



Spiritual Rhythms

WEEK 1

A New Rhythm¹

BEGIN WITH *PRAYER*

Begin in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to lead and guide your time today.

INTRO QUESTIONS

As you begin this six-week study on Spiritual Rhythms, spend a few minutes thinking through the following questions:

1

Take a minute to think about the pace of your own life. What do you notice?

2

What does the way you spend your time say about what you care about the most?

3

Is there any aspect of your life that feels overwhelming right now? What does that look like?

4

Take a minute to reflect on your life with God. How would you describe it?

¹ Adapted from content created by Casey McDonald for Bridgetown Church's "Practicing the Way."

READ THESE PASSAGES

1

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.

– JESUS, MATT. 11:28-30, THE MESSAGE

2

I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing.

– JESUS, JOHN 15:5, THE MESSAGE

3

You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in You

– ST. AUGUSTINE, CONFESSIONS, 1.1.1.

APPLICATION

Once upon a time, a group of people who loved Jesus but were frustrated with Christianity. They lived in a culture where Christianity had become the “norm.” It seemed like everybody called themselves a Christian, but nobody truly meant it. And “Christianity” looked a lot more like the culture around them than it did the way of Jesus. These people longed to experience the passion and zeal they saw reflected in the martyrs of the early Church.

So they came up with a plan. They would live out a counter-cultural movement. They would intentionally shape their lives to reflect the kingdom of Jesus rather than the cultural values of their day. So they did – and were pretty hardcore. And they started a movement that has changed the world.

This group became known centuries later as the Desert Fathers and Mothers. They lived in Egypt in the 4th century and launched a monastic movement that would become a worldwide missionary force of spiritual vitality, education, art, health care, and really good beer.

At the heart of their counter-cultural kingdom movement was a very simple concept that came to be known as a “rule of life.” These men and women believed that if we want “to experience the life of Jesus, we have to adopt the lifestyle of Jesus. Allow his pace and his practices to rule our lives.” Because being a Christian is ultimately not about knowing the right information but about becoming apprentices of Jesus – building our lives around his life.

Now, when the fathers and mothers used the word “rule” they didn’t mean “law.” It’s not something that binds or constrains. Rather, “rule” comes from the Latin word *regula*, which can mean both “rhythm” and a “trellis” in a vineyard. Just as all good wine requires trellises to grow healthy grapes, we also need a support structure to help us “abide in the vine” and experience the joy Jesus talks about.

But what about now? How do we follow Jesus in 21st-century America, with iPhones, social media, hectic schedules, and jobs? What does it mean for us to live as his counter-cultural people within a culture defined by anxiety, consumerism, incessant digital connection, and frenetic pace? How do we enter into the fullness of the abundant life Jesus promises in the midst of everyday life?

Over the next six weeks, we will develop a rule of life together – a set of practices and rhythms to help us slow down and make space in our busy world to be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what he did. This new rhythm will help us live “to the full” in his kingdom and alignment with our deepest passions and priorities.

It’s been said that we achieve inner peace when our schedule is aligned with our values. A rule of life is simply a tool to that end. Rather than a rigid, legalistic to-do list, it’s a life-giving structure for freedom, growth, and joy.

PRACTICE

Contrary to popular usage, in biblical theology, your “soul” (Hebrew: nephesh) isn’t the invisible part of you that flies off to heaven when you die. Rather, “soul” is your whole person: the integrating center of your humanity, material and immaterial. Your will, mind, emotions, body, and relationships. The categories listed below are an attempt to apply a rule of life to your whole person so that all of us can experience all of God.

Take a few minutes and order these seven categories² from most effortless/ fun to most challenging.

1. **Abiding:** To turn your attention to God all through your day, and index your heart’s affection toward receiving and giving his love.

Examples: Morning prayer, Scripture reading, worship music, sabbath, silence and solitude, etc.

2. **Mind:** To curate your thought life to take on “the mind of Christ” (Philippians 2v5-8) and carefully guard your mind.

