

RHYTHMS

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion?

Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest.

Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.

I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.

Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

Matthew 11:28-30 (The Message)

SEVEN SPIRITUAL RHYTHMS

Spiritual practices are things we engage to connect with or stay connected with God. The "why" of our spiritual rhythms is to simply remain connected with God in our daily lives. The goal of the spiritual life is to live in such a way to hear, see, and even feel God's presence and cultivate a deep desire and joy to respond to His leadings. None of us start here, and the entire Christian life is a journey of growth as we walk in the teachings and rhythms of Jesus and the teachings of the Bible. Spiritual rhythms are our active participation in Jesus' invitation in John 15:1-17 to "*remain in Him*". This is central to the life of biblical discipleship and paramount to living a life of flourishing and bearing much fruit.

We participate with God by intentionally staying connected to God and positioning ourselves so that His life and love might flow into and through us. Jesus made this reality abundantly clear in John 15:5 when He said, "*Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*" Spiritual practices, or "rhythms" are what God calls us to grow and live in to experience a life of flourishing and bearing much fruit.

Many great theologians have written on the spiritual practices (or disciplines) and gifted the church with resources that clearly explain a variety of wonderful practices we might experiment with. Some of the best books are:

- *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster
- *The Spirit of the Disciplines* by Dallas Willard
- *The Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* by Adele Calhoun
- *Sacred Pathways* by Gary Thomas
- *Sacred Rhythms* by Ruth Haley Barton
- *Practicing the Way* by John Mark Comer

Though exploring the various disciplines available can be very helpful, at Crossroads Church we encourage each other to live into what we call the Rhythms of a Disciple and to cultivate them somehow into your own way of living. This will look different for each of us based on temperament and lifestage, but, through the history of the church, these rhythms are always on the top of the list of core practices for spiritual transformation.

Below are the seven core rhythms that Crossroads Church invites you to live into. These are simply an invitation. However, we believe that by living in these, a follower of Christ will find a deeply nourishing and fruitful connection with Jesus, as He invites us to experience in John 15.

These seven rhythms are:

1. Simplicity - *Cultivating a lifestyle of detachment from the world's values of accumulation and busyness to live in contentment with God.* (Matthew 6:21; Hebrews 13:5-6; 1 Timothy 6:6-8; Romans 8:5-6) In practice, this rhythm allows us to create space in our lives for deeper communion with God and friendships with others.
2. Community - *Walking life with others for encouragement, support, and accountability towards personal and collective human flourishing.* (Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:24-25) When practiced in health, community allows us to be truly present and supportive of others and allows them to encourage us.
3. Solitude, Silence, and Prayer - *Pursuing time to connect with God through silence, limiting distractions, and conversational interaction with God to be refreshed.* (Mat 6:5-13, Psalm 46:10) This rhythm allows us to be fed and nurtured by God at the core of our being. By being fed by the branch (John 15), we are able to enter into friendships with others without striving to receive affirmation or things that God alone can truly provide.
4. Scripture - *A continual commitment to engaging the Bible in study, meditation, and reflection to renew our minds and hearts.* (John 15:1-8; Romans 12:1-2) Feeding on Scripture allows our minds and hearts to be renewed to see reality as it truly is. It allows us to serve others into true freedom and the hope of God's redemptive work.
5. Sabbath - *Living within the peace (shalom) of God through purposely preserving weekly time for rest, joy, wonder, and worship.* (Exodus 20:8-11) When practiced, sabbath allows us to find deep rest and re-creation in God. It allows us to live our other six days in joyful service and love for others.
6. Examination and Confession - *Living in joy, peace, and freedom through openly examining and confessing our faults to ourselves, to God, and, if necessary, someone you trust, in order to live freely in the grace and mercy of God.* (1 John 1:9; James 5:16) Examination and confession allows us to live "lightly", placing our sin and shame to the finished work of Jesus on the cross. Living in this mercy and grace allows us to extend the same grace to broken people like ourselves.
7. Fasting - *A willing abstinence from food for a period of time to cultivate whole body hunger and awareness of our need for God's presence and provision.* (Mark 2:18-20; Matthew 6:16-18) The rhythm of fasting allows us to connect our spiritual life with our physical, committing our whole person to the transformative work of God.