

UNHURRIED RHYTHMS

everyday rhythms *for* everyday people



NORTHEAST RESOURCES

TABLE *of* CONTENTS

ONE: Introduction	1
TWO: Prayer	4
THREE: Scripture Part 1	8
FOUR: Scripture Part 2	12
FIVE: Silence & Solitude	11
SIX: Sabbath	16
SEVEN: Fellowship	22
EIGHT: Communion	25

Unhurried Rhythms: What to Expect

For the next eight weeks, we're walking through everyday rhythms to help you live an unhurried life in the Way of Jesus. Instead of adding eight new things to your calendar, we'll provide inspiration for how to create margin and integrate spiritual rhythms throughout your day.

There is no shortcut to spiritual maturity, but we hope to remove the stumbling blocks of shame and intimidation from practicing spiritual rhythms.

This group study is intended to be simple, shame-free, and approachable for anyone. For the weary, the longtime disciple, and even the "I'm doing fine, thanks". Whether you're established in your spiritual rhythms or you're just starting out, this series hopes to offer you a new mindset towards spiritual practices that will help you mature into a fully-formed disciple of Jesus.

Each week, you'll be invited to participate in:

- Reading a reflection on a spiritual rhythm that Christians have engaged with for centuries to practice being with God.
- A few questions for reflection
- An idea to practice that rhythm for the week

If you commit to creating Unhurried Rhythms in your life, it's our prayer that you'll live unburdened by burnout and flourish in your walk along the Way of Jesus.

Week One: Introduction

Opening Question:

- Share about a time you felt like you had too much going on- that you had overpacked your life? What were some of the consequences that you noticed?



Watch Sermon Video Clip: (8 minutes)

www.necchurch.org/leader-resources

Discussion Questions:

- How do you want your closest friends and family to describe you 10 years in the future? What would they say about your character?
- What would they say about how you spend your time?
- What would you want them to say is important to you?

Scripture Study:

Read John 10:1-21

- What stands out to you in this scripture?
- What is challenging about it?

Benedictine monks were known for their ability to create communities around a common set of values or a rule for life. Three important lessons we learn from them are the following.

Three Lessons from the Benedictine monks:

- I am not going to be owned by hurry. I am going to walk with Jesus at the pace of love.
- I am not going to be formed by popular culture. I am going to let the rule of Jesus rule me.
- I am not going to follow alone. I am going to live in community with other Jesus followers.

Application:

- What do you hope the outcome would be if you were able to successfully apply these three ideas to your life?

In order to become the person we hope to be in 10 years, we have to live intentionally. We will all be somewhere in the future. We cannot control what all of our circumstances will be then, but we can start asking the question: Who am I becoming?

This week, try to notice things in your life that happen every week. When you go to the grocery, the way you drive to work, or when you turn on the computer or TV in the evening. Make it a point to say, “This is a regular part of my life.” Then ask the question, “Who is this forming me into?”

Use the next section to reflect individually after your group time, before you gather again.



Individual Reflection:

By Avery Michaels

I'm a chronic overpacker.

In high school, I had the opportunity to go on a short-term mission trip to Europe. I packed the largest of my suitcases, ensuring I had enough clothes and supplies for anything I might encounter. The airline had a 50 pound limit for checked bags, which deeply distressed my overpacking DNA. My bag was around 47 pounds when all was said and shoved in there.

I was proud of myself for fitting everything I thought I needed while also staying under the limit. I wanted to be ready for anything. To be prepared.

What I didn't prepare for, however? Lugging a 47 pound suitcase across Europe. I knew that what I packed might be more than what I would *need*, but it felt responsible to fill it to the brim.

No one told me that what I packed might be more than I could carry.

(For the record, no one told me that Central Europe is not ripe with elevators, either.)

I hauled that stupid blue suitcase up and down flights of stairs in metro stations, up to the fifth floor of the building we stayed in for music camp, and into multiple host homes. I resented that suitcase by the time it touched down in the USA 16 days later.

The following Summer, I was determined to *not* make the same mistake. My second year suitcase was under 25lbs. I ruthlessly edited my packing list. I packed only the things I could carry. That summer was different.

I zipped up and down stairs with the smallest of my suitcases, anticipating the next destination, dwelling on the possibilities of what it could present rather than the dread of what it would take to get there.

Does your *life* ever feel like you're lugging around an invisible 47 pound suitcase?

