

## Ongoing Soul Care

*For Your Spiritual Leadership Process*

Gem Fadling

Here are a few simple ways you could plan for some soul care in an ongoing way. These ideas are relatively simple and that's good. It's always wise to begin small and build habits.

I'm going to share with you one idea each for your daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and yearly life. Begin by choosing one and adding it to your routine. You can add the others as you go along.

My prayer is that these ideas spark something within you toward soulful habits. Just like we brush our teeth, make our bed, or eat a meal, these practices are routines that can help us to remain open, aware and willing clay in the Potter's hands.

### Daily

**Enjoy five minutes of presence.** Practicing presence is becoming aware of your mind, body and heart all in the same place.

Set a timer and simply sit or stand still for two minutes. Yes, your mind will usually race, but it is healthy to train your body and soul to be still, even for a very brief time.

You can place one hand on your heart and one on your belly. Feel yourself breathe. Remember that you are a human being, created and nurtured by a loving God.

Breathe deeply and lengthen your exhale. This has the benefit of calming your heart as you rest in God's presence.

### Weekly

**Make space for reflection.** Think back through the week and ask yourself two questions. You can journal or simply think it through in your mind.

- What was one time you felt good, joyful or content?
- What was one time you felt resistant, sad or discontented?

No need to solve anything here. Simply notice these dynamics in your life. Allow a prayer to bubble up from within as you recall the conversations and situations of your week. Hold all of this in God's presence.

This can take 10 minutes or less, or you can make more time if you'd like.

## Monthly

**Place yourself in receptive mode.** This is not a time to conquer anything or strive for something to occur. It's a "be still and know that I am God" time.

We are often in active mode because, at our best, we are loving and serving others.

But receptive mode is a necessary pattern as well. It helps relieve some pressure and it leans us toward humility. (Believe it or not, the world will still spin if you step back for a bit).

During this time:

- Begin in silence.
- Receive God's love and care.
- Open your hands to remind yourself to remain humble.
- Let go of that which holds you back or presses you down.
- Spend time doing what feels life-giving.
- Have a minimal toolkit: bible, journal, pen, music, spiritual reading.

If it helps, take a walk. I like to move or journal or take myself some place lovely. It helps to remove yourself from distractions.

Set aside at least one hour. This is a great starting point. If this is already a regular practice for you, you might want a half day. [HERE is a great guide](#) to help you engage this time.

## Quarterly

**Assess your patterns and make adjustments.** Be sure to notice your energy levels. Again, you are a human and not a machine. We are seasonal creatures just like flowers and trees.

Make adjustments to your calendar and life without guilt. Here are some questions to help you discern:

- Do I have enough life-giving activities in my life? How might I increase that which is life-giving?
- Where is my energy waning? Can I let go of this activity?
- Do I have enough buffer or recovery time in between engagements?
- What do I need to feel healthy—body, mind and soul?
- What support do I need to make the necessary changes?

Give yourself the gift of this important check-in. Like a tree in an orchard, you need watering, thinning, and resting.

## Yearly

**Engage a grand examen.** Some people enjoy a daily examen. But you can also engage a grand examen by reflecting on the previous year. This is a great way to get an overview of God's movements within your life on a larger scale.

This is where discernment really gets to shine. We don't often know what's happening in the midst of a particular season, but when we stop and look back, often our eyes and hearts are open to the large brush strokes of our own formation.

We have created [a beautiful guide for engaging a grand examen](#). You can use it as is, or allow it to spark your own imagination for ways to encounter God in the big picture of your life.

## Remember

"Unnatural, frantic, anxious work, work done under pressure of greed or fear or any other inordinate passion, cannot properly speaking be dedicated to God, because God never wills such work directly." (Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, p. 19)

John 15:5 - I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.