



# FAITH LEADER

Participant's Guide I

*This book is dedicated to*  
*The Reverend Dr. Donna Scott, Spiritual Director and Mentor*  
*and*  
*The Alumni of Leadership Woodmont*  
*and*  
*The Members of Woodmont Christian Church Nashville, Tennessee*

# FAITH LEADER

Participant's Guide I

BETH PATTILLO



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ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

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### ***Spiritual Self-Discovery Guide***

#### **Spiritual Gifts Inventory**

The opening retreat will allow us to explore the biblical idea of spiritual gifts and its relationship to one's call to leadership. The retreat will also include prayer, Bible study, and worship.

#### **Spiritual Type Assessment**

Do you experience and express your spirituality through thinking, feeling, being, or doing? We will learn how our spiritual type impacts our own faith journey and our relationship to our church.

#### **Developing Spiritual Practices**

What are your spiritual needs? We will assess our spiritual lives and participate in a variety of classic spiritual practices that reflect a wide range of Christian experience. We will examine prayer, solitude, Bible study, social justice, the movement of God's spirit, our personal integrity, our ability to share our faith, and the ways in which God is present in our daily lives.

#### **Building a Guide for Living**

Using our spiritual practices work, we will develop a simple guide for living to nurture our faith. Based on the work of Saint Benedict, this self-structured program provides a means for living out our deepest connections to God, self, and others.

#### **Discerning God in Your Life**

By examining where God has been present in our lives in the past, we can begin to see where God wants us to go and who God wants us to be in the future. We'll look at important moments of change in our lives, what scriptures guide us the most, and how we've seen God at work in our lives.

#### **Discerning God in Your Congregation**

How would you describe your church? What scriptures guide your community of faith? Is it a comfortable or uncomfortable place for you? Just as each person has unique gifts and a distinct type, so do individual congregations. We will assess our churches and how we fit or don't fit into them.

#### **Your Personal Plan for Ministry**

The last step on our journey together will be to articulate a personal plan for ministry. Don't worry about this too much until we reach this point. It's amazing how clear your call will become over the course of the year. At the closing retreat, we will share our ministry plans with one another and pray for each other as we step out into the future.

### **What to Expect from Yourself**

As part of the *Faith Leader* experience, you will develop some important bonds with the other members of your group. Some of the others in the group may be people you know already; others will be strangers. The exercises and discussions are designed to challenge you. To the extent you can, be willing to be vulnerable and step out of your comfort zone. Think of this process as baby steps. As friendships grow, take some risks and allow other members of the group to know you for who you are. The risk of intimacy will be worth the challenges.

By the same token, be willing to practice hospitality to all members of the group. Greet one another when you arrive each week. Share prayer concerns in the closing circle. Listen attentively to what others are saying. Support others when they are struggling, and rejoice with them when they experience success or receive insights.

At the beginning of the year, all group members will promise the discussions in the weekly meetings and retreats will be held in confidence. Practice honoring this vow by not repeating private information to your spouse or church friends. By doing this, you are “being Christ” for your fellow *Faith Leader* participants.

Some participants will come to this process burned out and angry. Church leadership that does not arise from our spiritual gifts affirmed in a healthy congregation can badly damage an individual. Show extra sensitivity to those who are wounded by their church experiences. Lift them up in your prayers. Your patience and affirmation will help them to heal.

### **What to Expect from Your Group Leaders**

Your group leaders are your spiritual companions through the *Faith Leader* process. Their call is to walk with you, point out the signposts along the way, and listen to what you are discovering about yourself and your spiritual leadership. Your group leaders should not provide rote answers to your spiritual questions. Rather, they will listen, discuss, and pray with you.

Group leaders will be facilitators, not lecturers. Their job is to make sure the group is balanced and that no one person’s concerns or conversation dominate the weekly sessions. They will also challenge you and push you to the edge of your comfort zones. Group leaders should be available for private conversation as well as group time, but be aware that they, too, only have twenty-four hours in a day.

