ENCOUNTER

Living The Rhythms Of Jesus In Every Day Life

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ENCOUNTER • INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

PRACTICING THE RHYTHMS OF JESUS

There is a difference between admiring a way of life and actually living it. Most of us have things we say we value.

We value our health.

We value our marriage.

We value our family.

We value our friendships.

We value our relationship with God.

But there is a simple question that exposes the difference between what we say we value and what we actually value: What does my life consistently practice? Someone can say, "I value my health," but if they never exercise, never rest, and never pay attention to what they put into their body, health may be an aspiration—but it hasn't yet become a practiced value.

Because values without practices eventually become just good intentions.

If something truly matters to us, it eventually finds its way into the rhythm of our lives.

It gets our time.

It gets our attention.

It gets our energy.

It gets our resources.

It becomes part of the cadence by which we live.

And Jesus understood this.

JESUS DIDN'T JUST SAY, "LISTEN."

Jesus certainly wanted people to hear His words. But He repeatedly pushed His followers beyond hearing to practicing. At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says:

> *"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock." — Matthew 7:24*

Notice what separates the wise builder from the foolish builder. Both heard. Only one practiced. Jesus makes the same connection in Luke:

> *"My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice." — Luke 8:21*

For Jesus, discipleship was never merely about accumulating information. It was about embodying a way of life. Jesus did not come simply to give us something new to believe. He came to show us a new way to live.

VALUES NEED RHYTHMS

That is where rhythms become so important. A rhythm is simply a repeated practice that gives expression to what we value. Think about music. A single beat isn't a rhythm. Rhythm happens when the beat returns.

Again.

And again.

And again.

Eventually those repeated beats create a pattern. Our lives work the same way. What we repeatedly practice begins to create the pattern of the person we are becoming. That means the question isn't simply:

What do I believe about Jesus?

There is another question:

Is my life increasingly patterned after Jesus?

Prayer becomes more than something I believe is important. I pray.

Scripture becomes more than something I believe is true. I breathe it in.

Community becomes more than something I say I value. I cultivate relationships.

Compassion becomes more than something I admire. I step toward people in the margins. Generosity becomes more than an ideal. I leverage what God has given me. Making disciples becomes more than the Great Commission printed on a church wall. I invest the life of Jesus into another person. Values tell us what matters. Rhythms put those values into motion.

PRACTICE DOESN'T MEAN PERFECTION

There is another reason I love the word practice. Practice assumes you haven't mastered it yet. Nobody walks onto a basketball court for their first practice expecting to shoot perfectly. Nobody sits at a piano for the first time expecting to play like a concert pianist. Nobody learns a new language without stumbling over words.

Practice includes repetition.

Practice includes growth.

Practice includes failure.

Practice includes getting back up and trying again.

And the same is true in our pursuit of Jesus. Some days you will practice these rhythms beautifully.

Other days you won't.

Sometimes you'll feel deeply connected to God.

Sometimes you'll feel distracted.

Sometimes you'll step courageously into mission.

Sometimes you'll miss the opportunity.

Sometimes you'll get it right.

Sometimes you'll fail forward.

That's why these rhythms are not a spiritual scorecard. They are not checkboxes. They are not religious obligations designed to prove how spiritual you are. And they are not empty disciplines performed to earn God's approval. We don't practice the rhythms to get God to love us. We practice them because we are already loved by God. Grace is not the reward at the end of our practice. Grace is where the practice begins.

RHYTHMS CREATE SPACE FOR ENCOUNTER

There is nothing magical about a spiritual practice. Reading Scripture does not force God to speak. Prayer does not manipulate God into answering. Worship does not make God come closer. Community does not guarantee transformation. But these practices intentionally position our lives toward God. They create space to listen.

Space to respond.

Space to remember.

Space to surrender.

Space to encounter Him.

Jesus described this kind of life with one simple word:

Abide.

Remain.

Stay.

Make your home in Me.

The rhythms are ways we continually turn our lives back toward the One in whom we are learning to abide. They keep Jesus from becoming merely someone we believe in and increasingly make Him the center around which our lives are ordered.

FROM ME AT THE CENTER TO JESUS AT THE CENTER

Every life has a center. Something determines how we spend our time. Something directs our energy. Something shapes our relationships. Something influences our decisions. Something tells us what success looks like. Something gets the best of our attention and resources. Without intentionality, that center slowly becomes me.

My comfort.

My success.

My schedule.

My desires.

My reputation.

My plans.

The rhythms of Jesus continually interrupt that gravitational pull.

They reorient us.

They remind us: Jesus is the center. Instead of asking only, What do I want from my life? We begin asking: Jesus, how would You have me live? And over time, these repeated practices begin to reorder everything.

Our time.

Our energy.

Our resources.

Our relationships.

Our priorities.

Our decisions.

Our purpose.

EXPERIENCE AND EXPRESS

At the heart of these rhythms are two movements:

EXPERIENCE JESUS.

And:

EXPRESS JESUS.

We practice these rhythms because we want to experience the life of Jesus more deeply and express the life of Jesus more fully. Some rhythms root us more deeply in our relationship with God. Others draw us more deeply into relationships with other believers. Still others push us outward toward a world God desperately loves. But together they form a way of life. They help us abide deeply and live boldly. They help us become rooted enough to withstand storms and available enough to be sent. They deepen our relationship with God while expanding our love for people. They form us privately so we can faithfully represent Jesus publicly.

They help us become salt and light. They give direction to our lifestyle, clarity to our priorities, purpose to our resources, depth to our relationships, and intentionality to our mission. The rhythms form the life of Jesus in us so the life of Jesus can flow through us.

A WAY OF LIFE

These eleven rhythms aren't meant to become eleven more things you have to do. They are meant to help us answer a much bigger question: What does a life centered on Jesus actually look like?

Dying.

Living.

Breathing.

Aligning.

Worshipping.

Identifying.

Cultivating.

Nurturing.

