

A woman wearing a blue sweater is shown from the chest down, holding a dark-colored Bible. Her hands are clasped together over the top of the Bible. The background is a plain, light grey color.

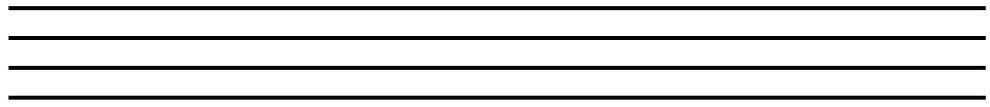
# Ladies' Night Out

ENJOYING JESUS THROUGH HOLY RHYTHMS

*Instead train yourself to be godly. Physical training is good but training for godliness is much better promising benefits in this life and in the life to come."*

- 1 Timothy 4:7-8

# WEEK 1



## FINDING TIME AND OUR PATHWAY TO ENJOY JESUS

### Adapted from “Enjoying Jesus” study from IF:Equip

Jesus lived much like us for the vast majority of His life. He grew up in a family and in a small town, with all the conflict and messiness that can bring. He had chores and obeyed His parents. He listened to teachers. He learned a trade and worked with others. He ate meals with family and friends. He likely went to sleep after a hard day's work with a sore back and blisters on His hands.

And yet, through all of it, Jesus chose to live in a way that maintained nearness with God the Father. We see throughout the Gospels how Jesus incorporated the spiritual disciplines into His daily life. He chose to seek silence and solitude, stepping away from the crowds to pray. He honored the Sabbath as a day of rest. Jesus invites us to a different life. He calls us to the small, everyday things—prayer, silence, solitude, sabbath—because in doing them, we find the rest He speaks of. We learn to enjoy Jesus in the day-to-day and find that the life He has called us to, no matter what it brings, will feel easy and light.

These rhythms aren't meant to just be extra tasks each day, they are meant to be life-giving and meaningful. These sacred practices will train us to center our days around Him focusing on what is eternal rather than temporary and help us be in tune with the Lord and what He is doing in our lives. Nothing in our lives happens without intentionality, if we are honest our approach to spiritual growth is much more random than our approach to most things in our lives. We usually attempt to tackle things like health, fitness, finances, trip planning with an intentional plan. If we want to grow a relationship with a friend, a spouse, or a family member, we have to be intentional with our time and attention, so why don't we do the same with our relationship with Jesus? What could it look like for us to intentionally carve out space in our days for enjoying Jesus? It will likely mean that we will have to rearrange some things, prioritize some things, and let go of others, but anything worth doing usually takes this kind of sacrifice and having an intimate relationship with our Savior is worth it. But you may not know that yet, because you haven't experienced this kind of relationship with Jesus, our hope is that through the next few weeks of practicing these Holy Rhythms, you will begin to enjoy your time with Jesus in a new way.

*There is nothing I can do to transform myself into a person who loves and serves as Jesus did except to make myself available for God to do the work of transforming grace in my life."*

**- Robert Mulholland**

# THIS WEEK'S PRACTICES

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This week we are working on crafting an intentional plan to incorporate these rhythms. There are only two practices to complete and we are recommending you do both of them this week. They are both important to do first before we embark on the rest of our journey to incorporate Holy Rhythms into our lives.



## EVALUATE HOW YOU ARE SPENDING YOUR TIME

*"The most difficult problem is not finding time but convincing myself that this is important enough to set aside the time." - Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline*

For the next week, record what you spend your time on, literally write what you did in each hour block. Record the time spent sleeping, prepping meals, weekly appointments, work, exercise, time with friends and family, house responsibilities etc. Be honest with yourself. This is not to shame you for how you spend your time, only to make you aware of it, so that you can submit your days to the Lord and ask Him to help you incorporate more time with Him into your days.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6:00am							
7:00am							
8:00am							
9:00am							
10:00am							
11:00am							
12:00pm							
1:00pm							
2:00pm							
3:00pm							
4:00pm							
5:00pm							
6:00pm							
7:00pm							
8:00pm							
9:00pm							
10:00pm							

- » When you look back at your week, how much time did you spend on the things you would consider priorities to you? Evaluate if you spent more time on things that are high priorities to you or if you spent more time on things that are less important to you. Based on your answer, does the way you currently spend your time a good representation of what is most important to you?
  
- » Do you see things in your week that you spend too much time on? Are there things you could eliminate, delegate, or ask for help with?
  
  
- » How much time did you spend this week on a screen? (Phone, computer, TV etc...)
  
  
  
- » How much time did you spend the week with the people in your life that are important to you?
  
  
  
- » How much time did you spend this week growing your relationship with the Lord or caring for your soul?
  
  
  
- » As you look back at your week, evaluate logical times for you to begin to infuse spiritual rhythms and make a plan for how you might begin to do that next week.
  
  
  
- » What changes do you want to make based on your evaluation of your week?
  
  
  
- » If you already make regular space in your schedule for these rhythms, list an area or two you want to be more intentional in this year.

# 2

## HOW DO YOU BEST CONNECT WITH GOD?

We all have unique ways that we connect, commune, and relate to God. What works for us might not work for our spouse, kids, or friends. Most of us will have a predisposition to 2-3 pathways that we gravitate to and that reflect how we best draw near to God. One of the great benefits of knowing our spiritual pathway is that it frees us up to build on the ways we best connect with God without feeling guilty about the spiritual pathways we find less effective. Use this assessment to see your top 3 ways of connecting with the Lord.

### SPIRITUAL PATHWAYS TEST

Respond to each statement below according to the following scale on your answer sheet:

**3** = Consistently/definitely true of me

**2** = Often/usually true of me

**1** = Once in a while/sometimes true of me

**0** = Not at all/never true of me

1. When I have a problem, I'd rather pray with people than pray alone.
2. In a church service, I most look forward to the teaching.
3. People who know me would describe me as enthusiastic during worship times.
4. No matter how tired I get, I usually come alive when a challenge is placed before me.
5. Spiritual reality sometimes feels more real to me than the physical world.
6. I get distracted in meetings or services if I notice details in the surroundings that haven't been attended to.
7. A beautiful sunset can give me a spiritual high that temporarily blocks out everything bothering me.
8. It makes me feel better about myself to hang out with people I know and like.
9. I've never understood why people don't love to study the Bible in depth.
10. God touches me every time I gather with other believers for praise.
11. People around me know how passionate I feel about the causes I'm involved in.
12. I experience a deep inner joy when I am in a quiet place, free from distractions.
13. Helping others is easy for me, even when I have problems.
14. When faced with a difficult decision, I am drawn to walk in the woods, on the beach, or in some other outdoor setting.
15. When I am alone too much, I tend to lose energy or get a little depressed.
16. People seek me out when they need answers to biblical questions.
17. Even when I'm tired, I look forward to going to a church service.
18. I sense the presence of God most when I'm doing his work.
19. I don't understand how Christians can be so busy and still think they're hearing from God.

20. I love being able to serve behind the scenes, out of the spotlight.
21. I experience God in nature so powerfully I'm sometimes tempted not to bother with church.
22. I experience God most tangibly in fellowship with a few others.
23. When I need to be refreshed, a stimulating book is just the thing.
24. I am happiest when I praise God together with others.
25. "When the going gets tough, the tough get going" - that's true about me!
26. My family and friends sometimes tease me about being such a hermit.
27. People around me sometimes tell me they admire my compassion.
28. Things in nature often teach me valuable lessons about God.
29. I don't understand people who have a hard time revealing personal things about themselves.
30. Sometimes I spend too much time learning about an issue rather than dealing with it.
31. I don't think there's any good excuse for missing a worship time.
32. I get tremendous satisfaction from seeing people working together to achieve a goal.
33. When I face a difficulty, being alone feels most helpful.
34. Even when I'm tired, I find I have the energy and desire to care for people's problems.
35. God is so real when I'm in a beautiful, natural setting.
36. When I'm tired, there's nothing better than going out with friends to refresh me.
37. I worship best in response to theological truth clearly explained.
38. I like how all the world's problems - including mine - seem unimportant when I'm praising God at church.
39. I get frustrated with people's apathy in the face of injustice.
40. If the truth were told, I sometimes feel guilty for enjoying silence and solitude so much.
41. I am happiest when I find someone who really needs help and I step in and offer it.
42. Others know that if I'm not around, I'm most likely outside in a beautiful place.
43. People around me describe me as a people person.
44. I often read lots of books or articles to help me work through a problem.
45. When I get overwhelmed, there's nothing like a good worship service to get me back on track.
46. I should probably take more time to slow down, but I really love what I do, especially in ministry.
47. Sometimes I spend too much time mulling over negative things people say about me.
48. I experience God's presence as I counsel some who is struggling or in trouble.
49. When I see natural beauty, something wonderful stirs in me that is difficult to describe.

