



Rhythms

MAKING SPACE TO BE WITH GOD

SERMON SERIES JOURNAL

TABLE OF CONTENTS



INTRODUCTION



HOW TO USE THIS BOOK



LIFE GROUP
PARTICIPANT COVENANT



WEEK 1
SABBATH



WEEK 2
SLOWING



WEEK 3
SIMPLICITY

46

WEEK 4
SILENCE AND SOLITUDE

58

WEEK 5
A SPIRIT-LED LIFE

70

APPENDIX 1
ROOTED RHYTHMS

71

APPENDIX 2
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

72

APPENDIX 3
VOMO

73

APPENDIX 4
MISSION, VISION, AND PRIORITIES

74

APPENDIX 5
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



INTRODUCTION

Your life is made up of rhythms. You have wake-up rhythms and bedtime rhythms. You have work rhythms and dinner rhythms. So much of life is done in a habitual way and we don't even realize it.

One of the questions that we have to ask as followers of Jesus is this: Are our rhythms helping us become more like Jesus? Are they helping us connect with Jesus? Are they helping us disciple under him? Are they leaving us detached from God? Are our rhythms leaving us weary and tired? Are they sapping any energy we have left?

In short...are our rhythms helping us to become people of love or are they hindering that journey?

That's what this series is all about. If you've been through *Rooted*, you know the importance of rhythms. In *Rooted*, we talk about and practice seven essential rhythms of a disciple or follower of Jesus: Daily Devotion, Prayer, Freedom from Strongholds, Serving the Community, Sacrificial Generosity, Sharing Your Story, and Celebration.

In this series, we're going to take a look at an additional five rhythms that followers of Jesus have been practicing ever since the church got its start. These rhythms go by different names. Sometimes they're called "spiritual disciplines," sometimes they're called, "spiritual practices," but we're just calling them *rhythms*. Because, like teeth-brushing and laundry, our hope as a church is that these rhythms become normal for us as a community, taking care not of our gums or dirty clothes pile, but our souls.

Jesus said one time, “*I am the way...*” (**John 14:6**). When he said that, he didn’t just mean that he’s going to achieve eternal life for us. What he meant by that is that *his way of life* was also key to experiencing the eternal kind of life in the here and now - a life of joy, peace, patience, gentleness, generosity, presence, and love. And his invitation for us is to journey with him on the way, watching how he does life, and slowly adopting his manner of living as our own.

As Jesus’ disciples, we don’t want to just be mentally educated on the things of God, we want to be a people who make space to be with God. And the way we do that, by God’s grace, is through our rhythms.



Scan the QR code to listen to our podcast as we introduce what Spiritual Rhythms are all about!



HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

*“If you abide in my word, you are truly
my disciples, and you will know the truth,
and the truth will set you free.”*

John 8:31

This devotional book will be a bit different from past renditions. We are going to be hyper-focused over the course of this series with actually taking time to experiment with some new rhythms and practices in order to “abide” in Jesus’ teaching.

This devotional book will be a bit different from past renditions. We are going to be hyper-focused over the course of this series with actually taking time to experiment with some new rhythms and practices in order to make space to be with God.

Additionally, in each week you’ll find three practices to experiment with. The key is to choose **one** and actually **do** it. Be intentional. Go slow. Don’t feel like you have to do every practice each week. The key is not to do the practice, but to carve out space to connect with Jesus.

Ideally, you’ll utilize this book on the weekend and in your personal devotional time. Use the pages to take sermon notes and to write down thoughts or questions, feelings and difficulties, things that encourage you, things that challenge you, and where you feel like God might be inviting you with a step of faith.

To get the most out of this book and this sermon series, we suggest that you:

- Don't go it alone! Journey through this material and these practices with your life group. If you do not have a life group, find others in your family or perhaps one close friend and invite them into the journey!
- Fill out the participant covenant (if you're doing this with your life group)!
- Take notes on the sermon each week.
- Commit to engaging in at least one practice per week.
- Listen to the podcast conversations for each week.
- Bring your thoughts, invitations, reflections, and sermon notes to life group each week.

As individuals and as a group, our hope is that this series and these practices will help you connect to Jesus, to grow as a disciple, and to become an ever more pleasing aroma to the Lord and to those around you (**2 Corinthians 2:15**).

THE CREEK

A life group is a community of disciples intent on loving God, loving others, and making disciples in order to connect people to Jesus.

We are a community: As the family of God, we meet regularly to eat, pray, and share life together. Community is the place where transformation into Jesus' likeness happens best.

We are disciples: As disciples of Jesus, we make it our aim to be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what Jesus did. Through practice, teaching, community, and guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are learning what it means to love God, love others, and make disciples as apprentices of Jesus.