Stepping.

Leveraging.

Multiplying.

Together, they give us a framework for practicing the way of Jesus.

Not perfectly.

But intentionally.

Not religiously.

But relationally.

Not occasionally.

But rhythmically.

They help us build our lives on something deeper than good intentions. They help us live with fewer regrets because what matters most begins receiving our best. They help us experience the presence of Jesus, embody the character of Jesus, and express the mission of Jesus. And ultimately, they move discipleship beyond something we know into something we live. Because the Great Commission was never meant merely to be studied. It was meant to be lived. And discipleship was never meant merely to produce people who know what Jesus said.

Discipleship produces people who increasingly practice the way Jesus lived.

So don't approach these rhythms asking:

> *"How many of these can I check off?"*

Ask instead:

> *"Jesus, what would it look like for Your life to become the rhythm of mine?"*

Because when His values become our practices, and His practices become our rhythms, and His rhythms begin shaping our lives, we don't just learn more about Jesus. We begin to experience and express the very essence of Jesus through the ordinary rhythms of everyday life.

ENCOUNTER • THE 11 RHYTHMS

Discipleship Has a Practice

The 11 Rhythms

Spiritual formation does not happen by accident.

We are all being formed by something. Our habits, relationships, schedules, desires, media, experiences, and environments continually shape the people we are becoming. The question is not whether we are being formed. The question is what is forming us. The 11 Rhythms of Jesus provide a shared way of life that helps us intentionally arrange our lives around Jesus. These rhythms are not intended to be mastered once and completed. They are revisited throughout a lifetime. Like breathing, they become repeated patterns of receiving and responding to the life of God.

They help us surrender to Jesus, walk with the Spirit, receive Scripture, align through prayer, worship wholeheartedly, remember our identity, live in community, nurture spiritual family, move toward people in need, steward what God has given us, and multiply the life of Jesus in others. These Rhythms can be practiced individually but they are best learned and lived in the proximity of community. Find a friend or two, a small group, a discipleship cohort, teammates or family members and discuss these as you put them into practice together.

ENCOUNTER • RHYTHM 01

Dying

The Christ-Centered Life

THE QUESTION

Who is on the throne of my life?

Jesus declares that dying to self, dying to our agendas, dying to our preferences and ideals and making Him the center of our lives actually leads to a fuller, abundant and meaningful life. The pathway to resurrection life begins with surrender. Dying means yielding our will, desires, pride, and control to the loving lordship of Jesus.

Biblical Background

Jesus described discipleship as more than believing in Him; it means surrendering the right to lead our own lives. He said, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23). To deny ourselves does not mean rejecting our personality, worth, or God-given desires. It means stepping down from the throne and allowing Jesus to become the center and authority of our lives.

The cross represented death, surrender, and the end of self-rule. When Jesus told His disciples to carry a cross, He was not inviting them to minor inconvenience. He was calling them to abandon competing loyalties and follow Him without reservation. The word daily reminds us that surrender is not merely a decision made at conversion. It is an ongoing rhythm practiced in ordinary choices.

Paul described this surrendered life by saying, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). Our old, self-centered way of living has been crucified with Jesus. We now receive a new identity and a new source of life in Him. Dying is therefore not self-destruction; it is making room for the life of Christ to be expressed through us.

Jesus taught that whoever tries to preserve life on their own terms will ultimately lose it, while whoever surrenders life to Him will truly find it (Matthew 16:25). This is the paradox of the gospel: surrender leads to freedom, humility leads to greatness, service leads to significance, and death leads to resurrection. Dying is the foundational rhythm because every other rhythm begins by placing Jesus at the center.

The Example of Jesus

Jesus modeled complete surrender in the Garden of Gethsemane. Knowing the suffering that awaited Him, He prayed:

> *"Father, if You are willing, take this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done." — Luke 22:42*

Jesus honestly expressed His anguish, yet He submitted His will to the Father. His surrender was not passive resignation; it was trusting obedience rooted in love. He chose the Father's will over personal comfort and gave His life for the salvation of others. Dying like Jesus means we can honestly bring our desires, fears, and struggles to God while still praying, "Not my will, but Yours be done."

Group Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to deny yourself without denying your God-given identity or personality?
2. Why do you think Jesus described discipleship using the image of carrying a cross?
3. What is the difference between a one-time surrender and daily surrender?
4. What most often competes with Jesus for the throne of your life?
5. Where are you currently struggling to release control?
6. When has obedience to God required you to sacrifice comfort, approval, or personal preference?
7. How can surrender lead to greater freedom rather than less freedom?
8. What is one area you sense Jesus asking you to surrender this week?

Group Practices

1. Each week, one person shares a moment they had to deny self or obey Jesus at a personal cost.
2. Rotate all group decisions (meal, location, time, topic) so no one clings to control.
3. A monthly practice where the group meets solely to serve a member's need, meals, childcare, yard work.
4. Handle tensions quickly with Matthew 18 conversations, humility, and forgiveness.
5. Choose one recurring fast (media, meals, spending) to practice dying to self as a group.
6. Share one place each week where following Jesus is challenging, and pray for courage to obey.

ENCOUNTER • RHYTHM 02

Living

The Spirit-Filled Life

THE QUESTION

Who is leading my life?

Instead of our feeble, inadequate and debilitated strivings Jesus promised the provision of the Holy Spirit. He has provided us an endless supply of His life being lived through us and in spite of us by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Christian life cannot be lived through human strength alone. Living means depending on the Holy Spirit to form the character of Jesus in us and express the life of Jesus through us.

Biblical Background

Jesus never expected His disciples to continue His mission through their own ability. Before returning to the Father, He promised them the Holy Spirit, saying, “The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26). The Spirit would not merely assist them from a distance. He would dwell within them, guide them into truth, and continue the work of Jesus through their lives.

