



**A SUMMER SPIRITUAL RHYTHM
FOR INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY USE**

GO TAKE A HIKE!

A Summer Spiritual Rhythm for Individual and Family Use



Summer. When Memorial Day has come and gone, when the final dismissal bell of the school year rings, when the days are longer and warmer and brighter, we look forward to a slower pace. The hope is there are vacations, day trips, and picnics. But, before you know it, Labor Day has come and gone, and it's time to reign in a slower pace and get back into a more scheduled routine.

Summer can lend itself to a more leisurely stride in which dwelling in God's presence can be more easily felt, but intentionality is vital. There are spiritual rhythms for summer that call you to give time and attention to what God says to you as you spend more time outdoors.

Renew the wonder of God's truths by experiencing it on a hike or leisurely walk. Bring this resource and a pen to record your reflections as you journey with God. Pack your backpack with water, fruit, and maybe some trail mix. Put on your sneakers or hiking boots, walk nature's paths, hike trails, splash through babbling streams climb a mountain (or maybe your style is more a slow incline). Find God in the vast mystery of his creation and during these summer days.

Rediscover your smallness and his greatness. As you do, you will marvel with renewed wonder: *"What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?"* Psalm 8:4 (NIV). Let go of any expectations and allow yourself to be open to God as you hike. Remember, he is your hiking companion.

Taking a walk with God takes being aware of the five senses that he has instilled in you, and as you do, every step will be an act of worship.

TWO RESOURCES IN ONE

This booklet holds a guided hike for one person in solitude with God. If you want to make it a family worship experience, you will find the "A Hike for the Whole Family" section. Whatever way you decide to use it, may it bring you closer to God, the Creator of the nature that you explore.

A HIKE FOR THE INDIVIDUAL



1. SIGHT

"The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good." Genesis 1:12 (NLT)

While you walk, notice the trees all around you. Pick one tree and take some time to examine it in all its uniqueness. Of course, there is the obvious, it is tall and green but get closer. Look at the grooves in the bark and the variations in its color.

If you were to cut the trunk horizontally, you would discover it is made up of many rings that determine the tree's age. These rings will also tell the story of when the tree endured drought and times of abundant nourishment.

Look at yourself in the same way. Does your skin have wrinkles or scars? These are signs of years of experience with possible times of abundant joy and difficulty.

FOR REFLECTION:

- What has been nourishment to my soul recently?
- Am I carrying any woundedness? What am I doing to bring healing?
- Pray about what has been revealed and bring healing where needed.

2. SMELL

But thanks be to God! For through what Christ has done, he has triumphed over us so that now wherever we go he uses us to tell others about the Lord and to spread the Gospel like a sweet perfume. As far as God is concerned there is a sweet, wholesome fragrance in our lives. It is the fragrance of Christ within us, an aroma to both the saved and the unsaved all around us." 2 Corinthians 2:14-15 (TLB)



The sense of smell can trigger all kinds of memories, such as the smell of your mother's freshly baked cookies. Unfortunately, some smells can trigger a negative response - dirty gym socks or rancid milk.

As you walk in nature, try to identify scents such as that of an evergreen tree or moss in a shady, cool area. Close your eyes and breathe in deeply. What do these smells indicate about what is around you?

FOR REFLECTION:

- Talk to God about what it means to be an "aroma for Christ" as described in 2 Corinthians 2:14-15.



3. SOUND

"Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge! A river brings joy to the city of our God, the sacred home of the Most High." Psalm 46:3-4 (NLT)

"Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are?" Matthew 6:26 (NLT)

As you walk through nature, spend some time listening to and hearing from God. This may not be an audible voice, but there are sounds around you – birds chirping, wind blowing, leaves rustling, a babbling brook - that he uses to speak to you. Spend time in silence on your walk to really listen to the sounds God has created all around you. You may need to stop and close your eyes to receive the fullest effect of the sounds around you.

God can speak to us through the sounds around us and the absence of sound. It is amazing how the Lord speaks to us in silence. Take some time to close your eyes and remove yourself from the sounds around you. It may take some time but do not rush away in frustration. Instead, wait on him to allow his Spirit to speak to you. Pay attention to your thoughts.

FOR REFLECTION:

- How might God be inviting you to be with him? Take some time to pay attention to the sounds around you. Often sounds can be triggers to memories. If there is any revelation, simply sit with it in Christ's presence. Whether you hear something from the Lord or not, stay present with him as you walk.

4. TASTE

"Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!" Psalm 34:8 (NLT)

In scripture, the sense of taste is described as a way for us to enjoy life and the blessings of God. Sometimes we struggle with enjoying God's blessing because we are busy attaining goodness through our efforts. Allow striving to cease through the sense of taste.

Whatever you may have brought with you for nourishment during your hike, take some time to stop and enjoy.

We underestimate the importance of water. Keep these facts in mind as you



drink water while on your journey:

- 60% of our body is made up of water
- Are you warm from your hike? Water regulates your body temperature
- Have you encountered a path that is rocky and uneven? This can cause wear and tear on your body. Water acts as a shock absorber to your brain and spinal cord.
- Tomorrow may bring some aches and pains from your hike. Remember, your water intake will lubricate your joints. Be proactive.

Beyond the fact that drinking water is a good idea, take time to enjoy the experience. As you drink, feel the refreshment that it brings. Associate this refreshment with the refreshment that the Holy Spirit brings. *"But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life."* John 4:14 (NLT)

If you packed a snack, take time to enjoy it. Notice the crunch of an apple or nuts. Any sweet or savory flavors. As you eat, think about the variety of foods God has created, and remember we are urged to "...taste and see that the Lord is good!" Psalm 34:8

FOR REFLECTION:

- The Lord is "Jehovah Jireh, your Provider." As you take this break and enjoy a snack, think of how God has marvelously provided for you today, this week, or even through a recent crisis.
- End this refreshment break with a prayer of thanks for who he is and how he has provided for you. Be specific.