If you're emotionally or mentally weary from an overpacked life, the thought of being handed a list of spiritual practices probably sounds like an airline fee you don't want to pay. I get it. But if true rest, healing from your hurry, and abundant life as a disciple of Jesus are what you seek, Jesus invites you to lay down your 47 pound suitcase of an agenda and, "Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden. I will give you rest for your souls." (Matthew 11).

Week Two: Prayer

Discussion Questions:

- Does the idea of prayer as simply “life with God” (instead of “asking from God”) feel true in your life?
- What do you think will be the greatest challenge for you over this series?
- Discuss difficulties you have with prayer.



Watch Sermon Video Clip: (13 minutes)

www.necchurch.org/leader-resources

Two keys to the rhythm of prayer were discussed in the sermon:

1. Diversify your prayer methods.
2. Habituate your prayer times.

Discussion:

- What are some ways you could diversify your prayer methods?
- As a group, discuss some ways you could habituate your prayer times. Perhaps it is before meals, or important moments. Try to come up with at least 3 times a day that work for you.

As a group, walk through the Lord’s Prayer, taking time to pray through this guide:

The Lord's Prayer | *Once you're settled, use this guide to pray the Lord's Prayer*

"Our Father..."

Pause and take a moment to think about the idea of God as your Father, who has good intentions towards you. Imagine God and his character as a father.

"In heaven..."

Now, take a moment to think about the idea that God is all around. As you breathe in & out, imagine yourself breathing in & out the breath of the Holy Spirit.

"Hallowed (holy) is your name..."

Spend a few minutes just sitting with the Father in joyful, grateful adoration. Sit in silence for a few moments. Think of some things you're grateful for and praise God for specific things you love about him.

Declare these things out loud like, "Father, thank you for your kindness." "Father, thank you for loving me unconditionally."

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven..."

Spend a few minutes asking for God's will to be done in your home, workplace, city, and church.

Verbally bring the Lord specific things in your life that you're wrestling with control over. A simple prayer of, "Your will be done in _____" is a great place to start.

"Give us each day our daily bread..."

Spend a few minutes praying for specific needs & wants in your life or that of your community.

This is a great time to pray over specific people in your life: pray for healing, peace, wisdom, comfort.

"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors..."

Spend a few minutes confessing specific areas in your life, and releasing others to forgiveness just as the Lord has forgiven you. If nothing comes to mind, ask the Lord to show you an area of your life that can be brought under his Lordship.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Spend a few minutes praying against temptation in your life. Pray against specific sins. Pray against any kind of evil – spiritual, human, natural, etc. Invite the divine flow of God's presence into your life and community.

Close with a moment of thanks to the Father for hearing us in prayer.

Application:

- Choose a way to habituate your prayer life for this coming week. Pray through the Lord's Prayer exercise above during those times.
- Report back to the group next week how it went.

Use the next section to reflect individually after your group time, before you gather again.



Individual Reflection:

By Jacob Stewart

Let's be real: for most of us, prayer is a weak point in our relationship with Jesus.

Most of us don't really enjoy prayer. We feel bad, even guilty, about how little we pray. When we finally do take the time to pray, we often don't know what to say. Or we're so distracted we can't focus!

For Jesus, prayer was central to life with God. Most people define prayer as simply talking with God. Prayer is a back & forth conversation that comes out of a depth of relationship.

That's why prayer was such a huge part of Jesus' life. We read, "he often withdrew into lonely places & prayed" (Luke 5:16). For Jesus, prayer wasn't a drag or a duty. He seems to genuinely enjoy his Father's company. I think that's why the disciples asked Jesus, "Teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). Jesus' answer was "the Lord's Prayer", which isn't a Scripture to simply memorize and recite but more of a template to follow when you pray.

Our practice of prayer is going to start there. This week, we'll challenge you to set up a time & place to pray and teach you how to do it. It's an easy exercise that you can do in 2 minutes or 2 hours! The main point is to get into a rhythm of daily prayer.

Here are some extra resources that will help you:

On Distractions:

Linda Stone, a tech writer and consultant, said that, “Continuous partial attention is our new default setting.” That was in 1998. In the last 20 years, this "continuous partial attention" has only become more partial because of technology. When "continuous partial attention" is our default, it debilitates our capacity to hear, see, adore, petition, experience, and commune with God, what Christians call prayer. If you struggle with distractions, you're not a bad Christian- you're just a human one. Try a simple breathing exercise before you start the prayer.