The Holy Spirit is not an optional part of discipleship. He is God’s presence within every believer. Scripture says, “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you?” (1 Corinthians 6:19). To live a Spirit-filled life is to recognize that we are never alone and that spiritual transformation does not depend on willpower alone. We learn to rely on the Spirit for wisdom, courage, conviction, comfort, and strength.

Paul writes, “Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). Walking suggests an ongoing, daily relationship. It is not one dramatic spiritual experience but a pattern of attentiveness, dependence, and obedience. The Spirit leads, but He does not force us. We can resist His conviction or respond to His prompting. Living by the Spirit means learning to recognize His leading and take the next faithful step.

The clearest evidence of the Spirit’s work is not spiritual excitement but Christlike character. Galatians 5:22–23 describes the fruit of the Spirit as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These qualities are not

manufactured through pretending or striving. They grow as we remain surrendered to God and allow the Spirit to shape our thoughts, desires, relationships, and actions.

The Example of Jesus

Jesus lived in complete dependence on the Holy Spirit. At His baptism, the Spirit descended upon Him, and immediately afterward, "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness" (Luke 4:1). His public ministry began not with self-promotion or human strategy, but with submission to the Spirit's leading. Jesus taught, healed, resisted temptation, served others, and fulfilled the Father's mission in the power of the Spirit. He demonstrated that Spirit-filled living is not passive. It is an active life of listening, trusting, obeying, and joining God in what He is doing. Living like Jesus means beginning each day with a posture of dependence:

"Holy Spirit, lead me, form Jesus in me, and express His life through me today."

Small-Group Discussion Questions

1. What comes to mind when you hear the phrase Spirit-filled life?
2. Why is it impossible to live the Christian life through human effort alone?
3. What is the difference between having the Holy Spirit and yielding to the Holy Spirit?
4. What does it practically mean to "walk by the Spirit"?
5. Which fruit of the Spirit is most visible in your life right now?
6. Which fruit of the Spirit needs the greatest growth?
7. Where are you most likely to depend on your own strength rather than God's power?
8. What can we learn from Jesus being led by the Spirit into the wilderness?
9. What is one area where you need to listen to and obey the Holy Spirit this week?

Group Practices:

1. Group Listening Prayer: Ask, "Holy Spirit, what do You want to highlight tonight?" and share what you sense.
2. Weekly testimonies of how someone followed a Spirit prompting, even if imperfectly.
3. One person sits in the middle while the group practices listening and praying prayers over them.
4. Practice spiritual gifts intentionally: encouragement, prophecy, discernment, wisdom, healing prayer.
5. Spirit-Check Questions, Ask: "Where did the Spirit empower me this week? Where did I resist Him?"
6. Discernment for Decisions. Bring real-life decisions to the group and practice collective Spirit-led discernment.

ENCOUNTER • RHYTHM 03

Breathing

The Word In and Through Us

THE QUESTION

What is shaping my mind, directing my life, and flowing through me to others?

The Bible is more than a how-to, self help book. Breathing God's Word is first about taking in a deep breath and inhaling all that He desires for us to take in. At the same time, His Word is not intended to just remain in us but that we would learn to exhale and breathe His words to those around us. God's Word is spiritual breath for the life of a disciple. We inhale the Word by receiving it deeply, and we exhale the Word by living it faithfully and sharing it freely with others.

Biblical Background

Scripture is not merely information about God; it is one of the primary ways God reveals Himself and forms His people. Paul writes, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). The phrase God-breathed reminds us that the Bible carries the truth, authority, and life-giving intention of God. Just as our bodies cannot live without breath, our souls cannot remain healthy without regularly receiving God's Word.

The psalmist describes God's Word as "a lamp for my feet, a light on my path" (Psalm 119:105). Scripture does not always reveal the entire road ahead, but it gives us enough light to take the next faithful step. It exposes what is false, clarifies what is true, reveals the character of God, and teaches us how to live wisely. When competing voices attempt to define our identity, values, and direction, the Word anchors us in God's reality.

Breathing involves both inhaling and exhaling. We inhale God's Word through reading, hearing, studying, meditating, and memorizing Scripture. But healthy breathing cannot stop with the inhale. James warns, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" (James 1:22). We exhale the Word when we obey it and allow its truth to shape our attitudes, relationships, decisions, words, and actions. The Word moves from our eyes into our minds, from our minds into our hearts, and from our hearts into our lives.

We also exhale God's Word by sharing what we have received. Paul writes, "Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with

all wisdom" (Colossians 3:16). The Word is meant to flow through us into community as we encourage, teach, comfort, correct, and remind one another of God's truth. We also exhale the Word through evangelism by sharing the gospel with those who do not yet know Jesus. We inhale so that we may be formed; we exhale so that others may encounter the life and truth of Christ through us.

The Example of Jesus

Jesus lived with Scripture deeply embedded in His heart. When He was tempted in the wilderness, He responded three times with the words, "It is written" (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10). He did not rely on emotion, instinct, or human strength. He had inhaled the Word so deeply that God's truth naturally shaped His response when He faced pressure and temptation.

Jesus also continually exhaled the Word. He taught it publicly, explained it privately, applied it to real lives, and used it to invite people into the Kingdom of God. After His resurrection, He walked with two disciples on the road to Emmaus and, "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27). Breathing like Jesus means receiving God's Word until it shapes who we are, living it so others can see its truth, and sharing it so others can know the God who has spoken.

Small-Group Discussion Questions

1. What voices most strongly shape the way you think and make decisions?
2. What does it mean that Scripture is "God-breathed"?
3. What practices help you inhale God's Word deeply?
4. Why is inhaling Scripture without exhaling it spiritually incomplete?
5. What is the difference between reading God's Word and living God's Word?
6. Where is God currently asking you to obey something you have read in Scripture?
7. What makes sharing Scripture or the gospel with others feel difficult?
8. What truth from God's Word have you recently received that someone else may need to hear?
9. Who could you encourage this week by sharing a passage of Scripture?

