

G A R D E N C I T Y V I N E Y A R D

Rhythm of Renewal

A RULE OF LIFE

G A R
D E N
C I T Y . M K

**“Walk with me and work
with me-watch how I do it.
Learn the unforced rhythms
of grace”**

JESUS, Matthew 11:29 (MSG)

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We are grateful to Renew Communities Church, for generously giving us permission to use some of their work to help shape this booklet for our own context.

PRACTICES FOR THIS MOMENT

We are living in an incredibly significant moment in human history. The rise of post-Christian culture, the impact of social media, political division, systemic racism, a global pandemic and hyper consumerism are all contributing to a uniquely catalytic moment that touches nearly every area of our lives.

What does it mean to practice the way of Jesus in the midst of a moment like this? Well we think it means we need to form new habits that shape our lives, so that we might help to shape the world around us. Below we have curated seven rhythms or practices to help us to establish some simple ways to live resiliently in the midst of this cultural moment.

To do this we need to move beyond simply attending church to intentionally journeying with Jesus in a whole new way. It's our hope that the rhythms and practices found in this booklet, based on the lifestyle of Jesus, will offer us some simple ways to do this.

We invite everyone who is a part of Garden City Vineyard to take part in all seven of these practices, so you can always have an answer for the question "how am I practicing the way of Jesus as we seek to bring renewal to our city?"

Through these rhythms and practices we are attempting to show how you and your family can make them a regular part of your life, and how you might be able to invite others to do the same. It's important to note this is not another opportunity to fail, rather these rhythms and practices are about growth and growth requires a level of discomfort born out of a recognition that we are not yet what we will be.

In this process of becoming we are allowing God to meet us where we are and guide us to the next place. You shouldn't see this as simply knowing more facts, or knowing something someone else taught you, instead it is about knowing from doing the things Jesus invited us to do, and it's for that reason these rhythms and practices are so important to us, why? Because they offer us freedom, the kind of freedom that Jesus promises in John chapter 8. We all want to be renewed and Jesus says if we make our home in His teachings, we'll find the truth and the freedom we long for. These rhythms and practices are an invitation to the kind of life and freedom Jesus has to offer.

There is also great freedom in how you engage with these rhythms and practices. We have provided a few ideas, but we're all different, and you might be way more creative than we are. The truth is as you follow Jesus, you're going to hear Him speak to you in very specific and in very personal ways.

He might guide you to methods that fit you and your family better than anything we could suggest. And that's great! We're not trying to prescribe anything to you; we only hope to describe what it might look like for you to practice the way of Jesus, and then what might happen as a result. The truth is, however you live this kind of lifestyle out, it really is between you and Him!

Our hope is that these seven practices give us the opportunity to grow in our understanding of; scripture, the central place of Christian hospitality, what it means to be sent to those around us and what it means to bless and serve others in the process. While we seek to grow in deeper devotion to God, find intentional ways to rest and sabbath and create space to hear from Him through silence and solitude.

Think of this a first step in establishing a simple Rule of Life, that seeks to help shape the kind life you live each day, with your family and those you find yourself in community with.

To help get these into our muscle memory, we've titled these practices so they spell the word **R.E.N.E.W.A.L.**:



READ



EAT



NEIGHBOUR



EMPOWER



WORSHIP



ABIDE



LISTEN

Each practices includes a baseline practice; the minimum starting point for you to engage in each day, week or month. We've also included a going further section; with even more ideas for how you can engage as individuals, as a family and with others, in the context of a City Group or community of your choosing.

December 2025.



1: SCRIPTURE **READ**

We've been given a wonderful gift from God in the form of the Bible. By delving into scripture, we come to know God, understand more about ourselves, make sense of the world, and discover the mission that Jesus modelled and passed on to each of us. Setting aside time each day to engage with the Bible, no matter how long or short is not about ticking a box. It's about connecting with truth that's bigger than our own perspective and anchoring our lives in God's unfolding story.

Making this a part of your daily rhythm is not only life-giving, it's essential for anyone seeking to practice the way of Jesus. Let scripture shape your thoughts. Let it challenge, comfort, and renew you. Open the Word, and open your heart.

BASELINE PRACTICE

Spend time daily reading and memorising the Bible. Ask yourself what the Scripture is saying and how it applies to your life and the lives of those around you. Pray that God would work in your life according to what you've read that day.

TRY READING SCRIPTURE



Individual

- Choose a book of the Bible, and read it every day for a week. Answer the questions: What compels you about this story? How does this story change you? How is this story calling you to act?
- Commit to a year-long Bible reading plan, including the BREAD journal (www.breadjournal.org) or the Bible in a Year app.
- Use your commute to work to listen to an audio Bible.
- Use a Bible Project video to help deepen your understanding of the bible
- Apply the Story to your life by writing down an action plan to obey what God is saying you through the scriptures.

Family

- Purchase a children's Bible and read one story a night with your children.
- Choose a story from the Bible and act it out as a family. When you are done, ask your kids how you can act it out in real life.
- Let your teenager choose a book and read through it together.
- Use the SOAP exercise questions to process a passage with your spouse.
- Use a Bible Project video to help deepen your understanding of the bible
- Lead your family by example, by letting them know how you interact with the Bible.

In Community

- Choose a book of the Bible and study it as a group.
- Use the SOAP exercise questions to process a passage of scripture as a group.
- Share how you are hearing and obeying God
- Use a Bible Project video to help deepen your understanding of the bible.

Question

- What have you read in the Bible this week?
- What did you learn and how has it impacted you and those around you?

BECOMING PEOPLE SHAPED BY SCRIPTURE

Every journey of spiritual renewal begins with a voice, the voice of God speaking through Scripture. If we want to live as apprentices of Jesus in a noisy, distracted age, we cannot afford to treat the Bible as a book we glance at occasionally. We are invited to become people who are rooted in God's Word, whose lives are formed, nourished, and renewed by it.

The writers of Scripture give us a vivid picture of what this rootedness looks like. The opening lines of Psalm 1 describe two kinds of lives, one that flourishes and one that withers: "Blessed is the one whose delight is in the law of the Lord. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away."

One life is rooted, substantial, fruitful, resilient. The other is rootless, thin, weightless, easily blown around.

In a world shaped by constant scrolling, relentless opinions, and digital noise, this contrast could not be more relevant. Our habits of attention form us. What we meditate on becomes the ecosystem our souls grow in.

Psalm 1 does not paint the rooted life as one of grim discipline. It uses a surprising word: delight. The rooted person delights in Scripture—returns to it with joy, not obligation; hunger, not duty. Over time, this love reshapes our imagination, our desires, and our decisions. The Word becomes not merely something we read but something that roots us.

WHY SCRIPTURE HAS THE POWER TO SHAPE US

The question naturally rises: why does Scripture have such power? The apostle Paul gives the answer in 2 Timothy 3:16–17: "All Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness"

The phrase God-breathed is astonishing. It means that while human authors wrote these words, the Spirit of God breathed through them. Scripture is a partnership of heaven and earth, fully human, fully divine. These pages carry

God's wisdom, God's life, and God's heart. This is why Christians speak of the authority of Scripture, not as a dry concept, but as a conviction that through these words, God still speaks. C. S. Lewis captured this beautifully: "It is Christ himself, not the Bible, who is the true Word of God. The Bible will bring us to Him." The Bible is not the destination. It is the doorway. We read Scripture to meet Christ.

HOW SCRIPTURE SHAPES THE LIFE OF A DISCIPLE

Scripture does not merely inform us; it forms us. It shapes us in at least three essential ways.

1. Scripture Grounds Our Identity

We live in a world crowded with voices trying to name us—advertisers, cultural expectations, social media, even our own inner critic. But Scripture speaks a better word. It reminds us who we truly are: "You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, God's special possession" (1 Peter 2:9)

Here is identity that does not fluctuate with success, failure, or public opinion. Before God tells us what to do, He tells us who we are. We do not obey to become loved. We obey because we already are loved.

2. Scripture Renews Our Minds

Paul writes in Romans 12:2 that we are transformed by the renewing of our minds. Scripture reorders our thinking and reveals reality as God sees it. It wakes us up from the cultural illusions we naturally absorb, the false stories about success, value, beauty, and significance.

In this sense, Scripture is like the "red pill" in *The Matrix*, awakening us to the truth beneath the surface of things. It is not always comfortable, but it is always freeing.