4-7-8 Breathing Method:

- Inhale through your nose for four seconds
- Hold in the breath for seven seconds
- Exhale through your mouth for eight seconds
- Repeat this as many times as you need to slow down.
- Completely power down your phone. (Better yet, don't even have it in the same room.)

Your mind will seize the opportunity in silence to run wild with thoughts, feelings, memories, to do's, etc. That's okay! Don't judge yourself, feel bad, give up, or worry. When you notice your mind starting to wander, recenter with breathing & saying a quick word like, “Jesus have mercy” or “Holy Spirit, come.”

Creating a Prayer Rhythm:

- Set a time and place to pray that is quiet and distraction free. It could be on the way to school, before you get ready for the day, or before you go to bed.
- Put away phones or any distractions and get into a comfortable, but alert position. Take a few deep breaths. Invite the Holy Spirit to be present with you.
- You're invited to pray aloud or silently, and I encourage you to do the opposite of what feels most comfortable or familiar.
- If you need the words, write out the Lord's Prayer on a small slip of paper and keep it in your pocket.
- Set a modest goal. Aim for daily, but if that's too much, try 3 times a week, for 10-15 minutes. If you miss a day, don't miss two. ☺

Week Three: Scripture Pt.1

Opening Question:

- Check in with your group and see how attempting to diversify prayer methods and creating new habits of prayer went.
- What difficulties do people have with understanding or trusting the Bible?
- What do you find difficult about understanding or trusting the Bible?



Watch Sermon Video Clip: (15 minutes)

www.necchurch.org/leader-resources

Discussion:

- What stands out to you from the video?
- We all have presuppositions of Scripture and what it is. What would you like to see change in your view of Scripture?
- What methods and tools are you using to read and study the Bible? Do you feel like you are able to apply what you read and grow in your faith journey through these methods? If so, how?
- Are you willing to share those methods with others as an encouragement for reading and studying Scripture?
- If this isn't a rhythm for you, are you willing to begin the journey of reading and studying Scripture on a regular basis?
- What is a favorite Scripture passage of yours and why?

Use the next section to reflect individually after your group time, before you gather again.



Individual Reflection:

By Tomara Brown

Psalms 119:105 (New International Version)

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

In my journey of faith, the one rhythm that has kept me “on track and grounded” is the study of Scripture. Has it been easy? No, it hasn’t. However, I have learned to acquire tools that have helped me, as a reader, commit to the challenge of reading the Bible consistently. The words of Scripture have truly been a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. There have been times where the Bible was like the flashlight on my phone and simply showed me the next steps to take. At other times, it has illuminated my path in a way that provided wisdom, insight, direction, and guidance. Reading Scripture has convicted me and yet comforted me at the same time. Even in my struggles with understanding the Bible, I am so grateful the Bible helps me to know and follow Jesus.

Creating a Rhythm of Reading Scripture

- Set a time and place for reading and studying Scripture. Make a modest goal. Aim for daily but if that’s too much, try 3 times a week for 15 minutes.
- Select a Bible to serve as your guide. A study-Bible is helpful if you are just getting started. It’s important to find a translation that works for you. I read a variety of translations but the main one I use is the New International Version.
- Put away your phone and ask the Holy Spirit to give you understanding.
- Choose a tool for your study. The Bible can feel challenging and unproductive if you’ve always had it broken down into little spoonfuls, and you’ve never applied your heart and mind to Scripture with a framework that makes sense for you. It requires some work at first, but the payoff is extraordinary.
- Choose a book of the Bible or Bible plan. Get to reading and studying. Write your reflections and questions in a journal.

Tools for Reading and Studying Scripture:

Tool #1 for Reading Scripture: The Alive Method

Help! My Bible is Alive! By Author and Pastor Nicole Unice

What is the Alive Method? The Alive Method is a simple framework for looking at any passage of Scripture. For those who've been in church for a while, you might know it as inductive Bible study. This simple concept is not new to Nicole's book, but, for whatever reason, it's one that hasn't been refreshed for the past several years.

The Alive Method is based on asking four questions of Scripture:

1. "What does it say?" (Observe)
2. "What's the backstory?" (Context)
3. "What does it mean?" (Theological Principle)
4. "What does it mean for me?" (Application)

The Alive Method takes us back to the basics and really encourages anyone to learn some basic tools and bring them to God's Word. The following books of the Bible are a good place to start with the Alive Method: Philippians, Luke, Acts, Exodus, and Proverbs.

