

A man with short dark hair and a beard, wearing a black leather jacket over a red t-shirt with a white logo, is sitting and looking down at a smartphone. The background is a blurred urban setting. The entire image is overlaid with a topographic map pattern in shades of orange and white. A large, stylized white 'X' logo is positioned above the main text.

CONNECT WITH GOD DAILY

EXERCISES FOR BUILDING A CONNECTION WITH GOD

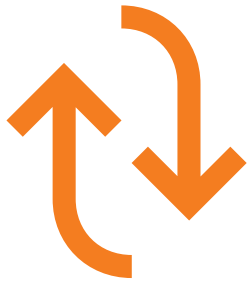
“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

—Jesus

Matthew 11:28–30,
The Message Translation



This short guide was made by the folks at Crossroads Church, a nationwide community founded in Cincinnati, Ohio. Read articles, watch videos, get connected, or just lurk at crossroads.net.



CONNECT WITH GOD DAILY

For any relationship to grow, communication is critical. A relationship with God is no different. If you find yourself not sure where to start when it comes to spending time with God, or if you're looking to shake up your routine a bit, these experiments are designed to help.

YOUR CHALLENGE:

Choose an exercise every day and do what it says. Make notes of what works and what doesn't. You can come back to these challenges over and over.

PRO TIPS FOR SUCCESS:

- **Choose a time and place.**

Connecting with God often works best when you have a specific time and a unique (holy) place that is set apart specifically for prayer.

- **Have a Bible handy.**

Paper or digital doesn't matter, just make sure you find a version that you can understand. (Not sure where to start? Try the NIV [New International Version] or ESV [English Standard Version].)

- **Get yourself a journal.**

Writing out what you hear or experience can be a great way to record how God is uniquely speaking to you.

Matthew 6:5–6 “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”



40 EXERCISES / 8 PATHS FOR CONNECTING WITH GOD

**THE NATURALIST • THE SENSATE • THE TRADITIONALIST
THE ASCETIC • THE ACTIVIST • THE CAREGIVER
THE ENTHUSIAST • THE INTELLECTUAL**



THE NATURALIST

Exercises for the nature lover.

#1 Open Matthew and read any section. Go on a nature walk and meditate on what you read. What do you think God wants you to do? (Bonus challenge, do that thing today.)

#2 Step outside and observe a bird, any bird will do. Listen for its song. Consider its flight. Quietly observe for at least five minutes. Then open your Bible and read Matthew 6:25-27. Ask God; "What do you want me to know?" Write down anything you hear.

#3 And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone. Simply spend time outside at sunrise or sunset. Matthew 14:23. Consider the sky and the clouds. If you can get to a location with a great view, do that. **Rest in that space for at least 20 minutes.** Have a conversation with God.

#4 Explore a new area in nature. Someplace you've never been. A new trail, or an entirely new park. As you hike, notice the biodiversity of life. When you find an especially beautiful spot, **stop and spend a few minutes reflecting on God's creation.** What stands out? Did God impress anything on you? If so, what?

#5 Set your alarm clock for 3am. Wake up and walk outside for 15 minutes. **In the quiet of the night, ask God if he has something he wants to tell you.** Write it down. Then go back to sleep.

THE SENSATE

A focus on all five senses.

#6 Find a quiet place where you can be totally alone. Light a candle. Listen to a worship song loudly. (Need a place to find great music? Search “Crossroads Music” on YouTube or Spotify.) Do you think God was trying to say something? Write down anything you heard/thought/felt.

#7 God is a creator and we’re made in his image. Create a work of art. Paint, sketch, or sculpt something. No one has to see your final product, so relax and have fun. As you create, meditate on what it means to be made in the image of an artist.

#8 Have a dance party. Seriously, even if you’re a dude. King David was one of the Bible’s most manly men and even he wasn’t too proud to dance before the Lord (2 Samuel 6:14). So pop and lock or Griddy your way across a room. Jot down anything God may have said.

#9 Read the entire chapter of Matthew 9. Read it as if you are an eyewitness to the events taking place. With the fullness of your imagination, try reading it as if you are physically there. Listen for the sounds. Smell the smells. Feel the hot air of Israel. How do you feel? What are you thinking about Jesus? What do you want to ask him? How are the people around you in the story feeling? What emotions are you feeling? Then, come back to your day and consider what God might be teaching you. Write that down.

