

June 11, 2025

Dear Salem Church Family,

What does your summer look like? It might mean an exhausting outdoor job, a much-needed vacation, time at the lake, family reunions, relaxation and leisure activities, home maintenance projects, or a number of other things. The beginning of summer signals a change of pace, particularly for those with school-age children or working in fields that follow the school calendar.

This change of pace is welcomed, particularly in our region of the country where the summer weather is so pleasant, and provides a reprieve from winter hibernation.

Summer also provides an opportunity for a new approach to your spiritual practices. May the Lord help you remain faithful in your typical spiritual practices, but perhaps find a way to refresh them in ways that align with your summer schedule.

The typical spiritual habits include: Sabbath, Bible reading, prayer, generosity, service, regular fellowship, fasting, meditation, and simplicity. How might you incorporate these habits in fresh ways, given your summer schedule? I would encourage you to take some time this week to reflect on this question and see if you might find ways to strengthen your spiritual habits in a way that leads to rest and renewal, and not busyness and burnout. Here are some ideas to get your spiritual wheels turning, but the possibilities are as many as are the people who imagine them.

- While on vacation, or at the lake, enjoy **Sabbath** in a fresh way, perhaps join Salem's Sunday worship online, and offer a blessing in the chat, or join a church in the community where you find yourself.
- Do your **Bible reading** in a different location, perhaps in an outdoor location that is conducive to rest, **meditation**, and worship.
- If you like walking or biking, spend time in **prayer** while doing these activities, or meet a friend in a park for fellowship and prayer.
- Be **generous** in giving to the ministries of Salem, even if you are absent some Sundays, and to the needs of the people around you. Consider donating equipment, furniture, and clothing to ministries in our community that can use them.
- We are reminded in Hebrews 10:25 not to neglect meeting together for **regular fellowship** and encouragement. Consider changing up the format of your life group, or find a way to meet up with a Christian friend while on vacation.
- The practice of **fasting** might be new for some. If so, consider reading what Scripture says about the practice of fasting, or ask someone you know about their experience with fasting.
- Sometimes "more is less." Find ways to draw near to Christ and to other believers this summer, without being busier or more tired. Strive for **simplicity**.

- Plug into opportunities at Salem to **serve**. Here are some to take note of:
 - + The Salem mobile food pantry will distribute food on July 10.
 - + Boaz Bike Ministry will have a full-day bike workshop on June 14.
 - + Work at the Salem Community Garden is every Monday evening from 6-8 pm.

And by the way, you will be helped along the way in these spiritual habits this summer at Salem as we will have a sermon series titled “21 Days with Jesus.” This series will focus on learning from the spiritual practices of Jesus (June 1, 8, and 15, and then finishing on August 17, 24, and 31). During the weeks in between, the sermon series is titled *Extraordinary*, focusing on less commonly studied Biblical characters.

I would like to close by recognizing and thanking departing elders Gary Edverson, Lance Ziebarth, and Dale Hellevang, and welcoming new elders Matthew Snead and Craig Jasperse.

May God bless you this summer with refreshment and renewal in your body, your mind and your spirit, as you strive to know Christ more and walk more closely with him day by day.

Mark Strand, Elder