Examples: Reading Scripture in the morning, regular podcasts or book reading, church on Sunday, a daily limit on device use, etc.

3. **Body:** To “offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” to keep your whole person healthy and whole before God.

Examples: sleep, regular exercise, a healthy diet, water, limiting alcohol intake, annual doctor’s visit, etc.

4. **Relationships:** To create, nurture, and deepen relationships of vulnerability and accountability to form your community before God.

Examples: weekly phone call or coffee with best friend, serving together, weekly date nights with your spouse, family movie nights, annual vacations, etc.

5. **Rest:** To build practices and rhythms of rest into your life for your spiritual formation, allowing you to live well in God’s world.

Examples: morning quiet time, sleeping eight hours most nights, a weekly sabbath, a “nothing night” once a week, etc.

6. **Work & Money:** To build habits into your work life and financial life to make stewarding your work and money part of your life before God.

Examples: a fixed-hour schedule, dedicated time to an entrepreneurial project, tithing, a blessing fund, sponsoring a child, etc.

7. **Gospel & Hospitality:** To show hospitality to all people not only as an expression of love, but as the best way to invite people to both hear and experience the gospel of God’s love in action.

Examples: a regular night to host neighbors for dinner, spending time listening to coworkers, serving the poor through volunteering, etc.

² Adapted from content created by Casey McDonald for Bridgetown Church’s “Practicing the Way.”

THINK THROUGH THE FOLLOWING

1

Based on your personality and preferences, which categories do you find easiest? How about most challenging?

2

Based on your life circumstances (such as job responsibilities, relationship status, social commitments, etc.), which categories fit most easily into your routine? Which might take more creative planning?

The Practice for this week is to explore our seven suggested categories for a rule of life and consider what your current rule or way of life—official or unofficial—looks like and how those patterns impact you. Remember, this practice is about describing how your life is, not what you think it should be!

All of us are engaged in rhythms of relationships and practices of daily life that are shaping us in one way or another—whether that’s into a person of love, peace, and joy or a person marked by stress, busyness, and anxiety.

THIS WEEK, TAKE TIME TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

Read through each suggested category of a rule of life (Abiding, Mind, Body, Rest, etc.), and consider or journal through what Practices make up your current rule of life in each area. (For example, your current rule for rest may include sleeping six hours each night and taking a night off from activities each week.) The goal is to assess where you are and how that’s impacting you, not to set new sky-high goals.

Remember, this practice is about describing how your life is, not what you think it should be! We’ll spend our time together next week debriefing what you notice.

REFLECT

Finish your time by reflecting on the following questions:

1

Does the process of crafting a rule of life seem freeing or constricting to you? Perhaps something else altogether?

2

As you consider the different aspects of your rule of life (Rest, Abiding, Body, etc.), is there one that sticks out that you'd like to press into or grow in in the next season of your life?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

WEEK 2

A Digital Rhythm³

BEGIN WITH *PRAYER*

Begin in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to lead and guide your time today.

INTRO QUESTIONS

Spend a few minutes reflecting on the past week. Think through the following questions:

1

How was week one of reflecting on your current rhythms and habits? Did you notice anything new?

2

Reflect specifically on the role technology plays in your life – use of your phone, streaming services, social media, email, etc. How would you describe those habits?

3

Does creating a Digital Rule of Life strike you as necessary and freeing? Challenging and unrealistic? Some combination of the two?

³ Adapted from content created by Josh Porter for Bridgetown Church's "Practicing the Way."

READ THIS PASSAGE

Read this passage three times, slowly:

*“And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!”
And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.”*

- Mark 4:39

APPLICATION

There is little debate among psychologists, sociologists, and ordinary people that for every leap forward in digital technology, we pay a cost. Inundated on all sides by screens, entertainment options, and outlets for curating a fabricated image of our lives, we are “distracting ourselves into spiritual oblivion.”

