



Camp Wyoming in Jones County, Iowa, is a place set apart, a place where trees and wildflowers offer their own kind of worship space. It is at camp, in creation, that God becomes visible in new and wonderful ways.

NINE SPIRITUAL PRACTICES IN NATURE

The sacred space of God’s natural creation provides us a unique opportunity to experience God. Here are some ways you can be intentional about experiencing God in nature. Several come from *A Field Guide to Nature as Spiritual Practice* by Steven Chase.

1. Pause during the day and do a devotional and pray (outside if possible).

- » Set the alarm on your phone to ring at that time.
- » Look out the window if you are inside.

2. Set aside 15 minutes per day to journal.

- » Write about what you have seen, heard, touched, smelled, and tasted today.
- » Use Rachel Hackenberg’s *Writing to God: 40 Days of Praying with My Pen*.
- » Use Martha Grace Reese’s *Unbinding the Soul* to write a prayer journal with a partner.

3. Walk an outdoor labyrinth in silence or while praying.

- » Do a finger labyrinth as an alternative.

4. Take a walk.

- » Pray in silence, or repeat a simple prayer or mantra.
- » Listen to a devotional app on your phone, such as Oswald Chambers’s *My Utmost for His Highest*.
- » Read John 4:35: “Do you not say, ‘Four months more, then comes the harvest’? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe

for harvesting.’” Look around you. What is sacred and ripe in your life that can now be harvested?

- » Walk in the rain or the snow (as long as it isn’t thundering and lightning and you dress appropriately). Feel the water on your face. Remember the waters of your baptism.
- » Walk a contemplative hike with members of your congregation, spending the first half in silence and then reflecting on what that was like. Feel the ground beneath your feet. Listen to the sounds around you.

5. Pray and color outside.

- » Use Sybil Macbeth’s *Praying in Color* for patterns and prayer suggestions if needed.

6. Go outside and lie on your back on the ground.

- » At night, look at stars. Think about God’s blessings and how they are more numerous than those stars you see.
- » During the day, look at the clouds. Watch them closely. Notice the colors you see. Think about what gives you joy and what gives you sorrow.

7. Give yourself the gift of a silent retreat even if it is just for 15

minutes. Turn off your phone, the TV, and the computer, and listen for that still, small voice. Sit outside in silence. What do you hear?

8. Find something from nature—a feather, a nut, an insect, a tree leaf. Hold it in the palm of your hand. Think about how it “shows forth and represents the goodness of God,” a saying from Thomas à Kempis.

9. Go on retreat. Jesus retreated by himself and took close friends with him to pray and be with God. Jesus is a great model to follow. Here are some links to help with that.

- » Stony Point, New York: Cultivating Quiet retreats (stonypointcenter.org)
- » Calvin Crest, California: retreats focusing on meditation, prayer, worship, and song (calvincrest.com)
- » Ghost Ranch, New Mexico: multiple spiritual-practice events based on art, hiking, learning, and solitude (ghostranch.org)
- » Simple, quiet space is offered at many centers for solo, couple, family, and group retreats, such as the hermitage cabin at Clearwater Forest in Minnesota (clearwaterforest.org).
- » To find a PC(USA) center near you: **BookARetreat.com**