Tool #2 for Reading Scripture: The Bible Recap

www.thebiblerecap.com

The Bible Recap is a short daily podcast (~8 minutes) where the Bible reading is summarized in an understandable way. Each day you'll read the assigned reading (A yearly plan or 3 month plan) then you'll tune in to The Bible Recap each day after you've finished the reading.

Tool #3 for Reading Scripture: Concordance and Commentary

Using a concordance and commentary are important for personal Bible study. You don't need a full library of resources and marketed Bible studies. These two simple tools will get you started.

A concordance has a lot to offer as you go deep in your personal Bible study. Use it to look up the original Greek Aramaic or Hebrew words used. A concordance will also help you find other passages in the Bible where the same word is used. You can also use your study Bible to cross reference. My favorite concordance is [*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*](#).

A commentary can be really helpful but there is value in wrestling with an idea or question and allowing yourself to stretch to try to discover the answer yourself. Start with the Bible itself. Read the passage. Read the chapter and book in its entirety for context. Check different translations. Use your dictionary to define terms. Look of cross-references. Pray. Then, after you've put in the work, check out the thoughts of trusted experts. Bible Commentaries vary depending on your own doctrinal beliefs. My favorite commentary is [*The NIV Application Commentary by John Walton*](#).

The main encouragement over the next few days is to commit this year to simply “take in God’s Word” in whatever consistent way that will help you grow in the knowledge of God.

Application:

This week read the following Scripture using the Alive method and be ready to discuss it with your group next week.

Day 1: Genesis 3:1-19

Day 2: Psalm 119:97-120

Day 3: Ephesians 1:3-14

As you read this week, consider the following that Dr Weatherly shared.

“The bible is the saga of the Creator’s victory that He graciously shares with His people. It answers the questions. Who are humans and why are we in such a mess? Will anything get better?”

Week Four: Scripture Pt.2

Review:

- How did your study time go last week?
- Did you learn anything new or have any insights into what you read? Was it difficult to read?
- How hard was it to sit in the questions and wrestle with them? Share it with the group anything that stood out.

Discussion Question:

- What criteria or mental map do you use personally to determine if something is true or trustworthy?



Watch Sermon Video Clip: (11 minutes)

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Discussion:

- What did you learn about Bible translations? Which have you used before?
- What stood out to you from the video?

Use the next section to reflect individually after your group time, before you gather again.



Individual Reflection:

By Tomara Brown

Last week, I introduced you to a helpful way of studying the Bible called the “Alive Method”.

The Alive Method is a simple framework for looking at any passage of Scripture. For those who’ve been in church for a while, you might know it as inductive Bible study. Here’s a written example from my study time to show what it can look like to use this method. Read through it to be encouraged that Bible study isn’t just for the scholars. You can use this method to study the Bible right now!

The Alive Method

John 15:1-5

The Alive Method is based on asking four questions of Scripture:

1. “What does it say?” (Observe)
2. “What’s the backstory?” (Context)
3. “What does it mean?” (Theological Principle) and
4. “What does it mean for me?” (Application)

Breath Prayer: Jesus Christ, Son of God, sharpen my mind to receive your word.

Choose your Bible: I’m using the ESV Study Bible by Crossway

Read Scripture: John 15:1-17 then study John 15:1-5 using the ALIVE METHOD by Nicole Unice.

1. What does it say?

This first step encourages me to observe. I'll paraphrase the verses into my own words. I'll be looking for repetition of words, compare/contrast statements, if-then statement, important conjunctions, etc. I'll also look for imagery and figures of speech.

- Those who stay connected to the true vine, Jesus, will produce fruit – fruit that will last – fruit that has eternal value. This connection is abiding.
- Every part of the believer who is bearing fruit should expect the pruning process so they can bear more fruit.
- Fruit is an image for the good results coming from the life of a believer that is advancing the work of God in the world. Life “apart” from Jesus cannot produce “a part” of Jesus.

2. What's the backstory?

The second step includes researching the setting, the author, the audience and any cross-references.

