentologists.! After all, life is really just a string of moments.

Simple Spirituality

Readings that illustrate practice 6

Count the Gifts

My spiritual eyes need to be opened to see the gifts in my life and to *count* them as being truly valuable.

This isn't an easy task. It's like exercise. That's why it's called a spiritual *practice*.

Not seeing the gifts in my life and not counting them as valuable seems to be more my natural inclination than either noticing them or being thankful for them.

Noticing the gifts in our life is an uphill battle.

Don't be surprised when you run into sadness.

It's the badge of this earth.

A sign of time

We live between two worlds. Two things are always going on.

Get good at counting your gifts even while embracing the sadness

Simple Spirituality
Conversation Starters

Practice 7 - God has a story of love, He tells it through us

I will practice partnering with Him to bring it to others

1. How did you show God's love this week?
2. What small acts of kindness did you practice?
3. Who did you pray for "behind their back"? Or "bless secretly"? Where did this take place?
4. Who did you listen to? Or say "hello" to?
5. If you believed that your small acts of kindness were spiritual and God *counted* (valued) them, what difference would it make in your life?
6. Tell us about someone you know that God tells his story through?
7. When are the times, where are the places that you sense most often that God is using you to tell his story of love?

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Simple Spirituality

Readings that illustrate practice 7

When they see you – They see me

It seems curious doesn't it, that God chooses to use broken human beings to tell his story through. I mean he could have handled it so much more effectively without us.

Yet when you tell your own spiritual story you can't get very far into it before you make reference to someone through whom you would say God spoke to you.

The fact of the matter is that for most of us, God talks to us through people.

Jesus said, "When they receive you, they receive me"

Who listens to God's story through you?

Your friends?

Your children?

The barista at the espresso stand?

The mom of your son's friend from school?

Just like we watch a movie and the music runs in the background, people watch our lives, our eyes, our ability to listen and the tone of our voice while our words run in the background.

Telling God's story of love takes place through ordinary everyday acts of kindness like paying attention to someone instead of forcing the conversation toward ourselves.

How did you "hear" God's story of love- whom did he use to capture your attention and what was it about them that "worked" for you

Simple Spirituality
Getting a group started

How to lead a Simple Spirituality Group

The following guidelines are helpful in the establishing and running of a Simple Spirituality group

The introductory meeting

The facilitator introduces Simple Spirituality by reading pages 1-5 with the group.

Each person then tells what brings them to the group and gives a short (5 minute) biography of their spiritual journey focusing not so much on their church affiliation as their personal history with God.

The facilitator also explains the kitchen timer and the 5 minute rule at the introductory meeting. (page 31)

The first eight meetings

Every meeting is run the same with the exception of the first 8 meetings when the group is being established. In the establishment phase the first meeting is an introduction and the next seven meetings focus on one practice each week for seven weeks. This builds a core group. After the first eight meetings the group may opt to repeat this same cycle or vary it by allowing each participant to choose to talk about whichever practice is relevant to them for that meeting.

Regular meeting outline

The facilitator welcomes new people, introduces them to the group and follows the steps outlined below

1. Read Overview and The Practices (page 2 –3)
2. Review Group Guidelines (page 31)
3. Facilitator shares their working of the practice (page 32)
4. Each person takes their turn
5. Response time (page 33)
6. Close with Serenity Prayer* (page 33)

Simple Spirituality

Getting a group started

The Facilitators role

- *The facilitator sets the tone* for the meeting. They begin each meeting by sharing a practice from their own experience (see page 32). They direct group members to read the *conversation starters*. This will help them learn how to talk about *practicing the practices*.
- *The facilitator reminds* the group of the guidelines before and during the meeting as is necessary. People need to be trained to listen without diverting or interrupting. They will sometimes become anxious and want to either care take or correct the one who is speaking. The group's gift of uninterrupted listening is a spiritual exercise.
- *The facilitator encourages* people to be intentional with the practices during the week by taking notes on their life with God. This habit will make for a more meaningful experience at group
- *The facilitator officially closes* the meeting. In order to protect the container of respect provided in a Simple Spirituality meeting. It is important to keep a short focused meeting, which ends once everyone has had his or her time to share. Failure to do this will dissipate the group's experience

Simple Spirituality

Group Guidelines

The purpose of a Simple Spirituality group is to help people discover God *at their own pace*. The following guidelines help us toward that end.

The 5 minute rule

The structure of a Simple Spirituality group is designed to facilitate listening. The sharing time is kept to 5 minutes per person. We appoint a timekeeper who sets the kitchen timer for 5 minutes at the start of each persons sharing and calls “time” when the buzzer goes off. There are NO comments or questions allowed when a person is sharing. Each person gets 5 minutes of uninterrupted talking. When the person is finished sharing other group members may ask “clarifying questions”* A clarifying question is one, *which brings more out* of the persons story. It is not a time for us to share our stories or opinions. For example: “That makes me think of something that happened to me” is NOT a clarifying question. “ How long did you say that experience lasted “ IS a clarifying question. Clarifying questions are not required; however they are welcomed. This same process repeats itself until each person in the group who wants to share has had their 5 uninterrupted minutes.