Group Practices:

1. Dedicate part of each gathering to unpacking the previous Sunday's message.
2. Choose a verse or short passage and memorize it together.
3. Turn a passage into prayer. For example, pray through Psalm 23, Romans 8, or Ephesians 3 as a group.
4. Head, Heart Hand. Use this simple group ritual at the end of reading the Bible:

• Head: “Here’s what I now understand that I didn’t before.” • Heart: “Here’s how God is speaking to or stirring me.” • Hand: “Here’s one thing I will do because of this Word.”

5. SOAP Share. One group member prepares a short SOAP reflection (Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer) and teaches it to the group.

ENCOUNTER • RHYTHM 04

Aligning

Prayer and Humility

THE QUESTION

Whose will am I pursuing?

Aligning is about creating space in our schedules to meet with God, giving Him permission to search our hearts and minds for any thought, feeling or motive that is out of alignment with all that He desires for us. Aligning is the rhythm of humbly bringing our hearts, desires, decisions, and direction into agreement with God through prayer.

Biblical Background

Prayer is more than asking God to bless our plans; it is the place where our lives are brought into alignment with His will. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). This prayer begins with God’s purposes rather than our preferences. Aligning means allowing His kingdom, priorities, and character to shape the way we think, choose, and live.

Humility is essential because prayer requires us to admit that we are not self-sufficient. Scripture says, “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up” (James 4:10). Humility is not thinking less of ourselves; it is seeing ourselves truthfully before God. We recognize our dependence, surrender our need for control, and remain teachable when His direction differs from our own.

Prayer also aligns our inner life with God’s heart. Paul writes, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6). As we bring our fears, frustrations, hopes, and needs honestly before Him, God’s peace begins to guard our hearts and minds. Prayer may not immediately change our circumstances, but it changes the posture from which we face them.

Aligning includes both speaking and listening. We bring our requests to God, but we also become quiet enough to receive correction, wisdom, conviction, and direction. Scripture invites us to “trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5). Prayerful alignment means trusting that God sees more clearly than we do and choosing obedience when His way challenges our assumptions.

The Example of Jesus

Jesus consistently withdrew from the crowds to pray. Luke tells us, “Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (Luke 5:16). Even with constant demands around Him, Jesus protected time with the Father. Prayer was not an interruption to His mission; it was the source of His clarity, strength, and direction. Before choosing the twelve apostles, Jesus spent the night in prayer (Luke 6:12–13). Before the cross, He prayed in Gethsemane, “Not My will, but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42). Jesus brought His honest desires to the Father while remaining fully surrendered to the Father’s will.

Aligning like Jesus means bringing our whole selves before God, our hopes, fears, plans, questions, and pain, and humbly allowing His will to become greater than our own.

Small-Group Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between asking God to bless our plans and aligning ourselves with His will?
2. Why is humility essential to a healthy prayer life?
3. What usually keeps you from slowing down to pray?
4. How has prayer changed your heart even when it did not immediately change your circumstances?
5. What can we learn from Jesus regularly withdrawing to pray?
6. Why do you think Jesus prayed before making significant decisions?
7. What area of your life is most difficult to bring into alignment with God?
8. How can we create space to listen to God rather than only speak to Him?
9. Where might God be inviting you to become more humble or teachable?

Group Practices:

1. Daily Shared Prayer Windows. Pick a time everyone pauses to pray for the group (e.g., 12:00pm every day).
2. Share one prideful thought or reaction from the week and ask for prayer to realign with Christ.
3. Take time to walk around the neighborhood, campus, or local community and pray for people, and needs.
4. Scripture-Based Prayer. Choose a passage of Scripture and pray through it line by line.
5. Prayer Mapping. Spend time identifying different “arenas” to pray for: personal lives, church, community.
6. Repentance Practices. End meetings with a few minutes of silence for personal confession and group prayer.

ENCOUNTER • RHYTHM 05

Worshipping

Glorifying and Enjoying God

THE QUESTION

What do I love most?

Worship is a lifestyle that permeates every aspect of our lives. Worship is seen in how we manage our money, how we run our business, how we parent our kids, how we respond to people and how we manage our dreams and ambitions. The heart of worship is a heart that enjoys God for who He is and all that He has done for us. Worshipping is the rhythm of responding to God's worth with our whole lives, loving Him, enjoying His presence, and honoring Him in everything we do.

Biblical Background

Worship is more than singing songs or attending a church service. It is the response of our entire lives to who God is and what He has done. Paul writes, "Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship" (Romans 12:1). Worship includes our words, choices, relationships, work, resources, and priorities. Every part of life can become an offering to God.

Jesus taught that the Father seeks those who worship "in the Spirit and in truth" (John 4:23–24). True worship is both sincere and grounded in reality. We worship through the Spirit, who awakens love for God within us, and according to the truth of who God has revealed Himself to be. Worship is not driven merely by emotion, preference, or atmosphere; it is rooted in God's unchanging character.

Scripture also connects worship with enjoyment. The psalmist writes, "Delight yourself in the Lord" (Psalm 37:4), and "In Your presence there is fullness of joy" (Psalm 16:11). God is not only worthy of obedience; He is worthy of delight. Worshipping means learning to enjoy His presence, notice His goodness, celebrate His faithfulness, and find our deepest satisfaction in Him.

Every human heart worships something. Whatever receives our greatest affection, attention, trust, and sacrifice becomes functional worship. Success, comfort, relationships, approval, money, and even ministry can take God's place. Worship reorders our loves. It reminds us that created things are gifts to receive, not gods to serve. As we behold God's beauty and worth, our lesser loves are placed back into their proper order.

The Example of Jesus

Jesus lived with His whole life directed toward the glory of the Father. He said, “I always do what pleases Him” (John 8:29). His obedience, teaching, compassion, service, and sacrifice were all acts of worship because they flowed from His love for the Father. Jesus also worshipped through gratitude and prayer. Before feeding the crowds, He gave thanks. Before raising Lazarus, He thanked the Father for hearing Him. On the night before the cross, Jesus sang a hymn with His disciples (Matthew 26:30). Even as suffering approached, His heart remained centered on the Father.