We want to connect people to Jesus: As people with a purpose in the Kingdom of God, we seek to proclaim and manifest the good news of Jesus and do justice in our community so that our message is grounded in words and deeds. We partner with God by giving our time, talents, and resources to see the Kingdom of God come in Indianapolis as it is in heaven.

Knowing that there are seasons and times for flexibility, in order to accomplish our goal of transformation into Christlikeness we are asking every life group participant to commit to:



- Attending your life group weekly (even when it gets tough!)
- Reflecting on the devotional material to enhance group time and contributing to group discussion based on the sermons
- Practice being with Jesus, becoming like Jesus, and doing what Jesus did
- Live and champion the seven rhythms of Rooted
- Being vulnerable and authentic
- Caring for your group members
- Speak the truth in love and humbly receive loving accountability
- Pursue unity with other group members

CONFIDENTIALITY

It is our desire to promote a safe environment for sharing the most important things in life. We want to provide a place where people can reveal openly and confidently the broken areas of their lives without judgment or condemnation. We are not here to “fix” one another. We encourage openness, vulnerability and intimacy during discussion, accountability, and prayer times. In order to ensure a safe haven for personal sharing, we ask that each life group member enter into an agreement of confidentiality.

Everything in this group is confidential, but according to Indiana law, we do have a duty to report abuse or neglect of a person whether they are a child or an adult. In addition, information may be shared for the express purpose of resource recommendations, accountability, discipleship, or for legal and safety reasons.

I agree to uphold the above commitments, to show up consistently both physically and mentally, and to keep all things shared by my group members confidential at all times unless what is shared falls under the aforementioned exceptions.

SIGNED: _____ **DATE:** _____

¹¹ Indiana Code 31-33-5-1, Indiana Code 12-10-3-9(a) and 12-10-3-2(a)



Sabbath

SABBATH

INTRODUCTION

When God created Sabbath, it was not for him. God is complete without rest, but he knew we are not. We have limits that are very real and cannot be ignored. We grow tired and weary, and we desperately need to be refreshed, renewed, revived. God modeled this for us in a beautiful and loving way.

Mark Buchanan paints the picture like this: *“So, God, knowing both our need and our folly, took the lead. He set the example. Like a parent who coaxes a cranky toddler to lie down for an afternoon nap by lying down beside her, God woos us into rest by resting...God commands that we imitate him in order to discover again that we’re not him, and that we need him¹.”*

When we practice Sabbath, we are reminded of who we are and to whom we belong. We also remember that God is ultimately in control.

Pastor John Mark Comer says, *“Sabbath is coming for you either as discipline or delight.”* If we don’t choose Sabbath, a form of it chooses us through weariness. So, let’s choose to be anchored by delight instead.

There is a common and simple “formula” for practicing Sabbath: Stop, Rest, Delight, and Worship.

STOPPING

The word shabbat (the Hebrew word for Sabbath) literally means to stop or cease.

RESTING

Rest from work, rest in God—no alarm setting, lots of napping, no worrying

DELIGHTING

We delight in God, in creation, in people; we enjoy his goodness.

WORSHIPPING

We remember what God’s done and what he’s doing, and we celebrate him.



Sabbath is a gift from a God who created you, both with limitations and with built-in desires to be with him. Experiment with Sabbath; try it on and see what kind of gift it will be for you.

SCRIPTURE

"Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done."

Genesis 2:1-3 (NIV)

PRACTICES

Sabbath is one of those things that is great to talk about but hard to actually do. It feels like it requires so much from us, and, if you have kids, it can actually feel downright impossible! With that in mind, here are three ways you can perhaps begin to implement a rhythm of Sabbath into your life. The goal isn't to do all of these, but to try just one and reflect on your experience with it. We've intentionally crafted these practices to get a bit more intense. So, Practice 1 should be fairly easy to do. Practice 2 will require a bit more time. And Practice 3, which is actually scheduling yourself a Sabbath, would take a whole day!

Read through these practices and pick one that seems doable this week. Remember, the goal is to be with God, to connect with Jesus, not to check something off of a list.



Slowing

SLOWING

INTRODUCTION

I remember having one of those “very-philosophical-conversations-thank-you-very-much” with a colleague of mine where we basically concluded that if you can do *nothing*, you can do *anything*.

Ok, maybe that is a bit hyperbolic. **But** we had gotten into a conversation about how busy and hurried our culture is that it feels pretty much downright *impossible* to not be moving and going and doing and making things happen. With phones, social media, notifications, shared schedules, kids, friends, to-do lists, and so on, it feels *impossible* to just be *still*.

We’re used to the expedient, the optimized, the efficient. If a website takes more than three clicks for me to find what I’m looking for, I’m out. If there’s a line in the grocery store, I get slightly perturbed. If someone waits before going at a green light for literally an extra second because they were distracted, my hand slides to my car horn without me even realizing it (yes, I know I have a problem).

It’s because of *all* this that my interlocutor and I concluded that if you can do *nothing*, you can do pretty much *anything* in life.

