



REACH

RHYTHMS

REST • EAT + ENGAGE • ACTS OF LOVE • CONFESSION • HOME • RETHINKING THE WAY OF JESUS TOGETHER



Jesus' invitation to his first disciples was, *"Come, follow me."* (Matt. 4:19). Those who responded to this invitation were able to witness first hand a new way of life. Jesus was more than a great example, he was the savior of the world who came to *"give his life as a ransom for many."* (Mark 10:45). It is clear throughout the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament that the initial act of salvation is just the beginning of the new life Jesus is inviting people into. When Jesus declared, *"Come, follow me,"* he was calling people into a new way of living as his disciples. Jesus himself modeled this new way of life and commissioned his apprentices, who were filled with the Holy Spirit, to practice this way of life together and to teach others to do so by saying, *"Go into all the world and make disciples...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."* This is why our mission is *"Practicing the Way of Jesus Together."*

Faith in Jesus is a new way of life, not just a belief system. It takes both practice and practices to live into this life. Think of this guide as a primer in what the way of Jesus can look like. Discipleship to Jesus entails much more than these five practices, but they serve as a great foundation and will also give our community a common vocabulary. You were not designed to follow Jesus on your own. To be a part of Elm City Church is to be *"Practicing the Way of Jesus Together."*

We *"Practice the Way of Jesus Together"* with the goal of growing as disciples who are equipped to make other disciples. A disciple can be defined as someone who is *intentionally following Jesus, becoming more like Jesus, and practicing the way of Jesus in community with others on mission."* Our REACH Rhythms are one way we intentionally follow Jesus in all of life.



Elm City Church **REACH** Rhythms of Practicing the Way of Jesus Together

REST

- I am going to slow down with God today through prayer and meditating on the truth of his word.
- I am going to intentionally set aside time this week to slow down in order to embrace the gift of Sabbath.
 - What is God saying to you through his word? How is he calling you to live into his words today?

EAT/ENGAGE

- I will eat/engage with others relationally this week.
 - Who are you eating/hanging out with this week? What people outside the church does this include?
 - Who have you shared your story of grace with lately?

ACTS OF LOVE

- I will bless others this week by intentionally doing something loving for them.
 - How are you blessing people within your church/lifegroup community?
 - How are you blessing people outside of our church?

CONFESS

- I will confess some area of my life where I fell short, sinned, or failed relationally.
 - How have you confessed sin this week and to whom?

HOME

- We will grow as a family this week. (This could also include roommates or close friends). Here are some ideas: learn something together, bless someone together, have a family fun night, date night with your spouse, no technology day, eat dinner at the table.
 - How have you grown closer as a family or community together this week?



Rest: I am going to slow down with God today through listening, praying, and meditating on scripture.

We live in a hurried, busy world. So many of us feel like we rush from one thing to the next. It might be a demanding job, a full course load, a busy schedule, or the day-to-day challenges of parenting. On top of that, most of us live attached to our devices and are constantly connected and distracted. The last thing many of us look at before we go to sleep and the first thing we grab in the morning is our phone.

We were not designed to live like this. If we want to live like Jesus we need to first learn to rest like Jesus. No one had more demands on his time and schedule than he did. If it weren't for some self-imposed boundaries, Jesus could have been busy 20 hours a day, seven days a week. But this is not what we see him model.

*"While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, " I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him. And he charged him to tell no one, but "go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them." But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. **But he would withdraw to desolate places to pray.**" - Luke 5:12-16*

This was a consistent pattern of Jesus. No matter how busy things got, he would spend time connecting and resting in God. Our primary task before we do anything **FOR** God is to first commit to being **WITH** God. We are defining rest as intentional time with God that refreshes and restores you.

Reflection Questions

1. When you hear the word "rest," what images or thoughts come to mind?
2. How would you currently describe your daily/regular time with God? What works well for you or has worked well in the past?

3. What are some things that get in the way of you slowing down and spending time with God through both prayer and meditating on his word?
4. What is one action step you could take this week to make space for rest?