Worshipping like Jesus means living with one central desire: that God would be honored through our thoughts, words, relationships, work, suffering, success, and everyday obedience.

Small-Group Discussion Questions

1. How would you define worship beyond singing or attending a church service?
2. What does it mean to offer your body as a “living sacrifice”?
3. How can ordinary work and responsibilities become acts of worship?
4. What is the relationship between worshipping God and enjoying God?
5. What currently receives the greatest amount of your affection, attention, or sacrifice?
6. How can good things become idols in our lives?
7. How does gratitude strengthen a life of worship?
8. When is worship most difficult for you?
9. What is one practical way you can intentionally glorify and enjoy God this week?

Group Practices:

1. In-Home Worship Nights. Once a month create space to sing, pray, and enjoy God together.
2. Testimony Praise. Start every gathering with a short testimony of where someone saw God at work.
3. Worship Through Work Reports. Share how worship showed up in workplace decisions or challenges.
4. Gratitude Rounds. Everyone names three things they’re grateful for; the group responds in praise.
5. Creative Worship. Write prayers, draw, journal, or create something artistic as an act of worship.
6. Worship Walks. Take a walk together outdoors and praise God through creation and Scripture.

ENCOUNTER • RHYTHM 06

Identifying

Baptism and Communion

THE QUESTION

Whose identity defines me?

Being a Jesus follower means being a part of something bigger than our individual selves. Baptism and communion are sacred experiences that represent both the individual, inward commitment to a personal relationship with Jesus and the corporate, outward sign of being connected to a local community of Christ followers, the local church. Identifying is the rhythm of publicly remembering and declaring that we belong to Jesus, have been united with Him, and are part of His people through baptism and communion.

Biblical Background

The Christian life is not built on an identity we create for ourselves, but on an identity we receive from Christ. Paul writes, “If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here” (2 Corinthians 5:17). To belong to Jesus means our past no longer has the final word, our failures no longer define us, and the opinions of others no longer determine our worth. Our deepest identity is now found in Christ.

Baptism is the public declaration of this new identity. Paul explains, “We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead…we too may live a new life” (Romans 6:4). Baptism symbolizes dying with Christ, being buried with Christ, and rising to a new life with Christ. It does not merely mark a private spiritual moment; it identifies us publicly as followers of Jesus and members of His people.

Communion repeatedly brings us back to the source of our identity. Jesus took bread and said, “This is My body given for you; do this in remembrance of Me” (Luke 22:19). He then shared the cup as a sign of the new covenant established through His blood. Communion reminds us that our relationship with God rests on the finished work of Jesus, not on our performance. We return again and again to grace, remembering that we are forgiven, welcomed, and sustained by Christ.

Both baptism and communion are personal, but neither is individualistic. Scripture says, “We were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13), and describes believers sharing “one loaf” because they are one body (1 Corinthians 10:17).

Identifying with Jesus also means identifying with His Church. We belong not only to Christ, but to a covenant community where we worship, serve, remember, forgive, and follow Him together.

The Example of Jesus

Jesus began His public ministry by being baptized. Although He had no sin to confess, He entered the Jordan and identified Himself with the people He had come to save. When Jesus was baptized, the Father declared, “This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). Before Jesus performed a miracle or preached a sermon, His identity as the beloved Son was affirmed. On the night before the cross, Jesus established communion with His disciples. He took the bread and cup and gave them new meaning centered on His sacrifice. He wanted His followers to continually remember who He is, what He had done for them, and the covenant community they now shared.

Identifying like Jesus means living from the security of belonging to the Father, publicly declaring our allegiance to Christ, and remaining deeply connected to the people of God.

Small-Group Discussion Questions

1. What voices or experiences are most likely to shape your sense of identity?
2. What does it mean to receive your identity from Christ rather than create it for yourself?
3. Why is baptism meant to be a public expression of faith?
4. What does communion help us remember about Jesus and the gospel?
5. Why are baptism and communion both personal and communal?
6. What can we learn from the Father affirming Jesus’ identity before His public ministry began?
7. What does it mean to identify not only with Jesus but also with His Church?
8. What is one area where you need to live more confidently from your identity in Christ this week?

Group Practices:

1. Monthly Communion. Worship, confess, and remember Christ together using communion in the home.
2. Testimony Nights. Each person shares how they came to Christ or what their baptism meant to them.
3. Witness Baptisms as a Group. Celebrate baptisms together to reinforce communal identity.

4. Identity Prayers. Begin gatherings by declaring truths like “We are God’s children; we belong to His family.”
5. Symbol Moments. Use simple symbols (water, bread, light) during a meeting to reflect on identity in Christ.
6. Covenant Reminders. Once a quarter review commitments the group has made to Christ and to each other.

ENCOUNTER • RHYTHM 07

Cultivating

Community with Others

THE QUESTION

Who is walking with me?

As image-bearers of God humanity was created to live in community with one another. The church is in its greatest expression of love when we live in close proximity with each other as a community that gathers around the person of Jesus. Cultivating is the rhythm of intentionally building Jesus-centered relationships where we are known, loved, challenged, encouraged, and formed together.

Biblical Background

God never designed discipleship to happen in isolation. From the beginning, He declared, “It is not good for the man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18). Although this statement first speaks to marriage, it reveals a broader truth about human nature: we were created for relationship. We need others to help us see clearly, endure faithfully, celebrate joyfully, and become more like Jesus.

The early church practiced a deeply shared life. Acts 2:42 says, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” Their community was more than attending the same gathering. They shared meals, resources, burdens, worship, truth, and mission. Biblical community is not simply being in the same room; it is intentionally participating in one another’s lives.