5. TOUCH

When touch is written in scripture, there is always an aftereffect. Throughout the Bible, there are warnings not to touch anything "unclean" or else the offender would be "cut off" from



others. Obviously, the opposite was true when Jesus touched people. *"Everyone tried to touch him because healing power went out from him, and he healed everyone."* (Luke 6:19 NLT) Whenever God touches us, we access him, his power, his healing, and his love.

In this part of your hike, you will use your sense of touch to further connect with God.

Find a flat, round stone small enough to fit in your pocket. Place it in your pocket and each time you reach into your pocket, let it remind you to focus on the Lord in the moment.

FOR REFLECTION:

- Where are you feeling the need for direction in life?
- Is there something in you that needs his touch today (his strength, compassion, healing)?

CONCLUSION:

This hike was your invitation from God to spend some intentional time with him. You have used your five senses in a way that you can be drawn closer to him through his creation of nature and to underscore the fact that he has created you to connect with him in ways you never imagined.

CLOSING PRAYER

Precious Father, thank You for allowing us to benefit from the beauty of all that Your hand has created. Thank You for our seas, forests, and skies. May all my thoughts and actions during this time of worship on this hike praise you, the Creator of all things good. Amen.

A HIKE FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

You can talk to God anywhere! In fact, God always wants to connect with us in everything we do. He wants to be in every area of our life. So, as you take a hike together as a family, take this booklet along and use it as an opportunity for the whole family to have time with God.

Nature is a wonderful creation of God. Every tree, stream, rock, and grain of sand...all of nature, is his amazing design for you to enjoy because he loves you so much.

As you hike, you will come across items from nature listed in this booklet (like rocks, water, birds...). Stop and follow along with what is written. In this way, you connect as a family and worship God, the Creator of it all.

ROCKS

The first thing to look for on your hike is a rock. Certainly, many make up the outdoors, but everyone needs to find their own rock- one that is smooth, round, and small enough to fit in your pocket. When you get home, you may want to paint your rock with a picture or word that reminds you of God and carry it with you to remind you of his strength in your life.

A rock is a symbol of strength and endurance. As you hold this rock, keep in mind that this rock has been around for a very long time. The oldest rock ever found is more than 4 billion years old. A rock can stand the test of time.

Jesus has been called "The Rock" because he is strong and has been – and will be – around forever. You can always count on Jesus!

From God's Word: *"He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright, and just is he."* Deuteronomy 32:4 (NIV)



TREES

As you hike, find a big enough tree for the family to sit under.

Think about this...there is not another tree in the world exactly like this one. Look at the grooves in the bark and the various colors. Look at the leaves. Every leaf has its uniqueness in size, shape, and color.

There is so much more to this tree than what you can see. An intricate root system keeps this tree alive underneath the ground where you are sitting. These roots are unseen but vital to the life of the tree.

From God's Word: *"Let your roots grow down into him and draw up nourishment from him. See that you go on growing in the Lord and become strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught. Let your lives overflow with joy and thanksgiving for all he has done."* Colossians 2:7 (TLB)



PRAYER: Lord, I want my life to grow deep in your love. Amen.



WATER

If there is a body of water where you are hiking, sit by the water's edge.

Water is a symbol of cleansing and refreshment. If you have brought a water bottle, you may want to refresh yourself from your journey so far. As you sip, think about the cooling feeling you experience with each swallow. Following this hike, you may decide you need a shower or bath to remove the grime from your trek. Something is refreshing about becoming clean.

There is a cleansing and refreshment when we spend time with Jesus. When we ask for forgiveness, the grime of our sin is removed. His Spirit brings refreshment to our souls.

From God's Word: *"But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life."* John 4:14 (NLT)

PRAYER: Lord, my relationship with you brings cleansing and refreshment. Thank you. Amen.



SKY

We've spent some time looking around at all the beauty in nature. Take some time and look up. The sky is a beautiful canopy that God has created full of diversity of white clouds, blue sky, or possibly today is a bit grey and overcast. The sun may be shining or hiding behind the clouds. God has created an unending covering overhead.

From God's Word: *"The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known."* Psalm 19:1-2 (NLT)

PRAYER: Lord, your love is higher than the sky above. Glory to your name!

BIRDS

While you are looking up, take some time to look at the birds flying by. In all his creativity, God made over 10,000 bird species: from the large ostrich to a tiny hummingbird, and yet, he cares for them all.

From God's Word: *"And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows."* Matthew 10:30-31 (MSG)



PRAYER: Thank you, Lord, for you provide for my every need. Amen.

SEA SHELLS

If you are by the beach, find a sea shell that catches your attention. As you look at the shell you have picked, notice that no two seashells are the same. So it is with each one of us. God has uniquely made us, so don't compare yourself to anyone else...it can be a dangerous trap to get caught. Celebrate your differences. Share with each other why this shell caught your eye. Also, share what is uniquely you.

From God's Word: *"I am marvelously made! I worship in adoration—what a creation! You know me inside and out, you know every bone in my body; You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from nothing into something."* Psalm 139:14 (MSG)



PRAYER: Thank you, Lord, for the way you have made me. I celebrate your creativity. Amen.

CONCLUSION

This hike has been your opportunity to spend time with your family. God created the family to be our support system. We do not travel this world alone. This journey has also been a reminder that God has created all the nature around you to be enjoyed.

Remember this day to celebrate how much the Lord loves you in providing such love and beauty.



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