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C O M E F O L L O W M E

The Rhythms of the Kingdom

(Mark 1:29-45)

Bottom Line: God calls us to participate in His kingdom ministry by adopting the rhythms of life that Jesus exhibited for us.

How would you describe “obedience” to a child? What are essential components of obedience?

Read Mark 1:29-45.

After a hectic day of helping others (vv. 29-34), Jesus needed some time to be alone and pray. What do you think He prayed for? How might this time in prayer relate to Jesus’ decision to move on (v. 38)?

While Jesus was concerned about focusing on God’s mission for Him, the disciples seemed to be caught up in the increasing popularity of Jesus. They came to Him saying, “everyone is looking for you!” But Jesus’ priority in that moment was not in catering to His following or nurturing His reputation. Jesus considered it more important to leave all that behind and move on to the next towns to share the Gospel of the Kingdom.

So already, from what we’ve read so far, we can see a rhythm begin to emerge: Jesus served others (vv. 29-34), retreated to solitude for rest and prayer (v. 35), then kept on pursuing God’s purpose for His life (vv.36-45). In other words, Jesus worked hard, then He rested, then He worked, then He rested, etc.

Does this pattern of working and then resting remind you of anything in the Bible? Read Exodus 20:8-11. Why does God say that we should devote one day a week to rest? Are you able to do this right now? Why or why not? How can you incorporate rest into your weekly rhythm? Taking cues from Jesus, what could your rest look like?

We often read the Sabbath command and emphasize the one day of rest, but what about the 6 days of labor that God also commands? Are you diligent to work hard during the week? (Or for retirees, do you make the most of your time?) How can working too much be a sign of a lack of trust in God? What are the benefits of a healthy work/rest balance?

Maintaining a healthy work/rest balance is vital if we are to flourish. God designed it that way from the beginning, per Exodus 20:8-11. In fact, God designed that pattern of living not only for us, but for the earth as well (see Exodus 23:10-13).

So rest is important for us physically, as Jesus surely was physically drained by His ministry, but how important is rest for us spiritually?

Author Tony Reinke says, “The spiritual life has an implicit pace of progress, measured not by the speed of exposure but by the speed of internal processing.” What Reinke is saying is that our spiritual growth is directly tied to how well we are able to process the things God teaches us, whether it be through sermons, Bible reading, prayer, conversations with others, etc. The danger, though, is to think that our spiritual growth can be quickened by increasing the amount

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of “spiritual” activities we engage in. Reading the Bible, listening to sermons, and serving others are all well and good things to do, but if we do not take the time to slow down and actually *process* what God is teaching us through these things, then we may find ourselves *doing* a lot, but not *growing* as much as we’d hoped.

Is this the case for you? Do you feel like you are doing a lot of “good” things, but do not feel as if you are growing? Jesus worked hard, and during His retreat to rest and pray, God was able to speak to Him and He was able to process what God was saying to Him and He came out of that time of rest determined and energized to press on. He had a clear direction on what God wanted Him to do next. Is it possible that what you might need to do is take a day or two to slow down and listen to God? Or maybe carve out time each day to devote to silence and prayer with God? What good might come out of it?

Is there anything in your life right now that prevents you from taking a day to rest? How can you free up time in your life for quiet and peaceful rest and prayer? Is there anything in your life that prevents you from doing good work (whether secular or spiritual)? (i.e.: too much video games, Netflix, social media, etc). How might your life look different if you were to limit those things in your life and replace them with the kind of rest that’s more intentional in prayer and meditation?

Reflection: Read these aloud, using your discretion about which questions should be pondered and which questions should be discussed.

Jesus was able to do the work of His Father, pray and receive further instruction, help, and guidance from Him, and then continue on His mission because He actually had a relationship with the Father. That may sound too simple because Jesus is the Son of God, right? He’s God in human flesh. But in His human flesh, in His time on earth, Jesus needed to rest. He needed the time away from all the chaos to clear His mind and focus on communion with the Father. He truly was in a relationship with God. Could it be that you may not be hearing from God because you don’t actually have a relationship with Him? Could your lack of direction in life, your lack of purpose and drive and ambition be because you haven’t heard from God due to not having an actual relationship with Him? The Bible teaches us that our sins separate us from God so that He cannot hear us and we cannot hear Him (Isaiah 59:2). If you repent from your sin, and place your faith in Christ’s death on the cross for your sins, then the very thing that separates you from God will be removed and you’ll be able to commune with the One who gives you purpose and meaning—the very One you were created for (Isaiah 43:6-7). Will you repent and trust Jesus today?

When it comes to your day-to-day mission as a disciple of Christ, how much of a priority is time alone with God? What is the greatest obstacle you face in your devotional life? What steps can you take to remove that obstacle? Do you even see that obstacle as worthy giving up for more time with God? Or to put it another way, do you value time alone with God enough to work at removing this obstacle from your life?

Can you, like Jesus, confidently say “this is why I have come” (v. 38)? If so, what is your God-given mission, and are you are being obedient to it at this time in your life?