Authentic community requires both grace and truth. Paul writes, “Speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is, Christ” (Ephesians 4:15). Grace without truth can leave us unchanged, while truth without grace can wound and shame. Jesus-centered community creates space for honesty, confession, correction, forgiveness, encouragement, and growth.

Community also strengthens us for perseverance and mission. Hebrews 10:24–25 says, “Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together…but encouraging one another.” We need people who will remind us of truth when we forget, carry us when we are weak, challenge us when we drift, and stand with us as we follow Jesus. Cultivating community means moving beyond casual connection into shared living, shared learning, shared practices, and shared mission.

The Example of Jesus

Jesus did not carry out His ministry alone. He invited twelve disciples to be with Him before sending them out to serve. Mark 3:14 says, “He appointed twelve that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach.” Before they were sent, they were invited into proximity. Jesus shared meals with His disciples, traveled with them, taught them, corrected them, prayed with them, and allowed them to see both His public ministry and private life. They learned not only from His words, but from being near Him.

Jesus also created a community marked by unusual belonging. He welcomed fishermen, tax collectors, zealots, women, outsiders, and social outcasts. He formed people who would not naturally have chosen one another into one spiritual family centered on Him. Cultivating community like Jesus means intentionally making room for others, sharing life honestly, practicing grace and truth, and helping one another become faithful disciples.

Small-Group Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think God designed spiritual growth to happen in community?
2. What is the difference between attending a group and truly sharing life with others?
3. What prevents people from allowing themselves to be fully known?
4. Why do healthy relationships require both grace and truth?
5. Who currently encourages, challenges, and strengthens your walk with Jesus?
6. Where might you need to become more honest or vulnerable in community?
7. How can a discipleship community move from discussion into shared practice and mission?
8. What is one step you can take this week to cultivate a deeper Jesus-centered relationship?

Group Practices:

1. Everyone shares one highlight and one hardship from the week, building empathy and awareness.
2. Eat something together every gathering, snacks or meals, to normalize shared life.
3. Show up for one another’s real life: a kid’s game, a doctor visit, a stressful workday.
4. Gather once a month for a Sabbath-style dinner, phones away, slow pace, lingering presence.
5. Pick one household with a need, yardwork, childcare, repairs, and serve them as a group.
6. Celebrate Milestones. Birthdays, promotions, anniversaries, sobriety milestones, honor and rejoice together.

7. Group Retreat or Getaway. A one- or two-day retreat to rest, pray, worship, and realign vision as a community.

ENCOUNTER • RHYTHM 08

Nurturing

Family on Mission

THE QUESTION

Who has God entrusted to me?

A family that serves God by being on His mission, changing the lives they touch as well as their own. As families pray together, discuss God's Word together, serve together and love a broken world together it empowers them to live out their faith and rhythms side by side. Nurturing is the rhythm of cultivating Jesus-centered homes and church communities where people are loved, formed, supported, and invited to participate together in God's mission.

Biblical Background

The home is one of the first and most influential environments of spiritual formation. Moses instructed God's people, "These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 6:6–7). Faith was never intended to be confined to religious gatherings. It was to be woven into the ordinary rhythms of conversation, meals, work, rest, celebration, and everyday life.

Nurturing involves more than providing for physical needs. It means creating environments where people are loved, protected, guided, corrected, encouraged, and helped toward spiritual maturity. Paul tells parents, "Do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Healthy spiritual leadership combines truth with tenderness, boundaries with grace, and instruction with a consistent example.

Scripture also describes the church as a spiritual family. Paul tells believers, "You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of His household" (Ephesians 2:19). Through Jesus, people from different generations, backgrounds, and life circumstances are brought into one household of faith. The church is more than a gathering we attend; it is a family to which we belong. We become spiritual fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters who care for one another, carry one another's burdens, and help one another grow.

Both the household and the church family are called to participate in God's mission. Joshua declared, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). A family on mission looks beyond its own comfort and learns to welcome others, practice hospitality, serve neighbors, care for the vulnerable, share resources, and point people toward Jesus. Nurturing means helping those entrusted to us know they are loved, discover their identity in Christ, and understand that their lives have a God-given purpose.

The Example of Jesus

Although Jesus never married or raised children, He consistently nurtured people with the love, patience, and responsibility of a spiritual family. He welcomed children when others treated them as interruptions, saying, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them" (Mark 10:14). He blessed them and affirmed their value in the Kingdom of God. Jesus also redefined family around relationship with God and obedience to His will. He said, "Whoever does God's will is My brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:35). He was not diminishing the importance of the natural family. He was revealing that His followers were being formed into a new spiritual household centered on Him.

Jesus created a community where people who might never naturally have chosen one another learned to belong, forgive, serve, and carry His mission together. Even from the cross, He cared for His mother by entrusting her to John, saying, "Here is your son," and to John, "Here is your mother" (John 19:26–27). In one of His most painful moments, Jesus formed a new expression of family through spiritual care and responsibility. Nurturing like Jesus means receiving people as gifts from God, caring for them faithfully, helping them grow, and creating homes and church communities where the life, love, and mission of Jesus are practiced together.

Small-Group Discussion Questions

1. Who has God specifically entrusted to your care in this season?
2. What does it mean to make faith part of the ordinary rhythms of home life?
3. How is nurturing different from controlling someone's spiritual growth?
4. Why is modeling faith often more influential than merely teaching it?
5. What does it mean to say that the church is a family rather than simply an organization or gathering?
6. Where have you experienced the church functioning as a healthy spiritual family?
7. What can we learn from the way Jesus created spiritual family around Himself?
8. How can households and church communities practice hospitality, service, and mission together?

9. What is one practical step you can take this week to nurture your home or your spiritual family?

Group Practices:

1. Family Serve Days. Bring spouses and kids into quarterly service projects.
2. Family Prayer Spotlights. Pray over one family at each meeting, marriage, kids, calling, protection.
3. Invite multiple families, kids included, to share meals and relationships around Jesus.
4. Family Scripture Talks. Share how families are integrating Scripture at home each week.
5. Each household creates a simple “family mission plan,” and the group supports and checks in monthly.
6. Parenting & Marriage Nights. Dedicate meetings to equipping and encouraging families in discipleship.