This past weekend, we talked about the spiritual rhythm of slowing. I like John Ortberg’s definition of slowing. He says that slowing is, “*Cultivating patience by deliberately choosing to place ourselves in positions where we simply have to wait.*”

But we’re not just slowing for the sake of slowing in and of itself. As followers of Jesus, here’s why we’re focusing on this: We don’t want to be the kinds of people who are addicted to hustling and bustling. We don’t want to be workaholics or schedule-aholics, unable to be attuned to the people or the presence of God in our lives. We want to be the kinds of people, like Jesus, who are present to the moment, who can see the image of God in the other, who can notice God’s Spirit at work in the world.

That’s what this week’s practices are focused on: slowing. Because we’re embodied creatures, the best way we can slow ourselves internally is to slow ourselves externally. Or, as John Mark Comer writes, “*Slow down your body, slow down your life.*”

So take some time to (slowly) reflect on the Scripture and experiment with one of the three practices that you’ll find on the following pages.



SCRIPTURE

"Be still and know that I am God."

Psalm 46:10

PRACTICES

Here are three practices at ascending levels of difficulty to choose from to try this week to help you do that. Note: the goal isn't necessarily to do all of these. The goal of this is to find one or two of these practice and actually DO them this week!

Practice 1 • Driving

Driving, perhaps, is a good place to begin. It's always so tempting to go a little faster, to bypass others, to speed through yellow lights. But driving is also a great time to practice slowing down and to think about God.

For this practice, try, for one day, driving slowly. Here's what that would look like...

- Give yourself plenty of time to get to where you need to go.
- Leave early for your desired destination.
- When you start driving, say to yourself, *"I'm just going to enjoy this drive. I'm not in a hurry."*
- Drive in the slow lane.
- When you come to yellow lights, slow down. Don't speed through them.
- Come to a full stop at stop signs.
- Drive the speed limit.
- Don't text and drive.
- Let others go at stops and turns before you.
- Keep music and podcasts off.
- As you cruise, bring God to your mind.

You might try and do this practice for one commute, one day of driving, or for the whole week. The goal is to try it! What's the worst that can happen!? So, pick a time slot you're going to try this practice, do it, and then once finished, reflect on your experience using the questions on page 34.

Practice 2 • *Win the Day (morning and evening edition)*

This week, begin each morning and end each evening in prayer. We call this “winning the day.” Before we play Wordle, check email, look at our calendars, or peruse the news, we want to start our days in God’s Presence.

Your goal isn’t to spend *hours* in prayer or Scripture in the mornings and the evenings. The goal here is to, before looking at any other words in the morning, we take in God’s words first. And the goal for us before we go to bed is to let God’s words be the last thing in our minds.

To do this, here might be some helpful tips:

- Parent your phone (you tell it when to “get out of bed” and “when to go to bed”)
- Buy an actual alarm clock so you’re not tempted to look at your phone
- Designate a specific quiet space to pray or read your Bible
- Try waking up before others in your house so you do not get distracted
- Know what you’re going to meditate on ahead of time

Find some time this week to meditate on God. Your goal with this practice is to open up your calendar and each morning – whether it’s five minutes, ten minutes, or thirty minutes – it doesn’t matter. The point is for you to intentionally focus on the Lord as you rise and before you go to sleep.

Once finished with the practice this week, reflect on your experience using the questions on page 34.



Practice 3 • Daily Office

This practice what has been traditionally called the “Daily Office.” In our hustle and bustle culture, the Daily Office helps us slow down and be attentive to God in our lives. The practice of the daily office helps us ground ourselves more fully in God’s presence as we pause each morning, midday, and evening for silence, scripture, and prayer. And, again, the goal isn’t to rush through these times of stopping, but to slow ourselves down intentionally throughout our day!

This practice is similar to practice number two, but with added times of stopping during the middle of your day.

Here are a few tips to help you practice the daily office:

- Set an alarm on your phone at the different points in your day you want to take five minutes for Scripture and/or prayer (you might try 7:30am, 12pm, 5pm, and 10pm)
- Parent your phone (you tell it when to “get out of bed” and “when to go to bed”)
- Designate a specific quiet space to pray or read your bible
- Try waking up before others in your house so you do not get distracted
- Know what you’re going to meditate on ahead of time

Find some time this week to meditate on God throughout each day. Your goal is to make slowing down to be attentive to God’s presence with you a priority—even in the midst of the day’s demands. Sometimes all it takes is an intentional moment of slowing and stopping (even if it’s for 30 seconds to still your breathing and pray, “*Help me, Lord Jesus*”) to make a difference in how you enter into the day’s tasks.

Once finished with the practice this week, reflect on your experience using the questions on page 34.