# ANSWER SHEET

Total each column and go to the next page to score your results. The highest number identifies your preferred spiritual pathway; the next highest number, your secondary pathway.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	32	33	34	35
36	37	38	39	40	41	42
43	44	45	46	47	48	49
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>A</b> Relational	<b>B</b> Intellectual	<b>C</b> Worship	<b>D</b> Activist	<b>E</b> Contemplative	<b>F</b> Serving	<b>G</b> Creation

Once you know your top three, use the "tips to grow" section this week to add something new to your rhythm.

## SPIRITUAL PATHWAYS RESULTS

**A. RELATIONAL** - I connect best to God when I am in community and doing life with others.

- **Tips to grow:** When you are with friends, go past surface level and explore deeper questions of faith with your friends. Be more transparent and vulnerable with trusted friends. Share what God is teaching you & ask friends to hold you accountable.
- **Things to be aware of:** Don't rely on your community solely for your spiritual growth, be sure you are cultivating your own personal relationship with Jesus along the way. Don't let your social time get in the way of your own personal time with Jesus.

**B. INTELLECTUAL** - I connect best to God when I learn: gaining insights about God and life with him.

- **Tips to grow:** Use resources like [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) or the Theology Handbook or Bible Handbook from [thedailygraceco.com](http://thedailygraceco.com) to deepen your study of God's Word. Use an ESV Study Bible or NLT Filament Bible that includes detailed study material. Journal what you are learning and process what you will do with this knowledge. Share the knowledge that you are learning with others, maybe consider leading a group or mentoring someone.
- **Things to be aware of:** Be sure you don't become all head knowledge with no heart, be sure that you are kind and gracious in how you share your knowledge with others. Be sure your wisdom doesn't make you self-righteous. Take time to regularly assess if the things you are learning from the Lord are moving from your head to change your heart and your actions.

- C. WORSHIP** - I connect best to God when I am celebrating God's goodness with thanksgiving and praise through worship.
- **Tips to grow:** Take time to notice & enjoy every good and perfect gift acknowledging that it is from the Lord. Keep a running gratitude list to track the goodness of God you see throughout your day. Incorporate worship music into your days during tasks that you don't necessarily enjoy or in moments that things are hard.
  - **Things to be aware of:** Remember that not everyone praises the Lord in the same way so beware of comparing your preferred way of worshipping to others. You can worship God anywhere and any time, so be sure that you don't box yourself in to worshipping only on Sundays or when the worship meets all your personal preferences, be open to letting God work no matter the circumstances.
- D. ACTIVIST** - I connect best to God when actively engaging with others to meet challenges, serve a cause, accomplish a goal or face injustice.
- **Tips to grow:** Find local and global causes that you can support with your time, action and financial support. Spend time intentionally praying for the injustices that burden your heart, pay attention to specific people and places that God lays on your heart throughout the day and stop to say a prayer. Ask God to show you ways that you can engage with those needs in a tangible way. Check out our local partners if you need some ideas at <https://www.graceclarksville.com/local-outreach/>
  - **Things to be aware of:** God has laid specific causes and passions on each of our hearts, so don't assume the worst of someone because they don't share the same burdens as you. Don't burn yourself out meeting the needs of others to the detriment of your own soul and relationship with the Lord.
- E. CONTEMPLATIVE** - I connect best to God through quiet prayer, being absorbed with God in solitude.
- **Tips to grow:** Work to mark out good chunks of time for solitude with the Lord, you likely need it more than others might. Have a plan for what you will read, study or pray during that time, keep scrap paper and jot down anything that distracts you from focusing on the Lord. Take a walk with no distractions and let God lead and guide your thoughts. Make a plan to put what God shares with you in your prayer and reflection time into action.
  - **Things to be aware of:** Be sure to strike a good balance of solitude and quiet with engagement with others in your week. Contemplatives are often more on the introvert side, so be sure not to keep all that God reveals to you to yourself, it is important that you have trusted relationships where you can share what God is showing you and also so you can be held accountable.
- F. SERVING** - I connect best to God while completing Kingdom tasks, offering God's compassion to those the hurting or struggling.
- **Tips to grow:** Ask someone to join you in serving in order to build a deeper relationship with them. Be a noticer of the needs around you and see if there are small unmet needs that you can enter into. (a neighbor/friend who needs help around the house or with her kids or a meal, a cashier who needs a smile and connection point, etc...)
  - **Things to be aware of:** Be sure you aren't serving with the wrong motivation of people pleasing or gaining your worth from what you do. Give your "best yes" to the things where your gifts can be used to the glory of God, don't say yes to every opportunity.
- G. CREATION** - I connect best to God in nature, appreciating the beauty and majesty and wonder of His creation.
- **Tips to grow:** Read your Bible & Journal outside in nature. Take a personal retreat for one day a year (or more if you can swing it) to be in nature and enjoy the Lord. When you are out enjoying nature, listen to God's Word, listen to worship music, or talk with the Lord about all your concerns as you soak in the beauty of His creation.
  - **Things to be aware of:** Although you connect with the Lord best in nature, don't see your time in nature as a replacement for fellowship with a body of believers in a local church.

» What did you learn by finding out how you connect best with God?

» How might knowing this change how you incorporate Holy Rhythms into your days?

» Did you try anything new this week based on your spiritual pathway?

# WEEK 2

## ENJOYING JESUS THROUGH PRAYER

**Read Matthew 6:5-14, Luke 11:1-13, James 5:13-16**

Last week we looked at how we most naturally connect with God and we worked to find space in our schedules to spend more time with him so each week we will focus on incorporating one rhythm into our days. We will start with prayer. Prayer is a lifeline for our souls. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Never stop praying." Prayer is intended to be a rhythm of life, like breathing. Prayer does not have to be relegated to certain times of the day with fancy words. You don't have to use a prayer journal or have a prayer list to "get it right" We simply have to surrender our hearts to Him and quiet internal and external distractions to focus on Him.

Prayer tends to be a difficult practice for us as we don't always feel like we know how to do it. We have to acknowledge that it is hard and be willing to grow in this over time. The truth is that prayer is a vital part of experiencing a deeper relationship with God. We know that relationships are better when we communicate openly and honestly with each other and the same is true with our relationship with God.

Prayer is quite simply a way to hear from God and a way to talk with God. It is not intended to be used as a method to go to God as a magic genie in the sky who will give us exactly what we ask. Instead, prayer is meant to shape, train, and form our hearts and our actions to look more like Him. God is always there to commune with us through prayer, there are no perfect words or perfect way to pray. He just wants us to come to Him with open hands and hearts in desperate need of hearing from Him. Our prayers can be seemingly simple requests or big bold requests. Nothing is too small for Him and nothing is too big. Prayer can simply be a moment when we quiet our hearts and limit distractions to talk with Him and leave space to listen for His voice. As we begin to incorporate the practice of prayer into our days, it will become a more natural rhythm in our lives. What a beautiful thing it is that we have a God available to us at all times through prayer, we can be in constant communion with Him pouring out our deepest longings and fears, and He is there to meet us with His love, comfort, power, and strength.

Let us learn to trust the Lord's grace in the process, as we mature to enjoy the taste of prayer for it's glorious purpose and benefit. As we press in and learn to experience the beautiful fellowship and benefits of the Father's communion with us, as our souls are stirred out of their lethargic slumber. Prayer awakens us. Begin where you are and be willing to rest in the hope and vision of where you are going. Our goal is FULL communion with our Heavenly Father.

## HELPFUL RESOURCES ON PRAYER

- *Every Moment Holy - Liturgy/Prayer Book* - [everymomentholly.com](http://everymomentholly.com)
- *Daily Grace Prayer Calendar* - [thedailygraceco.com](http://thedailygraceco.com)
- *Val Marie Prayer Journals* - [valmariepaper.com](http://valmariepaper.com)

*"There is a moment between intending to pray and actually praying that is as dark and silent as any moment in our lives. It is the split second between thinking about prayer and really praying... How easy it is, and yet between us and the possibility of prayer there seems to be a great gulf fixed: an abyss of our own making that separates us from God." - Emilie Griffin*

# THIS WEEK'S PRACTICES

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You don't have to try all of these, but at least pick one or two to try this week. Record at the end what was meaningful to you, what you enjoyed, what you didn't enjoy.

