

Developing Our Own Rhythms of Life

Jesus says: *“Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”* (John 15:4)

I would like to suggest that these words of Jesus give us the key question around which to shape our rhythms of life: What helps me and us to remain in Christ?

In the box, you can find other approaches to developing a good rhythm of life. They are also helpful and worth considering. Their limitation is that they do not help us see that our relationship to Christ is not only one important aspect of our life, but at its center.

Work-Rest Balance. We need to make sure that we are both giving and receiving, that we are investing ourselves and that our energy is renewed.

Key Areas of Life. We can decide which key areas are important for our life as a whole e.g. time with God, family/friends, work, bodily exercise, etc. We then ask how we can ensure that these areas can be integrated into our rhythms of life.

Please read John 15:1-8.

Jesus is the vine. The life of the branches depends completely on him. There is no life outside of Jesus. Only as we are in him, his life flows through us.



Our relationship with Jesus is described in the most intimate way: He in us and we in him.

As we live in and out of this relationship, fruit will grow. That is the promise that Jesus gives: *“If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.”* (John 15:5)

Fruit is not produced. None of us can make fruit grow by trying hard. It grows slowly, naturally, yet surely as we remain in Christ.

Jesus says: Remain in me. That is the only command in this passage. Everything else flows out of this relationship. And so, we are invited to choose a way of life that opens us up to the presence and work of Christ in our lives.

What helps me remain in Christ?

Notes:

Not all of this finds its expression in defined rhythms of life. Unexpected words of encouragement and God's loving goodness surprise us along the way. A spontaneous initiative or response to God's Word may be deeply meaningful for our walk with the Lord.



And yet, it is important to develop some basic rhythms of life that help us remain in Christ. Not as a limiting box, but as a framework that helps us to flourish and grow. Just as the vine is given a structure along which to grow, we need some foundational structure for our life in Christ.

As we reflect on our own rhythms of life, let us remember:

_Our aim is not to live up to an ideal of the Christian life, but to walk and grow in intimacy with Christ.

_Our circumstances and personalities need to be taken into consideration. There is no one pattern that fits all. And our rhythms of life will change as we move through different phases in life.

_Together we remain in Christ. We need one another.

_God's promises and faithfulness are greater than my ability to remain in him.

Rhythms of life that help me remain in Christ...

_What life-giving spiritual practices or other rhythms are already a part of my life on a regular basis? Do I feel the need for any change?

_Where do I sense God's invitation to grow more deeply into his life? What do I want to develop in this season of my life?

_With whom can I live community in such a way that we help one another remain in Christ?

Translating my reflections into concrete rhythms of life.

How can this take shape in my life?

Daily:

Weekly:

Monthly:

Annual:

Other:

Prayerfully look again at your rhythm of life:

Is it realistic? We are not called to live an ideal life, but to walk with Christ in our realities. It is better to start small and put this into practice than to dream big and give up quickly. As we integrate spiritual practices into our lives, we need to be careful not only to add things to our already full lives. What will you *not do* in order to make time for these rhythms of life?

Is it balanced? Is there space for community and time alone, for receiving and giving, for mind, body and soul? We easily forget that there is also a bodily and emotional dimension to remaining in Christ. If we are overtired or feel weary for lack of exercise, this will affect our ability to listen and respond to Christ. If we have no space to honestly process our emotions or enjoy loving relationships, we will find it hard to be open to God.

Is it life-giving? Is your rhythm of life an expression of love and joy or does it feel like a heavy burden? Talk with Jesus about this and listen for his invitation to you.


What do others say? Share your thoughts with your spouse and/or a close friend.

In closing...

Spiritual practices are a means to an end; they are not in themselves the end goal.

Let us not focus on our spiritual practices, but on Christ.

Let us remember that the end goal is not to read our Bible, pray or go to church – but to grow closer to Christ and become a more loving person. The key question is not: Am I reading in the Bible and praying? But: Am I growing in my ability to receive and give love? Am I more at home in the love of Christ and becoming a more loving person? That is the aim. (See 2 Peter 1:5-7)



The spiritual practices have a purpose beyond themselves.

Their aim is Christ himself who should always remain at the center of our focus and the aim of our search.

Richard Foster

We live by grace. As we seek to remain in Christ, we are held by him. The disciples to whom Jesus spoke in John 15 all deserted him only a few days later. But Jesus went to the cross to die – also for them and their inability to remain in him. His faithfulness will see us through. His grace is always greater.

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