The endless dopamine drip feed of new information, photos, updates, headlines, likes, comments, and outrage have so dulled our once hungry attention spans that many of us—whether we realize it or not—no longer have the attentive wherewithal to endure a single meal, movie, conversation, or get-together without our itchy twitching fingers stabbing at a touch-screen display.

The same digital technology useful for communicating, finding your way home, and enjoying art can also distract and anesthetize us, steep us in noxious fantasy, damage relationships, and incite us to sin.

In a world of normalized digital addiction, disciples of Jesus remember the uncompromising words of Paul, “I will not be mastered by anything” (1 Cor. 6:12). Rather than allowing ourselves to circle the drain of the digital vortex, we instead “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5).

PRACTICE

Think through the following questions. Write down your answers and ideas in your journal as you unpack them.

1

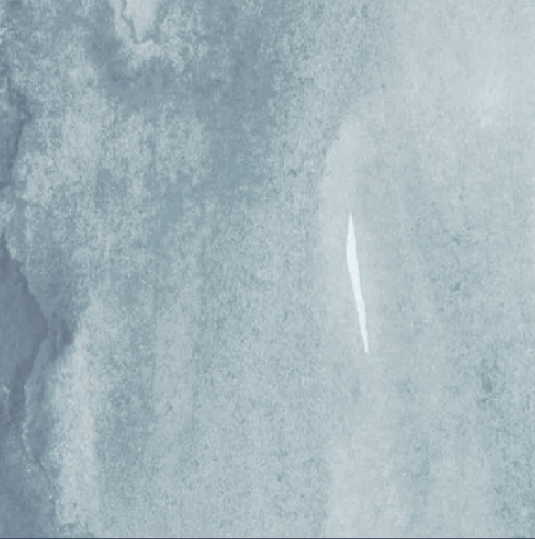
Do the people who know you best say you spend a lot of time on your phone, social media, watching TV shows, and in front of screens?

2

If you use an iPhone, go to Settings > Screen Time and note how much time you spend each day and week on your phone and what you spend your time on. How do you feel about what you found?

3

If you use an iPhone, go to Settings > Screen Time and note how much time you spend each day and week on your phone and what you spend your time on. How do you feel about what you found?



The Practice for this week is to begin to draft a Digital Rule of Life. It is unrealistic and even dangerous to assume we might be the only people in the world who will avoid the pitfalls of the digital age without an organized, disciplined effort. Remember, your Rule of Life will be a work in progress, and you will likely adapt it as you find your way.

THIS WEEK, TAKE TIME TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

1


Think through the technological outlets that most demand your time and attention and what they are doing to you, for better or worse.

⋮

2

In a journal, begin outlining what will become your Digital Rule of Life. Be specific (e.g., something like “spend less time on Instagram” is vague and ambiguous, but “spend no more than 10 minutes a day on Instagram” is clear and quantifiable).

Here are some ideas to consider, adapt, or inspire:

- Create a recurring schedule for when your phone will be powered down and put away.
 - Minimize the number of apps on your devices.
 - Take a weekly sabbath away from devices and screens.
 - Establish limits and parameters for particular devices, apps, or media.
 - Establish “no device” zones, like the dinner table, the car, or while out with friends.
- 

REFLECT

Finish your time by reflecting on the following questions:

1

How do you feel about creating a Digital Rule of Life? Eager? At least open-minded? Less enthusiastic?

2

How do you hope a Digital Rule of Life will shape the person you are becoming as you apprentice Jesus? Who do you want that person to be?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

WEEK 3

Scripture⁴

BEGIN WITH *PRAYER*

Begin in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to lead and guide your time today.

INTRO QUESTIONS

Spend a few minutes reflecting on the past week. Think through the following questions:

1

Were you able to spend time drafting a digital rule of life? If so, how did it go for you?

2

What did you notice about your current digital habits? Did anything surprise you or give you pause?

3

Was there anything you tried that you found helpful? Was there anything frustrating?

⁴ Adapted from content created by [Josh Porter](#) for Bridgetown Church's "Practicing the Way" and by [Laura Abrams](#) for InterVarsity.