1

## START THE DAY WITH PRAYER

**Read Mark 1:35** - *"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."*

Jesus recognized the importance of starting his morning with prayer, and it should be an example to us. Imagine how important it is to implement this rhythm of morning prayer into your life, it will help you emerge ready to face every day. Often we open our eyes and are immediately bombarded with insecurity, discouragement, loneliness, doubt... but what if the first thing we do is take those concerns and emotions to Him? How would it shape our days if we went to the Lord first before the pressures and the demands of the day hit and asked for His help? God promises to be our comforter and help, but we have to give him an opportunity to do just that. If we don't make space for him, how will he meet us where we need him the most? Here's some ideas for morning prayer:

- Open the YouVersion app on your phone and use the verse of the day to guide your prayer, or open to Psalms, many of the Psalms are great to launch your prayers.
- Keep a book of prayers by your bed, so you can grab it first before your phone.
- Keep a journal by your bed and jot down things you need to release to the Lord and things you are grateful for.
- Use a guided prayer app like Lectio 365 or Abide.

Use the following prayer from the prayer book *Every Moment Holy* to start and see where your conversation with Him goes from there:

*Meet me, O Christ, in this stillness of morning. Move me, O Spirit, to quiet my heart. Mend me, O Father, from yesterday's harms. From the discords of yesterday, resurrect my peace. From the discouragement of yesterday, resurrect my hope. From the weariness of yesterday, resurrect my strength. From the doubts of yesterday, resurrect my faith. From the wounds of yesterday resurrect my love. Let me enter this new day, aware of my need, and awake to your grace.*

*"The first hour of the morning is the rudder of the day." - Rebekah Lyons*

- » What keeps you from incorporating this rhythm of morning time with Jesus?
- » What does your current morning routine look like? Is it hurried and hustled or peaceful and calm? Which do you prefer?
- » What adjustments could you make to start your morning off more peaceful and calm?
- » Was practicing Morning Prayer helpful to you?
- » What stood out to you as you prayed?
- » Was it meaningful, do you think it will help you grow in your prayer rhythm?

## 2

**END YOUR DAY WITH A PRAYER OF EXAMINATION**

*"The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results."*  
-James 5:16b

Evaluating what's going on in your heart is hard but important work, but this evaluation does not happen without intention. Until you slow down and get still and quiet, you can't really know what your heart needs. We don't always like to get still and quiet because it can be uncomfortable to sit and examine our heart and confess to the Lord all our worries, anxieties, and sins. In addition to confessing and evaluating, we need to be able to sit with the Lord long enough for Him to reveal to us that we are known, loved, and forgiven. Peace cannot happen without the discipline of self-examination. We cannot heal what is hidden deep in our hearts that we don't acknowledge. The enemy wants to keep those things in the dark, but they lose their hold on us once we acknowledge them and bring them into the light.

Once you realize that you have some heart work to do, it's easy to spiral into regret, shame, and guilt, but it is a much better practice to look forward and not backward. There is a path forward that is free of guilt, shame, and anxiety. This heart work begins with examining and confessing which is our part and it ends with forgiveness and freedom which is God's part.

**Carve out some time to end your day with a prayer of examination, use the prompts below to guide you:**

- **Pray Psalm 46:10** - Lord, help me to be still and know your love for me.  
Thank God for his presence with you throughout the day and name some things you are grateful for.
- **Pray Proverbs 4:23** - Above all else, God guard my heart, for everything flows from it.  
Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any attitudes or actions that did not reflect the character of Christ or the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23 - "the Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."
- **Pray Lamentations 3:22-23**. God your steadfast love never ceases; your mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.
- **Pray Psalm 139:23-24**. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life."
- **Ask the Lord, "Search Me"**  
Search my thoughts and actions. Give me a clear picture of my motivations. What might I need to do differently in my relationships? How might I need to apologize and lean into your forgiveness and rest in the fullness of your grace? How might I need to offer that forgiveness and grace to others? What might need to look different in my schedule, priorities, and decisions? How might I need to ask for help? Reveal any sins that I need to confess and ask forgiveness for.
- **Ask the Lord, "Know Me"**  
Lord, what worries, frustrations, or wounds do I have that I need to acknowledge and trust into your care? Help me release my anxious feelings and thoughts to you. I want to believe that you are good and kind and able to help me with whatever I need no matter the circumstance, but help my unbelief. Heal my heart where it feels broken and help me to see the good of who you are and what you are doing in my midst. Such vulnerability to be fully known can be scary, but I choose to trust you because I am fully known and fully loved by you.
- **Ask the Lord, "Lead Me"**  
Lord, give me the direction, help, support, and confidence I need to become more like you. Help me make decisions based on what will bring you glory. Show me through your Word more of who you are and your plan for how you created me. Bring to mind any godly friends that can pray with me and help me seek wise counsel for the areas that feel overwhelming and hard.

*"But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness."* 1 John 1:9

- » How could confessing and releasing some of our burdens, sins, and guilt to God help us find deep and lasting rest?
- » Why do we cling to things like shame, defeat, or guilt instead of releasing them to the God that wants to heal and forgive and free us from those things?
- » Do you have a trusted friend or counselor to process this heart work with? If not, maybe reach out to someone at Grace.
- » What stood out to you as you used the Examination Prayer? Was it meaningful, do you think it will help you grow in your prayer rhythm?

### 3

## USE THE PRAY ACRONYM AS A GUIDE FOR PRAYER

*"Of all spiritual disciplines prayer is the most central because it ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father."* **Richard Foster** - *Celebration of Discipline*

### **P - PRAISE**

Praise the Lord for all He has done for you, consider listing the blessings you see and the things you are grateful for.

Praise God for who He is, consider focusing on a few attributes of His character.

Praise God for His faithfulness to you.

### **R - REPENT**

Ask God to search your heart, be still and honest with yourself as you name the sin in you. Are my thoughts, words and actions honoring him? What are my motivations? Am I relying on my own strength or His?

Ask for His forgiveness. Ask the Lord to give you a clean heart and a renewed passion to pursue holiness. Thank him for his grace & mercy

If there are places He reveals that you have bitterness, resentment or unforgiveness in your heart, ask Him for help in offering forgiveness to those who have wronged you.

## **A - ASK**

Present to the Lord your requests. Start with others and then move to yourself.

Pray over specific family members and friends, your spouse and children.

Pray for your neighbors, for our city, for the leaders of our churches and schools, as well as local and national leaders.

If someone specific comes to mind during your prayer time, make a point to ask them if there is anything they need prayer for. People are often humbled to know that someone is praying for their specific requests.

When praying for others, consider texting them a verse or prayer in the moment.

Release your own worries, concerns, and requests to Him and ask for His guidance, praying for all the other things first often shapes how you pray for yourself.

## **Y - YIELD**

Acknowledge that He is the Lord of your life therefore you will submit your heart and emotions to His authority.

Acknowledge that because He is Lord of your life, His way is better than yours and He gets to guide your life.

Acknowledge that He is sovereign so you surrender your plans over to Him in exchange for His bigger plan.

» Was using the PRAY acronym helpful to you?

» What stood out to you as you used it?

» Was it meaningful? Do you think it will help you grow in your prayer rhythm?

## SET YOUR ALARM FOR 3 PRAYER INTENTIONAL TIMES EACH DAY

### FIRST PRAYER OF THE DAY: BREATHE PRAYER

Inhale—what you're asking God to bring into your life, and exhale what you're asking God to carry for you, so that you can release it as you breathe out. Pray these scriptures over yourself. Keep a journal nearby in case God brings something or someone to mind to pray for in these moments.

#### Inhale courage/exhale fear.

*"So be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid and do not panic before them. For the Lord your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you."* - **Deuteronomy 31:6**

#### Inhale peace/exhale worry, fear, and anxiety.

*"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."* - **Phillippians 4:6-7**

*"Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith? So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today."* - **Matthew 6:27-30, 34**

#### Inhale hope/exhale despair.

*"And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love."* - **Romans 5:5**

*"I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit."* - **Romans 15:13**

#### Inhale comfort/exhale chaos.

*"All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ."* - **2 Corinthians 1:3-5**

*"When doubts filled my mind, your comfort gave me renewed hope and cheer."* - **Psalms 94:19**

### MID DAY PRAYER - GUIDED PRAYER MEDITATION

It's hard to pause mid-day to focus on prayer, but it's often the time of day that we need to reset and refocus on the Lord. Use an app like Lectio 365 or Abide to stop and do a guided prayer meditation

Meditate on the verse and prayer from the app, sit in quiet with that prayer for an extended period of time. Record what you feel God was saying to you through your time of prayer.

