

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”
(James 1:22)

PRACTICE THIS WEEK:
Being Present In Absence

Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Romans 12:10

With current limitations around our ability to be present together, it is ***more important than ever*** to engage in the spiritual practice of LOVING one another. We were divinely designed for community – and we wither without it. This week we want to dig deep and get creative with ways we can continue to be genuinely present to one another’s hearts and lives, despite increased physical absence.

Monday – Daily Spiritual Practice: Being Present In Absence – Porch Drops!

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. 1 Peter 1:22

Who in your world needs to hear: “I see you, I care about you, I miss you, you matter!” ... but without any words?

“Porch Drops” are a fun and simple way to communicate both presence and care. The unexpected discovery of a treat or basket of items on one’s porch – particularly in a season of increased isolation – can be a powerful way to lift a heart, reminding people they are seen and loved.

Keep it simple – it’s mainly the thought that counts. Some suggestions:

- Home-baked goodies
- Flowers or a plant
- Donuts & tea
- Hot chocolate bombs
- Fresh fruit
- Books
- Puzzles & games
- Craft kits
- Silly stuff to bring a laugh
- Oven-ready meal
- Comfort care package
- A “Congrats, You’re Living Through A Pandemic!” cake

Tuesday – Daily Spiritual Practice: Being Present In Absence – Prayer!

Make this your common practice: Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you can live together whole and healed. The prayer of a person living right with God is something powerful to be reckoned with. James 5:16

Prayer is a powerful way to be present to the deepest part of people, even when we can't be together. Who in your world could use someone caring how they are and walking with them in prayer?

1. Call/text/email a friend; simply ask how they're doing and how you could be praying for them.
2. Pray! Make the space to give yourself to genuine prayer for the concerns shared with you. Trust that as you give your heart to prayer, God will bring life and presence to your friend.
3. Find a way to prompt yourself to return to prayer throughout the day. Could be a note on the fridge, a reminder on your phone, stick a prayer bead in your pocket... etc.

Wednesday – Daily Spiritual Practice: Being Present In Absence – Random Acts of Kindness!

Carry one another's burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2

Today – two great practices to help shoulder the burdens others around us are carrying. Acts of Service and Random Acts of Kindness are two ways to dump some light into another person's life – at a time when they may need it more than you know! Little acts add up to great big love. Aim these practices at someone close, or a stranger on the street – either way, give yourself to actively incarnating the loving, attentive, gratuitously-kind servant heart of Jesus in the world today – as many ways as you can.

- Shovel a driveway
- Make a meal
- Take someone else's kids outside to play
- Do a grocery shop or laundromat run for someone else
- Call an isolated senior; read a book to them over the phone
- Ask a friend "What's hard for you right now?"... then find a way to HELP
- Do a task for your partner or friend that they hate doing
- Bring breakfast in bed to someone you live with
- Pay for the Drive Thru (or takeout) order behind yours
- Buy some gift cards & give them to strangers
- Send flowers for no reason
- Give a stranger a compliment
- Leave a nice note on someone's car
- Send a thank you email to someone you admire
- Drop homemade muffins off to a workplace.

BONUS PRACTICE: To remind yourself of this same serving way that Jesus loves you, [Click Here](#) for a 10-minute imaginative-footwashing-prayer practice.

Thursday – Daily Spiritual Practice: Being Present In Absence – Speaking Encouragement!

So speak encouraging words to one another. Build up hope so you'll all be together in this, no one left out, no one left behind. I know you're already doing this; just keep on doing it. 1 Thess. 5:11

The spiritual practice of speaking encouragement is as simple as it is powerful. The art of noticing and naming that which is good, in and to a person, has a unique ability to *put courage in* to them. It's a very real gift we can give one another – being seen for who we genuinely are, and reminded of the goodness within us – at times when we're prone to lose sight of it. It can knit our hearts together, reminding us that we are not alone, that we're connected to and valued by a strong community of love.

[Click Here](#) to walk through a guided practice of encouragement – and then continue to practice it ALL DAY LONG as best you can – *one sentence at a time*.

Friday – Daily Spiritual Practice: Being Present In Absence – Practicing Generosity!

“Everyone should look out not only for his own interests but for the interests of others.”

Philippians 2:4

Where do you have more than you need? Where is someone else struggling to make ends meet? Not having enough is a big trigger for feeling alone and un-taken-care-of in the world. How can you help incarnate the presence of God today, in a way that lets someone know they aren't alone, and are carried by more arms than they realize? What do you have that you can give away? What can you get – for someone else instead of yourself?

- Shop locally
- Tip generously
- Lend someone your vehicle
- Offer a house swap
- Send someone a gift
- Order someone a Skip The Dishes dinner
- Leave extra quarters at the laundromat
- Lend another family books, games, movies, puzzles
- Hide money in random places for strangers to find
- Donate to a homeless shelter – Hot Paws, Cereal and Toothbrushes are especially needed in ours right now.
- Go through your home looking for anything you have that someone else might need. How many things can you give away? How might doing so bring healing, freedom, and increased life to both their heart and yours?