

# Desert Day Guide

## Background

Reading through the gospels, we discover that Jesus had different habits in his life. One of his primary habits was practicing extensive times of solitude and prayer. Jesus began his ministry by spending forty days alone in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11). Before he chose his twelve disciples he spent the entire night alone in the desert hills (Luke 6:12). After the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus went up into the hills by himself (Matthew 14:23). As he prepared to go to the cross, Jesus sought out solitude in the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46).

There are more instances than these, but it is clear that Jesus had a practice of spending time in solitude to tune out all the other voices in order to hear the Father. And he also taught his disciples how to do a Desert Day. When the twelve returned from a preaching and healing mission, Jesus told them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place” (Mark 6:31).

## Plan and Prepare

Block out a significant amount of time for your Desert Day (3-4 hours). If you’re able to do a full day (6-8 hours), then go for it! Pick a place to go that is meaningful but not distracting such as the beach, the Everglades, a park, Fairchild Tropical Gardens, or a quiet bookstore.

It may be helpful to do your Desert Day with someone if this is really new for you or spending time in solitude is difficult. Just make sure not to distract one another!

Make sure to turn off your phone during the Desert Day and eliminate any other distractions you may have. As you begin the time, give yourself some space to slow down, relax, and release any chaos or noise in your mind. You could sit in silence for a period of time or take a prayer walk. Ask God to give you an openness to hear from the Spirit. Take as long as you need.

## Listening to the Spirit and Fasting

Desert Days are primarily about listening to the Spirit. As you open yourself to God know that God is with you, guiding you through the Spirit. Remember that you are deeply loved by God and can be vulnerable in his safe presence.

We also encourage you to fast during your Desert Day. Fasting has been an important spiritual practice for followers of Jesus for thousands of years. The forty days that Jesus spent alone in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11) were also spent fasting. There are many reasons that Christians practice fasting, but the three primary reasons are: 1) fasting helps us lean into God for our needs, 2) fasting creates some extra space to spend in seeking God when we would otherwise be eating, and 3) fasting helps us see that we often desire food (or other things) more than God.

### Some practicals on fasting:

- Start slow - fast from one meal or for half of one day. If you have fasted before, then do it for a full 24 hours.
- Set a definite beginning and ending time.
- Begin the fast in faith, believing that God is going to lead you and work in your life.
- Do your fast on your Desert Day, so you combine the fast with prayer and reflection.
- Write down in your Supper Club journal what you receive from God during your fast.
- Always drink a lot of water and/or juice.
- Allow any discomfort you feel during the fast to lead you to God.
- Break the fast with healthy food - soup, bread, fruit, etc.

## **Desert Day Prayer Exercises**

Below are three different prayer exercises to use on your Desert Day. Feel free to try all three, or just one. The goal for this Desert Day is to spend extended time communing with God in prayer. Use your Supper Club journal to process through the reflection questions and exercises. Make sure to take periodic moments of silence and prayer to re-center in God's loving presence.

### [1] Personalize the Lord's Prayer

Use the "Personalizing the Lord's Prayer" tool to guide you through this prayer. Take a few deep breaths before you begin, inviting the Spirit to be with you and guide you. Go at whatever pace you need to, allowing the Spirit to lead you from one section of the prayer to another.

After you finish personalizing the Lord's Prayer for your own life, take a few minutes to answer and journal through the questions below:

- What has God shown me through personalizing the Lord's Prayer?
- Which part of the prayer did I find the most difficult to pray? Why?
- Which of the three core areas highlighted in this prayer are most difficult for me to trust God in? (Provision/Daily Bread, Forgiveness/Reconciliation, Deliverance/Temptation)

### [2] Communion Prayer

This exercise helps us to "commune" or "center" in God's love. We soak in his care, joy, goodness, creativity, and abundance. We don't focus on expressing our needs or desires, but focus on the care of our Father towards us.

Below are a few suggestions for practicing communion prayer:

- Set aside a minimum of 15-20 minutes. Set a timer on your phone if that helps you to be less concerned about when to stop! Settle into a comfortable position.
- Settle into God's loving presence. Don't worry about thoughts or ideas that swirl around in your mind. Let them go and remain with Jesus.
- Use a word, phrase, or verse from Scripture that expresses your desire for God or God's desire for you.
  - *Suggested words/phrases:* Jesus; grace; Good Shepherd; Come Holy Spirit
  - *Suggested verses:* Psalm 62:1; John 14:23; Acts 17:28
- Take time to become quiet. It is not unusual for the first several minutes to be filled with many noisy thoughts or internal distractions. Don't worry about them or pay them any attention! Let them go. Gently return your mind and heart to the center of God's love and presence by repeating your word, phrase, or verse. Be with Jesus. Listen. Be still.
- Take several minutes to come out of prayer. Don't rush or hurry. Breathe in the presence of Christ and offer yourself to God.

### [3] Kingdom Prayer

This approach to prayer helps us to seek God for healing, renewal, and transformation in people's lives and in the world. We ask God to break into situations that are broken, restore lives that are hurting, and bring his presence and power to places where his reign is not seen.

Below are a few suggestions for practicing kingdom prayer:

- Write down the names of people in your life who don't know Jesus. Begin seeking God for them, asking the Spirit to draw them close to Jesus.
- Go on a prayer walk, praying over the people and places that you see. Pray for God's kingdom and joy to be experienced and realized in that place.

- Take a few minutes to be still and quiet before God. What are the broken areas of Miami that come to your mind and heart? Spend time praying for God's love, powerful, and wisdom to break in to those parts of our city.