3. Scripture Guides Our Steps

Psalms 119:105 offers another enduring image: "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path." (Psalm 119:105). Scripture rarely illuminates the whole journey at once. Instead, like a lamp carried on a dark path, it gives just enough light for the next step. When we are confused, pressured, or unsure, the Word offers wisdom that helps us walk faithfully and clearly.

PRACTISING THE RHYTHM OF SCRIPTURE

If Scripture is the stream that nourishes our roots, how do we drink from it regularly? The goal is not perfection; it is rhythm. Many of us know what it

feels like to start a big Bible-in-a-year plan in January, only to abandon it by February. That is not failure. It is simply proof that we need a gentler, more sustainable rhythm.

Here is the simple practice:

Set aside time each day, however short, to engage with Scripture. Not to perform. Not to check a box. But to make space for God to speak.

Tools can help. Two of the simplest are SOAP and BREAD.

SOAP

- Scripture – Write down a verse or phrase.
- Observation – What does it actually say? What stands out?
- Application – How might this shape my life today?
- Prayer – Turn your reflection into a conversation with God.

BREAD (www.breadjournal.org)

- Be still – Pause, breathe, invite the Spirit.
- Read – Read slowly and attentively.
- Encounter – What stirs, challenges, or encourages you?
- Apply – What step of obedience can you take?
- Devote – Commit your day and walk it out.

Use whichever fits you, or none at all. What matters is the rhythm, the returning. Think of Scripture like daily food. You may not remember every meal you have ever eaten, yet each one nourished you. In the same way, many moments with Scripture feel ordinary. But over time, they sustain you, root you, and form you.

A LIFE PLANTED BY THE STREAM

To practise the rhythm of read scripture, is to choose rootedness over rootlessness. It is to plant yourself beside the stream of God's living Word. It is to allow Scripture to name you, renew you, and guide you, day by day, season by season.

So open the Word, open your heart, and let God speak again and again until His voice becomes the story your life grows in. For those who take up this rhythm, the promise of Psalm 1 becomes reality: a life that stands firm, bears fruit, and does not wither, even in hard seasons.

Journal your thoughts



2: HOSPITALITY

EAT

Eating together has been a central Christian practice since the very beginning of our movement. From the early church to today, the table has been a place of fellowship, formation, and shared life. The gospel spread not just through sermons, but through meals, from one table to the next, one home to another. The table is a very ordinary place. So routine and everyday, it's easy to overlook it. Yet it holds extraordinary potential to create life-changing community. Jesus himself used meals to teach, welcome, restore, and invite. And when we gather around a table with friends, neighbours, coworkers, or strangers, we are practicing that same way.

We encourage you to continue this ancient Christian practice: Open your home. Share a meal. Create space. Not just for food, but for fellowship, stories, and the Spirit of God.

BASELINE PRACTICE

Aim to eat at least 2 meals (or you can share coffee, dessert, etc.) with others this month. Eat once with a person from church and once with a non-Christian friend, neighbour or co-worker.

TRY PRACTICING HOSPITALITY



Individual

- Invite a co-worker to lunch.
- Take a friend to coffee.
- Have a late night dessert with another mum.
- Plan a morning breakfast with someone before work.
- Invite someone to share dinner with you.

Family

- Invite your neighbours to a bbq.
- Have some friends over for pizza and games.
- Pass out ice creams to the neighbourhood kids.
- Make s'mores with another family around a fire pit.
- Gather a few different families for a potluck lunch.

In Community

- Share a meal during a city group meeting.
- Go out for dessert after a group gathering.
- Get to know someone who just joined the group by sharing a meal with them.
- Plan a dinner party with your group and invite those who don't yet belong.
- Have a potluck picnic in the park and invite strangers in the park to help themselves.

Question

- With whom have you eaten this month and what learning, encouragement or concerns were raised by it?

HOSPITALITY AS A WAY OF LIFE

What is one of the most ordinary things every human being does almost every single day? In an average lifetime, you will do it 87,000 times? ...Eat!

Breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks in between, our lives are structured around meals. Eating is at the heart of being human. And remarkably, it was also at the heart of Jesus' ministry.

Jesus didn't spend His time only preaching sermons or performing miracles. He shared meals. He sat at tables, with friends, strangers, and people who made everyone else deeply uncomfortable. In Luke's Gospel alone, there are over fifty references to Jesus and food. Luke paints a picture of a Messiah who is constantly eating, reclining at tables, sharing bread, and breaking social boundaries through hospitality.

Let's look at just a few examples:

- Luke 2: Jesus is born and placed in a feeding trough—signifying He is “food for the world.”
- Luke 5: He eats with tax collectors and sinners in Levi's home.
- Luke 7: He is anointed during a meal in the home of a Pharisee.
- Luke 9: He feeds the five thousand.
- Luke 10: He eats with Mary and Martha.
- Luke 11: He confronts the Pharisees' hypocrisy—at a meal.
- Luke 15: The story of the prodigal son ends with a feast.
- Luke 19: He invites himself to Zacchaeus' table.
- Luke 22: He shares the Last Supper.
- Luke 24: After His resurrection, He breaks bread with disciples and asks the others, “Do you have anything to eat?”

As New Testament scholar Robert Karris observes: “In Luke's Gospel, Jesus is either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal.” Hospitality was not just a pleasant extracurricular activity for Jesus. It was a central component of His mission.

Tim Chester points out that Luke uses the phrase “the Son of Man came” twice:

- Mission: “The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.” (Luke 19:10)
- Method: “The Son of Man came eating and drinking.” (Luke 7:34)

Jesus' mission was to seek and save. Jesus' method was hospitality. He did not build elaborate programs or craft strategic marketing campaigns. He simply opened His life to others, often around a table.

A Meal That Changed a Life

To see this in action, we turn to one of the most disruptive moments in Jesus' ministry, His meal with Zacchaeus.

Luke 19:1–10, Jesus enters Jericho and encounters Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, someone considered morally bankrupt, socially corrupt, and spiritually beyond hope. Zacchaeus climbs a sycamore tree to see Jesus, and in a stunning moment of grace, Jesus looks up and says: "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."

This would have shocked everyone present. Tax collectors were despised, traitors to their own people, extorting outrageous taxes to enrich themselves under Roman occupation. They were viewed as the bottom of the moral ladder. And yet Jesus chooses to eat with him.

The crowd mutters, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." But over that shared meal, Zacchaeus' heart changes. He stands and declares: "Here and now I give half my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will pay back four times the amount."

Jesus responds: "Today salvation has come to this house..." over a meal, a table, an invitation, a human life transformed.

This was Jesus' evangelism, not pressure, not manipulation, not spiritual sales tactics. It was presence. It was welcome. It was love expressed around a table.

What Hospitality Really Means

The Greek word for hospitality is *philoxenia*, a compound word:

- philo = love
- xenos = stranger, outsider, foreigner

It is the opposite of xenophobia. Hospitality literally means: "the love of the stranger." John Mark Comer defines it as: "Expressing the welcome of God through tangible acts of love, usually food, shelter, and relationship." But before hospitality is something we do, it is something we are. It is a posture of heart, a willingness to create space for others to be seen, welcomed, and loved. Hospitality provides a sacred environment where the Spirit of God can move.

Hospitality vs. Entertainment

Many people confuse hospitality with entertainment, but the two could not be more different.

Entertainment	Hospitality
Impressing	Including
Performance	Presence
Showing off	Showing up
Host & guest	Blurs the lines
Reciprocity ("your turn next time")	Generosity ("I expect nothing back")

Biblical hospitality is not about immaculate homes or gourmet meals. It is about welcome. It is about presence. It is about making room for others in our lives. As Rosaria Butterfield writes: "The most hospitable Christians are often those with the least to give."

Hospitality is not a personality trait. It is not a spiritual gift reserved for a few. It is a command given to all believers. Paul writes: "Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality" (Romans 12:13). The word practice implies intention, effort, and commitment. Peter adds: "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling" (1 Peter 4:9). Hospitality is worship. It is transformative, and when exercised faithfully, it shapes a home into places of encounter.

What Makes a Home a Place of Hospitality?