Simplicity

SIMPLICITY

INTRODUCTION

There is a Shaker hymn that says, *“’Tis a gift to be simple. ’Tis a gift to be free.”* And perhaps the Shaker lifestyle is what you picture when you think of practicing simplicity: austere, plain, monotonous. So, is simplicity really a gift, or is it just boring?

In 2000, a pair of psychologists set up an experiment in the form of a sales display table of specialty jams at a grocery store. The first day, the table held a selection of 24 different jams; the second day, it displayed six. Would you like to take a guess which table sold more or had the highest customer satisfaction? The table that contained six jams. We’ve become conditioned to think we want the most options and the widest range of possibilities, when, in fact, this study (and other similar ones) have shown that simpler choices not only help us make decisions but also lead to more satisfaction with what we’ve chosen.

What does that have to do with our relationship with Jesus? In **Matthew 6:31-33 (CSB)**, Jesus says, *“So don’t worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.”*

When we practice simplicity, we do so because we desire to uncomplicate and untangle our lives so we can focus on what really matters. Perhaps you’ve been trying to find satisfaction in a full schedule, a multitude of options, or in sophisticated pleasures. And perhaps you’ve found the words of another hymn to be true: *“I can’t get no satisfaction.”* If that’s the case, then simplicity might be for you.



SCRIPTURE

“Actually, I don’t have a sense of needing anything personally. I’ve learned by now to be quite content whatever my circumstances. I’m just as happy with little as with much, with much as with little. I’ve found the recipe for being happy whether full or hungry, hands full or hands empty. Whatever I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the One who makes me who I am.”

Philippians 4:11-13 (MSG)

PRACTICES

Perhaps the hardest thing about the concept of simplicity is actually practicing it. Our appetites are kings in our culture. So...to “stick it to the man” try implementing one of these three practices into your life this week. Like always, the goal isn’t to check off a to-do item. The goal here is to notice what we feel attached to and to learn contentment in all things, to learn that there is more to life than the accumulation of possessions.

Practice 1 • *Gratitude and Contentment*

Two other practices or frames of mind are closely associated with simplicity: contentment and gratitude. This first practice will help cultivate both.

Spend time meditating on the scripture above from **Philippians 4**.

Interact with it. Without judging, see what God, through the scripture, might reveal to you. Ask God and yourself questions, like:

- Have I learned to be quite content?
- What would that kind of contentment look like for me?
- Am I just as happy with much as with little? With little as with much?
- Have I found the recipe for being happy whether full or hungry?
- As you cruise, bring God to your mind.

Once you've sat with the scripture, create a gratitude list.

Set a timer for 5 minutes and write as many things as you can—from your closest family members to your coffee pot to a good conversation you had last week—that you are grateful for. Whatever comes to mind, write it down. Once the 5 minutes is up, give the list to God in prayer. Tell him how grateful you are for the gifts in your life.

I'm grateful for...



Practice 2 • *Simplicity of Pleasures*

Simplicity doesn't have to mean boring. In this exercise, you'll identify simple pleasures you enjoy and schedule time to do those things. (You might notice how this can easily coincide with carving out some of that sabbath time from a couple of weeks ago.)

First, spend time thinking about the simplest pleasures you enjoy; ask God to reveal them to you. That could be a leisurely walk, getting away in nature, good conversation over coffee, sitting by a fire, you get the idea. Name the top 5 simple pleasures that you love.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Second, schedule time to do one of those things. Block out time and prepare so the crush of busyness doesn't interfere. And when the time comes, actually do the thing; don't put it off because something seemingly more pressing or more important has come up.

Take time once you're finished to notice how that experience affected you when you were intentional about doing it.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Which practice did you experiment with this week? What was doing it like for you?

How did this practice help you simplify and experience God more? Explain.

What takeaways or invitations from God did you experience as a result of using this practice this week?



Scan the QR code to listen to our podcast as we talk about our spiritual rhythm of *Simplicity*.



**Silence
and
Solitude**

SILENCE AND SOLITUDE

INTRODUCTION

In silence and solitude, God invites us to slow down, defy distractions, settle in His presence, and listen intently for His voice. Our culture drives harder and harder, moves faster and faster, and demands more and more from us. The Kingdom of God slows us. Steadies us. Solidifies us.

Ruth Haley Barton says, "There is something about being invited that makes the heart glad. Someone is seeking me out, desiring my presence enough to initiate encounter. The Invitation to solitude and silence is just that. It is an invitation to enter more deeply into the intimacy of relationship with the One who waits just outside the noise and busyness of our lives. It is an invitation to communication and communion with the One who is always present even when our awareness has been dulled by distraction. It is an invitation to the adventure of spiritual transformation in the deepest places of our being, an adventure that will result in greater freedom and authenticity and surrender to God than we have yet experienced."

