Learning to Recognize God

journal
Walk around your home. Choose a location for your prayer place. Choose a time every day to go there. While sitting in your place, offer a prayer asking God's blessing on you and your place.

What makes this place special to you? How did you choose this location for your prayer place?

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You are a beloved child of God. God loves you for who you are, not for what you do. Think about that as you create a picture of what you look like to God. Where is the light of God in you? Is there one part of you that is more aware of God's light?

As you look at this picture of you as God sees you, what are you thinking? What do you notice?
SILENCE can be frightening. Do you always have music or the television on because you don’t know what to do with SILENCE? Have you ever had a time when you enjoyed SILENCE? The world, however, is filled with SOUNDS. Rarely is there total SILENCE. Sit absolutely QUIET for one minute and discover what you hear.

Make a list of the sounds you heard.

1. ______________________________  6. ______________________________
2. ______________________________  7. ______________________________
3. ______________________________  8. ______________________________
4. ______________________________  9. ______________________________
5. ______________________________ 10. ______________________________

Would you have noticed them if there were other voices present? What were you thinking about during the silence?

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Alone is not always lonely. Jesus was constantly surrounded by people who wanted him to **PREACH, TEACH, HEAL, AND CHANGE** their lives, so he often went away to be alone with God. How many hours a day do you spend with others? How many hours alone? Have there been times when you wished you could go somewhere by yourself?

Record the number of hours you spend with others and the number you spend by yourself.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours with others</th>
<th>Hours alone</th>
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Finish the following sentences:
I like to be alone when...

The hardest thing about being alone is...
Look at your HANDS. What do you do with your HANDS each day? Place one of your HANDS on your journal page and trace around it. Ask God to help you think of a person your touch could help. In the middle of your HAND outline, write their name and how you will use your helping HANDS for that person.

What happens as you use your helping hands.
How does it make you feel?
How does the person you help feel?

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When you first learned to **PRAY**, you probably were taught to fold your hands, bow your head, or kneel. The position in which you put your body can add to or take away from **PRAYING**. Try **PRAYING** while sitting down and placing your open hands over your heart. Now try **PRAYING** while standing with your arms stretched up to the sky. Hold each position for one minute and end with an “Amen.”

What did it feel like to pray in both of those positions? What other positions can you think of that might add to your praying?
Carefully look back at days 1 through 6 in your journal.
Think about the past week. Are you able to recognize God in you? Were there times you reflected the love of God in the world?

Which day was most helpful to you? Which day was the most difficult? Why?
Do you **SING** in the shower? Do you **PLAY** music when you’re riding in a car? Music is a part of everyday life. The way you **THINK** about God often becomes clear through music. It can **CONNECT** you to God and help you feel peaceful. **CHOOSE** a song that reflects your thoughts about God—a heart song. **SING** or **PLAY** it on a musical instrument. Even if you don’t think it sounds good, remember that God **HEARS** beautiful music in your worship.

When did you first hear that song? How does it make you feel to sing, play, or listen to it?

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IMAGINE that a great fire or flood is moving toward your home. You have ten minutes to GATHER together a few things before you must LEAVE. What will you TAKE? MAKE a list; then WRITE in your journal about why each of these items is important to you. You are a greater treasure to God than the most important item on your list is to you. God VALUES your presence in the world.

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What kinds of things did you save—toys, books, pictures? Are you surprised at what matters most to you?

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Choose a small object that draws your mind to God. It could be anything: a rock, a picture, a note. Place it somewhere you pass by every day. Every time you go by it, really slow down and notice it. Take just a moment to think about who the symbol reminds you of—God who LOVES you and whom you LOVE.

Why does your object remind you of God?

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Keep track in your journal of how many times each day you really noticed your object and thought about God.
Take a Walk in a quiet, natural setting—a park or a quiet street. If a particular plant, insect, cloud, stone, or puddle draws your attention, stop and spend time with it. Touch, smell, look, and listen. See if it has something to teach you.

Day 11

Draw a picture of the part of nature you spent time with.

What did it teach you about God?

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Repeating or writing a small verse of scripture can help focus your mind on God. Use the familiar and powerful scripture Psalm 45:10 NRSV: "BE still and know that I am God." In your journal, write each of the following phrases slowly and prayerfully: "BE still and know that I am God...BE still and know that I am...BE still and know...BE still...BE..."

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How might using this focus practice be helpful in your life?

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Now write the scripture in reverse order: "BE...BE still...BE still and know...BE still and know that I am...BE still and know that I am God. Amen."

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Day 13

Begin to write down your story this week by finishing the phrase, “A time in my life when I felt close to God was...”

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Think about one person you would like to share this story with.
Find a time to sit together and share.
How did it feel?
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Carefully look back at days 8 through 13 in your journal. Think about the past week. Are you able to recognize GOD in you? Were there times you reflected the love of GOD in the world?

Which day was most helpful to you? Which day was the most difficult? Why?
Find a map or a globe of the world. Look at all the nations and find a country other than your own where you know someone or where there is a **COMMUNITY OF CHRIST CONGREGATION**. How far are they from your homeland? Pray for this person or **CONGREGATION**. Feel the way God connects us in the same way the oceans connect the continents.