Final Thoughts: We will not rest in God if we approach it as if it is a burden. Cultivating a relationship with God does require effort, but it is designed to be life-giving not guilt-inducing. Listen to the words of Jesus:

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” - Matthew 11:28-30

Action Step this Week

- What is one thing you can do this week to help you slow down with God and create space for prayer and meditating on God’s word?

Here is a suggestion to try each morning and evening for the next 6 weeks.

Morning (Before you check your phone)

1. Start with 2 minutes of silence before God.
2. Bring your daily schedule to him in prayer.
3. Read a section of Psalm 119 all the way through, slowly.
4. Read it again and this time pray that God would make the Psalmists desires about God and his Word your desire.
5. End with 2 minutes of silence

Evening

1. Start with 2 minutes of silence before God.
2. Read a section of Psalm 119 all the way through, slowly.
3. Read it again and this time pray that God would make the Psalmists desires about God and his Word your desire.
4. Reflect on your day in prayer before God.
5. Close with 2 minutes of silence and prayer.

Notes

Others you have encountered:

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Eat/Engage: I will eat and engage with others relationally this week.

Robert Karris, who wrote a book about the Gospel of Luke said, “In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus is either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal.” Often Jesus’ missionary strategy appears to be a long meal that stretched into the evening. Luke 7:34 says, “The Son of Man came eating and drinking.”

Most people come into a relationship with Jesus through a relationship with someone who has a relationship with Jesus. Meals and shared activity break down barriers and open up opportunities to share both your own need for Jesus and invite others into the life that Jesus offers. It can be easy to be good at eating and engaging with those we already know and are comfortable with. Jesus calls us to do more than that; he calls us to eat and spend time with those on the outside.

“He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you will be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.” - Luke 14:12-14

In this section, Jesus is challenging people on their motives for who they invite in. It’s important to understand the overall context. Jesus is not saying that it’s wrong to eat with your friends, relatives, or neighbors with means. But in the 1st century context of this teaching there were common hospitality rules of reciprocity. It was costly and time consuming to throw a banquet or a feast, but if you invited the right people it was customary for you to be invited to their banquet or feast. The poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind were not invited to these feasts because they had no way to pay a person back.

What set Jesus apart from the other rabbis was that he ate and engaged with all sorts of people. We see him eating with the religious elite and also at the party of Matthew the tax collector and his band of outcasts. To “Practice the Way of Jesus” is to eat and engage with both insiders and outsiders.

More scripture passages about EATING and ENGAGING

- Jesus reclining and eating at Matthew’s house with the sinners and tax collectors (Mark 2:15-17).
- Jesus and the last supper with the disciples (Luke 22:14-23).
- The early church devoting themselves to the breaking of bread and prayer (Acts 2:42).
- “The Son of Man came eating and drinking” (Matthew 11:19).
- Invite whoever you can find, bad or good, to the wedding feast (Matthew 22:1-14).
- Jesus will serve us in heaven (Luke 12:35-37).
- “I am the bread of life” (John 6:22-59).
- Jesus fasted for 40 days in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11).
- Rivers of living water (John 7:37-39).
- Eat, drink and enjoy (Ecclesiastes 5:18).
- Celebration feast for the prodigal son (Luke 15:23).
- Feasting and wiping away all tears (Isaiah 25:6-8).
- Come with what you don’t have and buy what you can’t afford (Isaiah 55:1-5).

Others you have encountered:

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Acts of Love: I will bless others this week by intentionally doing something loving.

God's people are always intended to be a blessing to those around them. When God called Abraham he said, *"I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and **in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.**"* Gen 23:17-18

Jesus showed his love for us in actions. To "Practice the Way of Jesus" means that we love others in clear and visible ways, both inside and outside the church.

"By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little Children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth." - 1 John 3:16-18

Reflection Questions

1. Talk about a time someone went out of their way to bless you. What was so significant about that? How did it make you feel?
2. How are you or have you blessed people tangibly within your church or small group community?
3. How are you or have you blessed people outside of your church community?
4. What do you think are some ways that Elm City Church could bless our community with acts of love as a tangible way of showing God's love?

Action Steps

- Pray each day that God would open your eyes for an opportunity for acts of love both inside and outside the community.
- Keep a journal this week and write down how many opportunities you had when you really were looking for them, and also how many you were afraid to step into.