#10 Relish in an amazing meal. Whether you cook something new or try a food you’ve never had, consider how what you’re eating reflects the diversity of our creative God and his abundant goodness. What stands out from tasting this new thing?

THE TRADITIONALIST

A lover of hymnals, pews, and stained glass.

#11 Rewrite Psalm 23 in your own words. Relax, there is no wrong way to do this. What did God speak to you in this exercise?

#12 Open the Crossroads App. Read the day's scripture and create a journal entry. Read at least two other public journal entries and consider what God might be saying to this community.

#13 Read Matthew 6: 9–13 (The Lord's Prayer) while on your knees. Slowly and meticulously make each and every statement personal and meaningful for your current situation. For example, consider these questions: How is God like a father to you? How do you keep his name holy and set apart? What would it look like for you to live fully submitted in HIS Kingdom? What feels like "daily bread" that you need today? Where do you need forgiveness? Who do you need to forgive? Where are you currently tempted and need strength? Where can you repent and turn from "evil"?

#14 Deeply consider your emotions. What is weighing on you right now? Jot down at least five different emotions you have surrounding that situation. **Now ask God to speak into each and every feeling you've captured.** What do you think He has to say? Write it out.

#15 Spend time reading Matthew 6:16–18. Spend part of or the entire day fasting from food. Every time you feel hungry, ask God to be with you. Record how it goes.

THE ASCETIC

A focus on simplicity and solitude.

#16 *"Be still and know that I am God" Psalm 46:10.* **Set a timer for 20 minutes and sit in complete silence.** With eyes closed, count to 10 in your head. Consider that if God speaks to you, he'll use that same voice. Now pay attention to your thoughts. Ask God to direct them. When the timer goes off, write down anything you think you heard.

#17 Imagine yourself in a place that you love. Maybe the home you grew up in, your favorite place outside, etc. **Then, just imagine that Jesus himself steps into that place.** Ask him something. See what happens. Jot down some notes.

#18 You'll need a quiet place, paper, and two different color pens. **Simply write out a conversation with God.** Put your thoughts in one ink color and anything you think God might be saying in a different ink color. It's your own screenplay. Don't overthink it, just let the ink flow.

#19 Look at your calendar, your daily to-do list, or your class schedule. **Now, pray for each and every part of your day.** Set a reminder to reflect on this exercise this evening. Did you experience God in a different way? How?

#20 **Ask God to show you something that you can give away today.** What is taking up space that you could do without that might be a blessing to someone else? Give it away. Record what you did, how you felt, and how the recipient reacted.

THE ACTIVIST

Finding connection through intense engagement.

#21 God can handle your disappointment, your lack of faith, your honest questions, and your anger (this is most of what the Psalms are after all). **Bring the full fury of your rage to God.** Vent to Him. Unload. Then sit in perfect silence for five minutes and see if He says something. Write down anything you think you might be hearing.

#22 Open the book of Matthew and start reading. Pay attention to your spirit. **When you feel like God is telling you to do something, stop and do it ASAP.** No excuses. DO IT. Make a note of what you did and how it went.

#23 *"Comparison is the thief of joy."* —Teddy Roosevelt. *"Contribution is the antidote to comparison"* —Unknown. Consider how you can contribute today. **Where might God want you to help, encourage, or otherwise contribute?** Write down some ideas and then do it. Record how it goes.

#24 1 Timothy 2:1–2 says to pray for our leaders. **Ask God to show you the leaders from all categories of your life.** Government leaders. Teachers. Parents. Bosses. Mentors. For each category, spend time specifically praying for the people God revealed. Were there any themes? Do you think God is asking you to do anything for any of those leaders?

#25 **Today, seek out the outcast.** Someone who seems lonely or down. Sit next to them, introduce yourself, pray for them. Ask them something about themselves. What is something they love or are excited about? Encourage them. Then jot down how it goes.

THE CAREGIVER

Connecting with God by considering others.

#26 Intercession is just a churchy word that means praying for someone else.

Ask God to bring one person to mind. Pray for them. Write out your thoughts if that helps. Lean in. Intercede like you've never interceded before. Maybe pray on your knees. When you're done, consider sending them a text of encouragement. Nothing weird, just tell them you were thinking of them.

