



9th - 10th grade

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

When teens begin high school, a whole new world opens up. This is a potentially messy time in a student's life. Peer groups are changing, boundaries are being pushed, and social media makes our lives more public than ever. All of these changes couple with the development of abstract thinking. Where things were once black and white, a teen can now see the gray - but what they are supposed to do with all the gray isn't always clear.

We want to offer students a safe place to process their thoughts and grow in their faith. Just like an athlete or musician must regularly practice to develop their skill, Christians grow and develop their faith through spiritual practices. Some practices center on our connection to God as our anchor - we call these vertical practices. Vertical practices include such things as prayer, fasting and journaling. However, our faith is not only about what happens between us and God; it is also about what happens between us and the world. These horizontal practices include such things as serving our community, responding to temptation, developing healthy relationships, and managing our time and money.

As students explore these practices, they will experience:

- Support from friends and mentors as they navigate a messy phase
- Safe small groups where they can be honest about their fears and doubts

- Service opportunities to strengthen their community
- Retreats and mission trips to further practice living out their faith

As a parent of a teen in this stage, one of the most important things you can do is model living out your own faith. Maybe your family picks a topic to pray about for a month. Perhaps you invite your child to help balance the budget and show them how you set aside your tithe. You can model spiritual practices in your everyday interactions, bringing to life what we are teaching at The Lodge.

Beyond that, an important thing to model for your child is vulnerability. That might sound strange at first, but think about it this way: your teen does not have it all together, and they will make mistakes. Modeling how to rebound from failure helps teens grow, and it also helps make you a trustworthy person in their eyes. It is easy in this stage of life to worry about the trustworthiness of your child. But for right now, your trustworthiness is even more important than that of your kids. The more you show that they can trust you with their questions and turn to you in their failures, the better positioned you are to help them navigate through the challenges of this stage and move towards a mature faith.

enough

“There are two ways to get enough: one is to accumulate more and more, the other is to desire less.”

—G.K. Chesterton

In his book, *More or Less*, Jeff Shinabarger talks about the discipline of enough - recognizing when we have all that we need. Most of us aren't good at drawing the line when our lives are full. Instead, we fill our calendar with more than we can handle or spend money to acquire things that we don't need. Jeff offers a unique approach: instead of feeling guilty about our excess, he suggests “experiments” that help us to see how much excess we have. Some sample experiments Jeff describes include:

Seeing how long you can go without grocery shopping or going out to eat, living simply on the food that already exists in your pantry, fridge and freezer.

Committing to wearing each outfit in your closet and dresser once, and seeing how long it takes before you need to repeat an outfit.

Selecting a reality of life in a third-world country and committing to experiencing that same way of life for a period of time (such as eating only rice and beans or committing to other forms of transportation besides your car).

Your challenge this month is to create your own enough experiment as a family. Use these steps:

1. Determine where you have excess. Fill in this blank: *We have more than enough _____.*
2. Choose a person (or group of people) who might not have enough of this resource. Depending on how you filled in the above blank, you might research what clothes, food or shelter people in other countries have.
3. Define your limits clearly. What will you do without? When will you start? How long will you sustain the experiment? How will you know when you've reached your goal?
4. Journal your thoughts. Share with family and friends what you're learning.
5. Celebrate big when the experiment is over! Consider making a gift with whatever excess you've realized you can do without.

Enough experiments don't have to be complicated. A simple way to start could be to have a garage sale. For inspiration, check out:

www.moreorlessbook.com

Above all, remember the goal of your experiment: to imagine a new way of living and to help answer the question, *What would enough look like in this area of life?*