Christine Pohl, in *Making Room*, identifies ten markers of a hospitable home:

1. Comfortable
2. Lived in
3. Life-giving, a place where people flourish
4. Not perfect, but cared for
5. Safe and sanctified, a refuge from anxiety
6. Unhurried, peaceful, slow
7. Celebratory—the practice of joy
8. Welcoming even of pain, disappointment, sadness
9. Attentive to the simple beauty of life
10. Anchored in gentle traditions—prayer, Scripture, Sabbath

A hospitable home doesn't impress people; it restores them.

Why Hospitality Matters Today

We live in one of the loneliest generations in human history. People have hundreds of digital connections, but few real friendships, especially the kind you can call at 2:00am in a crisis. In such a cultural moment, hospitality is radical. It says: You belong, you matter, you're seen and valued and my table is open to you.

Jesus redefined meals as places of grace, belonging and transformation, and He calls us to do the same. This is how our own church began, around a table, with simple meals and shared lives. Table gatherings have been foundational to our formation as a community.

Practising the Rhythm of Hospitality

Hospitality doesn't require perfection, just presence. It looks like:

- A family squeezing in one more chair at the table
- A single person inviting a friend for coffee or takeaway
- A small group eating together and extending the welcome outward

What matters is not the menu, but the welcome.

Journal your thoughts

Journal your thoughts



3. SENT

NEIGHBOUR

We are a sent people, called to carry the hope we've found in Christ back into the places we live, work, play and learn. This mission isn't reserved for a select few. It's for all of us. And it begins with something simple yet powerful: actively loving our neighbours. That means the people we live next to at home, in our workplaces, classrooms or communities. We do this through intentional acts of blessing, kindness and hospitality, and by being ready to share the reason for the hope we carry.

Jesus invites us to be good news people in everyday spaces, shining His light not just through words but through lives shaped by love. Let's live sent and bring the hope of Christ wherever we go.

BASELINE PRACTICE

Ask yourself daily (in places of life intersection), "Who has God sent me to love?" and "How can I share the hope I've found in Christ with my neighbours?"

TRY LIVING AS SOMEONE SENT



Individual

- Draw a map with your house in the middle, and learn the names of the people in all the houses near yours.
- Find out what your neighbours do professionally.
- Find a way to get to know one personal thing about each neighbour.
- Look for ways to “help” when you see neighbours doing a project.
- Make a goal to talk with one neighbour each day, and do it.
- Check out the Art of Neighbouring website www.artofneighboring.com

Family

- Bake a cake and take them to each house.
- Invite families over for seasonal parties (Easter, Christmas, New Year).
- Look for ways to rally other families around you to serve your community together.
- Play out front instead of in the back garden, to intentionally engage with neighbours.
- Make a goal for the number of times a month your family will invite neighbours over for a meal.

In Community

- Share your neighbours names and needs and pray for them in your city group.
- Invite group members along with neighbours in to your home, to connect important relationships.
- Work together on seasonal parties to create special experiences with shared resources.
- Share stories of successes and failures in loving your neighbour, to learn from each other.
- Ask meaningful questions of each other, to encourage regular engagement with neighbours.

Question

- What neighbours have you intentionally loved this week and how did you love them? How have you shared the hope you have with the people you’ve been sent to love?

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR, REALLY?

I was reflecting recently on how deeply divided our society has become. There are generational divides and technological divides. Economic divides between rich and poor. Divides around sexuality, culture, religion and ideology.

Just five minutes of watching the news makes it obvious: we are not well. We are fragmented. Yet as a sent people this is the context in which we are called to serve others. For us, that's Milton Keynes, a place that, in its own way, reflects the wider fragmentation of our culture.

Milton Keynes is literally built on a grid, separated into neat little pockets and estates. Many houses are surrounded by tall fences and tidy boundaries. People leave their private plots in the morning, commute to another plot or another city, then return, closing the door behind them. Work is often behind another closed door, sometimes the bedroom next door. Life becomes a series of sealed compartments.

We live in a culture that not only tolerates this kind of isolation, but actively perpetuates it. "You do you." "Create your own identity, Follow your heart, Believe in yourself, No one can tell you who you are." And yet we are lonelier than ever. Polarised. Anxious. Exhausted.

So here is the question: Is there a practice in the way of Jesus that can break down the walls of "us and them"? A practice that moves us from individualism to community, from division to unity, from enemy to neighbour? I believe there is. It is the practice of neighbouring and living a people sent to those around us.

To explore this, we turn to one of Jesus' most famous stories. Luke 10:25–37. A religious expert stands up to test Jesus and asks: "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" This isn't an open, humble question, it's an exam. Is Jesus clever enough? Does He know the law? In typical Jesus fashion, He replies with a question: "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" The man answers by quoting Scripture he knows well, Deuteronomy 6 and Leviticus 19: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind, and love your neighbour as yourself."

"Right," Jesus says. "Do this and you will live." In other words, Jesus sums up the entire law in a single command, Love God with everything you have.

Love your neighbour as yourself. This is the path to life in all its fullness. But the man is not satisfied. Luke tells us he wanted to justify himself, so he asks. "And who is my neighbour?" He's looking for limits. He wants to make sure he's done enough. He wants a neat box he can tick—I've fulfilled my neighbour obligations for the week. Aren't we often the same? Rather than answering directly, Jesus tells a story.

The Story We Think We Know

A man is travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho, a notoriously dangerous road, and he is attacked by bandits. They strip him, beat him, and leave him half dead at the side of the road. By chance, a priest comes along. He sees the man, moves to the other side of the road, and passes by. Then a Levite, a temple assistant, comes along. He too sees the man, and he too passes by on the other side.

If you're hearing this for the first time, it's shocking. These are the religious people. The ones who know the law, work in the temple, handle holy things. The "good guys." To us, centuries later, it's easy to judge them. We assume we'd do better. But for a moment, put yourself in their shoes.

They've likely just finished a long rotation of temple duty in Jerusalem. They're travelling home with their pay, quite possibly in the form of offerings, grain, or animals. According to Jewish purity laws, contact with blood or a dead (or nearly dead) body would make them unclean, jeopardising the very food and resources their families and communities depend on.

They're tired, the road is dangerous, time is short and the risk feels high. Is it right that they pass by? No! Can we understand their excuses? Probably. We do something similar, "I didn't see, someone else will help, I'm too busy, I've got too much on." And then Jesus introduces the twist.

"Then a despised Samaritan came along..."

To Jesus' Jewish audience, this would have landed like a grenade. Jews and Samaritans had a long, bitter history of religious, ethnic, and cultural hostility. Jews saw Samaritans as half-breeds and heretics. Samaritans saw Jews as cruel and prejudiced. They avoided each other whenever possible. The hatred ran so deep that many people no longer even remembered its origin. It was just the way things were. Yet this is the person Jesus casts as the hero. "When he saw the man, he felt compassion for him."

The Samaritan:

- Goes towards the wounded man
- Cleans and soothes his wounds with oil and wine (costly resources)
- Bandages him
- Puts him on his own donkey (sacrificing his comfort and speed)
- Takes him to an inn
- Cares for him through the night
- Pays for his ongoing care and promises to cover any extra costs

This is not a token act of kindness. It is inconvenient, expensive, time-consuming, and risky.

Then Jesus asks the religious expert “Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The man can’t even bring himself to say “the Samaritan.” He replies “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus says “Go and do the same.”

Sent to Our City, Sent to Our Street

From this story, we learn at least two things:

1. God sends us into the divides of our city. We are not called to avoid difference, but to step into it with compassion. We are sent into the “us and them” spaces, the cultural divides, the political divides, the ethnic divides, the religious divide, to embody a different kind of love.

2. We are not only sent to the city in general, but to our street in particular. Your neighbours are not an accident. Mission is not always “over there” on another continent. Often it is right next door.

Jesus universalises the idea of neighbour, your neighbour is everyone, even your enemy. But He also localises it. If your neighbour is everyone, it risks becoming no one. So we need to recover the literal meaning as well. Your neighbour includes the person who lives next door, across the hall, over the fence or beside your desk.

For 1st-century Jews, the challenge was to see that their enemy was their neighbour. For us, the challenge may be to see that our literal neighbour is our neighbour.

The Posture of Compassion

The key word in Jesus’ story is compassion. “He felt compassion for him.”

The Greek word is *spagchnizomai* - a long, strange word that speaks of a visceral reaction, a feeling in the gut. It is not mild sympathy. It is love that moves you; love that refuses to walk past; love that steps into someone else's suffering.