ENCOUNTER • RHYTHM 09

Stepping

Into the Misery and Margins

THE QUESTION

Who is God asking me to move toward?

Stepping into the margins is more than awareness or advocacy, it's about associating, sharing life, and rescuing those who have been ignored and victimized by this cruel world. We show love and compassion in practical ways and share the gospel boldly in order to heal the sick and set the captives free. Stepping is the rhythm of moving toward people in pain, need, isolation, and injustice with the compassion and presence of Jesus.

Biblical Background

Throughout Scripture, God reveals His particular concern for people who are vulnerable, overlooked, oppressed, or suffering. The prophet Micah summarizes faithful living this way: “Act justly and love mercy and walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). Compassion is not merely feeling sympathy from a distance. It moves us toward people, enters their pain, and responds with mercy, justice, and practical love.

Jesus taught that loving our neighbor requires crossing boundaries. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, a wounded man was ignored by religious leaders but cared for by someone considered an outsider. The Samaritan “took pity on him,” approached him, treated his wounds, and provided for his recovery (Luke 10:33–35). Mercy became visible through proximity, inconvenience, generosity, and action. Stepping begins when we stop asking, “Is this person my responsibility?” and begin asking, “How can I become a neighbor?”

God also calls His people to pay attention to those living at the margins. Isaiah describes true worship as loosening injustice, sharing food with the hungry, providing shelter for the poor, and clothing those in need (Isaiah 58:6–7). James says that pure religion includes caring for orphans and widows in their distress (James 1:27). Our treatment of vulnerable people reveals whether our faith has moved beyond words and taken root in our lives.

Stepping does not mean we can solve every problem or meet every need. It means we refuse to allow helplessness, inconvenience, fear, or difference to make us indifferent. We offer what God has entrusted to us—our presence, time, compassion, resources, influence, prayer, and practical help. We do not serve people as projects or from a place

of superiority. We recognize the image of God within them and meet Jesus among those the world often overlooks.

The Example of Jesus

Jesus consistently moved toward people others avoided. He touched lepers, welcomed children, honored women, ate with sinners, defended the condemned, restored outcasts, and stopped for people whose suffering interrupted His plans. Matthew says, “When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless” (Matthew 9:36). His compassion was not passive emotion; it became healing, teaching, feeding, welcoming, and restoring.

When a man with leprosy approached Jesus and said, “If You are willing, You can make me clean,” Jesus reached out and touched him before healing him (Mark 1:40–42). That touch mattered. The man needed more than physical restoration; he needed to be welcomed back into human connection and community. Jesus ultimately stepped into humanity’s deepest misery through the incarnation and the cross. He did not save us from a safe distance. He entered our brokenness, carried our suffering, and gave Himself for our restoration. Stepping like Jesus means allowing compassion to interrupt us, crossing boundaries others avoid, and moving toward people with humility, courage, and tangible love.

Small-Group Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between feeling compassion and practicing compassion?
2. Who are the people most likely to be overlooked or pushed to the margins in our community?
3. What usually keeps us from moving toward people in pain?
4. Why are proximity and personal presence important when caring for others?
5. When has someone stepped into your pain and helped carry your burden?
6. How should mercy and justice work together in the life of a disciple?
7. Where might God be asking you to allow compassion to interrupt your plans?
8. What resources, relationships, abilities, or influence has God given you that could serve someone in need?
9. Who is one person or group God may be asking you to move toward this week?

Group Practices:

1. Adopt a Mission Partner. Commit to a specific ministry (shelter, school, prison) and serve monthly.
2. Instead of one-time service, build consistent relationships with marginalized individuals.

3. Practical Blessing Projects. Prepare meals, collect clothing, or provide essentials for families in crisis.
4. Visits to the Overlooked. Visit the sick, elderly, lonely, or incarcerated as a group.
5. Once a quarter have a meeting dedicated to Scripture and conversation around compassion and justice.
6. Emergency Response Team. Keep a small pooled fund or resource list for fast responses to real-time needs.

ENCOUNTER • RHYTHM 10

Leveraging

All That We Have

THE QUESTION

What has God entrusted to me?

Leveraging all that I have for God's greater purpose is about realizing that all I have has been entrusted to me by God so that I can play a part in his redemptive story for this world and my life. Leveraging is the rhythm of faithfully using our time, abilities, relationships, influence, finances, opportunities, and resources to honor God and advance His Kingdom.

Biblical Background

Everything we possess ultimately belongs to God. David prayed, "Everything comes from You, and we have given You only what comes from Your hand" (1 Chronicles 29:14). Our lives, abilities, resources, and opportunities are not merely possessions to protect; they are gifts entrusted to us. Biblical stewardship begins by recognizing that God is the owner and we are managers of what He has placed in our care.

Jesus illustrated this responsibility in the parable of the talents. A master entrusted different amounts of wealth to his servants and later returned to see how they had used what they received (Matthew 25:14–30). The servants were not evaluated by whether they had been given the same amount, but by whether they had been faithful with what was placed in their hands. God does not ask us to reproduce someone else's calling or capacity. He asks us to faithfully invest what He has entrusted to us.

Leveraging involves more than finances. Paul writes, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord" (Colossians 3:23). Our work, education, experience, creativity, homes, relationships, and influence can all become instruments of Kingdom purpose. A meal can become hospitality. A business can create dignity and opportunity. A home can become a place of belonging. A skill can meet a need. A relationship can open a door for encouragement, discipleship, or the gospel.

Faithful stewardship requires both generosity and intentionality. Paul instructed believers to "do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share" (1 Timothy 6:18). Leveraging asks us to move beyond consuming everything for ourselves. We prayerfully consider how what God has given us can bless others,

strengthen the church, serve the vulnerable, support mission, and create opportunities for people to encounter Jesus.

