

Introduction: Our lives are lived in rhythms

- Your habits
- What you think
- What you watch
- Your route to work
- What you are currently doing

The goal

The goal of sacred rhythms is to practice true spirituality.

What is true spirituality according to Scripture?

- It's the life of Christ reproduced in a believer.
- It's the life of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- It's the life of Christ as you cooperate and respond to His Word in faith and obedience.

God's #1 agenda: to make you like His Son.

How do you become close and intimate with Jesus?

The context: *Those who do My will, those are My true mothers and brothers and sisters.*

Mark 3:31-35

The parable: The sower and soils

Mark 4:1-9

- *Some seeds fell along the path...* Mark 4:4
- *Some seeds fell on rocky places...* Mark 4:5
- *Some seeds fell among thorns...* Mark 4:7
- *Some seeds fell on good soil...* Mark 4:8

Explanation: *The secret of the Kingdom of God has been given to you.*

- ¹⁴*The farmer sows the Word.* Mark 4:14 (NIV)
- The seed along the path:
¹⁵*Some people are like seed along the path, where the Word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them.*
Mark 4:15 (NIV)
- The seed on rocky places:
¹⁶*Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the Word and at once receive it with joy. ¹⁷But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the Word, they quickly fall away.*
Mark 4:16-17 (NIV)
- The seed among thorns:
¹⁸*Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the Word; ¹⁹but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the Word, making it unfruitful.*
Mark 4:18-19 (NIV)
- The seed sown on good soil:
²⁰*Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the Word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.”*
Mark 4:20 (NIV)

Your **RESPONSE** to God's Word determines your **RELATIONSHIP** with the Lord.

- This truth is about transformation.
- The soil is your heart.
- The sower is Jesus Himself.

Your spiritual growth depends on your commitment to God's Word.

- *"Take to your heart all the Words with which I am warning you today... For it is not an idle Word for you..."*
Deuteronomy 32:46-47 (NASB)
- *For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*
Hebrews 4:12 (NASB)

It's a living, powerful Word that has to be received in a heart in order to apply it.

"[Thy] Words were found and I ate them..." Jeremiah 15:16 (NASB)

"If you [abide] in My Word..." John 8:31-32 (NASB)

"[Set them apart] by Your truth. Your Word is truth." John 17:14-17 (NASB)

The Spirit of God uses the fuel of God's Word to transform our lives.

Jesus gives 3 warnings:

Warning #1: There is no such thing as **PRIVATE** spirituality. Mark 4:21-25 (NIV)

Warning #2: There is no magic formula. Mark 4:26:29 (NIV)
Spiritual growth is a **PROCESS**.

Warning #3: It starts small, but it has great **IMPACT**. Mark 4:30-32 (NIV)

The context for Spiritual Rhythms:

God must work deeply **IN** you, before He works significantly **THROUGH** you.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does your rhythm of life look like? Are there any changes you need to make?
2. How does the Spirit of God progressively produce the life of Christ in you?
3. How would you describe your connection to the Word of God?

Introduction:

Our lives are a product of the rhythms or habits we've embraced.

Questions to ponder:

Are the rhythms of my life producing...

- The kind of person I long to be?
- The kind of friend I want to be?
- The kind of spouse I want to be?
- The kind of parent I want to be?
- The life of Christ in me?

The problem:

Instead of thoughtfully engaging with our rhythms, our tendency is to get caught up in the rhythms of the world around us.

The answer:

The purpose of Jesus coming to earth is to give us life!

John 10:10

What are sacred rhythms?

Sacred rhythms are spiritual practices that help cultivate, over the course of time, the life of Christ in the follower of Jesus.

- **The Warning:** Sacred rhythms can turn into a form of **RELIGIOUS PIETY**. Matthew 6:1
- The issue is not public or private, it's heart **MOTIVATION**.
- Sacred rhythms are transformational when we move them from **RELIGIOUS** piety to **RELATIONAL** intimacy.

The rhythm of generosity:

²“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Matthew 6:2-4 (NIV)

Embracing the rhythm of generosity:

- Tithing **TRAINS** our hearts to **TRUST** God.
- Generosity must be learned. It does not come naturally.
- Whatever we value and treasure in this life is what controls our heart.

Matthew 6:19-21
Luke 16:10, 13

Understanding the practice of tithing:

- Tithe literally means a **TENTH**.
Leviticus 27:30
Matthew 23:23
- We are to give to God **FIRST**.
Proverbs 3:9-10
- God asks us to **TEST** Him.
Malachi 3:10
- It's a pre-decision in our **HEART**.
Luke 6:38
2 Corinthians 9:6
- The blessing of God is so that we can **ABOUND**
in good work.
2 Corinthians 9:8

Conclusion:

The rhythm of generosity begins with the practice of tithing.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are your daily rhythms of life? Do they produce the kind of person you want to be?
2. Are the rhythms of your life producing the life of Christ in you? Why or why not?
3. What new insight did you gain concerning generosity? How could this help your perspective in your current situation?
4. Are you exercising the sacred rhythm of generosity? If not, what hinders you?

Introduction: The Rhythm of Prayer

Prayer is the **PATHWAY** to experiencing **INTIMACY** with God.

“Simple prayer involves ordinary people bringing ordinary concerns to a loving and compassionate Father.”

- Richard Foster

“Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work.”