We want to make space to listen to the voice of God above the noise of our lives, to be anchored in and attentive to His presence through His Spirit, and to stay connected to Jesus moment-by-moment. And connection is important to remember for any practice. God is always the goal and driving factor of any of our rhythms; it's quite easy to be silent or alone with acknowledging God at all. In fact, it's easy to do that for any of the rhythms we're exploring in this series. When we fix our eyes on Christ, though, a moment of silence can become a moment of transformation.

Begin wherever you are. Let go of achieving and just accept the invitation to be with God.



SCRIPTURE

“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”

Mark 1:35 (NIV)

“Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.”

Mark 6:31-32 (NIV)

PRACTICES

As we move from the reading of Scripture and from a bit of the theory behind silence and solitude, let's look at three practices for you to choose from to actually begin incorporating moments stillness into your everyday life. Here are three different practices you can choose from. You don't need to do all three. We'd recommend picking one and sticking with it for the week!

Practice 1 • Moments of Silence

We can get tricked into thinking that silence or solitude needs to be a long practice, like several hours or even a day-long retreat. In fact, silence can be found in the extra spaces of our days, whether you're just starting the practice or you've been doing it for years.

For starters, look for those extra moments and use them to get used to being silent. Here are a few ideas:

- Drive with the radio off for the week.
- Take a short walk during the day with no phone or music or distractions and observe what's happening in and around you.
- Find a quiet place at lunchtime to sit for 2 or 3 minutes.

Do I normally have moments of silence in my day? Where?

Where can I schedule a moment of silence to be with God for 2-3 minutes?

What feelings do I have about creating moments of silence?



Practice 2 • *Silence and Solitude*

Below you will find a simple, but thorough way to practice silence and solitude adapted from *PracticingTheWay.org*.

First...

Identify a time and place that works well for you.

Time: For most people, first thing in the morning works best. You're rested, fresh, and the day is young. For others, a more optimal time slot is when kids are napping in the late morning, or on a lunch break, after work, or before you go to bed. Feel free to experiment until you find the right fit. It doesn't matter which time, just that you find the time that's best for you.

Place: Find a place that is quiet and as distraction-free as possible. A comfortable chair with a blanket and candle nearby works well for a lot of people. Weather permitting, a park or nature reserve are also a good bet.

Set a modest goal and begin wherever you are.

Beginners: It's better to start small and work your way up. We recommend you start with ten minutes, 3-5 days a week.

Intermediate: If you already practice silence and solitude a few times a week, consider upping it to every day.

Advanced: If you already practice silence and solitude daily, consider upping your time (to, say, an hour), or just giving your time a high level of focus.

Then, for the practice...

Put away your phone or any other distractions, settle into your time place, and get comfortable.

For most people, sitting with your back straight, shoulders relaxed, legs on the floor is a good start. Others do better lying on their back in a relaxed position.

Some of you may prefer to do this exercise while walking or doing something simple with your hands, like laundry or drawing to begin.

Begin with a breathing prayer.

Close your eyes. Take long, deep, slow breaths (if you want, count 4 seconds in, 4 seconds wait, 4 seconds out, repeat).

Inhale through your nose, exhale through your mouth.

Start to pay attention to your breathing. Just “watch” your breath go in and out.

Release the constant chatter in your mind. Let each thought go as quickly as it comes, and just focus on your breathing.

Your mind will seize this opportunity to run wild with thoughts, feelings, memories, to-do’s, and distractions. That’s okay. Don’t judge yourself, feel bad, give up, or worry. When you notice your mind start to wander, just recenter with a quick prayer, like, “Father...” or “Be still and know...” and come back to your breathing.

In the beginning, just 1-2 minutes of this is a huge win, and 10 minutes is a home run.

Spend a few minutes “*abiding in the vine.*”

Transition from your breathing prayer to “the practice of the presence of God.”

Notice God’s presence all around you, in you. For some people it’s helpful to imagine the Father is sitting in the chair across from you or on a throne.

Welcome his love, joy, and peace from the Holy Spirit.

If you want, open your mind and imagination to listen for God’s voice, or get something off your chest in prayer.

But the main goal here is simply to “be with Jesus.” Don’t feel like you have to “do” anything. Just relax and enjoy his presence.



Close in a prayer of gratitude and commit the rest of your day to the Father.

A few things to note...

You can't "succeed" or "fail" at this practice. All you can do is show up. Be patient. This takes some people years to master. Resist the urge to say, "I'm bad at this" or "This isn't for me." Don't judge yourself, especially if you're an overachiever type!

If you're more of an active-type person, and sitting still is just death, you might want to begin by trying this while doing a stretching exercise or going on a walk somewhere quiet and distraction-free (like a park or short hike). Apply the same idea to a walking prayer, and just focus on your walking instead of your breathing.

Practice 3 • Retreat

Practice 3 is to take a solitude retreat.

The retreat doesn't have to take long, but it does need to be an intentional "leaving" of your normal day to spend time alone with Jesus.