Use a piece of string or yarn to measure, on your globe or map, the distance between the two countries. Glue it in your journal. Label one end with your name and homeland and the other end with the name and homeland of the person or congregation for whom you are praying.
Day 16

Bring a piece of Bread to your prayer place. Think about all the people and steps it took to make this Bread. Tear the Bread into several small pieces. As you slowly chew each piece, pay attention to its taste, smell, and feel. Offer a prayer of thanksgiving and blessing for those who created this Bread. Ask God to help you find ways to help those who are hungry.

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In your journal list the names of world church leaders, your mission center leaders, and your congregation leaders. If possible, find a picture of each one. Pray for them. Ask God to help them be good leaders.

What do you think would be the hardest part of being a church leader? What would be the best part?

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Everything we have comes from God. One of our gifts is that we can generously GIVE to others. GIVING is one way to worship God. We GIVE because we want to honor God and share God’s love.

Think about your own life. Write about a time when you were a cheerful giver. Are there other ways for you to give?

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If possible find the *Prayer for Peace* on the church Web site www.CofChrist.org/PrayerPeace. Read through the information given about different countries. Ask God to help you understand the needs of these countries. Write your own *Prayer for Peace*.

Think about e-mailing your Prayer for Peace to nstallbaumer@CofChrist.org at Community of Christ headquarters. Your prayer may be selected and offered during the Daily Prayer for Peace held each day in the Temple.
In Psalm 18:2, David is a **Warrior**, so he thinks of God as protection. A **Soccer** player might think of God as the goal to aim for. An artist might think of God as the palette of color. A **Writer** might say, “O Lord, for me you are the Newberry Award.” How would your life connect with God in a psalm?

Write your own psalm by finishing the phrase, “O Lord, for me you are the…”
Come up with as many examples as possible.
Read your psalm out loud to someone you trust.

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Day 21

Carefully look back at days 15 through 20 in your journal. Think about the past week. Are you able to RECOGNIZE GOD in you? Were there times you REFLECTED the love of GOD in the world?

Which day was most helpful to you? Which day was the most difficult? Why?

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"Forgive us for doing wrong as we forgive others" (Matthew 6:12). Do you think it is harder to forgive or to ask for forgiveness? In your journal, list the kinds of things that require forgiveness. Is there something on that list that you have done to someone else? Cut out a paper heart. On it, open your heart to God as you write a prayer asking for forgiveness. Tape or glue your heart prayer onto your journal page.

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Are you ready to ask forgiveness from the person you hurt? If yes, practice what you want to say by writing it in your journal.

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Day 23

Blow up a balloon. Using a permanent marker, write a few words on the balloon about a hurtful time you remember. Maybe you still hold a grudge. Talking it out can help you let go. Ask God for help in knowing how to share your hurt. Then pop your grudge balloon.

Write a short explanation of the hurtful event. What made it so hurtful? What is the hardest thing about letting go of your grudge?

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COMMUNITY OF CHRIST is called to create communities of joy, hope, love, and peace. What do those words look like in a COMMUNITY? Think of COMMUNITIES you are part of: church, school, home, sports teams, musical groups...

Remember and celebrate a time one of your COMMUNITIES created joy. A time one created hope. Created love. Created peace. Offer a prayer of thanksgiving that you are part of these COMMUNITIES.

Draw a picture showing these communities creating joy, hope, love, and peace.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>JOY</th>
<th>HOPE</th>
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<tr>
<th>LOVE</th>
<th>PEACE</th>
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What do these communities have in common?

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Whether it is learning to play an **INSTRUMENT**, making a **QUILT**, perfecting **SKATEBOARD** tricks, or recognizing God in your world, any new learning requires energy. Having a guide who is a good listener and offers a safe space for you to ask questions is helpful. Think about your life. Who is someone who supports you?

Write a note of thanks to your guide. Pray for them as you mail the letter.

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Day 26

Begin with a quiet prayer asking **GOD** to help you become aware of someone who is feeling hurt or left out. Write their name on a piece of paper. Using a flashlight, glow stick, or small lamp, shine its light on that person’s name. Imagine the glow of the light as **GOD**’s love surrounding them. Ask **GOD** to bless them in whatever way is needed. Keep that person in your heart and prayers today.

What words could you say that might help this person feel better?
Write them in your journal.

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Now, what could you do with these words?
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Day 27

Create a cartoon drawing showing you offering the five body prayer: your eyes, your head, your ears, your throat, and your heart. Use this cartoon as a reminder of how to offer a body prayer.

This practice is a prayer of blessing for your body as you open it to feel God’s presence. Place your hands over your eyes. Ask God to help you lovingly see the world. Put your hands on your head. Ask for your mind to stay focused. Place your hands over your ears. Pray that you may pay attention to the sounds around you. Put your hands on your throat and ask God to guide your words. Put your hands over your heart. Ask to receive and share God’s love and peace. Close with an “Amen.”
Carefully look through your entire journal. Are you able to **RECOGNIZE GOD** in you? Were there times you **REFLECTED** the love of **GOD** in the world?

**Day 28**

Which day was most helpful to you? Which day was the most difficult? Why?