



Rhythms of Grace

GROWING IN THE
SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Rhythms of Grace

Sermon Series Overview

What is the purpose of this sermon series?

As people who follow Jesus, we are considered to be His disciples. This simply means that – through the Spirit’s power – we are learning to be with Jesus in order to embody His teachings for His mission. Throughout Scripture we see a variety of ways that Jesus and the people of God have learned to commune with God. Historically these have been referred to, by the Church, as the spiritual disciplines or spiritual rhythms. The purpose of these rhythms is not simply to do them, but to grow in our relationship with Jesus. They take practice. At times, they may not even be enticing. But these beautiful rhythms of grace are designed to create space for Christ to meet us and form us into the people He has called us to be.

How long is this sermon series? Four weeks.

What is the Head, Heart, and Hands of this series?

- **Head:** Our desire is for students to understand what the spiritual rhythms are and be able to identify their importance by looking at the life of Jesus and the lives of His people throughout the narrative of Scripture.
- **Heart:** Our desire is for students to grow in their love for Jesus by seeing the spiritual rhythms, not as a rigid set of rules, but grace-filled opportunities for their own spiritual formation.
- **Hands:** Our desire is for students to grow in what it means to practice spiritual rhythms. They ought to walk away with practical tools for how to engage with Jesus and His people in a variety of ways.
 - We also want to equip parents to engage in the spiritual rhythms (if they are not) and have conversation with students about.

Who is this sermon series for?

- Students who have been following Jesus for some time, but need to be reoriented around the person of Jesus and the importance of spiritual rhythms.
- Students who are new to the faith and need help in taking their initial steps in their discipleship journey.
- Students who are apathetic to following Jesus and don’t see the importance of spiritual disciplines.

What is the tone of this series?

- Educational
- Informative
- Practical
- Inspiring

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Sermon Series Breakdown

Week 1 Sermon Title: How to Read the Bible

Scripture: Jn.5:39-40; Matt.22:34-40

Big Idea: Scripture is a story that points us to Jesus

Brief Description: If we're honest with ourselves, reading Scripture can seem like a very daunting task. After all, it contains a library of 66 books written over the course of approximately 1,500 years with a variety of different authors from different cultures – very intimidating on the surface! However, when we understand that Scripture is a story that reveals to us the person of King Jesus we become more like Him as we engage with Him in His word.

Conversation Starter: Why is scripture important and how does God want to use it in our lives?

Week 2 Sermon Title: How to Pray

Main Scripture: Luke 11:1-4

Big Idea: Prayer is about becoming someone, more than it is about receiving something

Brief Description: Prayer is one of the many ways that we are able to connect with Jesus and grow in our faith. It is absolutely central! However, for many of us, prayer has been boiled down to making a series of different requests to God. While this is no way wrong, it cheapens the goal of prayer. The Lord desires more for us! In fact, more so than receiving, prayer is about becoming. Through prayer, God is able to align our desires with His and form us into the people He has called us to be.

Conversation Starter: In what way is prayer more than simply asking God for things?

Week 3 Sermon Title: The Beauty of Community

Main Scripture: Acts 2:42-47

Big Idea: Through Biblical community, we grow together.

Brief Description: As the early church formed, members of the church were united as one. Each individual had the same goals, to spur one another toward love and good deeds and faith through intentional encouragement. The early church is a great example of why we as today need to be in a community similar to the early church.

Conversation Starter: How is biblical community different from the other types community you experience? What is the goal of biblical community?

Week 4 Sermon Title: Living on Mission

Main Scripture: Matthew 28:16-20

Big Idea: In biblical community, we go together

Brief Description: Jesus commissions His people to go to all nations and spread the good news. This mission, while challenging, is something that we are not only called to do but an area where we receive Christ's power and support. With the help of King Jesus, through the Spirit, we can serve as a bridge for people to encounter the transformative power of the gospel.

Conversation Starter: Who in your sphere of influence is God inviting you to share the good news with?

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Games

WEEK 1

Bottle flip tic tac toe

- Tic Tac Toe, but with a twist! Tape a grid on a carpet and cut out cardboard X's and O's (or just draw them on segments of white paper) to represent each letter. You put down a letter when you complete a bottle flip! First one to complete 3 letters in a row wins.
- You can compete 1 v 1 or team style.
 - Team style - Depending on the size of youth group, split students up into two teams. 1 person gets a bottle flip at a time, if they complete it, they put down a letter. Next person in line attempts a flip. If you flip it or don't flip it, you get 1 turn at a time, moving down the line until a team wins.

