

Tiny Holy Things

Finding Sacred in our Ordinary Lives

12 Week Series

Welcome to the 12 Tiny Things Study Series!

Below you will find twelve weeks of content you can use in your congregation. Each week includes a theme, quote, Bible verse, journal prompts and tiny spiritual practices to try.

Consider asking one member of your congregation to share a 5-10 minute story or personal reflection based on the theme and Bible verse. Part of the time can be working through the theme in large group. Part of the time can be spent in small groups reflecting on how the micro-spiritual practices went from the week prior and working through the discussion questions from the current theme. It will work well online or in person.

This packet is a starting point. Take these elements and craft a series that works for you.

You can find additional resources, including meditations, a 30 day daily calendar, and additional small group questions at 12tinythings.com/resources. There are also discussion questions at the end of every chapter in 12 Tiny Things the book.

If you'd like to order multiple copies of 12 Tiny Things for your adult forum participants, or your church library, please contact 1517 media at 877-373-0706 or booksales@1517.media.

The most urgent question of the time: How much is enough?

—Wendell Berry, *The Gift of Good Land*

Maybe you are searching in the branches for what only exists in the roots.

—Rumi

Week 1

Space

An invitation to enough

Theme: Saying no to one thing is saying yes to the possibility of another.

Bible Verse: Matthew 8:18

Jesus was fully human. He took time away. As his reputation as a healer grew, so did the crowds and their demands of him. There are moments in the Gospels we see him carve out space to be alone and to be with his disciples to recharge so that he could be effective in his ministry.

Quote: “Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.”
—Arundhati Roy, War Talk

Tiny Things:

- Say no to something.
- Look up. All the way up. Take in the vastness of the universe and feel the space holding you.
- Block off a time on your calendar that remains untouched. See what unfolds.
- Donate ten things that don't bring you joy. Don't replace them.

Journal Prompts/Discussion Questions:

1. What is one thing you can do to make more space in your mind? Closets? Schedule?
2. What are the lies you tell yourself about not being enough?

Fill in the blank: I'm not _____ enough. Now replace that with a mantra that is true.

Fill in the blank: I am _____. Write your mantra on post-it notes and put them up around your house.

3. What do you need to give up to feel more rested? Take some time to really chart how you spend your time in a week. What do you notice?
4. How does creating more space in your life support your faith journey?

Week 2
Work
An invitation to presence

Theme: Practicing presence is remembering how to live.

Bible Verse: John 4:4-42

Jesus shows presence in his work by really listening to the woman at the well. In listening to her with his heart open, he spoke right to her heart. How can we bring this level of presence to our work and our days?

Quote: “How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.”

—Annie Dillard, *The Writing Life*

“Let the beauty of what we love be what we do.”

—Rumi

Tiny Things:

- Spend the first 20 minutes of your day in the analog world.
- Make your neck long, and roll your shoulder blades down your back, toward your spine so your heart shines out to the world. Bring your full presence to your work.
- Shutdown your computer each day and take conscious breaths when you reboot.
- Put something in your workspace that reminds you of what you value.

Journal Prompts/Discussion Questions:

1. What are 5 things you love to do that you don't get paid for?
2. What are 5 traits you bring to the work you do?
3. What constitutes a bad day at work for you? A good work day? What is one thing you can shift to set yourself up for more good work days?
4. How does deepening your presence at work support your faith journey?

Week 3

Spirituality

An invitation to attention

Themes: Tend to the things you want to grow.

There is no keeping score.

Spirituality is in the noticing.

Bible Verse: Ephesians 3:14-19

Living as a spiritual being means being comfortable with the things that surpass our understanding. We can dwell in mystery. We can leave room for the unexplainable. We can be enchanted by that which is not of this world. We can be awed by the height and depth of God's love being far bigger than our minds can imagine. Rooted in love, paying attention to the vast universe, our spiritual being can thrive.

Quote: "Attention is the beginning of devotion."

—Mary Oliver, *Upstream*

Tiny Things

- Take three breaths, slightly slower and fuller than usual.
- Pick your toes up and place them back on the ground intentionally. Be where you are.
- Set an intention for your day and return to it repeatedly.
- Choose one ordinary task like washing dishes and do it with extraordinary attention.

Journal Prompts/Discussion Questions:

1. In what areas of your life do you catch yourself keeping score?
What are you doing?
Who are you with?
Where are you?
2. When you feel most connected to yourself, to others and to the earth?
3. Choose one of your five senses that you underutilize: _____
4. What are 5 observations you have when you pay more attention?
5. How can deepening your attention feed your faith journey?

Week 4

Food

An invitation to alchemy

Theme: Breaking bread mindfully is everyday alchemy.

Bible Verse: John 21:1-14

Jesus eats breakfast on the beach with his friends. This scene is so tender between Jesus and his friends, eating a simple meal on the shore together. The food and setting is simple, yet the scene is filled with alchemy. Breaking bread with those we love is holy indeed.