Compassion:

- Isn't convenient
- Doesn't wait for a calm week
- Interrupts our to-do lists
- Costs time, energy, and often money

Fear argues with compassion "It's too risky, you'll burn out, you've already done enough." But compassion moves through fear and inconvenience and says "I see you, I'm here and I'll step into your suffering."

This is the love we see in God Himself, ultimately in Jesus, who took on human flesh, entered our pain, and gave His life to restore us. Neighbouring is simply this love extended outward.

Mapping Your Block

One way to start is to map your neighbourhood. Draw a simple block map, with your home in the middle, and eight other square representing you eight closest neighbours.

Once you've done that here are three things to think about:

What are their Names?

- Do you know the names of the people living around you?
- If not, that could be your first step.



Some basic information

- What do you know that you'd only know from a conversation? Their jobs, kids, hobbies, how long they've lived there?

Time for deeper understanding

- What are they struggling with?
- What weighs heavy on them?
- Where might they need support or simply someone who listens?

The block map is a long-term practice. Relationships take time, but it helps you to understand where you are starting from, and after all if we are called to love our neighbour, might it be a good idea to know their names first?

Neighbouring also overlaps with the other rhythms we've looked at, especially the practices of Hospitality. Sharing food is one of the easiest way to begin a relationship. A cup of tea, a mince pie at Christmas, a barbecue in summer, a shared dessert, all of these can be holy moments.

Sent People, rooted in their Neighbourhoods

To wrap up:

- We are a sent people because the Father sent Jesus, and Jesus sends us.
- We are sent with compassion, because we ourselves are deeply loved.
- We are called to love everyone, including those very different from us.
- But we are also called to love our literal neighbours, where we actually live, work, and study.
- We are in this place for a season and a reason.

Neighbouring is not easy. We will be tempted, like the priest or the Levite to justify ourselves and choose comfort. But Jesus invites us into a better way...

To slow down.

To notice.

To move towards.

And to love our neighbours.

Journal your thoughts



4. BLESSING

EMPOWER

The Hebrew word for blessing (Barak) means “to empower to strength.” As followers of Jesus, we are invited to pass on God’s blessing to others through words of affirmation, acts of kindness, compassion and tangible gifts. These everyday moments can become sacred expressions of God’s love.

Make it your purpose to mark each day with an act of blessing by intentionally empowering someone else with encouragement and grace. Pray that the Holy Spirit would give you eyes to see the opportunities around you and the courage to respond, whether it’s a friend, a neighbour, a co-worker or even a complete stranger. Don’t get caught up in how big or small it might feel. Trust the stirrings of the Spirit and act.

BASELINE PRACTICE

Write down what you got that God can use in the lives of the people around you.

TRY LIVING AS A BLESSING TO OTHERS



Individual

- Speak an encouraging word with someone who may feel down.
- Shovel your neighbours driveway when it snows or mow their lawn.
- Share a word from the Lord to someone when you feel led.
- Give someone a gift you know they will appreciate.
- Help a family in need with a bill.

Family

- Make a get well soon card with your kids for someone who is sick.
- Help an elderly neighbour with some odd jobs as a family.
- Seek to serve the homeless together.
- Pray together about who God wants your family to bless and then do what God directs you to do, be especially open to your kids' ideas.
- Find a way to sacrifice something your family would normally do and use the resources to bless another family.

In Community

- Pool your money together to help out with a major need.
- Provide meals for a family with a new baby.
- Serve a specific group you are called to care for.
- Organise a servant evangelism / blessing the community event together.
- Pray together and discern who and how God would want you to bless someone.
- Take time to speak encouraging words to each other at a group gathering.

Question

- Who have you noticed this week and how did you bless them through words or actions?

BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

One of the core callings of God over our lives is this ,We are blessed to be a blessing. Most of us can think of moments when someone's kindness or encouragement changed us. Maybe someone helped you when you were in real need. Maybe they prayed for you when you were broken. Maybe they opened a door you could never have opened yourself.

That's what blessing looks like. But here's the key, God doesn't bless us just to make us comfortable. He blesses us to make us channels of blessing.

What Is Blessing?

The Hebrew word often translated bless is *barak*. It carries ideas like; to bless to kneel / salute / honour, to endue with power for success, to praise or adore. Blessing is not a casual "hope things go well for you." It is empowerment - strength released into someone's life.

And it works like a two-way door.

- God blesses us — He empowers, strengthens, and favours us.
- We bless God back — through worship, gratitude, and obedience.

When we worship, we are in a real sense blessing God. We receive His goodness, and then we return love and honour to Him. As followers of Jesus, we're also invited to pass on God's blessing to others, through; words of affirmation, acts of kindness, compassion and presence, practical generosity

Everyday moments, at home, in the office, at school, in our neighbourhood can become sacred expressions of God's love. Blessing is not just a nice thought, it is a divine empowerment for strength, flourishing, and life. In other words, *Barak* means to empower.

Blessed to Bless

So here's the big idea of this chapter God blesses us, not just for us, but so that we can bless others. We are empowered by God. We are blessed to bless. Imagine if we really lived like that

- What if your life was the answer to someone's prayer?
- What if your presence brought strength to someone who is weak?
- What if your blessing became their breakthrough?

To make this more concrete, consider a story—not from a preacher, but from a president.

A President, an Enemy, and a Blessing

When Abraham Lincoln became President of the United States, he appointed a man named Edwin Stanton as his Secretary of War. Stanton openly disliked Lincoln. He mocked him in public. Many of Lincoln's friends were shocked by the appointment and questioned his decision. Lincoln simply replied, "He is the best man for the job." Lincoln chose to honour Stanton, to empower him, and to treat him with respect, even though Stanton had treated him with contempt.

That choice changed everything. Over time, Stanton grew to deeply admire Lincoln. When Lincoln was assassinated in 1865, Stanton stood by his bedside and said "Now he belongs to the ages." The man who once mocked Lincoln became one of his greatest defenders, all because Lincoln chose to bless instead of reject. One act of encouragement can turn an enemy into a friend. Every time we empower someone with a blessing, we participate in God's mission. We push back darkness and spread His glory.

Where Blessing Begins: Abraham and the Church

So where does blessing come from? What is its source and purpose? We first see it clearly in Genesis 12:1–3, when God calls Abram "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

God is the source of blessing. Every good thing, every opportunity, every provision flows from Him. And notice the pattern "I will bless you and you will be a blessing and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." God never intended Abraham to be a reservoir of blessing. He intended him to be a river.

You might ask, "That's Abraham. What does this have to do with us?" The New Testament answers that in Galatians 3:14: "He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit."

So the blessing given to Abraham now flows to us - the church - through Jesus. And Paul says the heart of that blessing is, The Holy Spirit.

Without the Spirit, we can't live out any of these renewal practices. The Spirit is God's empowering presence in us, the true blessing that enables us to bless others.

The Purpose of Blessing

Why does God bless us? Paul gives a clear answer in 2 Corinthians 9:11 "You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God."

We are enriched so that we can be generous. We are blessed so that thanksgiving to God overflows. The point is simple, don't sit on the blessing. Pass it on.

A helpful picture comes from the geography of Israel. The Sea of Galilee receives water from the River Jordan and gives it away. Life flourishes around it, fish, plants, villages. The Dead Sea receives that same river but lets nothing out. It is rich in minerals but nothing lives in it. When we receive blessing and let it flow through us, we become like the Sea of Galilee, bringing life to others. When we only collect and never release, we become like the Dead Sea, full, but lifeless.

We are called to be a tap, not a bucket. We are in the city for the city, not to consume it. Blessing that flows brings life. Blessing that stops brings stagnation.

How Do We Practise Blessing? (WARM)

Practically, how do we live this out? Paul quotes Jesus in Acts 20:35 "It is more blessed to give than to receive." We still need to both give and receive, otherwise we burn out. But there is a special joy in giving. A simple framework can help us think about how to bless others. Call it WARM:

W – Words

We bless with our words when we:

- Speak life, not constant criticism
- Encourage people when they are down
- Affirm God's image in them

A – Actions

We bless with our actions when we:

- Serve others in practical ways
- Show up when it's inconvenient
- Step in to help carry someone else's burden

R – Resources

We bless with our resources when we:

- Give generously and cheerfully
- Share what we have—money, time, skills, space
- Meet needs where we can

M – Mentorship

We bless with mentorship when we:

- Share what we've learned
- Disciple others
- Equip people to grow in their calling and gifts

Jesus did all four:

- Words: He spoke forgiveness and peace (Luke 7:50).
- Actions: He healed, fed, served (Matthew 14:14).
- Resources: He took a small lunch and turned it into a feast (John 6:11).
- Mentorship: He poured His life into the disciples and sent them out (Matthew 28:18–20).

