



### GOAL

Youth recognize the distractions in their lives and the value of unplugging to connect with God.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- AT** Abstract Thinking
- C** Conversation
- CT** Concrete Thinking
- D** Drama
- G** Game
- M** Music
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



### PRAYER

O, ever-present God who works in all things, in stillness and in chaos. I will focus. I will listen. I will embrace. I will respond.

## THIS SESSION

In today's world, many people remain plugged into sources of information that demand constant attention and interaction. These sources routinely preoccupy the mind, body, and spirit of a person. When we unplug, however, we turn our attention away from these things and create space to keep company with God. We eliminate distractions in order to engage more deeply in our relationships with ourselves, others, nature, and God.

## THE BIBLE STORY

In Matthew 14, Jesus is busy performing miracles and sharing wisdom with his community. People look to him for healing and guidance. Jesus, however, is navigating his own experiences of grief and suffering. In many ways, he is dealing with what we might call burnout.

After John, one of his best friends, tragically dies, Jesus seeks solitude to pray and create space for God's company. As he attempts to withdraw and seek this peace, however, a crowd of people follows him. His disciples encourage Jesus to send the people away, but Jesus has compassion. He heals those who are sick and feeds the multitudes. Immediately after caring for the crowds, he once more withdraws and retreats to the mountainside by himself to pray.

This story illustrates Jesus navigating the balance between unplugging to keep company with God and plugging into the community.

## CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Youth have a lot of experience with technology. It is a tool that connects them with community, teaches them about interests and important issues, and provides entertainment, enjoyment, and enrichment. They are also familiar with the ills of technology. Remember that youth will have different levels of access to different technologies. While they will easily connect *unplugging* with stepping away from social media, video games, and wearing headphones, they will gain a deeper understanding of unplugging as a spiritual discipline if they connect the practice with taking time to care for themselves and foster their relationship with God and creation.

## SESSION PREPARATION

- "Call and Response" (p. 34): Post the "Call and Response" newsprint from session 1 (p. 6).
- Depending on the options you choose:
  - "About Camp" (p. 35): Invite a speaker from a local camp to speak about how camps help people unplug.

# GETTING STARTED

“Call and Response” newsprint

## CALL AND RESPONSE

QC

Lead youth in the following prayer or invite a volunteer to lead:

Draw near to God

**and God will draw near to us.**

When we unplug, we connect with God and others.

**Let us keep company with Jesus.**



## INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

Internet-connected device

## ATTENTION FOR SALE

T C A

Show youth the video “Is Our Attention for Sale? | James Williams” ([bit.ly/FMAttention](https://bit.ly/FMAttention), 4:15).

Invite youth to form pairs. For each of the following questions, challenge youth to think about the answer first and then share their answers with their partner before discussing them further. Once they have answered and discussed both questions, each pair will summarize their conversation for the group.

- ➔ What is competing for your attention?
- ➔ What do you want to be more attentive to?

Paper  
 Drawing supplies

## LIFE WITHOUT SOCIAL MEDIA

A AT C

Distribute paper and drawing supplies to youth. Instruct them to write “Life without Social Media” on the top of the paper. Invite them to draw a picture of what they think the average day would look like if there were no social media or television.

As youth draw, use the following discussion questions to help them wonder together:

- ➔ What does it mean to be unplugged?
- ➔ Why would someone want to be unplugged?
- ➔ When is it helpful to be plugged in?
- ➔ Besides technology, what are other things you are plugged into?

## PRAYER

QC

Explain that, during this prayer, there will be moments set aside for youth to finish your sentences and offer their own words to God. Affirm that youth can pray silently, but that they are also encouraged to share their words with the community.

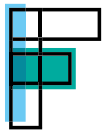
Say the following prayer. Pause after the ellipses to give youth a chance to speak.

O God, we are busy people. We often spend our time . . .

We admit we sometimes fall short of your plans for us. We often . . .

Help us draw near to you. Remind us to . . .

Amen.



## FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

### JESUS TRIES TO UNPLUG

C AT

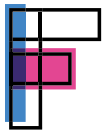
Bibles

Distribute Bibles to youth. Have youth form two groups, Group A and Group B. Group A will read and summarize Matthew 14:6–12. Group B will read and summarize Matthew 14:14–21. Allow the groups to read and work together for about three minutes.

Invite Group A to explain their summary of Matthew 14:6–12 to the whole group. Request all youth read Matthew 14:13 out loud together. Then, invite Group B to explain their summary of Matthew 14:14–21 to the whole group. Have all youth read Matthew 14:22–23 out loud together.

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation about the Scripture passage the youth have just worked through:

- ➔ How do you think Jesus was feeling throughout this story?
- ➔ Why do you think Jesus wanted to withdraw in solitude?
- ➔ What do you imagine Jesus was doing during his alone time? What do you think he was praying about?
- ➔ When are times you need to go off alone? How do you know?



## FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or both options.

### ABOUT CAMP

C X

Guest speaker

Invite the representative from camp to discuss the *unplugged* components of camp ministry.

If your church does not have a relationship with a summer camp, invite youth to describe their experiences at a retreat or camp. Ask them to describe how it felt to be disconnected from the world for a certain amount of time. How did it change the way they engaged with the world?

### OBSERVING THE SABBATH

T C

Internet-connected device

Show the YouTube video “Why Should Christians Observe the Sabbath?” ([bit.ly/FMObserveSabbath](https://bit.ly/FMObserveSabbath), 1:41). After showing the video, use the following questions to help youth process what they watched:

- ➔ What do you know about the Sabbath?
- ➔ Why is it important for Christians to practice the Sabbath?
- ➔ What are some things you already do to observe the Sabbath?
- ➔ What are some things you might start to do to observe the Sabbath?



# PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

## MEDITATION

QC AT

Invite youth to get into a comfortable position for meditation. Consider dimming the lights and playing soft music. Explain that the group will sit together in silence for five minutes. During this time, youth are invited to clear their heads and focus on stillness. Instruct youth to imagine three different boxes: one labeled *thought*, a second labeled *emotion*, and the last labeled *sensation*. Explain that, when the youth experience a thought, emotion, or sensation, they should imagine sorting it into the corresponding box then continue to focus on clearing their head.

Remind youth to inhale deeply through their nose as if they were smelling flowers and exhale through their mouth as if to blow out a candle. Allow five minutes to pass. Calmly instruct youth to focus their attention on their breath and to rejoin the group when ready. Remind youth they can practice this meditation on their own whenever they want

---

Copies of Resource Page 1

## BODY SCAN

QC CT

Invite youth to find a comfortable position. If possible, encourage them to lie on their backs on the floor. Explain that, when we unplug from distractions, we are more capable of making deeper connections with ourselves, our neighbors, creation, and God. Today's activity is a practice about connecting with our body.

After youth are comfortable, encourage them to close their eyes. Begin to read Resource Page 1 out loud to them slowly.

After reading Resource Page 1, invite youth to rejoin the group when they are ready. Distribute copies of Resource Page 1 to youth to practice this meditation when they are at home.

---

Paper  
 Pens

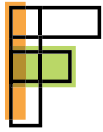
## PLANNING TO PRACTICE

CT

Distribute paper and pens. Instruct youth to write the days of the week across the top of the page. Then, invite them to list their activities for the upcoming week under each respective day.

Ask youth to describe examples of when they think they could practice being *unplugged* in the upcoming week. For example, they may choose not to watch anything during mealtimes or to not use headphones while working out. Perhaps they will resolve not to use their phones while conversing with family members.

After a short discussion, invite youth to mark moments on their personal schedules when they intend to practice being unplugged. If youth do not know when this would fit, encourage youth to plan a new activity on their schedule to practice being unplugged.



## FOLLOWING JESUS

### LET US REMEMBER YOU



For the closing prayer today, invite youth to collectively say, “Let us remember you,” after each line in the following prayer:

God, we are busy and sometimes distracted;

**let us remember you.**

Help us this week to focus on you.

**Let us remember you.**

Everywhere we go and in all we do,

**let us remember you.**

# Body Scan

Begin by taking a deep breath in through your nose. Exhale slowly out of your mouth. Take another deep breath in and feel yourself relax. Breathe out and notice how your body feels. For the next few moments, we are going to scan our bodies and release any tension. Continue to take nice deep breaths as we go.

Let's start with our face. Squeeze your eyes tight and scrunch your eyebrows as tight as you can. On the next exhale, relax your face.

Scrunch your nose as tight as you can. On the next exhale, relax.

Purse your lips so your mouth feels tense. Relax on the next exhale.

Tense all the muscles in your shoulders. On the next big exhale, relax your shoulders and feel them sit comfortable once more.

Flex your biceps as hard as you can. Hold it, and then relax.

Tense your forearms. Relax.

Squeeze your hands into tight fists. As you relax your hands, imagine releasing all the tension you have been feeling in your body through your fingertips.

Flex your abs and feel all the muscles in your torso tense. On the next big exhale, relax and breathe out the tension.

Flex your glutes and feel the muscles around your hips tighten. Relax with your next exhale.

Squeeze your thighs as hard as you can. Breathe out slowly and relax your thighs.

Flex your calves and feel the tension in your lower leg. Relax.

Curl your toes and feel your feet tense and tighten. As you relax, feel your exhale push all the tension out through your toes.

Return to any points of tension or tightness in your body. Continue to breathe and release the tension in those areas.

Take a few more deep breaths. When you are ready, open your eyes and return to the group.