READ THIS PASSAGE

9 How can a young person stay on the path of purity?

By living according to your word.

*10 I seek you with all my heart;
do not let me stray from your commands.*

*11 I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you.*

*12 Praise be to you, LORD;
teach me your decrees.*

*13 With my lips I recount
all the laws that come from your mouth.*

*14 I rejoice in following your statutes
as one rejoices in great riches.*

*15 I meditate on your precepts
and consider your ways.*

*16 I delight in your decrees;
I will not neglect your word.*

Psalm 119:9-16

APPLICATION

One of the most fundamental beliefs of the Christian faith is that the Bible is God’s Word—and these words speak to us. The Scriptures spoke to generations before us, and will speak to generations after us until Christ returns. This is why we love to study the Scriptures inductively—taking into account the context of the text, making observations, drawing reasonable inferences, and applying these truths to our lives as the Holy Spirit guides us.

Careful study of the Bible is essential to a healthy Christian life and community. And it is not the only way to let our lives be shaped by God’s Word and the Holy Spirit. *Lectio divina*, Latin for “divine reading,” is a devotional reading of Scripture that has existed for over 1,700 years. This practice emerged when literacy rates were low, and accessibility to written texts were few and far between. Communities of believers used this method to enable followers of Jesus—with or without a copy of the Bible (or an ability to read it)—to receive God’s Word and consider how to respond.

Practicing this spiritual discipline opens us up to more ways to hear from, experience, and respond to God—individually and communally. A benefit of *lectio divina* is that there is less temptation to read solely in order to consume information (a temptation to study inductively). In whatever way you interact with the Bible, Scripture is meant to be read with ears open to hear God’s voice through his Word and respond!

PRACTICE

Practice lectio divina. Below is the Donovan style, but feel free to do so another way if you are inclined. Any passage of Scripture will work, so if you feel led to a passage, go for it. If you need help narrowing it down, here are a few suggestions to get you started:

- Genesis 32:22-31
- Psalm 16
- Psalm 23
- Psalm 100
- Isaiah 55
- Matthew 6:25-34
- Mark 10:46-52
- Luke 10:38-42
- John 15:9-17
- Romans 12:9-21

After selecting a passage, read and move slowly through each of the five movements of spiritual reading. Enjoy the time. Listen to the Spirit.

1

Prepare to meet with God (silencio): Turn your phone off and leave it in another room. Situate yourself comfortably in a quiet, solitary place. Calm your body and quiet your mind before God as you work to prepare your heart to receive what God has spoken through the text and to respond accordingly. Finally, invite the Holy Spirit to guide your thinking and feeling as you read.

2

Read (lectio): Read the passage slowly and carefully twice. Take your time. As you move through the text, notice a word, phrase, or image that catches your attention. And if nothing sticks out, that's okay! Remember, this is not a performance-driven exercise. All that really matters is that you are spending intentional time with God in his Word.

For a group setting: After your second reading, go around the room and ask everyone to share one word/phrase/image that stood out to them.

3

Reflect (mediatio): Read the text a third time. As you listen, ask the Holy Spirit, “How does this connect with my life? What do you want to say to me?”

For a group setting: After the third reading, go around the room and ask everyone to share a sentence that captures what they’ve reflected on.

4

Respond (oratio): Read the passage a fourth time. As you listen, as the Holy Spirit, “How are you inviting me to respond?” Talk to God about what you’ve noticed and whatever emotions/reactions arise.

For a group setting: After the fourth reading, go around the room and ask everyone to share a couple sentences about what they sense God is inviting them to do in response.

5

Rest (contemplatio): Read the text a fifth time. Pause to sit in God’s presence and listen to the Holy Spirit. Reflect on the experience. Regardless of how you feel, thank God for the chance to encounter him and his living Word. Ask God to bless you and to help you respond in the ways he has spoken.