True blessing multiplies when we empower others to continue what God has started in us.

The Ripple Effect

If every follower of Jesus decided, “Everything I have is a potential tool to bless others,” the impact would be enormous. Even mathematically, the idea is striking. If just 1% of the global church intentionally blessed and discipled just ten people each, the ripple would spread incredibly fast.

We see a picture of this in the early church “They shared everything they had... and there were no needy persons among them.” (Acts 2–4)

When blessing stops being just a concept and becomes a lifestyle, revival often begins. Blessing that flows creates a culture where God’s Kingdom becomes visible.

Journal your thoughts

Journal your thoughts



5. DAILY DEVOTION

WORSHIP

As John Wimber said "...Worship [is] the act of freely giving love to God, [it] forms and informs every activity of the Christian life..." As a church, we want to be intentional about how we engage with worship both in our gathered settings and in the scattered rhythms of everyday life. When we gather in worship, something powerful happens. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit is uniquely released as we come together sisters and brothers in faith, lifting one voice in surrender and praise.

Worship interrupts our routines. It inconveniences our comfort. It recentres us, reminding us of what is true and what is real. Whether on a Sunday morning or in the quiet of your own space, may we be a people formed by worship — a people who give love freely to God and allow His Spirit to shape everything we do.

BASELINE PRACTICE

Find simple ways to express worship on a daily basis and commit to gathering with others in devotion towards God.

TRY LIVING A LIFESTYLE OF DAILY DEVOTION



Individual

- Be vulnerable and honest before God, We worship Him in Spirit and truth.
- Spend 10 to 15 minutes in quiet contemplation.
- Pause throughout your working day to praise and thank God.
- Speaking Psalm 145 out loud.
- Surrender your life/will to God (Romans 12:1)
- Take a worship song and meditate on the words. So often we don't give ourselves time to connect deeply with the words of a song.

Family

- Get outside in creation and express thanks together.
- Do something creative - get out the paints/colouring pencils.
- Take turns in saying a word to describe God.

In Community

- Spend time in sung worship together as a community.
- Take communion together, focusing on God's sacrifice for you, reflect that back in worship.
- Commit to regularly worshipping the with the wider church on Sundays.

Question

- What has the object of your affection that often substitutes your worship of God?

WHOLE-LIFE WORSHIP

For many of us, when we hear the word worship, we instinctively think of what happens in a church gathering, singing songs together, lifting our hands, sensing God's presence as we join our voices. That matters deeply, but there's a problem if what we do in those gathered moments becomes completely separated from the rest of our lives.

Think about it for a second. If you're in a typical church context, you might spend around 90 minutes in a Sunday service, maybe six hours a month, roughly 72 hours a year in gathered worship. That's out of 8,760 hours in a year, is that the only worship God is interested in? Of course not.

Worship is not primarily about what happens when we sing together, good and beautiful as that is. It's about what it means to live a whole life of worship.

The Sacred–Secular Split

Many of us grew up, consciously or unconsciously, with a kind of invisible sorting system in our minds, some parts of life go in the "sacred" basket: church, Bible reading, prayer, Sunday services. Everything else goes in the "secular" or "normal" basket: work, leisure, cleaning, emails, school runs, TV.

We may never say it out loud, but we live as if God is mostly interested in the first basket and only vaguely interested in the second. The result? We live divided lives. We act as if some segments of our week matter to God and others don't. But here's the truth, Jesus is with you in all things.

The Christian life is not a split-screen divided between sacred and secular. There is no moment in your life that cannot become an act of worship. Everything is an invitation to intimacy with God.

Avodah: One Word, One Life

The ancient Hebrews understood this far better than we often do. They used a single word for both work and worship, Avodah. In Genesis 2, when God places Adam in the garden "to work it and take care of it," the word used is avodah. Elsewhere, that same word is used for worship and service.

Avodah holds together work, worship, service and prayer all in a single idea.

In other words, God's original design was that our work and our worship would be a seamless way of living. On Monday morning you would avodah - work, serve, pray, worship. On Sunday with your community, you would also avodah - serve, pray, worship together. There wasn't a sacred box and a secular box. There was just life with God.

So what would it look like, in our 21st-century, post-Christian world, if tomorrow you and I chose to live as people of avodah?

Picture your Monday at 10:30am teaching a class, cleaning a room, writing code or reports, caring for a child, stacking shelves, fixing a broken system, making a bed. What if each of those moments was seen as an opportunity to worship Jesus?

A Whole-Life Offering: Romans 12

Our key passage comes from Romans 12:1-2. In The Message paraphrase, it reads like this: "Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out."

In this passage we can see three invitations, Offer your life, Fix your attention and Recognise the call, let's walk through each one.

1. Offer Your Life

There is nothing half-hearted about Paul's language. "Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice..." It's a picture of complete surrender, every aspect of who we are presented to God as worship. We often feel God most clearly in certain "high" moments of gathered worship: when the room is full of praise, when we sense His nearness, when there is joy, freedom, and connection. Those moments are real and precious.

But they are not meant to be contained in a building or time slot. When we pray "Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" we are not just praying it over a church service. We are asking, Your Kingdom come in the supermarket, Your Kingdom come on the bus, Your Kingdom come in the office, the workshop, the classroom, Your Kingdom come in the kitchen, the playground, the staffroom, the pub. We are asking that God's presence be at work everywhere, and that we would join Him there.

This is beautiful—but it is also costly. Paul says "Take your everyday, ordinary life... and place it before God as an offering." God doesn't just want the

highlight reel. He meets us on the ordinary days, in the boring task, in the repetitive routine and the unseen labour.

Brother Lawrence, a 17th-century monk, famously discovered the presence of God not just in the chapel, but in the kitchen, washing dishes. His “method,” in essence, was simple Do what’s in front of you, with God and for God. He wrote that it was enough to turn your heart toward Him in the middle of your tasks, thank Him for past and present grace, offer your troubles and your joys and Lift your heart to Him “during your meals and in company”

You don’t have to shout, you don’t have to feel spiritual. You simply remember He is nearer than you think. Whatever God has placed in your hands, raising children, cleaning floors, managing projects, driving buses, handling emails, caring for others, can become an act of worship when offered to Him. We are called to avodah: to offer our whole lives as worship.

2. Fix Your Attention

Paul goes on to say: “Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out.” Worship is not only about singing. It is about attention. The question is: Where is my attention? What am I fixing my mind and heart on?

There is a constant battle for our attention, The news cycles, social media, work pressures, fear, worry, all distractions. None of these things are wrong to be aware of, but when they dominate our attention, they also shape our hearts.

Paul says in Colossians 3:1–2 “Set your hearts on things above, Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” We easily forget who we are, People raised with Christ, hidden with Christ in God. Every day, we have a choice, will we set our attention primarily on our circumstances, problems, and fears? or will we set our attention on Jesus and let Him reframe our reality?

This doesn’t mean pretending everything is fine. We will still face deeply difficult situations—sometimes impossible ones. But in those places, worship invites us to ask “Jesus, how do You see this? Where are You at work? What does it look like to respond with You rather than react without You?”

John Tyson once wrote that when disruption comes, we have at least four possible responses:

1. Complain – “This isn’t what I wanted.”
2. Blame – “It’s their fault.”
3. Withdraw – “I’m done. It’s pointless.”
4. Redeem – “God, how can something beautiful be brought out of this mess?”

He describes wanting to live in that fourth response: not ignoring the brokenness, but asking how creative redemption can emerge from within it. That kind of response is only possible when our attention is set on Jesus. Worship is not escapism. It is bringing our real lives, with all their complexity, under the gaze and guidance of God.

3. Recognise the Call

Paul continues “Readily recognise what He wants from you, and quickly respond to it. God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.” As we fix our attention on Jesus, He begins to change us from the inside out. We grow in our ability to discern what He is asking of us, respond quickly and joyfully and live with a quiet, steady obedience.

Much of this transformation does not happen in obvious, dramatic ways. It happens in the “quiet, fiddly places” of daily life; how we handle money, how we speak about others, how we treat people when no one is watching, how we rest and play and how we use our time and attention. Imagine if our attitudes, finances, politics, leisure, work, and relationships were all held in God’s presence, offered as worship, shaped by His ways.