In addition, don’t put your group leaders on a pedestal, because they will topple right off! Do use them as a rich resource. Show them respect by arriving for class on time, prepared for discussion and activities. Do let them know if you’ll be absent. As the shepherds of your group, they want to account for all their sheep.

### **What to Expect from the Group**

One of the strengths of the *Faith Leader* program is that it allows us to appreciate one another as “indispensable members of the body of Christ.” Through this process,

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you will come to value the gifts of the other group members. Extend to others the grace that you would like to receive for yourself. Listen carefully and attentively so that you can learn from others' experiences. Make sure to contribute to the discussion so that your words can be a way that God is present in your group.

Each group will develop its own covenant or set of ground rules to guide the group's work together. Two established rules for *Faith Leader* groups are confidentiality and the right to "pass" during a discussion. Any information, thoughts, or feelings disclosed by you or a member of your group will be held in confidence. By doing this, group members create a safe space for exploring God's presence and intention in their lives. In addition, at any time a group member may invoke the right to "pass" on a given assignment, activity, or question. Other possible aspects of the group covenant may include how to handle extraneous conversations, excessive absences, or even cell phone etiquette. The group covenant will provide a healthy environment for the work of the *Faith Leader* group.

### **What to Expect from Weekly Sessions**

Each ninety-minute session will include an opening time when scripture and centering music invite you to lay aside the cares of your day and focus on God. The bulk of the time will be spent engaging in activities or discussions around that week's topic. Preparing the homework assignments or completing the assigned activity will contribute to a richer, deeper experience. The session will end with a closing circle, the sharing of prayer concerns, and the Lord's Prayer or other appropriate prayer.

### **What to Expect from the Homework**

Plan to set aside one to two hours each week to complete your assignments. The activities will vary as we move through the year, and some may require more time than others. Most assignments will be completed in your Participant's Guides but from time to time you may need to use outside sources. Your church library and local library are excellent resources for many activities. Each section of the program will offer a "For Further Reading" list if there is a particular area or topic you would like to explore in greater depth.

### **What to Expect from the Retreats**

The opening and closing retreats are essential to the success of the *Faith Leader* program. Important bonds will be formed at the first retreat, and necessary closure and celebration will occur at the second. It is vital that you attend these two events. Put them on your calendar as soon as your leaders give you the dates so you can protect this important time. If you must be absent, make arrangements with your leaders to catch up on what you will have missed.

Retreats will be casual with an emphasis on reflection and fellowship. Plan to bring a Bible, your Participant's Guides, and a pad or notebook and a pen. Your group leader will inform you of any additional supplies you might need. You will

also have the opportunity to sign up for leadership of activities and worship during the retreats.

### **The Most Important Question**

The central focus of *Faith Leader* is the key question, “Where is God in this?” Whether we are discussing biblical models of leadership; spiritual gifts, types and practices; discernment; or the Personal Plan for Ministry, this question will guide us in our work. The “God” question may not only be the most difficult one to answer; it may also be the most difficult one to ask. Too often we resist naming God’s presence in ourselves, our lives, and our congregations. Yet if we develop our skills in doing so, our spiritual lives and leadership will benefit.

To help us answer this key question, we will often refer to our list of “God Words” on page 6. These are words that help us point to tangible ways God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are present and active in our world. Take a moment to look over the list. Circle any of the words that already identify where God is present in your life. Blank spaces are left for you to add God Words of your own choosing as we move through the year.

### **In Closing**

Remember that the *Faith Leader* experience is a journey. Each component of the program will be a “stepping stone” to the next. No two paths will be alike, so refrain from judging your spiritual life against someone else’s. You are a loved and uniquely gifted child of God, and you are called to be the face, heart, and hands of Jesus Christ in this world in a way no one else can be. Remember to trust in God’s providence, the example of Jesus, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the weeks to come.