TAKE NOTE. Just as is true with any spiritual practice, you may feel like you have heard nothing—even to the point you feel irritated. This is okay and natural. Again, do not feel you have to perform in this prayer practice. In [Creating a Life with God](#), Daniel Wolper writes:

If encountering God’s Word were easy, there would be no need to practice prayer! Prayer is not a product, it’s a relationship. Even if you did not experience the wonderful event that you imagined, God knows your intention. You wanted to spend time with Jesus, and in some way, although exactly how is a mystery, you did. So express your frustration to God; ask for help and for the strength to try again. God does not require that we be successful, just faithful.

As is the case with all spiritual disciplines, the more you practice, the more familiar it becomes. And while it’s not about perfection, the Christian life is about faithfulness. May you, and your Christian community, discover more of Christ and how to live for him through his Word.

Establish a time and place that are both quiet and free from distraction. Then set aside 3-5 times this week to practice lectio divina.

REFLECT

Finish your time by reflecting on the following questions:

1

How did this lectio divina test drive go for you? Which steps feel the most awkward? What do you feel the most excited about?

2

When you read the Scriptures, do you feel as though you actually meet with and connect with God? Why or why not?

3

How is lectio divina similar to your current practices of reading Scripture? How is it different?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

WEEK 4

Silence and Solitude⁵

BEGIN WITH *PRAYER*

Begin in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to lead and guide your time today.

INTRO QUESTIONS

Spend a few minutes reflecting on the past week. Think through the following questions:

1

How did it go practicing Lectio Divina? What was rewarding? What was challenging?

2

Why do you think silence & solitude have always been important to Christians?

3

Does silence & solitude have any place in your life right now? How are you hoping to grow in this area going forward?

⁵ Adapted from content created by Collin Mayjack for Bridgetown Church's "Practicing the Way."

READ THIS PASSAGE

Read the following passage three times, slowly:

The news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Luke 5:15-16

APPLICATION

A brother visited Abba Moses at Scete to ask for advice. The elder said to him, "Go and sit in your [room], and your [room] will teach you everything."⁶

In the first week of this series, we met the Desert Fathers and Mothers – 4th century Egyptian monastics who launched a counter-cultural movement to shape their lives around the lifestyle and priorities of Jesus. And at the heart of this movement was the fundamental value of hesychia – silence. But this silence wasn't empty or passive. It was about creating space to actively wait, watch, and listen for the Holy Spirit. The monks went to the desert not because they were mystical nature hippies, but because out of the desert silence comes a voice. And that voice changes everything.

The lifeblood of almost any vibrant relationship consists of two parts: time and undivided attention. Whether it is a friendship, a marriage, a parent relationship, or a relationship with a coworker, it is virtually impossible for a relationship to thrive if there is not room for consistent, uninterrupted time together. And yet, so few of us apply this same logic to our relationship with Jesus.

⁶ Moses 6 [2.19] in Give Me a Word.

Henri Nouwen once wrote, “Without solitude it is virtually impossible to live a spiritual life... We do not take the spiritual life seriously if we do not set aside some time to be with God and listen to him.” Alone time and undivided attention. Or, as followers of Jesus have historically called it, silence and solitude. Silence and solitude are arguably the most important of the spiritual disciplines because they create space for every other discipline to flourish. They are like a “container” for the whole of our relationship to God.

What’s more, when we practice silence and solitude, we don’t just get to know God more. We also get to know ourselves. Founded by the very first Desert Father, the Monastery of St. Antony in Egypt has been a place of constant prayer for over 1700 years. In 1994, a British journalist interviewed a monk who had left his corporate career to spend his life in the middle of nowhere. The journalist asked why the man had to come to the desert, since God could also have been found in his office in Cairo. The monk replied, “What you say is true... You can pray anywhere. After all, God is everywhere, so you can find him everywhere...But in the desert...in the silence – there you can find yourself. And unless you begin to know yourself, how can you even begin to search for God?”⁷

If we want our relationship with God to thrive, or in the words of Jesus, if we are going to “abide” in him (John 15), it will take the same kind of effort we put into all of our healthiest relationships. It will require creating space to intentionally listen for God and to deliberately reflect on our own hearts. This is hard to do! Which is why we’ll spend some time this week examining our current practices for silence and solitude.