The Example of Jesus

Jesus leveraged everything the Father entrusted to Him for the sake of others. He used His time to teach, heal, pray, welcome, and serve. He used His influence to elevate overlooked people and confront injustice. He used meals as opportunities for relationship, discipleship, and mission. He never treated people, power, or opportunity as tools for personal advancement. Jesus also noticed and affirmed what others were willing to offer. When a boy brought five loaves and two fish, Jesus received that small gift and multiplied it to feed thousands (John 6:9–13). The offering seemed insignificant compared with the need, but surrendered resources in the hands of Jesus became more than enough.

Ultimately, Jesus leveraged His very life for our salvation. He said, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). He held nothing back from the Father’s mission. Leveraging like Jesus means opening our hands, surrendering what we have, and trusting God to use ordinary resources for extraordinary Kingdom impact.

Small-Group Discussion Questions

1. What has God entrusted to you in this season of life?
2. How does viewing God as the owner change the way we handle our resources?
3. Which resource is easiest for you to offer: time, abilities, finances, relationships, influence, or possessions?
4. Which is most difficult for you to surrender?
5. How can your home, workplace, or profession become a tool for Kingdom impact?
6. What can we learn from the boy who offered his loaves and fish to Jesus?
7. Where might fear, comfort, or scarcity be keeping you from using what God has entrusted to you?
8. What is one specific resource or opportunity you sense God asking you to place in His hands this week?

Group Practices:

1. Gift Mapping Night. Each person identifies their spiritual gifts, talents, professional skills, and passions.
2. Everyone chooses a portion of their schedule to leverage for discipleship, service, or mentoring others.

3. Build a simple group inventory. tools, vehicles, childcare, meals, financial coaching, tech that can be shared.
4. Once a month choose someone in need to bless practically, or relationally with your resources.
5. Use your professions: teachers, counselors, business, mechanics.
6. Open your homes regularly not just to the group. Host dinners, parties, or prayer nights as an on-ramp to Jesus.

ENCOUNTER • RHYTHM 11

Multiplying

Making Disciples Who Make Disciples

THE QUESTION

Who am I helping follow Jesus?

Multiplying is the rhythm of intentionally investing the life of Jesus in others so they can follow Him faithfully and help others do the same. As the Holy Spirit reproduces the life of Christ through ordinary disciples, the gospel spreads from person to person, generation to generation, until every believer is living a sent life. Multiplication is the natural overflow of a life formed by Jesus. What He develops in us is never meant to end with us; it is meant to be shared, modeled, and reproduced in the lives of others.

Biblical Background

Jesus did not call His followers merely to become mature believers; He commissioned them to make disciples. Before ascending to the Father, He said, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them…and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19–20). The Great Commission is not simply a call to share information or gain converts. It is an invitation to help people enter a lifelong relationship of following, obeying, and becoming like Jesus.

Multiplication happens through intentional relationships. Paul told Timothy, “The things you have heard me say…entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2). Four generations of disciples are visible in this one verse: Paul, Timothy, reliable people, and others they would teach. Biblical discipleship always looks beyond the person directly in front of us toward those their life may eventually influence.

Making disciples requires more than teaching content. Paul described his ministry by saying, “Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well” (1 Thessalonians 2:8). Multiplication grows through proximity, shared living, shared learning, shared practices, and shared mission. People need truth, but they also need an example of what that truth looks like when lived through ordinary life.

The goal of multiplication is not building our own following. It is helping people become faithful followers of Jesus who depend on Him, participate in His Church, and reproduce His life in others. Paul wrote, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1

Corinthians 11:1). Healthy disciple-makers continually point beyond themselves to Jesus. They invite people into relationship, invest in their growth, and inspire them to live on mission.

The Example of Jesus

Jesus multiplied His life by intentionally investing in a small group of disciples. He preached to crowds, but He gave focused time and proximity to the Twelve. Mark says, "He appointed twelve that they might be with Him and that He might send them out" (Mark 3:14). They first learned through being with Jesus, and then they were entrusted with His mission.

Jesus taught His disciples, modeled prayer and compassion, allowed them to ask questions, corrected their misunderstandings, and gave them opportunities to practice. He sent them out to proclaim the Kingdom, heal the sick, and serve others. When they returned, He listened to their reports and continued coaching them. His approach included teaching, example, practice, coaching, experience, and community. Jesus also expected His disciples to reproduce what they had received. He told them, "As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you" (John 20:21). His mission would continue through ordinary people empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Multiplying like Jesus means inviting people close enough to see our lives, investing patiently in their formation, giving them opportunities to practice, and releasing them to help others follow Him.

Small-Group Discussion Questions

1. How is making disciples different from simply sharing information about Jesus?
2. Who played a significant role in helping you follow Jesus?
3. What did that person teach, model, or practice with you?
4. Why are proximity and shared life important in discipleship?
5. What is the difference between making disciples of Jesus and gathering followers around ourselves?
6. Who is currently close enough to observe and learn from your walk with Jesus?
7. Who might God be inviting you to intentionally disciple?
8. What could you begin sharing with that person, truth, practices, encouragement, experience, or mission?
9. What is one practical step you can take this week to help someone else follow Jesus?

Group Practices:

1. Pray daily for one person by name who needs to know or grow in Jesus.

2. Invite one person into your life through a meal, coffee, church, or your discipleship group.
3. Meet regularly with one person to read Scripture, pray, and encourage spiritual growth.
4. Share your testimony or the gospel with one person each month.
5. Start a discipleship group at your workplace, campus, neighborhood, or gym.
6. Invite two or three people to begin a weekly Bible reading and prayer group.
7. Host a meal in your home and intentionally create spiritual conversations.
8. Partner with your cohort to launch a new discipleship group in your community.
9. Invite someone to co-lead a group so they can eventually start one of their own.
10. Look for a “person of peace” who can help the gospel spread within their network.