



South Santiago Lutheran Church

Teaching the Word. Reaching the World.

We are a congregation whose core values seek changed lives through the power of the Holy Spirit by forming and sustaining life-long personal faith in God through Christ Jesus. We practice this by engaging in cross-generational ministry and radical hospitality as it is revealed by God's Word. We do this by connecting with our congregation, the community and the world.

A Summertime Devotion Pattern for Spending Time With Jesus While You're on Vacation

Dear Friends in Christ—In the Creation Story in Genesis 1 & 2, there is more than a suggestion for Sabbath rest time. We are told that on the 7th day of creation God rested from all the work of creating and made that day of rest a special day, blessed and holy. That sense of rest and blessing is picked up again in the Ten Commandments, as well. In Exodus 20, the third commandment about keeping the Sabbath is connected both with God's original practice of resting on the 7th day as well as with making sure the whole world we work in gets a rest too. And if that wasn't enough, Leviticus 25, in expanding God's people's understanding about Sabbath and rest, Moses is instructed to teach about a "Sabbath Year" and a "Year of Jubilee" in which everyone and everything—the people, the animals, and the land—are granted a giant, refreshing "reset." **THAT'S the sense of "vacation" that we all long for, right? Whether it's at the lake or camping or an extended trip, our bodies and our minds need a break from every day life every once in a while.**

Martin Luther sought to help us understand and use our vacation time well when he wrote the Small Catechism, a basic understanding of our Christian faith and practice through the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, Holy Communion, and Baptism. He understood that vacation time and the break from every day life was a gift from God. But he also knew how important it was to be connected to God through God's Word. So he wrote these words about the 3rd Commandment and vacation/Sabbath time: "...We should not avoid God's Word or the preaching of it, but instead...we should gladly hear and learn it." **In the same way that vacation is a "reset" for our bodies and minds, being connected with God is a "reset" for our spirits, as well.** It's less of command than it is an opportunity to receive a gift.

It ALL goes together—refreshment for our bodies, minds, and souls. We are beings created in the image of God, unlike any other living creature on earth. So far as we know, we are given the capacity to hunger and to be connected with God in a deep and intimate way, perhaps even in some of the very same ways that we connect to our friends and family. And while we quite easily figure our ways to enjoy renewing our bodies and minds through vacation, I suspect we overlook the goodness God promises in having our souls renewed by connecting with God while on vacation.

What follows here, then, is brief suggested resource for the way you and your family might stay connected to God while you're on vacation this summer.

It's a very easy, portable resource. You could do it in your camper. You could do it in your boat. You could do it around a campfire. Or on a beach, in a canoe, or just about any place you might find yourself vacationing this summer.

Give it try this summer.

Pastor Mike

Four Key Faith-Forming Activities to Be Aware of and to Practice

Faith Talk (or Caring Conversation)---is simply a matter of talking about God, life, and where and how those come together. You don't have to be an expert; just curious. Sometimes Faith Talk is a matter of asking questions and responding to those questions. Where have you seen God? How might we make God's love visible? What do you think about...?

Word & Prayer---is simply being connected with God through the Bible and through prayer. Frequent Bible reading helps us learn and remember the story, which just might help us realize how God might be present with us in our daily lives. Similarly, prayer is a basic

faith practice in which when we pause in prayer, we acknowledge God's presence with and around us.

Service---is the active engagement of what we believe. We believe that we serve God by serving other people. Service makes visible what would otherwise be invisible.

Ritual (and Traditions)---is habit-forming repetition that seeks to root our faith practices in such a way that our faith becomes regular and daily. Table prayer might be a basic example, but any of these faith practices would be strengthened by habitual ritual.

A Suggested Daily Pattern

When would be the best time—morning, over breakfast? At night around the campfire? Start small; make it manageable and achievable.

Our "Sharing God's Story @ Home" is available both on our website (www.sslcmn.org ...look for "Some of Our Publications.")

Faith Talk/Caring Conversation: Here are some options for you to try.



- **Check-in:** "Highs and Lows" or "Happies & Crappies" (not the fish!) of the day. This can become a connection with Word & Prayer, below with something as simple as "Thank you, God, for (the highs that were named). Be with us in (the lows that were named).
- **God sightings:** Where do you think you might have seen God today?

Hints to help keep the conversation going: What was something beautiful you saw today? What was something good you were able to receive or provide? What was something troubling you saw that made you want to act?

Devotion & Prayer:



- If you have small kids, simply use a kid-friendly story Bible. (Our favorite at SSLC is the one we provide at Baptism *The Jesus Storybook Bible* which is available both in a hard copy as well as digital reader version.) **Simply start reading a story a day.** *The Bible in Picture for Little Eyes* is also a great resource, for its questions `at the end of each reading. Young readers will find this to be a great opportunity to practice their reading.
- "Middling Kids" will find the picture Bible we have in our pews particularly engaging, especially for its margin notes and illustrations. This also is a resource suitable for starting at the beginning and simply start reading.
- For households with adults or older kids, a guided reading (like the weekly readings suggested on our "Taking God's Story Home" insert) might be more helpful than starting at the very beginning. (See the note under the title above if you need to find this through our web presence.) Each week, the Daily Readings in "Taking God's Story Home" follow a theme and usually have some sort of guiding question for reading, as well.

Service:



- Service can be a "project," like **taking a "Trash Walk" through the camp ground to pick up and throw away garbage...**
OR
- ...it can be a daily approach to the way you talk about and think about chores. "We serve God by taking care of each other. Setting the table without being asked over and over again is an example of a way you can serve God by taking care of something here at the house."
- **Post service ideas that your household comes up with over the summer that others might enjoy doing, as well.**

Rituals: ANY and ALL of the above might be part of building a repetitive daily ritual. Disconnecting from screens and technology while you tend to these practices is VITAL. Here are some other ideas:



- **Table Prayer**—Taking a moment to say grace on a daily basis can be a simple way to tend to ritual.
"Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest, and let these gifts to us be blessed. Amen." is one of the most familiar, but it can also be as simple as, "Thank you, God, for this food. Amen."
- **Candle Lighting**—If you were to work on your household's 4-Key Faith Practices, lighting a candle as a signal of "the beginning" can be helpful. Talk about how when the candle is lit, we turn off our attention from everything else and turn on our attention to our time together.
- **Grace and patience**—If tending to these things ISN'T a part of your daily practice, you have to be patient with your "progress." Start small—like maybe aiming for Table Prayer 3 days a week and build from there. And if you don't make your goal, start again NEXT WEEK.