### **Assignment for Next Two Sessions**

- Read Session 2: Biblical Principles of Leadership.
- At the direction of your small group leader, choose one of the biblical leaders from the list on page 10.
- Prepare a brief (two or three minutes) presentation on your selected biblical leader using the “Profile of a Biblical Leader” worksheet on page 12. For your presentation, focus on questions 2, 3, 8, and 9 of the worksheet.

Half of the class will present a “Profile of a Biblical Leader” during Session 2, with the remainder presenting during Session 3. As time permits, read the texts for each biblical leader from the list.

### **Notes**

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**God Words**

|             |                |                |            |
|-------------|----------------|----------------|------------|
| God         | Transcendent   | Righteousness  | Oppression |
| Jesus       | Transformation | Friendship     | Sacrifice  |
| Christ      | Relationship   | Hospitality    | Renewal    |
| Messiah     | Love           | Sabbath        | End Times  |
| Will        | Peace          | Creation       | _____      |
| Intention   | Joy            | Creativity     | _____      |
| Sacrament   | Hope           | Freedom        | _____      |
| Baptism     | Self-Control   | Good           | _____      |
| Confession  | Knowledge      | Evil           | _____      |
| Communion   | Spiritual      | Integrity      | _____      |
| Community   | Gifts          | Purity         | _____      |
| Salvation   | Leadership     | Unity          | _____      |
| Sin         | Anointing      | Interpretation | _____      |
| Redemption  | Sanctification | Reason         | _____      |
| Forgiveness | Presence       | Mystery        | _____      |
| Time        | Justice        | Trinity        | _____      |
| Human       | Prophecy       | Prayers        | _____      |
| Divine      | Worship        | Body           | _____      |
| World       | Obedience      | Holiness       | _____      |
| Heaven      | Faithfulness   | Liberation     | _____      |

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# Introduction to Spiritual Practice

## Introduction

Where are you in your spiritual life? The purpose of this chapter and this week's session is to evaluate your spiritual life with guilt-free honesty. First, we will identify and celebrate the spiritual practices that are already a part of your routine. *Spiritual practices are those habits of the body, heart, and mind that deepen our relationships with God, self, and others.* Then, we will identify areas for growth in your spiritual life. Where can we go deeper, and how do we get there?

The eight sessions of the Spiritual Practices guide are an opportunity to cultivate your spiritual life. We will try new practices, reinvigorate our established ones, and broaden our understanding of what it means to live spiritually.

After reading this chapter, you will complete the Spiritual Practice Profile. This exercise should be done in a spirit of tender compassion. Let go of any perfectionist ideals you may have when it comes to what your spiritual life should be. Instead, focus on articulating where you've been spiritually, where you are now, and where God is calling you to grow.

## Six Ways of Spiritual Living

Many of us hold an idealized picture of the truly spiritual person in our head. Devout, pious, reverent, contemplative, compassionate—in short, an ideal we can never achieve. Often, we place Jesus in this role, which only confirms our spiritual inadequacies. How can we be Jesus?

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**Spiritual life:** *The “big picture” of our spirituality, which includes the practices of prayer, personal integrity, the Holy Spirit, community, the Word, and faithful living.*

**Spiritual practices:** *The habits and activities of heart, mind, and body through which one lives out the depth dimension of relationship to God, self, and others.*

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The good news is that while we are always called to strive to be Christlike, we are not called to be perfect. Living in the midst of the world is not very conducive to devotion, piety, reverence, contemplation, or compassion. Through the spiritual practices of our lives—the activities that help us to connect with God, self, and

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others at deeper levels—we can make progress on our journey of faith. We can be closer to God next week than we are today. We can know ourselves better six months from now. We can have even more fulfilling relationships with other people in the future than we currently enjoy.