⁷ Dalrymple, From the Holy Mountain, 410.

PRACTICE

Begin by practicing silence. Set a timer and spend two minutes in complete silence.

Afterwards, talk through the following questions. Write down your answers and ideas in your journal as you unpack them.

1

How do you respond to time alone? What about silence?

⋮

2

What does the rhythm for silence and solitude look like in your life right now, if you have one? What gets in the way of that rhythm?

⋮

3

What other practices have you adopted, presently or in the past, to facilitate life with God? Which were “upstream” (challenging, but good for you) and which were “downstream” (easy for you and your personality)?

⋮

4

What practices for cultivating silence and solitude would you like to add into your life, cut out of your life, or change?

The Practice for this week is twofold: 1) spend some time in silence and solitude, and 2) brainstorm how you might integrate silence/solitude into your rule of life (think in terms of daily, weekly, monthly, and/or annual habits). Remember, your Rule of Life is an experiment! It will be a work in progress, and you will likely adapt it multiple times along the way.

THIS WEEK, TAKE TIME TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

1

Identify a time and place that works for you to spend time alone with God. Figure out what works best practically, set a modest goal, and stick to it.

2

Evaluate the habits that make up your time with God: Which habits are helpful for you (e.g. morning prayer, fasting, daily office)? What gets in the way of those habits?

3

In your journal begin outlining what will become your rule for abiding. Be as specific as you can and strive for reasonable goals (e.g., If you aren't praying much now, something like "spend more time praying" is vague and ambiguous, but "spend 10 minutes in silence and solitude each morning" is clear and quantifiable).

Here are some ideas to consider, adapt, or inspire:

- Find a specific location and time for daily time in abiding.
- Add five minutes of silence to your daily time in prayer.
- Find a liturgy or psalm to pray every day.
- Adopt a simple Bible reading plan.
- Take a weekly sabbath.
- Pick a day of the week (or of the month) to practice fasting with a few people from your community.
- Fill your commute to work with silence or worship music.
- Spend 15–60 minutes in nature alone with God.
- Begin planning a retreat day or weekend.

REFLECT

Finish your time by reflecting on the following questions:

1

In the spirit of starting small, what is one small change you want to make in the week ahead?

2

What are you looking forward to about practicing silence and solitude? What are you nervous about?

3

How might your Rule of Life for abiding look different in your current stage of life than in previous or later stages of life?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

WEEK 5

SABBATH⁸

BEGIN WITH *PRAYER*

Begin in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to lead and guide your time today.

INTRO QUESTIONS

Spend a few minutes reflecting on the past week. Think through the following questions:

1

Were you able to set a time to be alone with God this week? What did that look like?

2

What was one thing that was new, difficult, or freeing about your time in Silence & Solitude? Was anything surprising to you?

3

What differences did you notice about your emotional, spiritual, and relational disposition after your time alone with God?

4

As you consider adding this to your Rule of Life, what are some of the obstacles you may face?

⁸ Adapted from content created by Bethany Allen for Bridgetown Church's "Practicing the Way."

READ THIS PASSAGE

Read this scripture passage three times, slowly:

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.

Exodus 20:8-11

APPLICATION

Ultimately nothing in this life apart from God can satisfy our desires. Tragically, we continue to chase desire. But to what end? A chronic state of restlessness? An underlying anxiety driving us increasingly into a life of hurry? Thankfully, there's a practice from the life and teachings of Jesus to fight against the chronic restlessness of our condition and culture and to tap into the deep soul rest Jesus offers. It's a practice called Sabbath.

In the book of Genesis we read that God, the creator, worked for 6 days and on the 7th day, he rested. He rested. An infinite God, and yet he rests. In his provocative and prophetic act of resting, God builds into the DNA and fabric of his creation an intrinsic need to stop and cultivate rest.