WEEK 2

Knee Ball

Supplies:

- Volleyball, soccer ball, or dodge ball

Instructions: Have students get in a circle with their feet spread apart shoulder width and feet touching each other. Through a ball in the middle of the circle and encourage students to slap it around (like gaga ball). If it goes through a student's legs, they're out and the circle gets smaller until you declare a winner. If you have the time, you can play a version where if a student gets out the first time, they can turn their rump to the circle and play backwards. If they get out again, they're out.

WEEK 3

Graduation

Instructions: Have all students participate. Like rock-paper-scissors, but if you win a round with someone, you move up a grade. You can choose to go from 1st-12th or start in Middle School with 6-12th. Up to you! Winner gets a prize of your choosing. Play fun music in the background.

WEEK 4

What if?

Supplies: Pens, Paper, Hat or small bucket

Instructions:

1. Gather students together in a circle of chairs.
2. Give each student a pen and piece of paper and tell them to write down a "what if?" question (make sure their neighbor doesn't see what they're writing down). It can be any question like:
 - What if the sky wasn't blue?
 - What if Pastor _____ had no hair?
3. Once all the students have completed writing their question, have them fold up their paper and put it in a hat/small bucket/whatever object you need to use to put the pieces of paper in.
4. Redistribute the paper back into the circle. Make sure that each student has a question that they didn't write.
5. (Making sure no one around them sees what they're writing) have each student answer the question on their piece of paper.
6. Once that is finished, you'll officially start a round!
7. Pick one student to read their question.
8. Then have a student to their right or left (whatever you chose!) to read their answer to their question.
9. After that, they'll read their question and the student next to them (in whatever direction you chose to move in) will read their answer.
10. Repeat until it gets all the way back around the circle.
11. Enjoy another round after that.

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WEEK 1
SERMON NOTES

How to Read the Bible

John 5:39-40 & Matthew 22:34-40

Introduction

- Welcome students
- Pray

Sermon Series Kickoff: We all know that there are different components that allow plants to grow (*you can even bring in a live plant*). Similarly, as God's Spirit grows us, He utilizes a variety of things. While it is He that brings the growth, we participate through, what the historic church has called, spiritual disciplines or spiritual rhythms. These include things like reading the Bible, prayer, community, etc. But, as we begin this new series it's important for us to understand that it's by God's grace that we grow. Together, we will discover who we can be when we engage in God's rhythms of grace!

Read: John 5:39-40 "You pore over the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, and yet they testify about me. But you are not willing to come to me so that you may have life."

Big Idea: Scripture is a story that points us to Jesus

We grow in our relationship to the Living Word (Jesus) through engaging with the written word. The Holy Spirit uses Scripture to reveal Jesus to us and make us more like Him.

Transition: Now that we've talked about the importance of scripture, let's discuss how to read it.

1. Observation

- Before we can understand what a verse or passage means, we need to look at what is being said.
 - Get curious about the text and ask the questions - who, what, when, where, why, and how
 - Identify words/terms, people, and places that you're not familiar with
 - Read the verse or passage in another translation (*Share a few Bible translations that you've found helpful and use frequently*)

2. Interpretation

- Now that we've explored what the passage is saying, let's do our best to try and understand what the passage means.
- We can be tempted to run quickly to commentaries, Study Bibles, and other resources. While they are critically important to aiding in our understanding, we'd do well to first ask the Holy Spirit for help and let the text saturate our minds and hearts before we read these things.

There are three different types of contexts to consider when interpreting the passage:

1. Literary context

- Genres: poetry, epistles (letters), historical narrative, parables, etc.
- **Illustration:** **Attempt to take song lyrics and read it as though you were trying to convince the students that it was an excerpt from a textbook or vice versa **. It sounds ridiculous because it is! We would never try to do this; and yet, we take this approach with Scripture when we don't allow the genre to help us decipher the meaning of the passage.

2. Historical context

- The biblical authors are writing during a specific time period to a specific people under specific sets of circumstances with a purpose in mind!
 - The Bible is not written to us, but it is for us!
- This is the beauty of trusted commentaries and reputable sources on the internet. We don't have to guess when it comes to the historical dynamics at play in the Bible.
- While the Bible is not merely a history book, it should encourage us that our faith is rooted in historical fact!