- John 15 is among the farewell conversations that include the last teachings that Jesus extended to his disciples before his death.
- The Gospel, John, was written by John (son of Zebedee and one of the 12 disciples.) The larger theme here is that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the son of God, and by believing in Jesus people can have eternal life.
- The main genre here is Gospel, which combines 3 different ingredients: what Jesus did, what Jesus said and people's response to Jesus.
- Here Jesus is confirming his “I am” statement – that he is the true vine. A cross reference here is Isaiah 5:1-7. In the Song of the Vineyard, the vineyard is the "house of Israel" that yields only the bad fruit of injustice and oppression. But in the Day of the Messiah, this vineyard will flourish.
- Abide is a key word here. It is found in verses 4,5,6,7,9,10 and 16. What, then does "abiding" entail? It's not talking about belief as intellectual assent, but belief as embracing, clinging to, and continuing to receive spiritual sustenance from the vine.
- Fruit is another key word. It is found in verses 2, 4, 5, 8 and 16. What, then, is fruit? The fruit is the evidence that you are a disciple of Jesus.

3. What does it mean?

The third step includes identifying the main principles and truth statements.

The 1st Principle: If you abide in Jesus then you will be able to produce fruit.

- As followers of Jesus, we must abide in him if we want to produce fruit – fruit that will last – eternal fruit. In other words, if we want to love others as Christ loves them then we must remain connected to the vine – Jesus.
- To "abide" means that I must "hold to" or "continue in" Jesus' teaching. This is the opposite of running hot for a short period of time, and then coasting. When I abide in Jesus' word then I don't give up under persecution or allow my fruitfulness to be choked by the "weeds" of worldly pressures (to use the vocabulary of Jesus' Parable of the Sower, Matthew 13:1-8, 18-23).
- Fruit is expressed in Galatians as the fruit of the spirit -love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Fruit grows through abiding and not striving. As we abide, God works in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. This kind of fruit enables us to love our neighbor and seek justice for the oppressed.

The 2nd Principle: People and plants must be pruned to grow. It can be painful but necessary.

4. What does it mean for me?

The fourth step includes making application for myself. This requires reflection on my daily walk with Jesus.

- My abiding in Jesus should always bring God glory and be reflected in my conduct, my character, and my conversations.
- I am called to abide, not just visit with Jesus. I am to press in ever closer to Him when circumstances tempt to pull me away.
- The pruning process increases my effectiveness as a Christian. Everything I experience while abiding as a branch is to prepare me to bear more fruit. It will be uncomfortable but as I abide in him, he abides in me. I draw strength, nourishment, protection, and energy from the vine.

I hope this method sparks a desire and confidence for you to study the Bible in a new way.

Application:

This week, read the following Scripture using the Alive method and be ready to discuss it with your group next week.

- Philippians 4:4-9
 - Isaiah 55:1-13
 - Hebrews 4:1-13
-

Week Five: Silence and Solitude

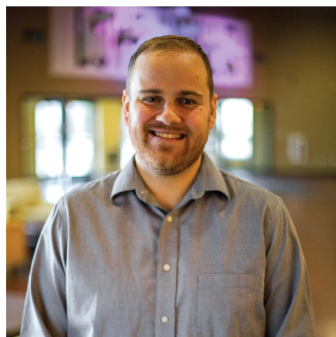
Opening Question:

- Instead of opening with a question, we're going to jump right into our practice for the week: silence and solitude. This will probably feel weird. You might love it, you might want to leave and never come back.
- **Let's spend 2 minutes in silence.** Close your eyes, take some deep breaths, and try to enjoy the mental margin. (*Leader, set a timer. Conclude the two minutes with prayer*)

Discussion Questions:

- Do you have any moments of silence in your day?
- Does the idea of having "silence and solitude" in your life feel laughable?
- When's the last time you had more than 2 seconds of silence OR solitude? How did that come about? Did you have to fight for it?
- Have you ever thought of "silence and solitude" as something spiritual?
- What would focusing on adding moments of silence and solitude look like in your life this year? This week? Today?

Use the next section to reflect individually after your group time, before you gather again.



Individual Reflection:

By Mike Mihalyov

My life is loud.

As my day starts, the kids are there early in the morning and either need my attention getting ready for school, or in discipline as I try to raise kids that don't suck as people later in life. I go to work and have meetings and people to talk to. I race through the carpool to make it home for dinner, family time, the bedtime routine, and try to coherently explain to my wife how my day was before sleeping and waking up to do it all over again the next day. That's my life.