## **EVENING PRAYER - REFLECTION PRAYER**

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you reflect on your day. Identify times throughout the day when you experienced God's love, presence, guidance, protection. Did God teach you something new about himself today?

Were there attitudes or behaviors that you need to confess, repent, and ask forgiveness for?

Record a list of things you are grateful for.

- » Was intentionally stopping to pray 3 times each day helpful to you?
  
- » What stood out to you as you did it?
  
- » Was it meaningful? Do you think it will help you grow in your prayer rhythm?

# 5

## **GO ON A PRAYER WALK WITH JESUS**

- Acknowledge Jesus and ask him to walk with you. Invite him to speak to you
- Walk with no agenda or intended destination:
  - » Notice everything inside of you and outside of you.
  - » Talk with Jesus, ask Him questions, pour out your worries and desires to Him. Then listen to what He is saying to you.
  - » Let yourself wander to what catches your eye or pause to rest and sit.
  - » As things pop into your mind, bring those before the Lord.
  - » As people pop into your mind, pray for them.
- Be fully present with no distractions.
- Breathe deeply through the walk to release the tensions and worries of the day.
- End with gratitude: Thank God for walking with you.
  
- » Record your Prayer Walk thoughts.
  
- » What stood out to you as you walked? Did God reveal something to you? Did you feel God's presence? Did you find yourself noticing more the longer you walked?
  
- » Was it meaningful, do you think it will help you grow in your prayer rhythm?

## 6

**USE THE LORD'S PRAYER AS A FRAMEWORK FOR YOUR OWN PRAYER**

Open your Bible to Matthew 6:9-13, Recite each section of the Lord's Prayer, then spend some time praying through each topic.

**PRAISE and HONOR** - Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy.

- Recognize God for who he is
- Praise him as our loving heavenly Father who is close and who cares
- Praise him for his holiness
- Pray through some of God's other attributes

**KINGDOM** - May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

- Pray for the government and all who are in local and national leadership that they might honor the Lord in their decisions
- Pray for the church and it's leaders that they might be faithful to what the Lord has called them to
- Pray for the spread of the gospel through local and global missionaries
- Pray for people in your own circle of family and friends who need to welcome Jesus into their lives
- Pray for those who are struggling with health or other issues - that God's will would be done in the situation and that his kingdom would be advanced through it

**PROVISION** - Give us today the food we need

- Ask God to provide the things that you need to get through the day , thank Him for His provision
- Ask God to provide spiritual nourishment for you - a Word from him that would encourage you for the day
- Pray for the basic needs of others for those who are in need, be open to where He might be leading you to help provide for others.

**FORGIVENESS** - and forgive us our sins as we have forgiven those who sin against us.

- Examine your life and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal your own sinful attitudes and actions, ask God's forgiveness
- Thank God for the forgiveness that is ours through the death & resurrection of Jesus
- Set a new course of action or plan that moves towards holiness.
- Pray for those who have sinned against you, ask God to help you forgive them, regardless of whether those people recognize their need for forgiveness

**PROTECTION** - And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.

- Ask God to get you and others through the tough times.
- Pray for protection from all that is evil & that fear will not keep you from following after the things of the Lord.
- Pray that hard seasons draw you closer to the Lord.
- Pray for the safety for those facing persecution around the world

- » Was using the Lord's Prayer as a guide helpful to you?
- » What stood out to you as you used it?
- » Was it meaningful, do you think it will help you grow in your prayer rhythm?

*Prayer for the Christian is not merely talking to God but responding to the One who has initiated toward us. He has spoken first. This is not a conversation we start but a relationship into which we've been drawn. His voice breaks the silence. Then in prayer we speak to the God who has spoken. Our asking and pleading and requesting originate not from our emptiness but his fullness. Prayer doesn't begin with our needs but with his bounty. Its origin is first in adoration and only later in asking. Prayer is a reflex to the grace he gives to the sinners he saves. It is soliciting his provision in view of the power he has shown."*

- David Mathis, *Habits of Grace*

# WEEK 3

## ENJOYING JESUS BY SPENDING TIME IN GOD'S WORD

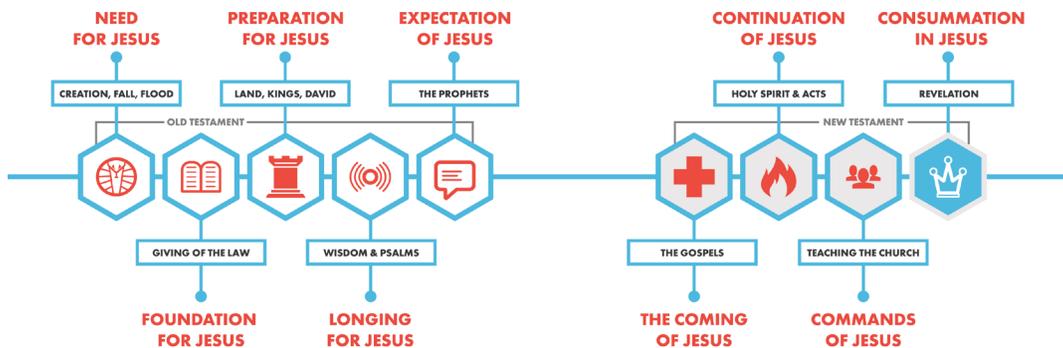
Read Psalm 19:7-11, 2 Timothy 3:14-17, John 17:17

David Mathis says in his book, *Habits of Grace*, "we must see his listening to us in prayer in relation to our listening to him in his word." As we move on from the rhythm of prayer, it's important to realize that these rhythms often work together and weave in and out of each other. Prayer and God's Word go hand in hand. Why is reading God's Word so important to our spiritual growth? It is the primary way that God speaks to us, reveals His character to us, and reveals to us His plan of redemption. His Word is where we can go to know what God would say about the circumstances of our lives. His Words are life-giving, encouraging, wise, humbling, kind, generous, loving, correcting, compassionate, and fair. We need our lives to be covered by His words so that we aren't broken down by the words of the world. We will enjoy reading scripture more if we move beyond just reading the words and find ways to engage with what we've read in a deeper, more meaningful way and let the words move from our heads to our hearts.

So how do we enjoy Jesus by reading God's Word? We start by realizing that Jesus is present throughout all the pages of scripture from Genesis to Revelation, so it's important for us to be looking for Him in every page.

"When Jesus was tempted, scripture flowed from his lips. When Jesus was challenged, scripture flowed from his lips. When Jesus was crucified, scripture flowed from his lips. One of the ways to live like Jesus is to internalize scripture, so that when we are cut, it spills out." - Rich Villodas

## JESUS COVER TO COVER



» Does reading God's Word feel more like a duty or a delight right now?

# THIS WEEK'S PRACTICES

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You don't have to try all of these, but at least pick one or two to try this week. Record at the end what was meaningful to you, what you enjoyed, what you didn't enjoy.

]

## JOURNALING SCRIPTURE

*"Take every word as spoken to yourself, with this essential anchor in place: Seek to understand first how God's words fell on the original hearers, and how they relate to Jesus' person and work, and then bring them home to yourself." - David Mathis, Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines*

Journaling Scripture is not just about a better understanding of the content of the Bible; it can also help you meet with God in His Word. In *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Donald Whitney writes, "By slowing us down and prompting us to think more deeply about God, journaling helps us feel more deeply (and biblically) about God. It provides an opportunity for the intangible grays of mindwork and heartwork to distill clearly into black and white. Then we're better able to talk to God with both mind and spirit." When journaling Scripture, the goal is to record and reflect on your raw thoughts and feelings when you read, ask questions, search for patterns, and develop your own thoughts with the Holy Spirit as your guide. Express your heart to God and interact with his Word in whatever way best suits you. Journaling is not just about writing! If you are a visual learner who responds to colors and pictures, try writing with different colored pens and markers, doodling, or creating your own drawings to depict a Scripture passage to better understand the story. Before you start reading scripture, on a scrap paper, write down any worries or distractions, perhaps as a prayer, as a way of giving them over to God before you begin reading.

You can use a separate journal, you may wish to write directly in the margins of your Bible, or they even make journaling Bibles as well as journals specifically for each book of the Bible. (Check out Crossway.org for options)

If you are already doing a Bible study or Bible reading plan, just use those passages to try journaling. Here are some suggestions if you need help to get started: **Psalms 19, Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, Matthew 5:1-12, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Galatians 6:1-10**

Here's a guide to get started, it might take you a few days to work through a longer passage:

- Write out the verses that stood out to you.
- Record questions you have about the passage (if you have time dig into to see if you can study those questions deeper using *BibleGateway.com* or a *Study Bible*).
- Write a truth from the passage.
- Write action steps for yourself based on your reading.
- Write a praise to God for a promise that was meaningful to you.
- Write prayers for yourself or others that were prompted by the passage.
- Write a confession because you've fallen short of an action in the passage.
- Ask God for help in living out a passage.

