

awakening grace

sermon notes

Matt LeRoy
Jeremy Summers

Copyright © 2014 by Wesleyan Publishing House
Published by Wesleyan Publishing House
Indianapolis, Indiana 46250

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com. The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.

Scripture quotations marked (MSG) are taken from *The Message*. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

This outline is to be used in conjunction with *Awakening Grace: Spiritual Practices to Transform Your Soul* by Matt LeRoy and Jeremy Summers (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2012).

All rights reserved. Permission is granted to reproduce the contents of this publication for ministry or educational purposes. No portion of this publication may be reproduced for profit without prior written permission of the publisher.

contents

1. A Foundation	4
2. Scripture	7
3. Prayer	10
4. Worship	13
5. Mercy and Justice	16
6. Sabbath	19
7. Creation Care	23
8. Covenant Friendship	26
9. Generosity	29
10. Creative Expression	32

1

a foundation

We often see discipleship as the process of mastering spiritual disciplines. The formula follows this pattern: If we can get a handle on these disciplines and perform them with excellence, then we can produce the proper and correlating fruit. But perhaps this approach is backwards. Before we ever recognized our need for God, his gentle strength was drawing us in. Before we even knew what name to call, he was calling ours. We could never find him if he hadn't already searched us out. Grace is good like that.

In his mercy, our Father draws us. He turns our heart toward him, enabling us to believe in his Son. Without this awakening grace, our sinful, broken hearts would remain hard as stone, refusing his free gift of full salvation. His grace offers the gift. And his grace enables us to receive it. God's love for us awakens our love for God. Without God's grace, our salvation is not possible. But we often miss that the same is true of the spiritual growth that happens after salvation. Just like salvation, discipleship is impossible without the same enabling mercy that first searched us out.

As we explore these spiritual practices that transform the soul, it is vital to understand that the power is not in the acts themselves and certainly not in our performance of them. The power is initiated through God's own presence in the process. It is his engagement with us that gives meaning to our practice.

I. From Mastery of a Discipline to Submission to Grace (1 Cor. 15:10)

As mentioned earlier, we often view the spiritual practices as disciplines that we should master. We strive to be better at prayer, reading Scripture, and worship—all of which, we conclude, will make us better Christians. While we absolutely need to engage with these practices, we must never think that we wrestle our way into Christian maturity by the sweat of our souls. Yes, we work at it.

Yes, we struggle. But we always acknowledge that the agent of change in this journey is the grace of God.

Our invitation in discipleship is to submission. We submit to the will of the Father, to the shaping work of the Spirit and to the pattern of Christ. We don't perfect our way to being better Christians. We submit ourselves to Christ. (If you think this amounts to lazy Christianity, then perhaps you haven't walked the difficult trail of submission lately.) As we examine these practices in the coming chapters, resist the temptation to master them and embrace the counterintuitive invitation to surrender.

II. From Practice as a Tool for Growth to Practice as a Teacher of the Soul (John 15:1–8)

Another mistake we make when approaching these spiritual practices is to view them as a tool in our hands rather than a teacher of our souls. We use them to accomplish our own purposes rather than listen to what they can teach us. We read Scripture to increase in knowledge, rather than hear from the heart of God. We pray to get what we want rather than enter into communion with the Holy Spirit. We worship to feel refueled or recharged, rather than give praise and ascribe glory to the resurrected King. In this, spiritual practices become utilities for leveraging quick growth. Instead, we should hear their invitation to sit at their feet and learn.

In *Awakening Grace*, we view the spiritual life less like a factory and more like a farm—less industrial and more organic. These practices are not components of a spiritual assembly line. They are more like open fields and hidden trails to be explored in the cultivating company of the Father, Son, and Spirit. They do not promise faster results or shortcuts around the process. In this landscape dominated by machinery and efficiency, we are called living branches nourished by the vine, under the watchful care of the gardener.

III. From Growth as Certain Formula to Discipleship as Unpredictable Journey (Matt. 4:18–22)

We like formulas. They clearly spell out the specific series of steps toward a desired destination. They promise us a set end if we correctly follow the prescribed measures. Formulas are predictable. Formulas are safe. Formulas are certain.

But discipleship is not. Discipleship is an unpredictable journey that promises danger and risk. Discipleship follows Jesus into the unknown (to us, never to him) and disrupts the stagnant status quo. This life with Jesus is far more like an experiment in grace. So, as we explore these spiritual practices together, do not approach them as steps in a formula to trigger a pre-determined outcome. Instead, engage them as pathways to walk with Jesus. They will twist and turn, taking you deeper into the heart of the Father and fellowship with the Son, all while the Holy Spirit implores you to take the next unsure step.

conclusion

Do you feel a longing to grow closer to God? Do you want to know him more? Is there something in your soul that calls out to him? Then consider that awakening desire your invitation into the deep places of discipleship. Place yourself in his hands, and allow him to shape and form your life into one that looks like Jesus. After all, you never would have called out to him if he hadn't already been calling you.