The writer of Hebrews puts it like this “Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” (Hebrews 13:15–16)

Or as the Message paraphrase puts it “Make sure you don’t take things for granted and go slack in working for the common good; share what you have with others. God takes particular pleasure in acts of worship—a different kind of ‘sacrifice’—that take place in kitchen and workplace and on the streets.”

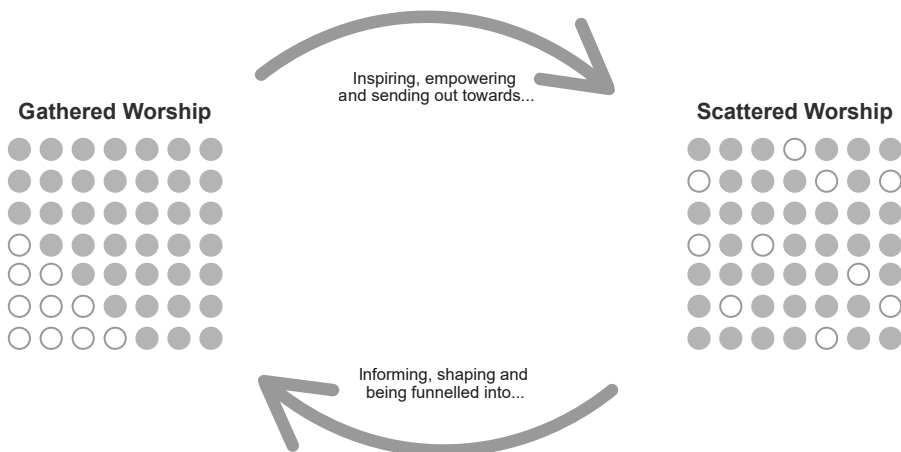
In other words Worship is not part of your life, it is your life. Every act of surrender deepens devotion. Every act of generosity breaks self-centredness. Every unseen yes to Jesus forms Christ in us.

Gathered and Scattered Worship

Most churches instinctively know what “gathered worship” is—what we do when we come together as a community. But Scripture and church history

also point to the importance of “scattered worship” what happens when we leave the building and go into our everyday contexts.

Sam and Sara Hargreaves describe it like this, our gathered and scattered worship are meant to form a virtuous circle. Our gathered worship draws on our experiences of glorifying God in our everyday frontlines. Our gathered worship also inspires and equips us to live more fully for God when we scatter.



The pattern is:

1. We gather to worship and be shaped by God’s presence and Word.
2. We scatter to worship in our everyday lives—home, work, school, streets.
3. We return and bring those stories and experiences back into gathered worship.
4. The cycle deepens and matures over time.

We gather in worship.

We scatter in worship.

Both matter. Both belong together.

Journal your thoughts



6. SABBATH

ABIDE

The human condition is naturally prone to restlessness and in our fast-paced digital age and consumer-driven culture, that restlessness only grows louder. But Jesus offers us a different way. He invites us into a life shaped by rest, not just as the absence of work, but as the presence of peace. The restfulness of Jesus is more than just taking a day off, it's a spirit we carry, a rhythm we live by throughout the week. To Sabbath is to intentionally set aside time for deep rest and worship. It's not about checking out or escaping, but about pressing in to God, to joy, to renewal, and to what truly matters. One of the most important and often overlooked practices of Jesus was his commitment to rest. He made time to withdraw, to be with the Father, to renew his strength, and to simply stop. As followers of Jesus, we are invited to do the same — to model rest in a restless world, and to trust that God is at work even when we are not.

BASELINE PRACTICE

Aim to take regular breaks throughout your day and set aside one day to 'sabbath' every week.

TRY PRACTICING SABBATH & REST



Individual

- Set an alarm on your phone to remind to take short breaks throughout your day.
- Decide on a window of time you will spend without your phone.
- Mark out a 24 hour time period (or as close as you can) to rest.
- Explore Sabbath activities that don't require a phone, internet, or a screen. If you're prone to vegging on Netflix, try picking up a book or reading the Bible.

Family

- Put together a box of special toys with your kids, that they get to play with on the Sabbath.
- Plan a special meal (like breakfast) or dessert.
- Read a story from the Bible
- Take a walk in your neighbourhood or to a local park
- Watch movie or go to the cinema together.
- Go to the zoo or visit a Museum.
- Parents, take turns taking time doing your own thing.
- Single Parents: See if someone is willing to hang out with your kids, so you can have some time alone.
- Parents of teens: Sleep in (and let them sleep in), limit the amount of screen time (in conjunction with your teens). Explore a hobby with them.
- Empty nesters: host an intentional family dinner, explore your spouses hobbies, find a hobby to do together, drive to the coast, read the Bible and pray together.

In Community

- Make any social plans for your Sabbath ahead of time so you don't need to be on your phone that day.
- Arrange to have coffee with others in your community.
- Meet up at a local park, go cycling with friends, explore a part of the city you've never visited before.

Question

- What are the things to stop you from resting, busyness, hurry, what makes you think you can't stop?

For more resources visit: www.practicingtheway.org/practices/sabbath

FINDING REST FOR YOUR SOUL

Let me begin with a simple observation, one I'm sure you've noticed. When you ask someone, "How was your week?" the number one answer, probably 95% of the time is "Busy." And when you ask, "How are you doing today?" the most common reply is "Tired." It's as if, in our modern world, exhaustion has become normalised. Some of us even wear it like a badge of honour.

And yet, if you were to flip through almost any magazine, the images tell a different story: couples drinking slow morning coffee in bed, a man relaxing on a sofa with a guitar, friends having a picnic on a quiet beach. These images reveal something profound, in a world that is busy and tired nearly all the time, what is often being sold to us is the ancient practice the Bible calls Sabbath.

The word sabbath comes from the Hebrew word shabbat, which simply means stop, cease, be done. And marketing departments know that we ache for this kind of life and they also know most of us don't have it. So they try to sell it to us.

But here's the irony You can't buy Sabbath. And you don't need to. You don't need the £69.99 luxury bathrobe You don't need the new sofa to Sabbath well you simply need to stop.

"Come to Me..." Jesus' Invitation to Rest

In Matthew 11:28–30 Jesus gives one of His most famous invitations "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest... and you will find rest for your souls."

Eugene Peterson paraphrases it beautifully "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me... Learn the unforced rhythms of grace... Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

"Are you tired?" has become a rhetorical question of our age. Of course you are. Low-grade exhaustion is the new normal. But Jesus calls us into something radically different - something that almost sounds foreign to our ears: "You will find rest for your souls."

Not just rest from your schedule. Not just a slightly better night's sleep. Rest for the deep place inside you.

The Greek word for weary means "those living at a pace that produces exhaustion." Sound familiar? We live in a world pushing us to move faster and faster, even in things that cannot be hurried. We tap the lift button repeatedly, hope the doors close quicker. We race strangers in the supermarket queue. We accelerate at amber lights. We try to fit more into days that are already full. We live at a pace of life our souls cannot sustain.

And ironically, technology, which was meant to save us time, has only sped us up. Instead of working less, we work more. Instead of resting more, we rest less. We call while driving, scroll while eating, and fall asleep to the glow of our phones. One author writes: "Never before in human history has a society been so things-rich and time-poor." Even in the church, research found the number one obstacle to spiritual growth was this "I am too busy."

And so Jesus' words hit us exactly where we live "Come to Me... and I will give you rest." He doesn't say "try harder, He doesn't say "manage everything better." He simply says "Come."

Jesus continues "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me..." A yoke was a wooden beam placed across the shoulders of oxen so they could pull a load. But it was also a well-known metaphor in Jesus' day, where Rabbis referred to their teaching and way of life as their yoke. To "take on the yoke" of a Rabbi meant to centre your life around him, to imitate him, to learn his rhythms, to shape your life by his way. So when Jesus says "Take my yoke..." He isn't offering a poetic image, He is saying "Let Me teach you how to live. Let Me show you how to rest."

Everyone is yoked to something, Achievement, which leads to relentless comparison. Appearance, which traps us in insecurity or Approval, which keeps us chasing other people's opinions. These burdens exhaust us, but Jesus says "Exchange your burdens for mine... for my burden is light." This is the heart of Sabbath, not adding another burden to your life, but laying down the burdens you were never meant to carry.