Eventually, your journaling style will become personal and unique, which is exactly as it should be. The goal is not to follow a strict pattern but to express yourself, seek clarity, and most importantly, to experience growth and new depth in your relationship with God.

- » Was journaling Scripture helpful to you?
  
- » What stood out to you as you did it?
  
- » Was it meaningful? Do you think it will help you grow in the rhythm of studying God’s Word?

## 2

## MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE

*Read Psalm 19:7-14, Psalm 119:1-16*

Adapted from Bible Gateway’s Abide Bible Initiative © 2014 by Phil Collins, PhD.

One of the best ways to move scripture from your head to your heart is to memorize it. Having a passage memorized makes the process of reflection available to you at all times. Memorizing Scripture allows you to dwell continuously on a passage throughout the day. In a time when Bibles are readily available and searchable on our phones, it might seem that the work it takes to memorize Scripture is not worth the effort. Most of us don’t memorize much of anything, so why should we memorize the Bible?

Memorized verses will come back to you in times you need it, in times of temptation, doubt, or sadness. Jesus combated the half-truths of Satan by quoting from the scripture that he had memorized as a young man (in Matthew 4:1-11, Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy and Psalms). Psalm 119:11 is clear about the memorizing Scripture and its power to help you resist temptation: “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” When you need encouragement, comfort, or strength to stand firm in your faith, God’s Word will be readily at hand.

Memorizing Scripture will help you grow in your knowledge of, love for, and obedience to God. The truths of the Bible will soak into your life, changing your understanding of what is right and good. It will bring a deeper peace into your life, and will be used by God to renew your mind.

Memorizing Scripture is also helpful so you can bless others when you have a passage readily available to share with them. Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.”

### TIPS TO START MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE:

- Start small. Pick a few verses or a short passage. A few verses that might be good to start with: **Proverbs 3:5-6, Romans 12:1-2, Philippians 4:8, Hebrews 4:15-16, 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, Matthew 11:28-30, Colossians 3:12-17**
- The goal isn’t the quantity of Scriptures memorized; the goal is to reflect on a passage and let God’s Word impact your life.
- Start by reading through the passage several times.
- Write the passage a few times, maybe even get a few index cards to write it on and put in places you will see it throughout the day, put one in your purse.

- Spend a few minutes meditating on what the passage means to you, maybe even turn it into a prayer.
- Review your memory passages often to keep them on your mind throughout the day and so that over time you will not forget them. Listen to it on a Bible app. Say It Aloud. Use a Scripture Memory App (see below) Try to set it to a tune to sing it or make up motions to help you remember.
- If possible, find someone else to memorize Scripture with you...a friend, your spouse or your children. That way, you can keep each other accountable to stick with the program.

#### RESOURCES TO HELP WITH SCRIPTURE MEMORY:

- *Verses app* or *The Bible Memory app*
  - *Dwell Scripture Memory Temporary Tattoos* - [dwelldifferently.com](http://dwelldifferently.com)
  - *The Bible Memory Project* - [biblememproject.com](http://biblememproject.com)
  - *Write the Word Journals* from *Cultivate What Matters* - [cultivatewhatmatters.com](http://cultivatewhatmatters.com)
- » Was memorizing Scripture helpful to you?
- » What stood out to you as you did it?
- » Was it meaningful, do you think it will help you grow in the rhythm of studying God's Word?

## 3

### MEDITATING ON SCRIPTURE

*Read Psalm 1, Joshua 1:8, Psalm 48:9, 119:15, 143:5*

Adapted from Bible Gateway's Abide Bible Initiative © 2014 by Phil Collins, PhD.

Meditating on Scripture helps us use God's Word to have a personal conversation with him. This is an intimate way of communicating with the Lord. All too often in prayer and worship, we talk to God but don't give him a chance to communicate back to us.

Have you ever thought that Christians are not supposed to meditate? Biblical meditation (see verses above) is not the same as Eastern meditation. In Eastern meditation, the goal is to detach and empty your mind. In biblical meditation, the goal is attachment to God and sustained focus on his Word. Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *Meditating on the Word*, says simply that "you should accept the Word of Scripture and ponder it in your heart as Mary did. That is all. That is meditation."

The four steps are reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. These steps are simply to provide structure and guidance, let God lead your time with Him. These four steps have been compared to "feasting on the Word." Reading is taking a bite of food. Meditating is chewing food. Praying is savoring food. Contemplating is digesting food and making it a part of your body. Too often we are quick Bible readers, the result is that we are unable to properly absorb our "spiritual meal." Instead, slow down. Savor your time in God's Word and

find joy in meeting God. You will find that this practice will help you combine the rhythms of reading His Word, engaging with Him through prayer and solitude as you contemplate what you have learned.

In biblical meditation, we are retraining our thoughts to mull over “whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable” (Philippians 4:8). Instead of worrying over something in a harmful way, we are choosing to redirect our thoughts on the things of God, especially Christ as found in his Word.

Suggested passages to start with: **Psalm 139:13-16, Philippians 3:12-16, Philippians 4:4-9, Colossians 3:12-17, 2 Peter 1:5-11, Acts 13:42-52** or use search for scriptures on a theme you want to focus on. Over time you could move to entire Psalms as you get used to the steps: maybe Psalm 1, Psalm 19, Psalm 23

### **A SUGGESTED FLOW COULD LOOK LIKE THIS:**

- 1. Reading:** After preparing your heart and mind to be in God’s Word, slowly read the passage you have chosen. Note specific words. Look for repetition or themes, or a single word, phrase, verse, or message that catches your eye, stirs you, moves you, or connects with you. Then read the passage again as many times as you need. **Stop at whatever had tugged at your heart and reread that part over and over, lingering over the words and phrases.**
- 2. Meditation:** Think about what the parts that stood out to you meant to their original audience and what the author might have been thinking when he wrote it. (Find the original context in a study Bible or use BibleGateway.com to look it up) Focus intently on why the Holy Spirit might have chosen these words to speak to you. **Reflect on how it might connect to your life. Is it relevant to something that you are going through? Do certain people come to mind whom God may want you to reach out to? Does it teach you something you should believe about God or something you should thank God for, or trust God for?**
- 3. Prayer:** The next step is to take all the thoughts, feelings, actions, fears, convictions, and questions you have meditated on and offer them to the Lord in prayer. Meditation flows naturally into prayer. In your prayer, you are bringing your life and Scripture together in God’s presence. Praise God for who he is. If during your reading/meditating you feel convicted about something, repent and ask for forgiveness, and ask for God’s guidance on moving forward. If you feel thankful for something, pour out those feelings of gratitude to the Lord. If you feel a specific anxiety about something in your life, present it to the Lord and pray for the guidance and peace to be able to submit to God’s will. **Simply talk to God and tell him what you’re feeling, just like you would with a good friend.**
- 4. Contemplation:** This final stage (though frequently overlooked) is vital. The “task” in this stage is to simply be silent in the presence of God (Psalm 46:10). This is one of the most essential aspects for building a growing relationship with the Lord as you continue to do these things you will likely feel the closeness and intimacy with the Lord. One of the most valuable things that you can do with this feeling is to relax and embrace it. Just be with God. You don’t need to always be talking at God. In this stage, simply sit in the presence of God and feel his tender love and embrace. Resist worrying about your phone, work, friends, family, illnesses, and whatever else holds you back from God and sit in the love that is shared between you and Jesus. Part of contemplation is to commit yourself, with the help of God, to act on the truth that he has implanted in your heart through this time. God is calling you to submit to his Word and live it out. **Ask some questions like: Is there something I need to have a new attitude about, make a decision about, or act upon based off what I’ve learned today?**

### **TIPS TO MEDITATING ON SCRIPTURE:**

- You will need at least 20-30 minutes to really get the most out of this practice.
- Remind yourself that you are coming to God’s Word and that to engage the Bible is to engage God.
- Before you start reading, pray for the Holy Spirit to quiet your mind and bless your time in Scripture.

- If you get distracted or tired, don't worry or criticize yourself. Simply bring your mind back to the Bible passage, re-read it, and be grateful for God's Word.