- Choose your time and place and put it on the calendar. Like *Practice 2*, start small. Shoot for an hour or two before trying a 3-day silent retreat. Think of a place that is comfortable for you, where you can be aware of God's invitation to join him in the solitude: in nature, a cozy spot in a quiet place, even in the corner of a busy coffee shop. *One note: it is most often better to do this away from your home—there are a lot of distractions calling your name when you're in your house.*
- Use the steps from *Practice 2* to help you with your time.
- You don't have to be still the whole time. You can practice silence and solitude while walking, for instance. If you need a change of scenery, go for it.



**A
Spirit-Led
Life**

A SPIRIT-LED LIFE

INTRODUCTION

I sat directly across from her, a trusted mentor and godly guide. We conversed about my exhaustion. The pace never stopped, and I was being dragged around by it. There was a brief pause and she leaned in, asking, *“Are you doing things in your own strength or the strength of the Spirit?”*

I blurted out my answer, *“Well, of course, the strength of the Spirit!”*

She was quick to quip back, *“Do you think you’d be so exhausted if that were the case? I don’t know that God called us to that level of fatigue.”* In that moment, I realized I knew very little about what it really looked like to walk in step with the Spirit—to experience a truly Spirit-led life.

When I was young, I remember carefully placing my little feet on top of my dad’s shoes, grabbing his hands and moving around the room, dancing with him. My job was to hold onto his hands or wrap my arms around his waist, clinging to him. His job was to gracefully carry me across the floor. My steps matched his steps every time.

A Spirit-led life looks a lot like this picture. It requires us to keep in step with the Spirit. Our job is to find God, to wrap our arms around Him, clinging to Him, moving where He moves and staying where He stays. His job is to carry us gracefully across the dance floor.

A.W. Tozer says, *“The Spirit-filled life is not a special, deluxe edition of Christianity. It is part and parcel of the total plan of God for His people.”* In other words, the Spirit-led life is not an optional way to live as a disciple of Jesus. It is a part of God’s design for His children that we would all live both IN and WITH the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Our prayer this week is that we will learn to lean in a little more to the Spirit leading our everyday ordinary lives for the glory of God.



SCRIPTURE

⁵ Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶ The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. ¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you. ¹² Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Romans 8:5-17

PRACTICES

A Spirit-led life contains many components, but this week we're going to focus on three aspects of living a Spirit-led life: noticing the movement of God, releasing control to Him, and submitting our will to His. We'll have the opportunity to practice growing each of these aspects. You can engage in all three of these practices or choose the one that stands out to you the most. These practices can all be repeated multiple times throughout the week.

Practice 1 • Noticing

In order to move in step with the Spirit, we have to see where the Spirit is moving. *The Prayer of Examen* is a great review of the day that helps you to notice where God was present throughout your day. You can take time to do this for any period of time—in the evening for the day or at the end of the week for the whole week. Determine what timeframe you would like to look back on and follow the prompts for the Examen prayer below.

Be Still:

Get into a comfortable position and let yourself relax.

Quiet your mind... your body... your heart before God.

Slowing your breathing—inhale God's love and presence, exhale stress and distractions.

Ask God what He wants to show you in these moments.

With His help, be attentive to how the Spirit is working.

Let yourself see your day as God sees it.

Practice Gratitude:

What are you grateful for?

Gratitude cultivates our hearts and minds to see God working.



It changes how we view the circumstances and people in our lives.

With God present, go back through your day.

For what are you grateful? Look for the small things, as well as the large.

As things come to mind, pause and express your gratitude to God.

Pray Through Your Day:

Looking back through your day, what circumstance(s) brought about strong thoughts or emotions? View this circumstance with God.

Did it draw you closer to God? OR did it lead you away or feeling distant from God?

Did it help you grow in faith, hope, and love OR make you less faithful or hopeful, or less loving?

Did it make you feel more alive and whole OR cause you to be more self-centered and anxious?

Did it challenge you to life-giving growth OR lure you into doubt and confusion?

Where was God present to you throughout the day? How did He show His love to you?

Did you receive His love?

What obstacles to His presence and His love did you encounter?

Rejoice and Seek Forgiveness:

Rejoice in the moments God brought you closer--the moments where His attentiveness was evident and you responded to His grace.

Confess the moments when you resisted God's presence and ask for His forgiveness.

Thank God for the gift of awareness.

Receive God's grace for the entire situation.

Look for Tomorrow:

Just as God was with you today, He is faithful and will be with you tomorrow.

Invite God to be part of it. Ask Him for a greater awareness of His presence.

As you think ahead to tomorrow, what do you need God's help with?

Is there a specific gift of grace you need?

Thank Him for His grace.



Practice 2 • Releasing Control

Relinquishment means to release or let go. Living a Spirit-led life means just that: our life is **led by the spirit** and not our own will.