Quote: “The making, eating, and sharing of food can be a magical tool for bringing profound change into our lives.”
—Demetria Provas, “Chocolate Alchemy”

Tiny Things:

- Choose one meal to eat fully engaged. Sit down. Close your eyes. Chew slowly.
- Relax your tongue inside your mouth. Notice if that releases tension in your face, jaw and throat.
- Choose a food you eat often and find out where it comes from. Is it possible to support local farmers?
- Make something you love from scratch. Notice how the elements combine to create something new.

Journal Prompts/Discussion Questions:

1. List 5 shortcuts you take around food that don't promote your wholistic health.
Where are you?
Who are you with?
What are you eating?
2. When you leave a meal totally satisfied and nourished?
3. What are five things you could do to share the magic of food with your loved ones and strangers?
4. How can tending to alchemy feed your faith journey?

Week 5
Style
An invitation to alignment

Theme: Curate a life that aligns your radiant inner and outer beauty.

Bible Verse: Psalm 139:1-18

God knows us inside and out. Our Creator took time knitting our being together, and knows how many hairs we have on our heads. It is powerful to be known so intimately in body and being. How can we live from a place of being created in care, seen and known?

Quote: “Fashion changes, but style endures.”
–Coco Chanel

Tiny Things

- Choose one item that is not in alignment with your inner self and give it a new home.
- Tilt your chin up and pull it back just a bit. Reach the crown of your head up. Enjoy the power and ease of alignment.
- Pick an item of clothes or jewelry that you choose to infuse with gratitude. When you put it on, wear and exude gratitude.
- Before your next purchase, think about your investing in quality material in your style.

Journal Prompts/Discussion Questions:

1. What are five words that define you that you'd like to express outwardly be it through your clothes, home or... ?
2. When was a time you tried a fad that just didn't make you feel like you?
3. Describe a room, an outfit, a location, an activity or a person's presence that make you feel like you are home, like you are in alignment.
4. How does celebrating your inner and outer beauty feed your faith journey?

Week 6

Nature

An invitation to wildness

Theme: Look to wildness. There is healing there.

Bible Verse: Genesis 1:24-31

We are creatures. We are created in the context of the web of life. God looks at us and tells us we are very good. When we engage with God's good creation, we can remember we, too, are creatures being held in a vast universe. Our relationship to God's creation invites us to live out of a sense of who we are and whose we are.

Quote: "We need the tonic of wildness."
–Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

Tiny Things

- Step outside. Stand directly on the earth. Come into contact with something wild.
- Hum. On your inhaled, receive the peace of the universe. Exhale, sending gratitude and you-ness back in response.
- Take a walk with no destination. Wander. Listen. Notice.
- Bring a flower, fallen branch or colorful leaf inside. Or nurture a house plant. Remember you are wild.

Journal Prompts/Discussion Questions:

1. What are five things you love to do outside?
Where are you?
Who are you with?
What are you doing?
When you are filled with a sense of wonder?
2. Write about a time you spent in nature when you felt in touch with your wild. How can you infuse more of that in your life today?
3. How does engaging in the healing of nature feed your faith journey?

Week 7

Communication

An invitation to see

Theme: Healthy communication fosters seeing and being seen.

Bible Verse: Mark 8:22-25

Jesus heals the blind man with great compassion. He takes him away from the crowd, leading him by the hand. He uses his own spit, a sign of deep intimacy. He asks the man for feedback, and the man was honest in saying he couldn't see clearly quite yet. The second time worked. Seeing clearly takes time, back and forth, communication, and mutuality. It takes a commitment to relationship and compassionate communication.

Quote: "Being listened to is so closely connected to being loved that most of us feel they are one in the same."

–David W. Augsburger, *Caring Enough to Be Heard*

Tiny Things

- Hand write a letter to someone you care about.
- Close your eyes. Relax your eyeballs. Find your body, your center. Then open your eyes slowly. With eyes refreshed and mind quiet, see anew.
- Pick a room and keep your phone there. Once a month, keep it off all day.
- Pick one of your people and imagine their day hour to hour before you ask them how they are. When they answer, really listen.

Journal Prompts/Discussion Questions

1. List five people who see you clearly with one word they would use to describe you.
2. Who is someone you want to communicate with better? What are three things you could change to set you up for success?
3. How do you use technology to enhance and deepen intimacy that is already established? How are you leaning on it too hard instead of doing the hard work of sacred communication?
4. How can practicing healthy communication feed your faith journey?

Week 8

Home

An invitation to gratitude

Theme: Gratitude, embodied, is to find home within.

Bible Verse: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Part of gratitude is being at peace with what is instead of longing for what isn't. How can we dwell in the moment without trying to manipulate it? How can we find a home in the season we find ourselves knowing that the only constant is change?

Quote: "For the great open secret is this: gratitude is not dependent on our external circumstances."

–Joanna Macy, *Coming Back to Life*

Tiny Things

- Write down three things for which you are grateful.
- Lay on the ground with your feet up the wall. Allow the earth to hold you up. Rise, refreshed with new perspective.
- Change out the pictures in your frames to refresh your gratitude for people, places and memories you adore.
- Choose a candle that represents gratitude and light it once a day.