Richard J. Foster lays out six “streams” within the history of Christianity that express different aspects of the faith.<sup>1</sup> By growing in our practices within each of these streams, we can enhance our spiritual lives.

For our purposes, we will define the six spiritual traditions within Christianity as:

- The Practice of Prayer
- The Practice of Personal Integrity
- The Practice of the Presence of the Spirit
- The Practice of Community
- The Practice of the Word
- The Practice of Faithful Living

Over the next six weeks, we will explore each of these traditions, try out a practice from the tradition during class, and select a practice to explore during the week. Each week, we will report on our experiences, successes, and frustrations. At the conclusion of this guide, we will each lay out a guideline for our spiritual lives, which will nurture and challenge us.

### ***The Practice of Prayer***

The practice of prayer is basic to Christian faith, and yet many people feel befuddled when it comes to their own prayer lives. Christian publishers produce one how-to-pray book after another. If we're not confused about how to pray, we're often frustrated with finding a time when we can pray. In the session on the practice of prayer, we will look at the many ways in which one might pray, increase our comfort level with stillness and quiet, and discover our own personal “breath prayer.”

Examples of practices from this tradition include:

- Meditation or centering prayer
- Intercessory prayer
- “Flash” prayers
- Prayer journals
- Routine prayers (such as a favorite psalm or the Lord's Prayer)
- Grace before meals
- Repetitive phrases or short prayers
- Gratitude journal
- Solitary walks

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<sup>1</sup>Richard J. Foster, *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christian Faith* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998).

- Silence
- Writing original prayers

### ***The Practice of Personal Integrity***

Sometimes, Christians mistake piety or morality for the sum total of the faith. While our personal integrity as Christians is not the pinnacle of our faith, it is essential to our spiritual health. Our actions in the world should match our beliefs on the inside. In this session, we will use the ancient practice of the *Examen* (or examination) of our lives to assess where our actions and thoughts are in tune with God and where we need to make corrections.

Examples of practicing personal integrity include:

- Resisting temptation through the use of prayer, scripture, or support from other Christians
- Listening more and speaking less
- Fasting
- Telling the truth
- Building up others rather than tearing them down
- Forgiveness
- Avoiding gossip

### ***The Practice of the Presence of the Spirit***

For many Christians, the Holy Spirit is almost a foreign concept. We often associate it with charismatic or pentecostal churches. When we turn away from experiences of the Spirit's movement in our congregations and in our lives, we lose the empowerment, passion, and joy that the living Spirit brings.

This session will allow us a chance to experience a ritual that invokes the presence of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. We will stretch our comfort zones to discover new ways the Spirit is at work in our lives.

Examples of the practice of the presence of the Holy Spirit:

- Prayers that ask for the presence of the Holy Spirit prior to a decision
- Cultivating the fruits of the Spirit identified by Paul in Galatians 5:22–23
- Using your spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ and God's kingdom
- Lectio Divina or sacred reading of the scripture that asks for the Spirit's guidance in discernment
- Asking the Holy Spirit for guidance as we begin each task or activity

### ***The Practice of Community***

Sometimes called the Practice of Justice and Compassion, this stream of the Christian tradition centers on the ideal of the kingdom of God as a call to action. How do we live out the ideal expressed in Matthew 25 of ministering to other people as if they were Jesus?

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In this session, we will look at how our spiritual practices inform and shape our communal life. Through an exercise in drawing our own icons, or sacred pictures, we will reflect on ways we are part of the problems in society and the ways in which our gifts and call to ministry can transform us into part of the solution.

Examples of the practice of community:

- Volunteering in a soup kitchen or homeless shelter
- Serving on the church's outreach or mission committee
- Participating in a walkathon or other fundraising event for medical research or hunger
- Working on a Habitat for Humanity house
- Making conscious choices as a consumer
- Taking a stand on an issue of racism, sexism, or other bias
- Tutoring children in low-income neighborhoods
- Assisting a refugee family in the resettlement process
- Serving as a Big Brother or Big Sister

### ***The Practice of the Word***

The two most common components of this tradition are Bible study and evangelism. In this session, we will explore the power of words and the power of God's living Word, Jesus Christ, to shape our faith. Through the use of a reverse paraphrase of a psalm, we'll discover how the very language we use lays the path for our spiritual journeys. We'll also look at ways in which we can share our faith that reflect our spiritual gifts.