In the book titled *Prayer – Finding the Heart’s True Home* by Richard Foster, he writes, “We begin to enter into a grace-filled releasing of our will and a flowing into the will of the Father. It is the prayer of relinquishment that moves us from the struggling to the releasing...this prayer is a bona fide letting go, but it is a release with hope... God is not destroying the will but transforming it so that...we can freely will what God wills.”

Oswald Chambers said, “No one is ever united with Jesus Christ until he is willing to relinquish not sin only, but his whole way of looking at things...”

Take some time for this practice to prayerfully list some things for which it is difficult for you to release control. Then pray slowly through this “Prayer of Relinquishment” from Richard Foster’s book *Prayers of the Heart*:

A PRAYER OF RELINQUISHMENT

Today, O Lord, I yield myself to you.

May your will be my delight today.

May your way have perfect sway in me.

May your love be the pattern of my living.

I surrender to you

my hopes,

my dreams,

my ambitions.

Do with them what you will,

when you will, as you will.

I place into your loving care

my family,

my friends,

my future.

*Care for them with a care
that I can never give.*

I release into your hands

my need to control,

my craving for status,

my fear of obscurity.

Eradicate the evil,

purify the good,

*and establish your
kingdom on earth.*

For Jesus’ sake,

Amen.



Think of someone who you have observed leads a Spirit-led life. What do you notice about them? What would you want to emulate in their life? What do you think they have cultivated in their life to live this way? If you have time, call them or invite them to coffee to have a conversation about how they have learned to live by the Spirit.

What takeaways or invitations from God do you see from this week's practice? From the entire series? What is your next step from here? Take some time to pray through that with God.



Scan the QR code to listen to our podcast as we talk about our spiritual rhythm of *A Spirit-Led Life*.

ROOTED RHYTHMS



Daily
Devotion



Prayer



Freedom from
Strongholds



Serve the
Community



Sacrificial
Generosity



Share Your
Story



Celebration

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS/COMMENTARIES

- *The Spirituality of Jesus* by Leslie Hardin
- *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* by Adele Calhoun
- *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence
- *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster
- *Invitation to a Journey* by Robert Mulholland
- *Invitation to Solitude* by Ruth Haley Barton
- *Practicing the Way of Jesus* by Mark Scandrette

OTHER

- www.bibleproject.com
- www.practicingtheway.org

SUPPORT AND HELP

- **Deepen Groups** - Deepen groups will help you navigate obstacles that you encounter as you pursue loving God and loving others. We have groups that cover a wide variety of topics (addiction, codependence, divorce, financial stewardship, sexual brokenness, grief, sexual abuse). Visit thecreek.org/next-steps/deepen for more information.
- **Care Appointments** - Care appointments are a one-on-one, one-hour sit-down with a pastor on our staff where you can go to receive encouragement, prayer, and resource recommendations. Find out more at thecreek.org/get-help/care-appointment.
- **Generous Matching Grants** - As you and your life group are looking for ways to serve, we know cost can often be a hindrance. We want to help with that. We want to support your ideas and make them possible by providing a matching fund and help alleviate financial burdens. To learn more about how this process works and to complete an application, go to thecreek.org/outreach and select "Life Group Projects."
- **Contact Us** - For any additional help, email us at contact@thecreek.org.

VOMO

VOMO is a one-stop shop to find all our serving opportunities. You, your family, and your group can find the volunteer needs from Generosity & Outreach at The Creek and our ministry partners. These opportunities are updated frequently, so you can have different serving experiences to find the right fit. If you'd like a member of our team to come to one of your meetings to help your group decide what's right for you, email TerriKilgore@thecreek.org.



MISSION, VISION, PRIORITIES

MISSION

Love God, Love People, Make Disciples

VISION

Connecting people to Jesus

PRIORITIES

Worship, Gospel, Kingdom, Scripture,
Identity, Community, Generosity

Worship • “All for the glory of God”
We seek God’s presence and
honor in everything we do.

Gospel • “Jesus Christ is Lord”
We proclaim the good news of Jesus and center
our lives on his teaching and example.

Kingdom • “As it is in heaven”
We desire to see the fame and deeds of God renewed
in our day—in Indianapolis and around the world.

Scripture • “Inspired and alive”
We delight in God’s Word and
live it out on a daily basis.

Identity • “Children of God”
We receive God’s love and embrace our
adoption as sons and daughters.

Community • “Devoted to one another”
We value relationships and build
our lives together as family.

Generosity • “More blessed to give”
We share our resources to enrich others
and advance God’s kingdom.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dear church family,

A project like this takes so much time, energy, and effort that my few meager words fall incredibly short in giving appropriate thanks to those who made this book possible.

So much of this content – everything from the words on the pages, to the design, to the subject matter, to the titling, etc. – is due to the various minds putting their collective skills together to ensure that a worthwhile product is completed within our scheduled time frame.