- Oswald Chambers

⁵“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ⁶But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

Matthew 6:5-8 (NIV)

Develop a powerful and transformative prayer life

Decluttering prayer:

- Prayer is not a **PERFORMANCE**. Matthew 6:5

- Prayer is not a **SECRET FORMULA**. Matthew 6:7

Developing intimacy with God:

- View prayer as **NECESSARY** not just a **NICE IDEA**.
Matthew 6:5-7
Luke 5:15-16
- Approach your **HEAVENLY FATHER** who **LOVES** you.
Matthew 7:7-11
- Set aside a **SPECIFIC** time and a **SACRED** place.
Matthew 6:6
Mark 1:35
- Just **PRAY**.

“The same way a small child cannot draw a bad picture, so a child of God cannot offer bad prayers.”

- Richard Foster

“Bring to God what is in you, not what ought to be in you.”

- C.S. Lewis

Discussion Questions:

1. How do you develop intimacy with God through prayer?
2. Why is “decluttering prayer” so crucial in developing a prayer life that is powerful and transformative?
3. Is prayer the “steering wheel” or the “spare tire” of your life? In other words, is prayer your first response or your last resort? Explain why or why not.
4. How do you currently approach your Heavenly Father in prayer? How would you like to approach Him?
5. What steps will you take this week to grow in your communication and intimacy with God?

Introduction: Relational intimacy requires intentionality

Review:

Sacred rhythms are spiritual practices that help cultivate, over the course of time, the life of Christ in the follower of Jesus.

Prayer is the pathway to experiencing intimacy with God.

5 Areas that develop intimacy with God

This, then, is how you should pray:

1. Worship

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name,

Matthew 6:9

Definition: Worship is recognizing and responding appropriately to the **GREATNESS** of God.

Ecclesiastes 5:2

Practice:

- Talk to God about God.
- Spend time simply thanking Him.
- Enjoy His creation.
- Put on worship music in your home or car.

2. Surrender

*Your Kingdom come, Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.*

Matthew 6:10

Definition: Surrender is giving God full and complete
CONTROL of every area of your life.

Romans 12:1

Practice:

- Invite the King to take His rightful place in your heart and life.
- You may want to physically kneel or raise your hands.

3. Request

Give us today our daily bread.

Matthew 6:11

Definition: Request is asking God to give you what you
NEED to make it through the day.

Psalms 5:3

Practice:

- Bring to God the needs and concerns you have today:
spiritually, emotionally, physically, relationally, vocationally, financially.

4. Confession

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. Matthew 6:12

Definition: Confession is to **AGREE** with God about your sin. 1 John 1:9

Practice:

- Ask the Spirit of God to show you any areas of unconfessed sin. Then respond by specifically owning what He reveals and asking for forgiveness.

5. Protection

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. Matthew 6:13

Definition: Protection is God's activity in your life to guard you from sin and the schemes of the enemy. Ephesians 6:10-20

Practice:

- Pray for your spiritual protection and discernment to identify the attacks of the enemy. 1 Peter 5:8

Discussion Questions:

1. What new insight did you learn from the Lord's prayer? How can you apply it to your life?
2. How do you experience intimacy with God in your prayer life?
3. Which of the 5 areas that develop intimacy with God are you growing in the most?
4. Which of the 5 areas that develop intimacy with God do you need to focus on this week? How specifically will you do that?

Introduction: What do you do when you don't know what to do?

The rhythm of fasting:

¹⁶ "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face,¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matthew 6:16-18 (NIV)

What is fasting?

Fasting is the act of **HUMBLING** your soul before God by **ABSTAINING** from something.

"More than any other discipline, fasting reveals the thing that controls us."

- Richard Foster

5 areas in which to practice the rhythm of fasting:

1. Major **DECISION** or **GUIDANCE**. Nehemiah 1:4

2. Facing intense **OPPOSITION**. Esther 4:16

3. Preparing for **MINISTRY**. Acts 13:3; 14:23

4. A physical expression of **SORROW** or **MOURNING**.
 - **Sin** – confession and repentance 1 Samuel 7:6
Nehemiah 9:1-2

 - **Circumstances** – Crying out for God’s will and deliverance. Daniel 10
Nehemiah 1:4

5. In times of great **NEED**. Ezra 8:21-23
1 Samuel 7:6

4 steps to be engaged in the rhythm of fasting:

1. Prepare yourself **SPIRITUALLY**.
2. Set-aside a specific **TIME** and **REASON**.
3. Be attentive to **GOD**.
4. Be aware of the **ENEMY'S** attacks.

Who should not fast from food?

- People who are physically too thin or emaciated.
- Those who are prone to anorexia, bulimia, or other eating disorders.
- Those who suffer weakness or anemia.
- People who have tumors, bleeding ulcers, cancer, blood diseases, or who have heart disease.
- Those who suffer chronic problems with kidneys, liver, lungs, heart or other important organs.
- Individuals who take insulin for diabetes, or suffer any other blood sugar problem such as hyperglycemia.
- Women who are pregnant or nursing.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is fasting and when should you do it?
2. Ryan discussed 5 areas in which to consider fasting (page 2). Is God calling you to fast in any of these areas?
3. What new insight did you gain concerning fasting? How could this help your perspective in your current situation?
4. Are you exercising the sacred rhythm of fasting? If not, what hinders you? What steps could you take to incorporate this rhythm?