We can practice the Word by:

- Reading through the Bible in a year
- Memorizing scripture
- Participating in or teaching a Bible study
- Attending Sunday school
- Sharing our faith through words or actions
- Writing poems, prayers, or other pieces that enrich other people's faith
- Reading literature that promotes reflection on God's presence in the world and in our lives

### ***The Practice of Faithful Living***

"Where is God when I'm doing the laundry?" a woman asked her pastor. One of the great mysteries of Christian faith is how a transcendent God could become incarnate in the physical world in Jesus Christ. The idea that God is in everything can be so overwhelming to us that we tune it out entirely. In this session, we will discover how to see and name God's presence in the routine details of our daily lives. We'll explore how to keep our connection with God alive and strong in the midst of the demands of work, family, and friends. Here are some ways in which

one can practice God's presence in faithful living:

- Activities that promote a healthy body and mind
- Using prompts as reminders to pause for prayer
- Doing work in a manner that gives glory to God
- Focusing on positives rather than negatives
- Receiving communion or witnessing a baptism
- Daily prioritizing in a planner or time management device
- Using artistry or craftsmanship to express one's faith

### **Completing the Spiritual Practice Profile**

Use the grid provided on page 6 to assess your spiritual life as it was five years ago, as it is now, and where you see a need to grow. Refer to the list of specific practices within each tradition in the chapter to help you identify your answers. You do not need to "fill up" any boxes; indeed, some may be left blank. This profile is meant to reflect both the strengths and growing edges of your spiritual life today.

### **Assignment for Next Week**

Read Session 7: The Practice of Prayer, but do not worry about trying the practices on pages 13–14 until after next week's class session.

### ***A Note about Upcoming Assignments***

In the coming weeks, you will read about one of spiritual practices in advance of the class session that focuses on it. Then, during the week following the session on a particular Spiritual Practice, you will pick a specific example of the practice to explore. While you are exploring the practice, you will also be reading about the next practice.

For example, at the end of this session on Introduction to Spiritual Practice, your facilitator will assign you to read Session 7: The Practice of Prayer. As mentioned above, read the session, but do not yet do the practices listed at the end of the chapter. Following your class session on The Practice of Prayer, the facilitator will instruct you to pick one of the practices to "try out" during the following week. While you are trying out this practice of prayer, you will also be assigned to read Session 8: The Practice of Personal Integrity. Again, don't do the personal integrity practices listed at the end of Session 8 until you have had the classroom session on The Practice of Personal Integrity.

The class sessions on Spiritual Practice will fall into two parts. First, you will report on your experiences from the preceding week with your new spiritual practice (e.g., prayer). Second, you will be introduced to the next Spiritual Practice through an in-class activity, and you will choose a particular practice from that topic to explore during the next week (e.g., personal integrity).

If you are confused about the assignment, contact your facilitator for clarification.

**Spiritual Practice Profile**

| <b>Streams of the Christian Tradition</b>         | <b>Five Years Ago...</b> | <b>Today...</b> | <b>Where I Need to Grow...</b> |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>The Practice of Prayer</b>                     |                          |                 |                                |
| <b>The Practice of Personal Integrity</b>         |                          |                 |                                |
| <b>The Practice of The Presence of the Spirit</b> |                          |                 |                                |
| <b>The Practice of Community</b>                  |                          |                 |                                |
| <b>The Practice of the Word</b>                   |                          |                 |                                |
| <b>The Practice of Faithful Living</b>            |                          |                 |                                |