No easy task by any stretch of the imagination.

Typically, ideating, writing, designing, editing, printing, and binding an entire book takes...well, I'm not sure how long it typically takes a publishing company, but I imagine it takes quite a while. The fact that we can compile a book like this with the kind of content that it has is a testament to God's people working together for God's glory. It's truly a grace.

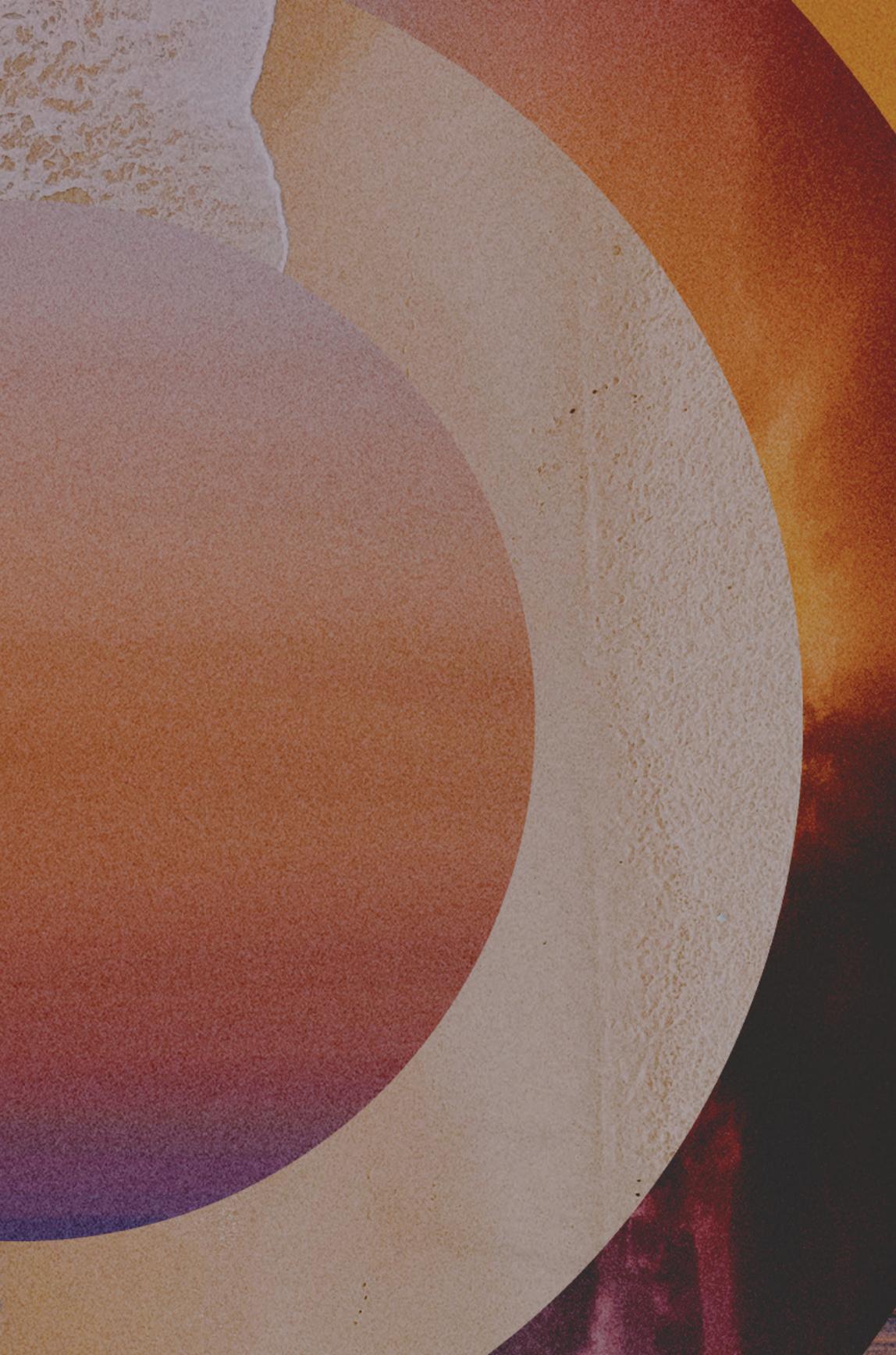
This is a high five and a shout out to all of you who have helped make this book a reality. You guys and gals rock! Thank you so much for your time, talents, and energy that you put into this endeavor.

Special thanks (in no particular order!) to Laura Dingman, Brock Pickett, Leslie Huckstep, Caroline Lamkin, Dan Hamel, Chad Monahan, Michelle Hay (our awesome graphic designer), Chuck Moeller (our printer and binder), our fabulous team of editors, and the rest of The Creek staff.

This project wouldn't have been possible without all of you!

Grace and peace,

Emerson



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