*"Meditating on God's words shapes our soul." - Dave Mathis, Habits of Grace*

*"The reason we come away so cold from reading the word is because we do not warm ourselves at the fire of meditation. What value is there to reading one, three, or more chapters of Scripture only to find that after you've finished, you can't recall a thing you've read? It's better to read a small amount of Scripture and meditate on it than to read an extensive section without meditation." - Donald S. Whitney, Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*

- » Was meditating on Scripture helpful to you?
- » What stood out to you as you did it?
- » Was it meaningful? Do you think it will help you grow in the rhythm of studying God's Word?

## 4

## INDUCTIVE STUDY

The inductive study method focuses on one passage of the Bible and seeks to discover what a biblical author intended to communicate to their original audience and how to rightly interpret those words in order to encounter Jesus and be transformed by his Word.

When studying God's Word, it is extremely important that we understand the author's original audience in order to interpret the scripture correctly and apply it to our lives. When reading, we often neglect the step of interpreting and skip straight from reading/observing the words to applying them to our situation. If we don't do the work of knowing its original context, we risk misunderstanding and misapplying God's Word to our situation. As Tara Leigh Cobble says in her book, *The Bible Recap*, "Sometimes Scripture is descriptive, not prescriptive—it's telling us what is happening, not what should happen."

So we need to be sure we aren't taking a passage that is descriptive and making it prescriptive in our lives. This study method will help you evaluate passages in a way that helps you understand context in order to rightly apply scripture to your life.

### TOOLS TO HELP IN INDUCTIVE STUDY:

- BibleGateway.com (use resources on the right such as Overviews & Commentaries)
- Study Bible (we recommend the ESV Study Bible or NLT Filament Bible w/Filament Study App)
- BlueLetterBible.org (use the tools, especially the Interlinear section to see original meaning of the Greek & Hebrew words)

Try the Inductive Method with **1 Thessalonians 4:1-11, Matthew 6:5-18, Hebrews 2:5-18, John 3:1-21, Psalm 23, Galatians 5:1-15**

Don't feel like you have to do all of these steps in one setting. Take it slow and spread it out over a few days if needed.

### **OBSERVE - What does the passage say?**

- What comes immediately before and after the passage?
  - What is the cultural context of the original readers?
  - Note characters, relationships, locations, time, actions, and reactions.
  - Imagine yourself in the story. What do you see, hear, and smell?
  - Look for repeated words, themes, comparisons, contrasts, action words/commands, questions/answers, cause and effect (if/then, therefore).
- » What truth do I learn about God and His character in this passage?
- » What truth do I learn about humanity in this passage?

### **INTERPRET - What does the passage mean?**

- Where does this fit in the story arch of scripture? What genre is the book I am reading? (Use the Book Overviews in your Bible or on BibleGateway.com to help)
  - Imagine the perspective of the people in the scene. What did these words mean to the original audience? What are the circumstances surrounding when these words were written? What did these words mean in their original language?
  - Are there cross references to other passages in scripture that help me interpret what this means?
  - Why is this passage or story here? Try to summarize it in one sentence.
- » What truth is God trying to communicate in this passage to His people?

### **APPLICATION - How does this passage transform us?**

- How does this passage challenge how I see God, myself, or the world?
  - Is there a command to obey or a promise to hold on to?
- » How can I allow the truths learned from this passage to shape my mind, my affections and my actions?
- » Was doing the Inductive Study Method helpful to you?
- » What stood out to you as you did it?
- » Was it meaningful, do you think this will help you grow in the rhythm of studying God's Word?

# WEEK 4

## ENJOYING JESUS THROUGH SOLITUDE, SILENCE, & SABBATH REST

Be honest with yourself, when was the last time you stopped to find a place to be alone and sat quietly in the presence of the Lord? When was the last time that you just pressed pause on things and set aside a few hours or maybe even an entire day to rest and rejuvenate your soul?

Do you trust God enough to just stop striving? Do you trust that the world will not stop spinning if you lay down your burdens, tasks, responsibilities just for a period of time? Sit with all these questions for a few minutes before you move forward.

*"Most of us are more tired than we know at a soul level. We are teetering on the brink of dangerous exhaustion and we really cannot do anything else until we have gotten some rest...rest in God"*

- Ruth Haley Barton

If Jesus needed to get away for times of solitude, rest, and Sabbath, why do we feel like we don't need it? This week, we are going to explore some ways that we can rest in the Lord.

There are experiments on how to make space each day to get quiet with the Lord, how to carve out extended space a few times a week, and then how to incorporate several hours or even an entire day to Sabbath Rest. If these are not a regular part of your rhythm, these will be a stretch, but stick with it. Many who practice regular rhythms of rest and Sabbath say they will never go back to the busyness that they previously had. Especially if you are prone to anxiety, this practice may be the most important of them all as you move toward a slower, calmer pace of life.

***"Without great solitude, no serious work is possible" - Rebekah Lyons, Rhythms of Renewal***

*"Then Jesus said 'Come to me all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you because I am humble and gentle at heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear and the burden I give you is light.'"*

- Matthew 11:28-30

# THIS WEEK'S PRACTICES

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You don't have to try all of these, but at least pick one or two to try this week. Record at the end what was meaningful to you, what you enjoyed, what you didn't enjoy.

7

## CREATE SPACE IN EACH DAY TO LISTEN

Adapted from Rhythms of Renewal by Rebekah Lyons

Our lives are so loud and so busy. It is a good practice to slow down long enough to make space each and every day to listen... to the Lord and to those God places in our path each day. We can't listen while we are talking. So this practice helps us create space for God and for others in our lives. So this week, try to carve out at least 15 minutes once per day to walk through the following...

**CREATING SPACE TO LISTEN IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD** - When we get alone, quiet, and slow down before the Lord, rest and depth can enter our relationship with Him.

When you are alone and quiet before God this week, try this exercise:

- **Listen Closely.** Just LISTEN and journal what starts to come to your mind. Resist the urge for it to be complete sentences or even complete thoughts, it may come in a word or a feeling. God, I feel \_\_\_\_\_. God, I am \_\_\_\_\_. Once you have listened, ask genuine questions about what you have heard... say to God "Tell me more" He might reveal some hard things. Write those down too, don't run from them or seek distraction, have the courage to stay. Sit with your thoughts, failures, hopes, dreams, wounds, longings... He will meet you there.
- **Discern Deeply.** Learn to read between the lines and discern what God is really trying to tell you. What is good, what needs work, what truths does He need to deposit in your heart. After you have spent time listening, pray for discernment in what He is revealing to you.
- **Understand as best you can.** Being quiet and really listening helps us hear God's heart and His truth above your loud inner voice. It realigns our perspective, helps us see more clearly and brings order to our chaos. Example: I am scared... God says Fear not for I am with you. I feel unlovable... God says, I love you unconditionally.
- **Check what you feel you heard from the Lord with His Word.** Once you've sat quietly and walked through these steps, pair this time with some scripture reading and prayer as you've practiced in previous weeks.

- » Record a few thoughts or insights you have as you practice this.
- » What keeps you from blocking off 15 minutes of quiet each day?
- » List ways you might incorporate more quiet times of listening to the Lord into your rhythms.

Once we establish a rhythm of slowing down to listen to the Lord, it opens us up to slow down and listen in our other relationships as well. How can you take this practice into your other relationships?

**CREATING SPACE TO LISTEN IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS** - When we get quiet, slow down, and notice the people around us, rest and depth can enter our relationship with others.

When you are with your spouse, child, or friend this week, try this exercise:

- **Listen Closely.** This means talking less and even seeking to stop thinking about what you will say next or trying to offer wisdom or a solution. Just LISTEN. Once you have listened, ask genuine questions about what they have shared, or about how they are feeling, or simply say "Tell me more." Listen to their heart not just their words. As you do this, let yourself feel what they feel and even quietly pray for them as you are listening.
- **Discern Deeply.** Seek to hear what they mean and want to say but don't actually put into words. Learn to read between the lines and discern what is deep in their heart. Pay attention to their body language, facial expressions, and their tone of voice. When you do talk or respond, talk about what you might be discerning and not just what you hear... maybe start off with, "so what I hear you saying is..".
- **Understand as best you can.** Being quiet and really listening to people is not about us getting ready to launch into what we want to say or to talk about ourselves. It is about having real empathy for them, loving them well, and gaining insight into their joy, pain, and desires. This helps us become more empathetic to others and helps us see when there is more going on under the surface.

- » Record a few thoughts or insights you have as you practice this.
- » What keeps you from fully listening in conversations with others?
- » What stood out to you as you practiced making space to listen this week?
- » Was this practice of creating space to listen each day meaningful? Do you think it will help you grow in the rhythm of solitude with the Lord?

