



## EXCERPT



### ***Spiritual Practices in Community*** *Drawing Groups into the Heart of God*

December 11, 2018 | \$16, 192 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4648-1

Diana Shiflett has spent years leading groups of all descriptions in spiritual practices, and in this personal, hands-on guide, she walks us through a wide array—from communal silence and Scripture meditation to active prayer and corporate discernment. Offering step-by-step instructions, this resource will show you how spiritual practices can become life-giving resources in your ministry setting for years to come.

## Learn to Lead Differently

We live in a thirsty world that's looking to leaders to lead well. This book is an opportunity to learn to lead differently. It will help you to not only tell people about the living water that Christ has to offer but also invite them to experience the thirst-quenching Spirit of Jesus Christ for themselves alongside you.

Over the years I've served as a pastor, I've heard these three statements often:

- "I am not feeling fed at church."
- "Thank you for your sermon today!"
- "Christ is transforming my life."

If you're like me, you hear the first two phrases far more than you hear the last. Yet we do ministry so that people will be transformed spiritually. I'd much rather people tell me their lives are being transformed spiritually than hear the first two phrases.

Simply put, spiritual practices are different ways of connecting with God. Over twenty-three years of ministry, I've gotten in a rhythm of using them. They have transformed me and the ministries I'm a part of. When I'm living into the practices and using them well as I lead, I feel fully alive in Christ—and often so do the people around me.

When I teach about spiritual practices, listeners often ask how they can lead the practices themselves in their own ministry contexts. We usually take a few moments right then and there to discuss different ideas, but a few minutes is not enough. People need more than a quick conversation; they need a book. My hope is that *Spiritual Practices in Community* gives you what you need to lead certain practices well in your context. Since everyone's context is different, you'll need to adjust each practice to fit yours.

Over the years, spiritual practices often have been referred to as spiritual disciplines. Some date back to the Old Testament, such as fasting and prayer. Others were created and refined during the hundreds of the centuries of church history. Some of the ones in this book I've created along the way. Others I've learned from partners in ministry.

Each person is wired differently, and spiritual practices give us different ways to engage with God, according to how we best connect with him. In this book, you'll find more than thirty different ways to engage with God. Encourage a group you're in or leading to try different practices that may help them connect with God.

Sometimes people assume they won't like an activity because they didn't like it in a different context. A woman in one of my spiritual practices groups said she didn't like to journal. I said, "Just try it in class when we're together, and you'll never have to do it again." Months later, she told the class she loved it.



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**Diana Shiflett** is ordained in the Evangelical Covenant church. She is an adjunct professor of youth ministry at North Park University, and a certified spiritual director. She has a master's degree in clinical psychology from Wheaton College.

There's something about connecting with God in new ways; it can awaken our souls. When we focus on listening to and talking to God, mundane things can suddenly have life. Recently I taught a class of first through sixth graders. First I asked them to draw what I was reading from the Scriptures. One third grader chimed in right away and said, "I don't like to draw."

"Do you like to write?" I asked.

"No," she said.

"Okay, well, how about you just try, and I will try too, and we'll see what happens."

She agreed, and as I read, I drew some terrible pictures. Seeing what I was doing, the whole class started to draw and to write. As we finished the practice, I asked her how she liked it, and she said, "It was kinda fun." All the children were given time to show their picture to the group and share what they'd learned about God.

Almost every time I lead a practice, and no matter what age I lead, some don't want to participate. I validate their feelings and request their engagement or silence. It seems the quicker I validate and encourage the group, the better it goes for everyone.

At the end, sometimes someone still feels it wasn't a good practice. I acknowledge that and say that it's good to learn what works and doesn't work for us so we can connect with God in ways that are best for us.

There's a time and a place for traditional messages and sermons, but there also need to be places where we listen for the voice of God together. As leaders, we need to start making more space for spiritual practices to help people learn how to meet and experience God. It's important that we live into ways in which we are connecting with and hearing from God so we can lead and teach others to do the same.

You can't lead where you aren't willing to go. As a leader, I experience spiritual growth when I lead practices. I learn from others as we share what God is doing in each of us. Because of this, I hope that as you move through this book, you experience God for yourself and then lead others in these practices so they too can enter into the presence of God. I give you full permission to do what we have all done in ministry: jump into a particular spiritual practice that you need to lead right now—whether it's for your edification or for those you will lead. My prayer and hope for you is that you will go and be with God yourself first. I hope you long for spiritual practice spaces—and find them. The best moments in leadership for me have come from experiencing God before I led a group.

—Taken from the introduction



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