

The Rhythms of Grace – An Invitation

Matthew 11:28-30 (MsgB) Jesus says: "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."

Wayne Muller: Our relentless emphasis on success and productivity has become a form of violence. Constantly striving, we feel exhausted and deprived in the midst of great abundance, longing for time with friends and family, longing for a moment to ourselves.

Gordon MacDonald: Christians have always worked hard. They have always known honest tiredness, the result of work and servanthood. But something is different today. The believing community has never been so busy, never had so many voices to listen to, never so many choices to make, never so many ways to respond. That, I believe, explains why we are facing the potential of a wholesale exhaustion of the spirit.

Jesus' Invitation: Come to me...Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.

John Ortberg: Following Jesus cannot be done at a sprint. If we want to follow someone, we can't go faster than the one who is leading.

Romans 3:28 (MsgB) Our lives get in step with God and all others by **letting him set the pace**, not by proudly or anxiously trying to run the parade.

Galatians 6:8 (MsgB) The one who plants in *response* to God, letting God's Spirit do the growth work in him, harvests a crop of real life, eternal life.

QUESTIONS:

- Do you recognise in yourself a tendency towards *doing* rather than *being*? If so, what might be the roots of this?

Rhythms of Grace – Learn From Me

Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV) "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and **learn from me**, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

We need to learn from Jesus – let him be our example. How did Jesus do it? What model did he give?

John 5:19-20 Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does."

- Jesus did not act in his own strength
- Jesus only did what the Father was doing
- Jesus understood the Father's love for him

We should learn to ask the Father questions all the time; e.g.

What do you have for me today?
 What do I need to know about this meeting?
 What are you wanting to say to this person?
 What part are you asking me to play here?
 What is your strategy in this situation?
 Is there something I should be noticing?
 What resources are you sending to me?

QUESTIONS:

Do you recognize a need for God's resources?
 Are you comfortable with God making your plans?
 Do you daily enjoy his love for you?

- Is the pace of your life unhealthy? If so, what steps can you take to identify and implement a better rhythm?

Rhythms of Grace – Breathe

Psalm 34:2 (MsgB) I live and breathe God

God is everywhere

Number 14:21 (NIV) the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth

Jeremiah 23:24 (MsgB) "Am I not present everywhere?"

Psalm 139:7 (NIV) Where can I go from your Spirit?

God in Everything

Romans 12:1 (MsgB) So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him.

Galatians 5:22 (MsgB) But what happens when we live God's way? We develop... a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people.

Proverbs 3:6 (MsgB) Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track.

Esther de Waal: "It is a very simple thing to walk through life with my hands open, my eyes open, listening, alive in all my five senses to God breaking in again and again on my daily life"

Richard Foster: "Slowly, almost imperceptibly, there is a shift in our centre of gravity. We pass from thinking of God as part of our life to the realisation that we are part of his life."

Rob Bell: "May you come to see that God is here right now with us all time. May you come to see that the ground you are standing on is holy. And as you slow down, may you become aware that it is in 'Yod – Heh – Vah - Heh' that we live and we move and we breathe".

QUESTIONS:

What do you have that you need to let go of – to breathe out?

How can you 'breathe in' more of God's reality this week?

Rhythms of Grace - Examine Your Life

Bill Hybels: Most of us live unexamined lives. We repeat the same errors every single day.

Psalm 139 (MsgB) God, investigate my life; get all the facts firsthand. I'm an open book to you; even from a distance, you know what I'm thinking. You know me inside and out. Investigate my life, O God, find out everything about me; Cross-examine and test me, get a clear picture of what I'm about; See for yourself whether I've done anything wrong— then guide me on the road to eternal life.

Richard Foster: It is actually possible for people to go to church services week in week out for years without having a single experience of spiritual *examen*.

Searching Us

Proverbs 20:7 (NIV) The lamp of the LORD searches the spirit of a man; it searches out his inmost being.

Jeremiah 17:10 (MsgB) But I, God, search the heart and examine the mind. I get to the heart of the human. I get to the root of things. I treat them as they really are, not as they pretend to be.

Searching God

1Corinthians 2:10 (NIV) We know these things because God has revealed them to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.

QUESTIONS:

How will you *climb out the river and onto the rock* this week in order to examine your life?

Do you need to create the space? Do you need to set aside time?

What questions do you want to ask God?

What questions do you want to ask yourself?

Rhythms of Grace – Silence and Solitude

John Ortberg: Solitude is the one place where we can gain freedom from the forces of society that will otherwise relentlessly mould us.
At its heart, solitude is primarily about not doing something.

Dallas Willard: Silence is frightening because it strips us as nothing else does, throwing us upon the stark realities of our life."

Proverbs 16: v 9 (NIV)
In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.

Psalms 32: v 8 (NIV)
I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.

Who is in control of your life you or God?

How do you know what God wants for you?

Psalms 46: v 10
Be still and know that I am God

God always communicates with the heart that seeks him, do you know his voice?

Questions:
What will you do differently now?
How will you continue to practise hearing from God?
Where will you find your quiet place?

Rhythms of Grace - Being Fully Present

Matthew 6:34 (MsgB) Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow.

Isaiah 43:19 (MsgB) Be alert, be present. I'm about to do something brand-new. It's bursting out! Don't you see it?

Ecclesiastes 5:20 (MsgB) God deals out joy in the present, the now.

Being fully present: The art of living right in the centre between past and future – in the present.

Body and mind become synchronized.
Replace automatic perceptions of situations with actual experience of the moment.
Focus our thinking on our actions and senses.

QUESTIONS:

Are you fully present right now?
Where are your thoughts? Are your senses engaged?

Luke 9:62 (MsgB) Jesus said, "No procrastination. No backward looks. You can't put God's kingdom off till tomorrow. Seize the day."

QUESTIONS:

Are there things from the past that you need to let go of?
Are there worries about the future that you need to let go of?

Matthew 6:11 (NIV) Give us today our daily bread.

Hebrews 4:7-9 (MsgB) God keeps renewing the promise and setting the date as today, centuries later than the original invitation: "Today, please listen, don't turn a deaf ear." And so this is still a live promise... The promise of "arrival" and "rest" is still there for God's people.

QUESTIONS:

Is your life in a place where you can fully embrace 'Today'?
If not, what steps can you take right now to engage with the present, to be fully present?