

# The Practices

# Overview

The practices of Jesus are essential to our spiritual formation. They are how we do what we can do — sabbath, pray, read Scripture — to make space for God to transform us into the kind of people who can do what we currently *cannot* do — live and love like Jesus. And they slow our busy lives down to the pace and presence of “the God of peace.”

## Practice reflection

Before we begin Session 04, break up into small groups and share your reflections on last session’s practice of reading Scripture.

- 01 How did your practice of reading Scripture go following the last session?
- 02 Where did you experience resistance in this practice?
- 03 In what ways did you encounter God in it?

# Teaching

## Scripture

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

—Mark 1v35

## Session summary

- The Practices are disciplines based on the lifestyle of Jesus that create time and space for us to access the presence and power of the Spirit and, in doing so, be transformed from the inside out.
- Practices are a means to an end: to live and love like Jesus.
- We approach deeper changes in our life indirectly, not directly, by practicing ancient disciplines that open us up to God to change us at the deepest level.
- Practices are not the whole of the spiritual life, they are just one part of it.
- They are essential for those who desire to be transformed to become more like Jesus.
- One of the most important practices for our age of exhaustion is Sabbath — a full day set aside to stop, rest, delight, and worship.

## The Practices

Sabbath

Prayer

Fasting

Solitude

Generosity

Scripture

Community

Service

Witness

# Teaching notes

[illegible]

# Discussion questions

Pause the video and take some time to process together as a community.

Here are some questions for discussion:

- 01 What's your experience with the spiritual disciplines? What practices have you engaged with in your spiritual journey?
- 02 If the practices are the means, what do you understand the end of the spiritual life to be?
- 03 Who has most reflected God's love to you? Where did you see the life of Jesus at work in them?
- 04 Do you practice any kind of Sabbath or day of rest? Or is this a new discipline for you?

# Practice notes

[illegible]

# After the video

## Closing prayer

End your time together by praying this liturgy:

With the stillness of this night,  
we offer the stillness of our beings —  
our minds, our hands, our souls;  
that in the quiet of your love  
we may again hear you whisper,  
“You are my beloved.”

### OPTIONAL

If you'd like to continue your conversation, here are some additional questions for reflection:

- 01 What comes to mind for you when you think about ceasing some things and embracing what gives life?
- 02 Talk about your plan with your group. When and where will you practice Sabbath?

# Practice

## Sabbath

To grow, we need more than content; we need real, embodied practice.

In our age of exhaustion, Sabbath is one of the most neglected and most crucial of all the practices of Jesus. But it can be daunting to begin, as it's an entire 24 hours, and you're swimming against the current of our entire culture. Powerful forces keep us tethered to our devices, distractions, and the endless queue of work and responsibilities.

So, start small. If a full Sabbath day is too much for you, start with a Sabbath morning or afternoon. Set aside a few hours after church or early on a Saturday to embrace the four movements of Sabbath: stop, rest, delight, and worship.

Four things to keep in mind as you begin:

- 01 Begin by connecting with God.** The Hebrew people called this “sanctifying the day,” setting it aside from the other six days. You could light two candles, or pray a Psalm or share a meal or begin with Sunday worship at your church. But have a clear ritual or moment with God that *begins* and *ends* your Sabbath time.
- 02 If you can, spend part of the day with your family or friends who follow Jesus.** You could throw a Sabbath meal or just spend unhurried time in conversation.
- 03 Do whatever makes you come alive in God.** Nap, read poetry, play basketball with your kids. Pursue whatever activities make you feel joyful, rested, and alive to God; whatever it is you do that makes heart spontaneously burst into gratitude and worship.
- 04 Keep at it.** Integrating Sabbath keeping into your life usually takes months or years, not weeks. Just start small and aim at joy.



# Here's a short guide to planning out your next Sabbath.

- When will you sabbath? (Include your start and end time)

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- How will you mark the beginning and end of your sabbath time?  
(A ritual or liturgy or prayerful moment)

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- What will you do with your devices?

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- What do you need to do to prepare? (Grocery shopping, emails, errands, work tasks, phone calls, etc.)

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- How will you include friends and family?

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- What will you do to fill your heart with joy and peace?

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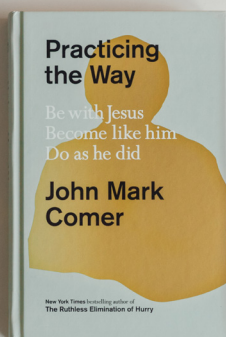
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- How can you create sabbath for those who have none?

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## This session's reading

For this session, we're reading "Goal #3: Do as he did," in *Practicing the Way* by John Mark Comer, pp. 118-155.

# Resources to go deeper

If you're interested in learning more about the keystone practice of Sabbath, here are some more resources to consider.

## Recommended reading

- *The Sabbath* by Dan Allender
- *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly* by Marva J. Dawn
- *The Sabbath* by Abraham Joshua Heschel
- *Subversive Sabbath* by A.J. Swoboda
- The Sabbath series from The Rule of Life Podcast: [link.practicingtheway.org/course-s4d](http://link.practicingtheway.org/course-s4d)
- The Sabbath series from Bridgetown Church: [bridgetown.church/series/sabbath](http://bridgetown.church/series/sabbath)
- Episode 04 of the Practicing the Way podcast: [link.practicingtheway.org/course-s4e](http://link.practicingtheway.org/course-s4e)

## Recommended listening

- Sabbath Rhythms sermon by Rich Villodas: [link.practicingtheway.org/course-s4a](http://link.practicingtheway.org/course-s4a)
- Subversive Sabbath sermon by A.J. Swoboda: [link.practicingtheway.org/course-s4b](http://link.practicingtheway.org/course-s4b)
- Rest Must Be Stronger Than Exhaustion sermon by Jon Tyson: [link.practicingtheway.org/course-s4c](http://link.practicingtheway.org/course-s4c)

## Additional Resources

- The Sabbath Practice from Practicing the Way: [practicingtheway.org/sabbath](http://practicingtheway.org/sabbath). If you'd like to learn more about the practice of Sabbath, you can run the Sabbath Practice, a four-session experience designed to integrate the practice of Sabbath into your regular life.



## Guest bio

Our guest this session was Jane Willard. Jane is a therapist, spiritual director, author, and widow of Dallas Willard. She works with organizations and publishers to carry on Dallas' message of Kingdom living in the present.

# Practice reflection

Reflection is a key component in our spiritual formation. Like practice, it allows what we learn to become a part of who we are.

Before your next time together, take five to ten minutes to journal out your answers to the following four questions.

- 01 What was challenging about your Sabbath practice?
- 02 Where did you feel delight in your practice?
- 03 Where did you most experience God's nearness?
- 04 Is there anything different you would like to try related to the practice of Sabbath?