Journal Prompts/Discussion Questions

1. What about your home overwhelms you? How do you get stuck in negativity?
2. What people, places, words represent home for you?
3. What is one thing you can do to feel more at home in your body? More grateful for your body so you will have a sense of home wherever you go?
4. How does cultivating gratitude feed your faith journey?

Week 9

Sensuality

An invitation to desire

Theme: Allow your body to take up space by wanting what it wants.

Bible Verse: John 12:1-8

Mary took the time to massage Jesus' feet with perfume. It was a very sensual moment, when Mary tended to Jesus' body and there was mutual acknowledgement of physicality and desire. Mary's actions made Judas uncomfortable, yet Jesus confirms that Mary spending time tending to his body had value.

Quote: "We know we must decide whether to stay small, quiet, and uncomplicated or allow ourselves to grow as big, loud, and complex as we were made to be."
–Glennon Doyle, Love Warrior

Tiny Things

- Take a few moments to decide what you really want to drink first thing in the morning.
- Pick a part of your body that you ignore or have negative feelings around and show it physical affection.
- Write down 5 ways you experience pleasure and make time for them in your day.
- Give up something you love for a week and celebrate introducing it back in.

Journal Prompts/Discussion Questions

1. In what ways have you been conditioned to not take up too much space?
2. Finish this sentence ten times in a row and see what surfaces: What I really want is....
3. Which forms of intimacy—physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, sexual—come naturally to you? Who in your life provides that intimacy—a safe space to explore your desires?
4. How does honoring your desire feed your faith journey?

Week 10

Creativity

An invitation to start

Theme: Just start. Remember how it feels to create.

Bible Verse: Acts 7:44 or Exodus 25

In the wilderness, God gave the Israelites a task: building the tabernacle. Having something to build together distracted them from their complaining. Work brings dignity. God asks the Israelites to create so that God could have a tangible home and remind the Israelites that God is there even while the Israelites are in the wilderness. When has creating something from nothing brought you dignity and a sense of worth? How does God call you to be a co-creator, God's hands and feet in the world?

Quote: "Make an empty space in any corner of your mind, and creativity will instantly fill it."
–Dee Hock

Tiny Things

- Get the guitar, knitting needles, paints, or mixing bowl out. Creativity is one action followed by another until there is something new.
- Cup both hands gently over your heart. Move your body to face all four cardinal directions. Your heart can hold in balance every facet of your being.
- Set aside time once a month to be creative with other people.
- Revisit your favorite childhood craft as an adult.

Journal Prompts/Discussion Questions

1. What are barriers for you in starting a new project? What is a tiny first step?
2. What are three ordinary activities (like mowing or cooking) that you can bring a sense of creativity to?
3. How do you like experiencing beauty (consider all five senses)? How can you intentionally take that beauty in and pass it on?
4. How does creating and co-creating feed your faith journey?

Week 11

Learning

An invitation into curiosity

Theme: Playfully explore the edges of your mind, body and being.

Bible Verse: Matthew 15: 21-28

(Jesus and the Canaanite woman's interaction is poignant. The woman, by allowing him to call her a dog in order to save her daughter, caught Jesus' attention and inspired him to reconsider her request. In this moment, we can see learning in Jesus. She incited curiosity in him long enough to change his mind. We don't often think of Jesus as a character who grows and unfolds, but if Jesus can be open to learning as an adult, so can we.)

Quote: "Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow."
-Anthony J. D'Angelo

Tiny Things

- Identify something you'd really like to learn. (A skill, subject matter or person, perhaps). That person could be you.
- Turn your hands so they are facing palms up. Your hands can invite your whole self to be open to newness, curiosity and growth.
- Take a walk around your neighborhood and explore a new corner.
- Break routine and choose a new mode of learning. Have you tried museums, audiobooks, podcasts, documentaries, community ed or hands-on experience?

Journal Prompts/Discussion Questions

1. What is a memory you have from childhood learning? What is one of your experiences of failure that you can now consider a gift?
2. What are three things you are curious about? What is a step you could take toward learning more?
3. Picture yourself in five years. What in what ways would you have liked to have grown, expanded and learned?
4. How can igniting your curiosity feed your faith journey?

Week 12

Community

An invitation to vulnerability

Theme: In vulnerability, we find community.

Bible Verse: Genesis 2: 18-25

(God takes time forming a suitable partner for Adam. God asks for Adam's input. Adam can recognize when he sees his companion. This part of the creation story shows us that the health of our relationships matters to God. God creates as a social beings and wants our relationships to thrive. Taking time to build community is a worthy investment.)

Quote: "Our fundamental desire as human beings is to be close to others, and our society does not allow for that."

–Sharon Abramowitz

Tiny Things

- Introduce yourself to a neighbor, whom you don't yet know.
- Sit on your heels and lean over your thighs to place your forehead on the ground. Place your arms beside your legs. Notice your smallness compared to the vast universe.
- Attend a festival, block party or town hall meeting in your neighborhood.
- Ask for help and receive it graciously.

Journal Prompts/Discussion Questions

1. Finish this prompt: I feel vulnerable when...
2. Where and with whom do you belong?
3. What are three ways you can invest more fully in your local community?
4. How can building community feed your faith journey?