Confidentiality: What is said in the group stays in the group. Nothing that is said or done is ever discussed outside of the group without permission of those involved.

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About Addictions (read when applicable)

Simple Spirituality recognizes the power of addictions in people’s lives. Addictions to work, alcohol, sex, drugs, money, food, people, etc., keep us from being free; keep us from doing the things we want to do to take care of ourselves and those we care about. As one attempts to develop an authentic connection with God, honesty to others and ourselves grows. We notice a desire to change. We make a decision to turn our life over to God, to help us change. Addictions, however, are strong, especially substance abuse. Simple Spirituality groups ask those with substance abuse challenges to be working their program in conjunction with this meeting. Simple Spirituality groups will work hand in hand with those in recovery from substance abuse to grow in their sobriety.

Simple Spirituality

Sample Group Starter format

An example of what the leader might say at this point...

I'll open this meeting by briefly sharing some of my own reflections and personal experiences related to one of the seven practices. I'll be sharing about practice #_____.

Example of a reading – Thrift Store Faith

My experience has to do with Practice 1. God is good and I practice trusting him with my ordinary life.

I feel God's goodness and care for me personally in everyday ways. I call it my *Thrift Store Faith*. A month ago I noticed a chair at the Thrift Store. I really liked it. It looked like a comfortable study chair that I could put right by our fireplace. I didn't have the money at the time to buy it but I talked to God about it.

I told him how I liked it but that I wasn't going to put anything on the credit card and that I would wait until after Christmas to buy it. I went back into that store two or three more times before Christmas. The chair was there but I didn't buy it.

I was gone then for a bit and when I got home, I anxiously went to the store. Would the chair be there? IT WAS!! I was thrilled. I bought it and put it by my fireplace. I love it. It has armrests. It's the perfect size for me. I feel loved and cared for when I sit in this chair. I feel joy.

God and I have a secret life together. I know that he is good and I can trust him with my ordinary life.

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Closing the meeting

It is very important to “officially” close the meeting. The facilitator is responsible to see that this happens. Once the meeting is finished people are free to interact with each other. There are three basic ways to close the meeting. After every person in the group has had their 5 minutes, the facilitator...

1. Says “Thank you for coming, see you next week”
2. Leads the group in reading the Serenity Prayer, and says ” Thank you for coming, see you next week”
3. Leads a Response time followed by the Serenity Prayer

Response time

This is an opportunity for each person to **Ask** for feedback or prayer or to **Affirm** someone else in the meeting. Each person is given 2 minutes.

Examples

Asking for feedback- “I would welcome some feedback regarding the what you have learned about being thankful during hard times” or “Could anyone recommend a good book on forgiveness”

Giving feedback – The response needs to be concise since each person is only allowed 2 minutes total time for this Ask/Respond segment. Listen to the question and answer it in 2-3 sentences.

Affirming someone- This is an opportunity to tell people in “real time” the things God has used in their sharing to talk to you.

Asking for Prayer – Time is limited to 2 minutes including being prayed for. It can be either silent prayer or verbalized prayer.

The person requesting prayer is responsible to tell how they want to be prayed for.

Serenity Prayer

God grant me the courage to accept the things I have to accept.
Change the things I can change and the wisdom to know the
difference. Amen

Simple Spirituality

Thoughts on spirituality

What about the Bible

I recommend the Bible as one of the ways God can speak to your heart. He can encourage you, strengthen you, and challenge you through the Bible.

It's God's love story with creation.

It's meant to be read with your heart.

It's meant to be food for your soul.

It's meant to reveal God's heart to you in Jesus.

It is a complex book because man has a complex history with God.

The Bible does report confusing stories.

God is a patient God of history.

He is not afraid of our humanity. He's fixed the problem.

I love the Good News of the Bible; that the God of the whole universe became man; took on human flesh, died and rose again and ushered in a new creation whose language is love.

All is well.

Simple Spirituality Scriptures

Words from the Bible that feed my soul

Luke 15:11-31

There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, “Father, give me my share of the estate.” So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.

After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his field to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

When he came to his senses, he said, “How many of my Father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death. I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son, make like one of your hired men.’” So he got up and went to his father.

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

The son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” But the father said to his servants, “Quick! Bring the best robe! And put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found.” So they began to celebrate.

Meanwhile the oldest son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard the music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father. ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

Simple Spirituality Scriptures

Words from the Bible that feed my soul

'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'

Philippians 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord always... The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Proverbs 4:23

Guard your heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life...
Above all else guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life...

Matthew 11:28-29

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find *rest* for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Matthew 6:25-33

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yes, I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor, was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not clothe you, O you of little faith?

So do not worry saying, "what shall we eat?" or "what shall we wear?" for the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Matthew 10:42

And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.

Revelation 21:4

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away...and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Simple Spirituality Scriptures

Words from the Bible that feed my soul

Psalm 139

Lord you have searched me and you know me.

You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.

You discern my going out and my lying down; you're familiar with all my ways.

Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord.

You hem me in-behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there; If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be darkness to you; the night will shine like the day, for the darkness is as light to you.

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place.

When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body.

All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!

Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand.

When I awake, I am still with you.

Search me, O God and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.