## 2

## **PRACTICING LONG PERIODS OF SOLITUDE AND SILENCE THROUGHOUT YOUR WEEK**

*"Let all that I am wait quietly before God, for my hope is in him."* - **Psalm 62:5, NLT**

This is an experiment to find extended periods of silence and solitude (at least 30 minutes) 2-3 times this week.

Adapted from *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by John Mark Comer

First, prepare for your time of stillness & waiting...Remember - there is no perfect way; it's just time to be with God.

### **But here are some ideas to get you started:**

- Find a quiet place with as few distractions as possible—a park down the street, a reading nook at home, a morning routine that begins before the little ones are awake—and “come away with Jesus.”
- Leave your phone in another room or with another person on airplane mode or do not disturb.
- Bring your Bible, blank journal, pen and scratch paper. You may not use any of it, but it might be helpful to have nearby.
- Slow your body and mind. Take a deep breath and place your feet on the floor to be grounded to the present moment. Write any to-do items on the scratch paper to help get them out of your mind. For other random thoughts, mindfully watch them pass by as if you were watching a running stream or traffic on a highway. If worries arise, immediately take them to God in prayer.
- Take your time. Maybe it’s not a full hour, but you’re there long enough to decompress from all the noise and traffic and stress and nonstop stimulation of modern society. Sometimes all you need is 30 minutes. Other times, an hour isn’t enough.
- You will start to feel. At first you might feel the whole gamut of human emotions—not just joy and gratitude and celebration and restfulness but also sadness and doubt and anger and anxiety. Usually we feel all the lousy emotions first. That’s just how it goes.
- Face the good, the bad, and the ugly in our own hearts. Your worry. Your hope. Your desire for God; your lack of desire for God. Your sense of God’s presence; your sense of his absence. Your dreams; your realities. All the lies you believe; the truth you come home to. Your motivations. Your addictions. Coping mechanisms you reach for just to make it through the week. All this is exposed and painfully so. But rather than leaking out on those we love most, it’s exposed in the safe place of the Father’s love and voice.
- In our ears we sense his voice cut through the cacophony of all the other voices, which slowly fade to the deafening roar of silence. In that silence we hear God speak his love over us. Speak our identities and callings into being. We get his perspective on life and our humble, good places in it.
- Use your Bible to search for truths to speak to any lies that the enemy whispers to your heart. If you journal, record what you hear during this time, so you can go back later and explore any feelings that you need to continue to process with the Lord.

*“Maybe I’ll hear a word from God that will alter my destiny; maybe I’ll just process my anger over something that’s bothering me. Maybe I’ll feel my mind settle like untouched water; maybe my mind will ricochet from thought to thought, and never come to rest. If so, that’s fine. I’ll be back, same time tomorrow.” John Mark Comer*

### **Questions to ponder AFTER your time of solitude...**

- What were your takeaways from your time?
- What do you need to say no to in order to make space for more simplicity and solitude (for the sake of pursuing rest to give you hope for endurance and obedience)?
- How do times of solitude energize you?
- How is solitude challenging and what can you do to combat the challenge?
- Who is someone you can talk to about your experience of solitude? Go ahead and schedule a time to chat or send a message about it.
- What are your go-to distractions that keep you from stillness and contentment?

- » Was practicing longer periods of solitude throughout the week helpful to you?
  
- » What stood out to you as you did it?
  
- » Was it meaningful? Do you think it will help you grow in the rhythm of solitude with the Lord?



## TAKE A WEEKLY SABBATH

Why is it so hard for us to stop? Put down the To-Do list, stop striving, leave the dishes, and just be. You might have heard before, we are human beings not human doings...We cannot run well, if we do not rest well. But most of us are not good at stopping, because we feel like our value is so wrapped up in what we accomplish. We don't need to hustle to prove something God says is already true. Your value as a human being is not found in what you produce; it's found in who you are in Christ, so you can set aside some time each week to just focus on that without producing anything!

**Exodus 20:8-11** - "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

**Ezekiel 20:20** - "...and keep my Sabbaths holy that they may be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God."

**Mark 2:27-28** - "And he said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.'"

**Hebrews 4:9-11** - "So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience."

Sabbath is not just a suggestion, it's a mandate... It is one of the Ten Commandments, yet we often think we have that one covered because we attended church on Sunday. When you look at the rhythm and pattern here, there is more to it than just attending church on Sunday. In the explanation of Biblical Sabbath, we see:

- Preparations made to "stop work and rest"
- Long, slow non-rushed meals around a table with family and friends with deep rich conversations
- Extra time spend in prayer and in God's Word
- Enjoying the Lord and all He has done for us

**What is Sabbath Rest?** A time set aside in your regular rhythm to pause: to restore your body, renew your mind, and nourish your soul.

**What Sabbath Rest is NOT:** A time to escape... it's a time to fully engage with the present and the gifts of the Lord. It is resting in HIM. Sabbath REST is NOT about escaping reality - it's goal should be to mindfully prepare our hearts, mind, bodies, and souls for reality.

**Self Care is Not Always Soul Care.** We sometimes mistake "self care" for "soul care;" but, this is not just a time for "me time". Self Care without Soul Care is just a mask for your exhaustion and becomes a hollow, shallow version of what it means to rest and care for yourself. Our goal in Sabbath Rest is to carve out time for TRUE SOUL REST and RESTORATIVE SELF CARE.

**Prepare For Your Sabbath Time & Protect It.** Put in effort to prepare for the downtime and put boundaries around it. You may have to work harder in advance in order to be able to rest well. Prepare food ahead of time, use paper products to avoid dishes, do any household chores ahead of your Sabbath to prepare for your rest.

**Set a Beginning and End to Your Sabbath Time.** If you set the beginning, you can go all in because you have prepared to rest. Setting an end is as important as setting the beginning... if there isn't a designated end, it can lead to laziness and unproductive "rest."

**Disconnect to Connect.** Disconnect from technology to connect with yourself, others, and God. When we connect in real life, we find more compassion than comparison.

**Slow Down & Savor.** Be present, even if it's painful. Focus on savoring every moment during your Sabbath Time.

**Leave the To-Do List behind.** Let go of achieving to rest, reflect and pray. Let go of worries and expectations. This leads to resting well and reflecting deeply (alone or with others). Think of this time as taking your foot off the gas and resting in the fact that you are a simply a child of God..... fully loved and accepted! Try not to earn, accomplish, or achieve anything. Avoid tasks. As much as possible, do them ahead of time, or even leave them undone.

**Don't be legalistic about it.** "Keeping Sabbath" is more about the posture of your heart and where you place you trust... not about just "keeping of the law." The heart of Sabbath is to rest in the Lord by taking a pause, celebrating His goodness in our lives, reorienting our hearts back to Him, and trusting that He is the one who keeps the world spinning... not us!

## **TIPS ON ESTABLISHING A RHYTHM OF SABBATH REST FROM TARA-LEIGH COBBLE**

1. Try to eventually work up to a full 24-hour day. Think about this: if the average person sleeps 7-8 hours per night, that leaves 16-17 waking hours each day. Since there are 168 hours in a week, that means one day of morning-to-evening rest is 10% of your week's hours. It's the equivalent of tithing your time.
2. For those who don't know how to "turn off", this paraphrased quote from Abraham Joseph Heschel is helpful: "If you work with your mind, Sabbath with your hands. If you work with your hands, Sabbath with your mind." For instance, if your job is primarily mental work, disengage from the mental heavy-lifting and go for a walk instead. If your job is primarily physical labor, try to spend a portion of the day reading, listening to sermons or worship music, etc.
3. Make a list of Sabbath friends. There are times to pour into others – even those who drain you emotionally – but today is the day to aim to be around people who rest your soul and who focus on, talk about, and live out the things of The Lord.
4. Parents: What do you delight in doing with your kids? Spend part of the day doing that thing with them. If you don't want your children to grow up to be overextended and stressed out adults, take this opportunity to model for them what it looks like to rest in the Lord.

5. Engage. This day is not just about rest but about relationships. It's not just what you're unplugging from that's important, but what you're connecting and engaging with. This is your opportunity to connect with your Source. Especially when you're busiest and most stressed, remember how Jesus said, "Come to Me, all who are labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

As you begin to cultivate this rhythm in your life... use this as a guide to practicing and experimenting with what brings you and your family TRUE SOUL REST.

### **STEP ONE: SET ASIDE SPACE FOR SABBATH THIS WEEK IF YOU CAN'T DO A FULL 24 HOURS, SET ASIDE AT LEAST 3-5 HOURS.**

Write out what your typical week looks like. This will help you evaluate how you can begin to carve out time for TRUE REST in your week. Ask yourself what is negotiable and what is non-negotiable in my schedule.