Three Things Scripture Teaches About Sabbath

1. Sabbath Is Built Into the Rhythm of Creation

Genesis 2 tells us "By the seventh day God had finished the work... so on the seventh day He rested... God blessed the seventh day and made it holy." God, the all-powerful Creator, rested.

If there was ever a moment to object to Sabbath, to claim you don't need it, the Scriptures gently dismantle that idea:

"I'm Type-A." — God sabbathed.

"I have so much going on." — God sabbathed.

"I'm raising young children." — God sabbathed.

The Creator of all things stopped. And by doing so, He built rhythm into the fabric of creation. Six days we work, one day we stop. This cycle is woven into the world itself. Every human society has been built on a seven-day week. The only famous exception was the French Revolution, when they tried to create a ten-day week to boost productivity. The result? Production went down. Suicides went up and mental health collapsed.

We are reliving a similar pattern, not because our calendars changed, but because our world refuses to stop. Alex Pang writes in his book *Rest* "Working better does not mean working more, it means working less and resting better." Even secular research is rediscovering God's creative wisdom.

2. Sabbath Is a Command

In Exodus 20 we read "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy..." It is one of the Ten Commandments, and the longest one. If you made a pie chart of the Ten Commandments, Sabbath would take up around 37% of the text.

In God's economy, Sabbath matters. It is unique among the commandments because it is the only one many Christians openly brag about breaking. People don't brag about lying or stealing, but they brag about busyness: "I worked 14 days straight." "I haven't had a day off in weeks."

Some argue Sabbath isn't binding for Christians today, but that question misses the point. Asking if you have to keep Sabbath is like asking if you have to obey gravity. You can work with it, or against it, but it simply is.

Wayne Muller puts it beautifully "The sabbath is not a burdensome requirement... It is a reminder of how things really are, the rhythmic dance to which we unavoidably belong."

Jesus said "The Sabbath was made for people..." Not as a restriction, but as a gift. Our problem isn't we have too many Sabbath rules, our problem is we have none.

3. Sabbath Is Resistance

In Sabbath as Resistance, Walter Brueggemann argues that Sabbath is not only spiritual – it is political, cultural, and profoundly counter-formation. He roots Sabbath in the Exodus story. Egypt was an empire built on endless work, relentless production, zero rest and a belief that human worth was based on output alone.

Pharaoh never allowed rest. Human beings were measured only by how many bricks they made. Brueggemann says Our modern world looks far more like Pharaoh's Egypt than like the Kingdom of God. Sabbath becomes God's powerful NO to Pharaoh and His YES to freedom.

Sabbath resists the lie that your worth = productivity.

You are not what you do, you are who God loves.

Sabbath resists anxiety and scarcity.

Pharaoh says: "There's never enough." God says: "I will provide."

Sabbath resists consumerism.

The world says your purpose is to buy, Sabbath says your purpose is to belong.

Sabbath resists the commodification of people.

Your worth is not your usefulness, You are an image-bearer.

Sabbath reminds us we are free.

Free from hurry, Free from anxiety, Free from production, Free from the tyranny of "more."

Sabbath doesn't restrict us, it liberates us. Sabbath doesn't just restore us; it resists the world that breaks us. And so in a world that is continually moving, what would it look like for you to stop?

Journal your thoughts

Journal your thoughts



7. PRAYER, SILENCE & SOLITUDE

LISTEN

We believe that God wants to speak to us, and we believe that we are capable of listening. We don't confine His voice to any one method or moment. Instead, we actively wait for Him to speak, wherever and whenever He chooses, through the practice of prayer, silence and solitude.

Before plugging in to the never-ending stream of content, set aside space in your day to connect with God. There is power in resisting the magnetic pull of social media, notifications or the to-do list. In that quiet space, we are reminded that our true “daily bread” is not the news cycle or the latest headline — our daily bread is Jesus.

BASELINE PRACTICE

Aim to spend daily time listening to the Holy Spirit's voice in prayer and silence and solitude.

TRY PRACTICING PRAYER, SILENCE & SOLITUDE



Individual

- Write out your prayers in a prayer journal.
- Take 15 minutes a day to be quiet with God and listen.
- Meditate on a certain Scripture and ask God to direct your heart in response
- At night, reflect on the day's activities and ask, "Where was God working and speaking?"
- Multiple times each day, stop to pray and ask God to speak to you. Then, pay attention for what He may say.
- Set aside one hour each week for an extended time to silence, solitude and prayer and be in God's presence.

Family

- Create a time where listening to God and prayer becomes a common daily practice for your family.
- Ask each other regularly, "What's God saying to you?" to help build the expectation that you will hear Him.
- Use various prayer methods to give your family different experiences.
- When prompted in public/social situations, lead your family in prayer.
- When someone in your family is sick or anxious, invite the whole family to pray for that person.

In Community

- Share with your City Group what God's been saying to you and its impact.
- Regularly pray for you for each other and listen to what God might be saying.
- When someone expresses need, fear or sickness, lay hands on them and pray.

Question

- Have you heard or sensed any promptings from God this week?
- What are you going to do about it?

For more resources visit: www.prayercourse.org/toolshed

ARE YOU LISTENING?

Listen. It's a word we rarely hear in our loud, busy, constantly connected world. We live surrounded by noise, notifications, conversations, deadlines, responsibilities. And if we're honest, many of us feel uncomfortable with quiet.

Some of us avoid being alone because silence has a way of revealing the things we'd rather keep hidden.

Have you ever been at an airport or in a huge supermarket? Dozens of announcements echo over the speakers, and most of them fade into the background. But then, suddenly, they say your name and instantly, your ears tune in. This is a picture of what Jesus is doing every day. He is calling you by name. The question is, are you listening? Or has His voice become just another announcement buried in the noise?

Jesus speaks, but the world doesn't make it easy to hear Him. The noise of culture, the chaos of our schedules, and even the chatter of our own thoughts create interference. Listening to Jesus requires intentional effort.

In other words, we must turn down the volume on everything else if we want to hear the One who matters most.

The Whisper of God

In 1 Kings 19, the prophet Elijah desperately needed to hear God. He was burned out, afraid, and alone. And God told him "Go out and stand on the mountain... for the Lord is about to pass by." A violent wind tore the mountains apart, but God wasn't in the wind. Then an earthquake shook the ground, but God wasn't in the earthquake. Then a fire blazed by, but God wasn't in the fire. Finally... "After the fire came a gentle whisper." and that's where God was.

God doesn't compete for attention. He doesn't shout over the noise. He speaks softly, purposefully and we must make space to hear Him. Listening to God is like tuning an old radio. The signal is broadcasting, but unless you adjust the dial, all you hear is static.

Where is the static coming from in your life?

- The endless scroll of social media?
- The constant buzz of notifications?
- The pressure of expectations?
- The anxious voice in your mind?

If you want to hear the Shepherd, you must learn how to silence the noise and clear the static. Because in Scripture, silence and solitude are not empty spaces. They are sacred spaces, the places where God speaks, restores, and realigns our hearts. Today, I want to invite you to rediscover this practice: The sacred act of listening, and who better to learn from than Jesus Himself?

Jesus Practiced Silence and Solitude

Perhaps surprisingly, silence and solitude were central to the life of Jesus. Mark 1:35 "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went to a solitary place, where He prayed." While everyone slept... before any miracles... before any decisions... Jesus withdrew to listen to His Father.

The next verses say "Everyone is looking for You!" How long had He been gone? Long enough that the disciples began to panic. And Jesus was unbothered, because He was choosing what mattered most. Jesus didn't rush into His day. He anchored His day in His Father.

Luke 5:16 "Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."

Matthew 14:23 "He went up on a mountainside by Himself to pray. Later that night, He was there alone."

Again and again, Jesus slipped away to be with the Father, not because He was weak, but because He knew where strength comes from. If Jesus needed solitude, how much more do we? Solitude for Jesus was not optional. It was essential.

Silence & Solitude make space to hear God

Psalms 46:10 simply says "Be still, and know that I am God." Stillness and knowing are linked. You can't truly know God without learning to be still. Just as Elijah discovered, God often speaks in whispers. Why? Because whispers require closeness.

God doesn't shout to get your attention. He whispers to draw you near. When someone says "I need to hear from God," I often ask:

- Where are the spaces you create to hear Him?
- When does God usually speak to you?
- How are you making room for Him now?