3. Theological context

- "Scripture is literature based in history that communicates a theological message".
 - What are the biblical authors attempting to communicate about God or how He operates in their lives/world in light of the appropriate historical and literary context provided?
- Utilize Scripture to understand Scripture.
 - Those small letters or numbers next to some verses in your Bible are references. They are a tool that can help us understand what may be happening in a passage by pointing to other passages

3. Application

Read: Matthew 22:37-40 He said to him, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands."

Matthew 22:37-40

- For Jesus and the Jewish people, these are the most central and important commands in all of Scripture. In fact, you could say that Jesus' end goal is to form us into people who live out these truths well.
- Simply put, applying Scripture is allowing the Holy Spirit to help us understand how we can love God, love ourselves, and love others through the particular passage.

Conclusion: Reading Scripture is not meant to be an end unto itself. The goal of scripture is to reveal to us the crucified and resurrected King who reigns over a Kingdom that we are invited to be a part of as His fellow heirs and royal participants.

- Story: Share how has God shaped you and your life through the reading of Scripture. Your honesty can help give the students a tangible framework for how God wants to use Scripture in their lives.

Action Steps:

- Small group – In your small groups, you will walk through a passage together and apply this method (observation, interpretation, application) of reading and understanding scripture
- Individual – This week, commit to engaging with the spiritual rhythm of reading the Bible:
 - Find a place where you'll read the Bible
 - Find a time (when is the best time for you/when do you think you'll have the best energy to commune and spend time with Jesus?)
 - Find a plan (Recommendation: the Bible Project reading plans on Youversion or Youth Commission International's plans)

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How to Read the Bible

WEEK 1
SMALL GROUP
QUESTIONS

Big Idea:

Scripture is a story that points us to Jesus

Scripture:

Jn .5:39-40 & Matt. 22:34-40

Brief Sermon Recap: If we're honest with ourselves, reading Scripture can seem like a very daunting task. After all, it contains a library of 66 books written over the course of approximately 1,500 years with a variety of different authors from different cultures – very intimidating on the surface! However, when we understand that Scripture is a story that reveals to us the person of King Jesus we become more like Him as we engage with Him in His word.

Small Group Leader Instructions: Help walk your small group through an exercise in learning to read the Bible. Feel free to pick a passage of your choosing. If you're unsure, you can use John 3:14-17.

Observation

- Get curious about the passage and ask questions!
- Ask who, what, when, where, why, and how?
- Have students bring up a few different translations. What differences are there that you can see?

Interpretation

- Literary - What is the genre of the passage? (Examples: Narrative, poetry, wisdom, epistles, parables, prophetic)
- History - Jesus is talking to a man named Nicodemus, who was a Pharisee. Find out as a small group what a Pharisee is and why they were important.
 - A Website like <http://www.freebiblecommentary.org> can be very helpful.
- Theological - What do we learn about God in this passage?
 - Verse 14 is an allusion to an Old Testament story (utilize the references in your Bible to see that story). How does it apply to Jesus?

Application

- How can the Holy Spirit – through this passage – help me to (1) Love God (2) Love myself (3) Love my neighbor?

Individual Action Step: This week, commit to engaging in the spiritual rhythm of reading the Bible:

- Find a place where you'll read the Bible
- Find a time (when is the best time for you/when do you think you'll have the best energy to commune and spend time with Jesus?)
- Find a plan (Recommendation: the Bible Project reading plans on YouVersion or Youth Commission International's plans)

Week 1 Slides

BIG IDEA:

SCRIPTURE IS A STORY
THAT POINTS US TO JESUS

OBSERVATION:

WHAT THE PASSAGE SAYS

INTERPRETATION:

WHAT THE PASSAGE MEANS

APPLICATION:

ALLOWING THE HOLY SPIRIT
TO HELP US UNDERSTAND
HOW WE CAN LOVE GOD,
LOVE OURSELVES, AND LOVE
OTHERS THROUGH THE
PASSAGE

SOAP Bible Study Method

- **S**CRPTURE
- **O**BSERVATION
- **A**PPPLICATION
- **P**RAYER

ACTION STEPS:

- FIND A PLACE
- FIND A TIME
- FIND A PLAN

*We will provide slides and social graphics for each week of the series