#27 **Open the Crossroads App, and complete the "Pray for Others" prompt.** In response, consider adding your own prayer request to the community.

#28 **Plan to spend time with one other person you trust and ask them what God is teaching them.** This could be a coffee date or a text thread. What might God be trying to teach you through your friend?

#29 **Make a "paste list."** A paste list is a list of people close to you that you pray for while you're brushing your teeth...with toothpaste. Tape it on your bathroom mirror. Who did you choose and why? Is God asking you to do more than simply pray?

#30 **At the end of your day ask God to bring to mind ONE interaction you had with another person.** Something you said, or something that was said to you. Reflect on why that moment stands out. Is God getting your attention for a reason? Are you being asked to follow up? To forgive? To repent? To intercede? Spend time writing down any thoughts that come to mind.

THE ENTHUSIAST

Exploring mystery, celebration, and joy.

#31 Set a timer on your phone to go off every hour today. Every time that timer dings, take one minute, look around, and think of something specific you're thankful for. **Towards the end of the day, consider what God might have been showing you.** Make some notes.

#32 Recreation is just re-creation. It re-creates us. **What do you LOVE to do? Do that today.** Whether it's a bike ride, fishing with buddies, or quietly reading a book at a coffee shop, consider whatever you do as a deep act of worship. How does it feel to worship that way?

#33 Sometimes we just need adventure. Something that radically shakes us out of our ruts and routines. **Jot down a few things that seem scary and out of your comfort zone, but give you a tinge of excitement, and then GO DO THAT THING.** Jump in a river. Pray for a stranger. Shout sing while rollerblade dancing. You do you. How did God meet you in that unknown?

#34 **Today, simply be prepared to say something nice to a stranger.** You might have to go out of your way to find a stranger, but listen for God's prompting and then act. What happened? What did you hear? What did you do?

#35 **Talk to God about the things you are thankful for.** Go into the Crossroads App and do the "Practice Gratitude" exercise on the home screen. What do you want to tell God about your life?

THE INTELLECTUAL

For the deep thinker.

#36: Read Matthew 6:9–13 (The Lord’s Prayer), and write down 15 observations. The first few will come easy, but gold is mined a little deeper.

#37 Make a list of 100 things you are thankful for. ONE. HUNDRED. James 1:17 says that everything good comes from God. If James 1:17 is true, how does it shift your perspective of God?

#38 Read Matthew 4:2–4 in at least three different Bible translations. (Some recommended versions: ESV, CEB, NKJV, MSG, NLT) Then Google “Matthew 4:2–4 Commentary,” and do a little research. What might God be trying to say to you specifically?

#39 Go to the explore tab in the Crossroads App and read or listen to something. What might God be saying to you?

#40 Ask God to show you a topic he might be trying to get your attention on. Greed. Lust. Pride. Unforgiveness. Anger. Then Google what the Bible has to say about that topic and explore it in depth. What did you learn? What do you think God is telling you?

EXERCISE #

DATE

Thoughts/Reflections:

EXERCISE #

DATE

Thoughts/Reflections:

EXERCISE #

DATE

Thoughts/Reflections:

THE SEVEN PROVEN PRACTICES

There are seven proven practices that, if you incorporate them into your life, will supercharge your spiritual growth.

- ↕ **Connect with God Daily.** Like Jesus, carve out time every day to hear from the Creator of the Universe. He just might have a great plan for your life.

- ✠ **Receive Teaching Weekly.** Regularly challenge yourself with good Biblical teaching. Because growth doesn't happen in an echo chamber.

- ✚ **Share Your Story.** Tell others what God has done/is doing in your life in a way that they will receive it. The best way to remember something is to tell it to someone else.

- ↓ **Get Baptized.** Follow Jesus' example and command to be baptized in water. It's a one-time thing with a lifelong impact.

- ↻ **Join Community.** Surround yourself with other believers who can support you, challenge you, and maybe go on a crazy adventure together.

- ↕ **Live Generously.** Honor God first with the resources he has blessed you with. Show God you're serious about his ways and his Kingdom.

- ↔ **Serve Others.** Use your time and skills to advance God's Kingdom and do some good in the world. Change your life by changing someone else's life.