In our current world, the concept of Sabbath may feel a bit outdated or disconnected. It certainly doesn't seem to make a lot of sense when set against the backdrop of our 24/7 culture. But the reality is that this practice is the baseline remedy for the chaos of the day to day grind that we live in.

When it comes to the Practice of Sabbath, there is no perfect formula. Sabbath will demand varying rhythms, times, and implementation for each person – and will likely change as you move through life. However, we do believe there is a blueprint or a set of rhythms that help practically provide space for us to experience the true gift of Sabbath. These rhythms are: Stop, Rest, Delight, and Worship.

Stop working. Rest in God's provision. Delight in the gift of rest. And worship God, who gives the Sabbath to us as a good gift. In the Practice of Sabbath, each of us has the opportunity to lay a foundation in the story of our lives that is rooted in rest, limits, and communion with God.

PRACTICE

Think through the following questions. Write down your answers and ideas in your journal as you unpack them.

1

Is Sabbath a practice you have already incorporated into your life? If so, what does it currently look like?

2


What are some of the challenges you face or have faced in practicing Sabbath? What gets in the way of this rhythm?

3

If you are new to this practice, take some time to identify what day of the week, time frame, and rhythms you would like to establish in this practice. (ex: Bible reading, naps, eating a nice meal, etc...)

4

If Sabbath is something you already practice, share how you would like to grow in this area, and in what ways you'd like to grow in your intentionality.



The Practice for this week is two fold: 1) to take a day and practice Sabbath (ideally, this would be a 24 hour period of time), and 2) to begin filling out the Rest section of your Rule of Life. Remember, your Rule of Life will be a work in progress, and you will likely adapt it more than once along the way.

THIS WEEK, TAKE TIME TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

1

Identify a day of the week to practice Sabbath. Figure out what day and time frame works best for you. Set a modest goal and then do it.


2

Under the framework of Stop, Rest, Delight, and Worship, think through a few ways specific to your life and season, to practice each. Identify any obstacles that may keep you from actually following through with these ideas.

3

In your journal begin outlining what will become your rule for Rest. Be as specific as you can and strive for reasonable goals (e.g., If you aren't able to do a full 24-hour time period, start with 12 or 6 hours). Consider what life-giving practices you can incorporate into your Sabbath rhythm.

Here are some ideas to consider, adapt, or inspire:

- Listen to worship music
 - Spend time with Jesus in meditative listening or contemplative prayer
 - Read the Bible, poetry, or a book of blessing
 - Read a fiction or non-fiction book
 - Meet up with a friend for coffee or tea
 - Watch or go see a movie
 - Explore a museum or art gallery
 - Go for a hike with friends
 - Have a nice meal with friends
 - Craft or create art
 - Take a nap
- 

REFLECT

Finish your time by reflecting on the following questions:

1

Which day of the week will you Sabbath?

◦ Here are a few ideas to consider:

- All day Saturday or Sunday
- Saturday night through Sunday evening
- Traditional Jewish Sabbath: Friday night to Saturday afternoon, starting and ending twenty minutes before Sundown.

2

What needs to change in your normal, weekly routine to make Sabbath happen?

3

How might your Rule of Life for abiding look different in your current stage of life than in previous or later stages of life?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

WEEK 6

Celebration⁹

BEGIN WITH *PRAYER*

Begin in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to lead and guide your time today.

INTRO QUESTIONS

Spend a few minutes reflecting on the past week. Think through the following questions:

1

Were you able to set a time to Sabbath this week? What did that look like?

2

What was one thing that was new, difficult or freeing about your Sabbath? Was anything surprising to you?

3

As you consider adding this to your Rule of Life, what are some of the obstacles you may face?

⁹ Adapted from content created by [John Mark Comer](#) and [Gavin Bennett](#) for Bridgetown Church's "Practicing the Way."