Our lives are filled with things clamoring for attention. We all have family dynamics. We all have work drama. We all have phones to scroll through, friendships to juggle, evening commitments, and the feeling that no matter what we do there is never enough time to balance everything or do everything well. And even knowing this, we continue to add MORE to our schedules. The pace is unsustainable. We are left feeling weary, burned out, and like we have nothing left to give. What do we do with relentless, unsustainable busyness?

Jesus was said by many to be the wisest person to ever live. Even if you don't believe everything about Jesus, most people agree that he was a good person and did great things while he was alive. One of these things was displaying how to have silence and solitude in his life. There are stories all through Jesus's life about how he would remove himself from his followers (and even the people closest to him) to spend time by himself. He would use this time to think about decisions, pray, work through his emotions, and spend time with God.

Reflect:

- What would focusing on adding moments of silence and solitude look like in your life this year? This week? Today? Make a list.
- What are one or two ways you could focus on spending time by yourself to think about decisions and to work through your emotions? If you are a Jesus follower, to pray and just be still with God?

Make this a priority and it just might change your life.

Creating a Rhythm of Silence and Solitude:

Last year, I made the choice to try to carve out more moments of silence and solitude each day to see if that helped with the constant feeling of being overwhelmed.

For me this looked like two simple changes to my daily routine:

- First, I now wake up *before* the kids, not with or after the kids. This helps me think, pray, and prepare for my day as a human FIRST before I am a husband, father, and pastor.
- Second, I schedule time in my daily calendar at work just for myself to go somewhere quiet. This helps me recalibrate my attitude and assess and adjust my emotions if needed.

These two simple rhythms have been life changing as I am more patient, handle my emotions better, and regain perspective easier. I'm FAR from perfect, but it has helped.

Your Turn:

This week, I challenge you to:

- Start your day with ten minutes of silence and solitude. If that means waking up before the kids, or if it means spending your first waking minutes with silence instead of the latest and greatest TikToks, just see what happens if you *try it*. You might like it. Invite the Lord into your day ahead.
- Pause sometime during your day to check in with yourself and with the Lord. Maybe while at a stoplight, before going to your next meeting, or in the carpool line. Reflect with Him on how your day is going.

Week Six: Sabbath

Opening Question:

- How did your practice of silence & solitude go last week? Any cool stories to share with the group?
- On a scale of 1-10 how busy would you say you are right now? How would your close friends and/or family rate you on that scale? (Be honest!)

Discussion Questions:

- What or who are you busy for? In other words, who benefits from your busyness? (your job, your kids, your dreams, etc.)
- Is your busyness helping you become more like Jesus, or less like Jesus?
- What activity or worship practice makes you feel most connected to God?
- Is there a way for you to incorporate more of this time into your weekly schedule? (Examples: reading scripture, praying, being outside in God's creation, fellowship with other believers, worshiping through singing)

Use the next section to reflect individually after your group time, before you gather again.



Reflection:

By Melinda Gividen

I have this strange ability to remember very specific conversations and interactions that most would say are not memorable.

Unfortunately, the ones that are burned in my memory most, almost haunting me, are the ones that start with “I know you are busy, but.....”. It’s a gut check every single time someone says those words to me. It always makes me think, “What is it about my behavior, my words, my actions, the speed I’m walking, talking, etc., that has told this person I am too busy for them? Have I worn my *busy* as a badge of honor?”

If you have recently thought “I just need to make it to spring break, then I can rest”, or any version of “I just need to make it to _____”, there is a good chance you are too busy.

Too many of us have such unhealthy rhythms of rest. Not only does this prevent us from experiencing true physical rest, but the idea of connecting with God on a deep level spiritually goes out the window when we don’t have consistent, predictable rhythms of intentional time with Him. While this includes Sunday morning worship, we all need more than that!

Something we often forget is that these moments of Sabbath are preparing us for what we will experience in heaven- every day will feel like a Sabbath day. What a gift that we can catch glimpses of while we are here on earth!

Too many of us are living at a pace that we were not designed to live. The concept of Sabbath is foreign and counter-cultural. In a world that says everything we do should be about ourselves and what we will gain, Sabbath is not that. Every time we stop and rest, we show God that our lives are not centered around work and productivity. We show God that we need Him in our lives. Sabbath rest is about slowing down long enough to allow God to transform us into who He needs us to be.

When we accomplish nothing, God still loves us. What an important reminder! When we do less, God accomplishes even more through us than we could ever imagine, because it makes us more like Him.