If you want to hear God clearly, create space. He doesn't get louder. Everything else gets quieter.

Silence & Solitude reveal what's inside us

And here's the truth, sometimes the reason we avoid quiet is because silence is confronting. When the noise stops, the heart begins to speak.

- Fears rise.
- Worries surface.
- Pain comes into view.
- Sin is exposed.
- Hidden desires appear.

God does not reveal these things to shame us, but to heal us. Psalm 139:23–24 “Search me, O God... test me... lead me.” Silence is not escape. Silence is invitation, a space where God lovingly reveals what needs healing.

Silence & Solitude strengthen us for the journey

Every time Jesus withdrew, He returned different:

- clear in purpose
- strong in conviction
- grounded in love

Solitude is not running away, it is gearing up. Think of winter. Everything looks barren, but in reality, the roots are strengthening, preparing for spring. Isaiah 40:31 says “Those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength...” Some of us are exhausted, not because we're doing too much, but because we're doing too much without God. Silence is spiritual refuelling.

Silence & Solitude anchor us in identity

Before Jesus did anything, before miracles, teachings, or crowds, the Father said “You are my Son, whom I love; with You I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:11) Identity precedes activity and the quiet places are where God still whispers that truth to us.

Not “I love you because you achieved...” or “I'm pleased with you because you're productive...” or “I'm proud because you're busy...” But “You are Mine. You are loved. You are enough.” The world says find your identity in your performance. Jesus says, find your identity in My presence.

Journal your thoughts

Building a Rule of Life

This booklet was designed as a simple guide for you to develop a Rule of Life, not a one-size fits all list of “rules” to follow. Please adapt, change, and improvise to what seems best to you and your community.

Here are five easy steps:

Step 1: Look over the Rule of Life Chart and spend a little time contemplating it, considering how it will integrate in to the different areas of your life.

Step 2: Prayerfully work through the seven practices and think about which ones are already part of your everyday rhythms, and the ones that may need more attention. Then start to imagine what a more intentional rule of life could look like for you.

Step 3: Draft your rule of life using the chart on the next page, filling in each block as you see fit. You might chose things like daily reading of scripture or a weekly sabbath or an evening to gather with friends to share a meal. It's not about doing whats right or what you think is enough, it's about doing what fits with you, your family or the community you belong to.

Step 4: Try it out. Spend a few weeks living into your rule, and see how it feels. If it feels burdensome or boring, pay attention to that without judgment, and consider what you need to change. What's working and what's not working? What's bringing you life? What's draining you? Talk about it with a partner, close friend, or other in your community.

Step 5: Revise and commit. Based on step 4, adjust your rule to what seems best, and commit to it for an extended season of time (we recommend a minimum of three months, and maximum of a year). Over that time period, create space for reflection via journaling, talking to a friend, or just taking a walk and thinking about it, to see what effect your rule is having on transforming you into a person of love, joy, and peace in the kingdom of God.

Rule of Life Chart

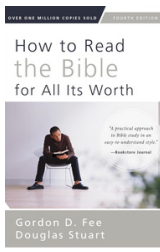
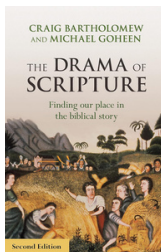
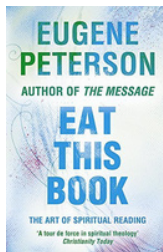
Practice	READ (Scripture)	EAT (Hospitality)	NEIGHBOUR (Sent)
Daily	<i>15 minutes of reading the scripture every day - follow a reading plan</i>		
Weekly	<i>Set aside an extended time to read large portion of scripture for 1 hour</i> <i>Read / listen to a book with biblical themes</i>	<i>Practice Hospitality with my City Group</i>	
Monthly	<i>Study a book or theme of the bible</i>	<i>Contribute and feast at our church Table Sunday</i> <i>Invite someone to Sunday Lunch</i>	<i>Find a way to hang out with neighbours / housemates</i>
Quarterly		<i>Invite someone who doesn't know Jesus over for dinner</i>	
Annually			<i>Host a neighbourhood Party / Street Party</i>

EMPOWER (Blessing)	WORSHIP (Daily Devotion)	ABIDE (Sabbath & Rest)	LISTEN (Prayer, Silence & Solitude)
<i>Bless a co-workers with coffee and cake</i>		<i>Take a lunch break</i>	<i>Spend 10 minutes in prayer, silence and solitude</i> <i>Take time each evening to reflect on Examen my day</i>
<i>Do something kind for someone and tell no one (discipline of secrecy)</i>	<i>Attend church gatherings to worship</i>	<i>Set aside 24 hours to rest and sabbath</i>	<i>Weekly time of Prayer and/or Fasting</i>
<i>Collect items for the Food Bank / MK Storehouse</i>	<i>Serve once a month on a church serving team.</i>		
		<i>Plan for a weekend away</i>	<i>Take a 24 hour retreat</i>
	<i>Serve on team at a Summer Camp</i>	<i>Take at least a two week holiday</i>	<i>Take part in 21 days of prayer and fasting</i>

Further Reading

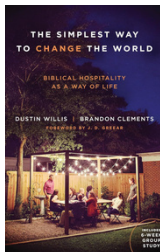
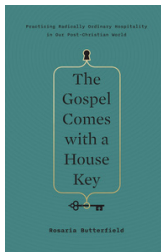
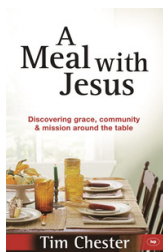
1: SCRIPTURE

READ



2: HOSPITALITY

EAT



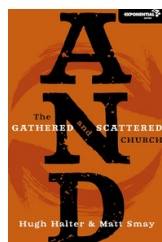
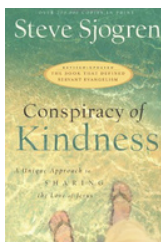
3: SENT

NEIGHBOUR



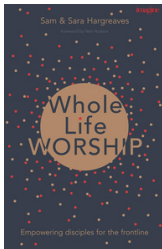
4: BLESSING

EMPOWER



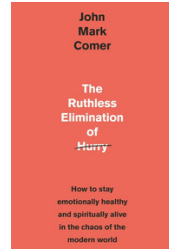
5: DAILY DEVOTION

WORSHIP



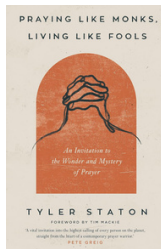
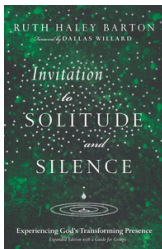
6: SABBATH & REST

ABIDE

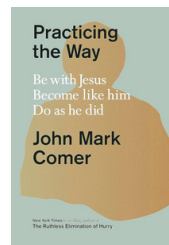
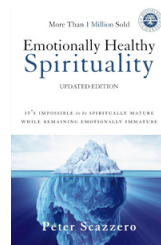
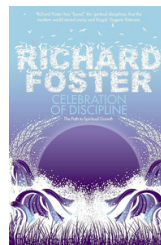
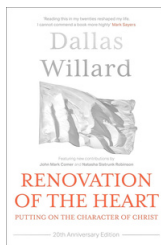
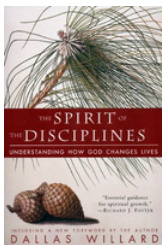


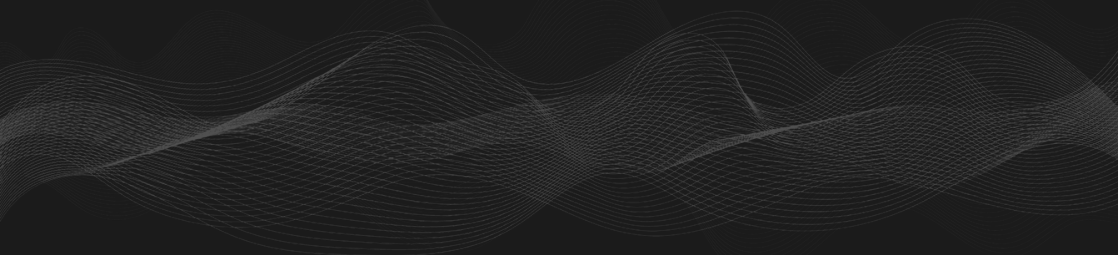
7: PRAYER, SILENCE & SOLITUDE

LISTEN



SPIRITUAL FORMATION





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