READ THIS PASSAGE

11 Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

13 "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

17 "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' 20 So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

21 "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

25 "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 27 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

28 "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 29 But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

31 "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

REFLECT ON THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

1

Who is Jesus talking to in this parable (hint - read Luke 15:2)?

2

What is the main point of this parable?

- a. The “prodigal son” is actually about the older brother! The punch line of the story is the father begging the older brother - the Pharisees - to join the party too!

3

What does this parable say about who God is and how he relates to us?

4

What does this parable say about the role of celebration in the life of the people of God?

APPLICATION

We've spent the last five weeks crafting a rule of life and practicing habits that help us be with Jesus and become like Jesus. And here's the whole point of everything - joy. In the words of Richard Foster, "When the power that is in Jesus reaches into our work and play and redeems them, there will be joy where once there was mourning...Joy is the end result of the Spiritual Disciplines' functioning in our lives."¹⁰

Now, it's worth remembering that celebration is referred to as a discipline for a reason. Cultivating a spirit of joy takes a lot of practice. Yet we would do well to remember that the Pharisees were far more committed to spiritual disciplines than any of us will ever be. And they missed the point of it all - that God has orchestrated all of redemptive history so he can party with his people forever.

Every year we celebrate Easter, the greatest day in the history of the cosmos, when sin, death, and the Devil were defeated. There is no greater reason to throw a party than the resurrection of Jesus. Celebration is embodied in the resurrection, but it's also consistent throughout Scripture. In the Old Testament, the tithe given by the people of Israel was spent on three things:

- 1) supporting clergy/worship maintenance,¹¹
- 2) caring for the poor,¹² and
- 3) parties.¹³

Israel is actually commanded to have a special party with God every year, when they bring out the best steak and wine. In the Gospels, we regularly read about Jesus at some kind of party, eating and drinking around a table. He's so fun to be around he actually gets accused of being a "glutton and drunkard."¹⁴ Now, to be clear, he wasn't actually these things. But the point is that he showed up at parties often enough to be mistaken for one.

How often do we think of Jesus as the life of the party? And yet, everywhere he went people flocked to him from all walks of life. Ours is the kind of God who goes to celebrations and makes them even more fun. Jesus is the embodiment of God, and Jesus is happy. In fact, Jesus was the happiest person alive because God is the most joyful being in all of the universe. And since God's plan for our lives is that we might grow to be more and more like Jesus, we know that Jesus' joy is a dimension of our growth that God deeply desires.

¹⁰ Foster, *The Celebration of Discipline*, 193.

¹¹ Num. 18:21, 24.

¹² Deut. 14:28-29.

¹³ Deut. 14:22-27.

¹⁴ Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:33-34.

PRACTICE

The main exercise this week is to plan and throw a party or get together with family or friends (the size of the gathering is up to you!) to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. Keep in mind that the invitation here is not to throw a party the way the world throws parties, but to have a Kingdom type of celebration in which you get together to celebrate the joy of life with God and to enjoy food and drink as Jesus would. This is a form of worship as you draw near to God through gratitude. In Kingdom parties, everybody is invited to revel in God's presence and to leave with joy.

THINK THROUGH THE FOLLOWING:

1

Who do you want to invite? A fundamental aspect of kingdom feasting is inviting people who are often overlooked.

⋮

2

What kinds of things is God doing that you want to celebrate?

⋮

3

What resources do I have to put towards the party or get together? (e.g. time, money, energy, access to venue, etc.)

⋮

4

When and where do we want to have the party or get together?

⋮

5

What kinds of food, drink, and entertainment do I want the event to feature? Or will the gathering take place at a restaurant or other entertainment venue?

REFLECT

Finish your time by reflecting on the following questions:

1

In the spirit of starting small, what is one small change you want to make in the week ahead?

2

What are you looking forward to about practicing silence and solitude? What are you nervous about?

3

How would you define joy? Is that something that comes naturally to you, or something you struggle with?

4

What does the idea of God as the happiest being in the universe mean to you for your everyday life? Does it make you see God differently? Does it make you see yourself differently?

CLOSE IN PRAYER