- Sell property and give the proceeds to the poor (Acts 2:42-47).
- Church family shared everything (Acts 4:32).
- The Samaritan woman treated as an equal (John 4).
- Standing up for the guilty - the woman caught in adultery (John 8).
- Jesus proved his resurrection to doubting Thomas (John 20:24-29).

Others you have encountered:

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Confess: I will confess some area of my life where I fell short, sinned, or failed relationally.

We are a community that is shaped by the Gospel message. The Gospel is good news - it is the best news there is. God in his love for us has made a way for broken, sinful people to be reconciled to a perfect, holy God through the death and resurrection of Jesus. On the cross the great exchange happened. Jesus took on our sin, allowing us to receive his righteousness.

One indicator that you are growing in your discipleship to Jesus is your willingness to confess your sin both to one another and to God. We all fall short on a regular basis, but we do not have to stay in the shame of sin. We practice confessing to each other not to focus on how bad we are, but on how good God is. We can freely confess our sin, because Jesus has paid for it. We don't have to pretend and make ourselves look better to be accepted, because we are accepted on the basis of what Jesus has done and not our own performance.

"This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." 1 John 1:5-10

Reflection

Think about a time this past week where you felt like you blew it, sinned against someone, or made a relationship more complicated. For example, "I blew it with my kid this week. I lost my temper and yelled when I should have been patient." How is the Gospel good news in this situation? It starts with the simple truth that if we confess our sins God wants to forgive our sins. He also wants us to seek him for the

More scripture passages about CONFESSION

- The man beating his chest - be merciful to me, a sinner (Luke 18:9-14).
- The prodigal son (Luke 15:1-32).
- Jonah from the belly of the fish (Jonah 2:1-9).
- Confess to one another (James 5:16).
- Leave everything and be reconciled to your brother (Matthew 5:23-24).
- "I kept my sin in and my bones wasted away" (Psalm 32:3).
- If we confess our sins, God forgives us (1 John 1:9).
- "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful person" (Luke 5:8).
- Repent, times of refreshing (Acts 3:19).
- Come near to God, and he will come near to you (Matthew 3:6).
- "Forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us" (Luke 11:4).
- Bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2).

Others you have encountered:

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Home: We will grow as a family this week (this could include a roommate or close friends).

The home is the first place we should be “Practicing the Way of Jesus Together” and is the testing ground for the genuineness of our faith. One of the major roles of a disciple of Jesus is to make other disciples and pass along the way to them. Because following Jesus is about a new way of life and not just a set of beliefs, the home is the perfect environment for discipleship.

“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” - Proverbs 27:17

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your GOD with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets for between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” - Deut 6:4-9

Discussions on family background can go in several directions for people depending on what your family looked like growing up. But the great joy of a follower of Jesus is that we are adopted into a new family, the family of God. The family of God has new family rules from those we grew up in, and as we learn these new ways of loving each other, dealing with conflict, forgiving, asking for forgiveness and supporting each other we are able to pass them on to our own families.

Reflection Questions

1. Reflect on Deuteronomy 6:4-9 passage. What words or phrases stand out to you? What would a modern home that embodied these principles look like?
2. What was the spiritual environment of your home growing up?
3. If you grew up in a Christian home, what did following Jesus look like in practice?
4. What is one way you want your family to grow together? This could be spiritually or relationally.

- Teach your children as you rise up and lie down, and walk in the way (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)
- Don't stress out your kids (Ephesians 6:4)
- Honor your father and mother (Exodus 20:12)
- Start off children on the way they should go (Proverbs 22:6)
- Keep your father's command and don't forsake your mother's teaching (Proverbs 6:20)
- Children are a heritage from the Lord (Psalm 127:3-5)
- Providing for a family (Proverbs 31:15-17)
- Singleness is a gift from God (1 Corinthians 7:8-9, 1 Corinthians 7:32-35)
- Husbands and wives should enjoy sex (1 Corinthians 7:1-5)
- Children are not a nuisance (Luke 18:15-17)
- The temptation for money to take over our priorities - don't be a workaholic (Luke 18:18-30)

Others you have encountered:

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