### **STEP TWO: EVALUATE WHAT YOU THINK IS RESTFUL AND WHAT IS NOT (HAVE EVERYONE IN YOUR HOUSE ANSWER THESE).**

As you prepare for this time of rest, refreshment, and reset, think about what you can do to reconnect with God, reconnect as a family, reconnect with God's creation, reconnect with your community. John Mark Comer uses these words as a guide for Sabbath: Stop, Rest, Delight, Worship.

How do you get more of what fills your soul in your week and less of what drains you? Discuss this idea of Rest with everyone in your home and let them help you decide what's best for your family. Everyone's needs may look different so there is no one-size-fits-all Sabbath Rest, and it may vary from week to week, so experiment until it feels refreshing and renewing to you.

There are THREE elements that make up what we need in this area of TRUE REST: Physical, Spiritual, and Emotional

**Things to do:** What refreshes your body? What renews your mind? What nourishes your soul?

**Things to avoid:** What weakens your body? What is damaging to my mind? What drains your soul?

#### **Here's some ideas to get you started on what Sabbath Rest could include:**

- Get at least 8 hours of sleep
- Light candles
- Play worship music
- Spend extended time in prayer, meditating on a passage of Scripture or journaling
- Limit screens, media and social media
- Watch a sunrise or sunset with no distractions
- Slowly enjoy a cup of coffee or tea
- Make a list of the week's wins or a list of things you are grateful for
- Spend extended time outside in nature. Spend some time around things that were here before you and that exist without you – it reminds you that your work doesn't sustain them, and that God is sustaining them even as you rest.
- Take a long bath or a long walk or read a book
- Invite some life-giving friends over and linger over a long leisurely meal.
- Take inventory of your spiritual, physical, mental and emotional health
- Look back at last week, where do things feel out of balance? Look at the week ahead, how do I have a better balance in the coming week?

- Ask yourself: Where is God leading me? What people has he placed in my path? What is God asking me to cultivate in my life in this season? What is most important in the week ahead? What can I let go of?

### **STEP THREE: TAKE A SABBATH REST AND RECORD WHAT FELT RESTFUL AND WHAT DIDN'T.**

Instead of asking, "Have I worked hard enough to deserve to rest?" Ask yourself, "Have I rested enough to do the meaningful work God has for me?" Keep Practicing Sabbath... don't give up, fight for SOUL REST each week so you can put your hands to the things God has for you!

*"Rest time is not waste time. It is economy to gather fresh strength. In the long run, we shall do more by sometimes doing less. - Charles Spurgeon*

- » Why do you think this kind of "Sabbath Rest" is so important?
- » Why do you think it's so hard to do? What is fighting against it?
- » What would a healthy life-giving, joy-filled day of rest look like for you and your family?
- » What are some ways you could begin to incorporate this rhythm into your life?
- » What did you discover when you stopped to "Sabbath" and took time to enjoy God and the things He has given you?

*"Anyone who cannot obey God's command to observe the Sabbath is a slave, even a self imposed one. Your own heart or our materialistic culture or an exploitative organization or all of the above will be abusing you if you don't have the ability to be disciplined in your practice of Sabbath. Sabbath is therefore a declaration of our freedom. It means you are not a slave, not to your cultures expectations, your families hopes, your medical school's demands, not even to your own insecurities. It is important that you learn to speak this truth to yourself with a note of triumph otherwise you will feel guilty for taking time off or you will be unable to truly unplug." - Tim Keller*

# WEEK 5

## ENJOYING JESUS BY BEING GENEROUS & SERVING

Read Matthew 25:35-40, John 13:12-16, 1 Corinthians 12:4-27, Ephesians 4:15-16, 2 Corinthians 9:7

As we come to this final week, we hope you are beginning to see how all these rhythms begin to flow into one another and work in tandem with each other. So this week, we are exploring how we can incorporate generosity and serving into our lives. To be able to successfully incorporate generosity and serving effectively and with the correct motivation, we have to first acknowledge that everything we have - our time, our resources, our talents, our finances, all belong to the Lord. Once we acknowledge that it is all His, then we more freely offer it back up to Him and to His people. It becomes an issue of how we can steward our finances, our time and our gifts well for the glory of His kingdom.

*For I was hungry and you fed me. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you invited me into your home. I was naked and you gave me clothing. I was sick and you cared for me. I was in prison and you visited me.*

*Then these righteous ones will reply "Lord when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?"*

*"And the King will say 'I tell you the truth when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters you were doing it to me!'"*

**- Matthew 11:28-30**

# THIS WEEK'S PRACTICES

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As we did in week 1, we are challenging you to do both of this week's practices. They are both important as we continue to place our whole lives under His authority, including our finances and our time.

1

## GENEROSITY AS A SACRIFICE

Throughout Scripture, it is clear that we are to be generous givers. Tim Keller says, its as if God says: "I don't want you to give your leftovers, I want you to give your first overs." The principle is not to give the surplus of what we have but to give sacrificially. We are to view generosity as a lifestyle, not a one time activity, but a way of living. Our generosity should never be as a means to earn anything from God, but it should flow from our gratitude for love and provision He has shown us.

The spiritual practice of generosity is grounded first and foremost in this - "For God so loved the world that he gave us his only Son." May we practice generosity as a loving response to God's love for us and as we do may our hearts be changed that our love for God and our love for others will grow.

Evaluate your finances. We know this is a deeply personal thing, but there is freedom in surrendering your financial situation to the Lord in this way. Ask for His wisdom in stewarding your finances well and in a way that will honor the Lord.

Is there a place where you currently spend money that God is asking you to surrender in order to be more generous... start with things like your Clothing/Shoe budget, Toiletry/Cosmetic budget, Coffee/Eating Out budget, House Decor budget...and then move on to see other areas where you could cut expenses in order to be more generous.

Ask the Lord where He would have you give that money this week. It could be your church, maybe it's one of our amazing local partners ([graceclarksville.com/local-outreach](http://graceclarksville.com/local-outreach)), maybe it's a neighbor or friend in need.

» What stood out to you as you practiced generosity?

» Was it meaningful? How do you feel like you can add generosity into your weekly rhythms?

## 2

## SERVING OTHERS EXPECTING NOTHING IN RETURN

Service involves seeing a need and meeting that need without expecting thanks, appreciation, or any type of reciprocation. In Matthew 20:28, Jesus declared, *"The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* As Jesus came not to be served, but instead had the heart of a servant, so those who believe the gospel of Jesus also have that heart of a servant inside of them, but they don't always choose to let God mold them in that way.

It is clear in God's Word that we have each been uniquely gifted to serve others. 1 Corinthians 12:7 says, *"A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other."* We are to love and serve one another in order to ensure growth. Ephesians 4:16 says, *"As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love."*

So where are you using your gifts to serve and further God's Kingdom? Spend some time this week brainstorming where you can serve & use your gifts, think of places that you are already and start there... your church, your neighborhood, your kid's schools or gather up friends & family to go serve at one of our amazing local partners (see list below)

- Serve at Grace - [graceclarksville.com/volunteer](http://graceclarksville.com/volunteer).
- Serve at one of our local partners like Manna Cafe', YaiPaks Outreach, Loaves & Fishes, Hope Pregnancy Center, or Urban Ministries - [graceclarksville.com/local-outreach](http://graceclarksville.com/local-outreach).
- Serve a friend by taking them a meal.
- Serve a neighbor by helping with yard work or keeping their kids.
- Serve a cashier by greeting them with a smile and warm conversation.
- Be a noticer this week of small ways to be a blessing.

» What stood out to you as processed where you could use your gifts to serve?

» How do you feel like you can add serving into the rhythm of your life?



- » As you have been on this journey, undoubtedly you have heard the Spirit's voice. What is it that He has told you?
  
- » As you've tried some of the disciplines, what have you learned? What was challenging? What surprised you? What drew you closer to the Lord?
  
- » As we come to the end of our time together, how have these rhythms helped you enjoy Jesus in a new way?
  
- » Write these thoughts down and spend some time in reflection and praise. Share them with a friend or spouse.

Until you see Jesus face-to-face, there will still be room to grow and to learn and to enjoy Him more. The apostle Paul described the ongoing growth of faith like this:

*"What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" Philippians 3:8-15*

Sisters, may we forget what is behind and press on toward Jesus. As we press into Him, we will find our perspectives on life transformed. We will begin to see that knowing, experiencing, and enjoying Christ is the only goal worth seeking.



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