

The development of our own spiritual scaffolding or rhythms is also known as a rule of life. What follows in this exercise is simply a framework through which we can understand our own discipleship and live into it. At its heart discipleship is about a life transformed through encountering the living Christ. Galatians 2:19 – 20 in the Message says, “What actually took place is this: I tried keeping rules and working my head off to please God, and it didn't work. So, I quit being a ‘law man’ so that I could be God's man. Christ's life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him.”

It is Christ's life that shows us how to live our own. As we begin the development of our personal rule of life we will focus in on two particular rhythms that we see modeled in the life of Jesus that can serve as a starting point for our own spiritual journey. In chapter 6 of Luke's gospel he introduces us to one of Jesus' rhythms that I believe ripples backwards and forwards from Jesus' life to show us the rhythms that lead to human flourishing. In Luke 6:12 the first thing Jesus does is go up the mountain to pray. He spends the night reflecting, being present and engaged in the moment. He knows that it is in these times (even when it feels as if nothing is happening) that the breath of God breathes life back into his soul. The writers of the Gospels tell us that Jesus would often get away to have this time. There is an intimacy here, self-awareness, and a connection with God that reminds us that we are the beloved and that God has not abandoned us. These times transform us and shape us. They invite God to reveal to us our motives, our thirsts, our idols and our pain. It is in these times that we can welcome God's acceptance and grace, knowing that God does not require us to change to be the beloved. The twist is that in the acceptance and peace we are changed, healed, liberated and redeemed.

After spending the night in prayer Luke says that Jesus went down the mountain and gathered his disciples. Even Jesus needed community. In another place Jesus tells his disciples whenever two or more are gathered and focused on Christ then he is present with them in a unique way (Matthew 18:20). Two or more...this means that there is an engagement with the presence of Christ, an encounter, that is unique to a community that is focused on Christ. Although our times of personal contemplation are important, we must seek out community because in community we encounter Christ in a unique way that cannot be found when we are by ourselves. Transformation happens in the presence of Christ and the presence of Christ is uniquely experienced in community.

Once Jesus gathers his disciples we are told he travels down the mountain and encounters a large crowd. Jesus has compassion on the crowd and begins to serve them. In Matthew 25 Jesus tells a parable and at the end, as he is explaining it, he tells his disciples that when they cross boundaries and serve those typically considered to be on the “outside” they are actually serving him. We have an opportunity to meet Christ in the faces of those we serve, they become the manifestation of Christ to us. Community and contemplation are both vital and yet they are unable to give us the encounter with Christ that compassion and boundary crossing gives us. Those we serve are as much Jesus to us as we are to them. There is solidarity in serving. We go not as the empowered one's bringing privilege and temporary reprieve from their suffering, rather we go as a fellow broken human being's desperately in need of wholeness and transformation.

Contemplation, Community and Compassion...each movement uniquely touches a part of our humanity. Each practice brings us into an encounter with the presence of Christ that transforms us in ways the others could not. Each practice is essential to a holistic transformation that impacts all of who we are and fundamentally restores us to the dream God had in mind when God began the creation project. Let us now turn to another rhythm found in the life of Jesus that will help create the structure from which we can begin to develop our own rule.

One of the most powerful symbols of redemption is done by Jesus himself the night before his crucifixion. On that night, he gathered with his disciples and we are told that he takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it and gives it to the disciples (see Mark 14:22-24).

Took...blessed...broke...and gave. This is a pattern we see throughout the scripture. In fact, Jesus repeats this pattern when he feeds the thousands and when he meets the couple on the road to Emmaus. If we look between the lines we can even see this pattern played out when God calls Abraham, Moses and so many others. The four

movements of taking, blessing, breaking, and giving cause us to be a living parable of redemption. Each time we enter in to these movements, we're not only reminded of the story, but we're also participating in it and being shaped by it.

- **Took** – This has to do with God's invitation. With this as the starting point we are reminded that God is at work in our world and we are being invited to participate in that story. As Wesley reminds us, apart from God's invitation we are unable to respond to, much less participate in, what God is doing in our world. God's choosing of us is an invitation not only to love and serve God but also to love and serve one another. As we consider God's invitation let us ask ourselves, "What do I feel God is inviting me into?"

- **Blessed** – This has to do with God's desire to create an intersection between who we are and what we are passionate about and God's activity in our world. God's invitation will always be one in which our gifts and passions are directed towards God's mission. As we consider God's grace in our lives let us ask ourselves, "Where am I strong, what do I know, what experiences have I had, and what am I passionate about?"

- **Broke** – In order to really become the people of God in our world we must go through a process of transformation, or what Wesley calls sanctification. This is often a painful process. Each of us in one way or another carries around a marred or distorted sense of self. We have needs designed into our human experience that are meant to draw us to one another but our own sin and shame causes us to hide and numb these needs or find alternative ways to quench these thirsts. Because of this our whole way of understanding ourselves and seeing the world must enter into a metamorphosis. We don't experience transformation unless we give up, let go, or move beyond the idols we trust in. We don't change for the better until we grieve our losses. Hearing God's message confronts us with and encourages us in truth, calling us to leave behind lies, open our broken hearts for healing, and inspiring us for better pursuits. As we consider God's activity in our lives let us ask ourselves, "Where do I want to see transformation in my life? What might God be asking me to let go of?"

- **Gave** – To be given is not just about serving, it is about belonging. In our spiritual journey we are not just spectators of new creation but we are participants. When an outsider comes to visit our home we typically do not expect them to contribute to the up keep of our home. However, when you belong, when you are part of the family then you are invited to use your gifts to help create and build. To participate is to belong. We're given to the world to tell and show the world they are also invited and blessed to be transformed and belong. God loves the world and desires all creation to know God. God is creating a new world in the midst of this one, a world where wrongs are righted, the broken are healed, and the rejected are accepted. As God's people, we participate in this mission, partnering with God to see this come to pass. As we reflect on God's call on our own life let us ask ourselves, "What goals will I set for rhythms and practices to make space in my life for transformation?"

Download the "My Spiritual Life Scaffolding Document" and complete it for yourself. Think through each area of *Contemplation, Community, and Compassion* and develop practices (rules) that will help you live into God's activity in your life. You will be paired with another participant who will be your traveling journey as you live into your rule of life. Their purpose is not to hold power over you but rather to share in the experience with you. To hear your story, share your struggles and encounter Christ...together.