Let’s embrace the rest that He is offering us today!

Creating a Rhythm of Sabbath

This week, choose at least one of these challenges:

1. Conduct a time audit. Ask yourself these questions:
 - a. Are there obvious blocks of time in your schedule that allow you space for rest?
 - b. How are you spending that time? Is God a central part of it?
 - c. What is one small change you can make to include God in your time of rest? (Examples: Instead of turning the game on, read or listen to a passage of scripture. Another option: instead of feeling pressure to

- constantly do chores and housework, give yourself permission to just sit and think about all that God has blessed you with.)
- d. Make a list of everything you will need to do before your Sabbath rest so that you can enter that time with a calm heart and mind.
2. Practice saying no.
 - a. If you tend to overcommit, choose something in your life that needs to go. Maybe it's something that leaves you feeling depleted, or something that you know takes your attention away from where God needs you to be.
 - b. Cancel the commitment, or communicate a plan for removing yourself from it. You may feel like you're letting someone down. Push through it anyway. Tell them what you're trying to do. They may seem shocked – that's ok! Remember, practicing Sabbath is counter-cultural. You may have an opportunity to help them understand God's love a little better than they do now.
 3. Stop wearing your busy as a badge of honor.
 - a. Slow down. Be intentional with your words, actions, calendar, speed of walking, etc. Make it impossible for anyone to think you are hurried or stressed because of a jam-packed schedule.
 - b. The next time someone simply says "How are you?," don't talk about how busy you are. Talk about the rare moments you are finding to slow down to be with God. Talk about the beauty you're finding all around you when you create space for it.

Tools for Creating a Rhythm of Sabbath

1. Recommended Reading
 - Subversive Sabbath: The Surprising Power of Rest in a Nonstop World by A.J Swoboda
 - Breathe: Making Room for Sabbath by Priscilla Shirer
 - The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry by John Mark Comer
 - Soul Rest: Reclaim Your Life. Return to Sabbath. By Curtis Zackery
2. Scripture about the Biblical Commandment of Sabbath
 - Genesis 2:3

- Exodus 20:8-11
- Deuteronomy 12:5-14
- Isaiah 58:13-14
- Ezekiel 20:19-20
- Hebrews 4:9-10

Week Seven: Fellowship

(Heads up: Next Week, Week 8, is about Communion. We encourage you to practice communion next week as a group. How you do this is up to you. You can take communion like we do at church, with bread and juice, or you can go all out and share a potluck meal together. At the end of your time together this week, make a plan for what you want your next gathering to look like.)

Opening Question:

- How did your practice of Sabbath go last week?
- Compared to your pre-Covid life, are you spending more or less time in community?
What has been the biggest reason for that change?

Discussion Questions:

- When was the last time you had a real conversation with another Christ follower about your faith and your relationship with Christ?
- When things are going well, are you more or less likely to fellowship with other Christ followers? Why do you think that is?
- When things are **not** going well, are you more or less likely to fellowship with other believers? Why do you think that is?
- Have you ever viewed the people you know at church as your family? Why or why not?

Reminder: Make a plan for what you want next week to look like as you practice communion.

Use the next section to reflect individually after your group time, before you gather again.



Reflection:

By Melinda Gividen

When my daughter was born, we were loved so well by our church family with texts, calls, prayers, and meals.

It was such an overwhelming experience, realizing how many people were in our corner, cheering us on, excited for us to begin this new chapter. While the meals offered us physical nourishment, they also offered us the emotional and even spiritual nourishment we needed as well.

That season remains some of the most humbling days, as I remember opening the door and letting people into my mess – there were more dishes, diapers, burp cloths, and tears than I could even count. I had never let people see me like that! Until then I had managed to keep it all together, at least on the outside.

I definitely didn't think I needed help, especially not from those I was closest to, right?.....WRONG! Oh how silly I was to think my husband and I could do it all on our own. That's not how God designed us.

Scripture teaches us that we were never meant to live life alone.

In a world that values and celebrates individuality, standing alone, and being self-sufficient, God is still calling us to surround ourselves with people who encourage us, lift us up, and speak truth to us. It turns out we do not have everything we need within ourselves. I was not equipped to face motherhood alone. I needed those friends who showed up with their casseroles and would still do the same for me today, almost 9 years later.

We fellowship with other believers not just so we can be served, but so relationships can become reciprocal. God is constantly healing our wounds with the words and actions of people around us. He speaks life back into our hearts, minds, and souls by forcing us to be vulnerable and admit that we need people around us (and that we will do the same when they need us).

Let's be honest. Covid has not been great for our social lives. We've lost friendships simply because we weren't willing to put in the extra work to keep up with people. Maybe it was easier when you saw that person every day, or every week, and now you don't, and you have no idea what's going on in their lives. Let's change that!

This week, accept the invitation God has given you to live life in a true biblical community, surrounding yourself with friends who point you to Jesus.

Creating a Rhythm of Fellowship

This week, choose at least one of these challenges:

1. There's an old saying that claims "Birds of a feather flock together". Would you say this is accurate in your own life? Are the people (your "flock") who you spend the most time with pointing you toward Jesus or pulling you away from Him? What adjustments might you need to make when it comes to investing in biblical community and friendships?
2. Each day this week, text (or call! *gasp!*) someone in your life who is important to you. Ask how you can be praying for them. If you're up for an extra challenge, ask them to pray for something specific going on in your life.
3. Think of a friendship in your life that has drifted or weakened over the last year or so. What intentional step can you take this week to reconnect? Reach out and schedule a time to grab dinner together, or share in a hobby you both enjoy.

Recommended Reading:

- Find Your People: Building Deep Community in a Lonely World by Jennie Allen
- The Art of Neighboring: Building Genuine Relationships Right Outside Your Door by Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon
- Just Show Up: The Dance of of Walking Through Suffering Together by Kara Tippett

Scripture References About Fellowship:

Hebrews 10:24-25, Proverbs 27:17, 1 John 4:21, Galatians 6:2, James 5:16, Acts 2:44-47

Week Eight: Communion

Discussion:

1. Have you ever thought about communion being a meal to remember Jesus?
2. In what ways does this idea change your perspective about the Lord's supper?
3. What does it mean to proclaim the Lord's death until he comes? (I Cor. 11:26)
4. According to Luke 7:34, the Son of Man came to serve, seek and save the lost, and to (Fill in the blank)?

This week, we're practicing Communion. We hope you enjoy this time together as a group, enjoying a meal with your community the way Jesus modeled.

Use the next section to reflect individually after your group time, before you gather again.



Reflection:

By Joey Keck

There is something powerful about sharing a meal with others.

Matthew 26:26-28 says:

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

²⁷ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

The early Christians seem to understand this, and they ate together all the time. Folks who didn't understand often referred to these meals as a "love feast" because all were welcome to

come and join. It was a gathering full of love and hospitality. It really can be considered a theological practice. Janice Price of the Church of England World Mission Panel says,

“Hospitality, as the mutual indwelling one with another, becomes the modus operandi of mission as those in common participation in the life and mission of God meet and receive from each other...Hospitality is an attitude of the heart which is about openness to the other...This mirrors the hospitality of the Trinity as God chooses to open himself to the other through the Incarnation and to subject himself to the created order...It is about a generous acknowledgement and meeting of common humanity as well as meeting the needs of humanity, emotional, spiritual, and physical, with generosity. As such it mirrors the activity of God towards creation.”

Every Sunday that we come together, we are extended an invitation to gather around the Lord's table. We're invited to share in a meal which we often refer to as Communion, but just the same, the Lord's supper. Jesus has invited us to come and sit at his table and participate in a meal of bread and juice to remember what he has done for us. It is a meal to celebrate the grace Jesus gives us. It is a meal to remember the hope we have through him. It is a meal to remind us that all are welcome in the family of God; that we are not only enjoying fellowship with Jesus, but with others who are participating as well. It is a meal that every time we participate, we are proclaiming Jesus's death and resurrection until he comes.

Remember, every time we take the Lord's supper, despite our sinfulness, because of what Jesus did for us, we are eating a meal to remember we are a part of his family. There is something very powerful in a meal- especially when Jesus himself has extended the invitation.

Creating a Rhythm of the Lord's Supper:

1. One of the things Jesus does in the Lord's supper is invite us into his space. In other words, he shows us hospitality. This week, who could you invite into your home and share a meal with?
2. According to Paul, when we take the Lord's supper we are proclaiming we believe Jesus died and rose again for us. We are proclaiming publicly that we follow Jesus. Is there an area in your life you need to surrender over to Jesus? If so, what action steps will you do this week to create new habits so that you begin to change your old behavior?