2

scripture

I. Reading as Formation

If the Bible is a story, then this should change the way we approach the reading of it. The goal of Bible reading is not to just dig out principles of truth, but to dive into the story and become a participant. Robert Mulholland speaks of this tension as informational reading versus formational reading.¹ The first is an exercise of intellectual mastery. The second is a practice of heart submission. When we open our minds, ears, and hearts to what the text wants to say, and to whom the text wants us to become, God's awakening grace shapes and forms us further into Christ's likeness.

To increase in knowledge of Scripture is one sign of spiritual growth. But a sharp mind must be joined with a humble heart. The deeper we venture into the Word, the further we should be drawn into the mind of Christ and shaped into his likeness. Grow in knowledge; but also hunger for humility, a true mark of the holy life.²

Here is the new mantra for experiencing Scripture: Aim for submission, not mastery. The Word is not a tool (or worse yet, a weapon) in your hand. Instead, you are in the Word's hands. You are not the master. You are the student.

II. Reading as Meditation

One way to actively submit to God's work through the Word is to engage in the ancient Christian practice of meditation or contemplation. At first, these terms might seem too mystical for us. It sounds like something we should leave for old monks and nuns to get into. But meditation and contemplation are actually very common pathways open to all believers. They are simply ways to listen for God's voice to speak through his Word. It is a step beyond passive reading. It is active engagement.

In his classic work *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster challenges us to rediscover the practice of meditation and contemplation: “If we hope to move beyond the superficialities of our culture, including our religious cultures, we must be willing to go down into the recreating silences, into the world of contemplation. In their writings all the masters of meditation beckon us to be pioneers in this frontier of the Spirit.”³

Meditation calls for stillness, but it also sparks movement. It demands reflection, but also active obedience. Meditation on God’s Word is not about sitting in a corner somewhere surrounded by incense and candles. It is about walking with the Word through the day, letting it guide and instruct you, convict or encourage you. It is about letting Scripture run through your mind until it sinks into your heart and escapes into the world through the small, common acts of your life.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said it this way: “In meditation God’s Word seeks to enter in and remain with us. It strives to stir us, to work and operate in us, so that we shall not get away from it the whole day long. Then it will do its work in us, often without our being conscious of it.”⁴

This humble practice of listening intentionally for God to speak through his Word awakens something in our souls. It calls out the courage to obey. It cultivates a desire for the deep and a hunger for the Bread of Life.

III. Reading as Inspiration

We hold firmly that the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God. But what do we mean by that? We mean that God himself, through the Holy Spirit, inspired human writers to record his great story of love and redemption—the account of his divine activity in the world. From the sprawling narratives to the intricate laws, gripping poetry, and timeless wisdom, the Spirit of God was active in the crafting and composing of this book. He chose specific people in specific places at specific times to record his special revelation for the world.

But we also realize that inspiration happens on two planes. As Robert Mulholland points out in his book *Shaped by the Word*, the Spirit has not given up on the work of inspiration. God inspired the writers then, but he also inspires the readers now.

As we open the Word, and open ourselves, the same Spirit that inspired the poets and prophets of old enables us now to understand what we are reading. In fact, as we submissively read the text, the text also has a way of reading us, with the Spirit bringing to light areas in our lives that call for further growth and deeper surrender.

conclusion

Challenge your church to join you in reading Scripture together. Don’t just preach about the power; engage with it! We’ve created a daily reading plan for your church to follow. (It is available at www.wphresources.com/awakeninggrace.)

This plan starts with the gospel of John, which tells the story of Jesus. It moves into Acts, the story of the early church, and Philippians, a letter to some of the first Christians from the apostle Paul. It then begins from the beginning of the Bible and covers the grand sweep of the great story. This guide challenges you to read one chapter of the Word a day for six months (184 days). As a bonus feature for those who desire to dig deeper, it also includes one selection from Psalms or Proverbs for each day.

notes

1. M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture is Spiritual Formation* (Nashville: Upper Room, 1985), 54–55.
2. Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 15.
3. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: A Discussion of Christian Fellowship* (New York: HarperCollins, 1954), 83.
4. Mulholland, 43.

3

prayer

How do you pray? It would be foolish to talk about how to pray without starting with the most obvious and trustworthy answer: the one given by Jesus himself in Matthew 6. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus sat on a hillside, opened his mouth, and reshaped the world. In the thick of radical ideas about loving our enemies and reversing the order of the blessed, he offered a simple and humble approach to prayer. He said, “This, then, is how you should pray” (Matt. 6:9). With those words, all of our attempts at defining and explaining prayer should grind to silence as we lean in and listen.

I. The Hypocrite

Jesus began his curriculum on prayer with pointed instruction on how not to pray. In Matthew 6:5, he warned us not to pray like the “hypocrites” who impress with their performance, but tragically miss the point. They have mastered the mechanics of prayer, but beneath their full and flowery language hides an empty heart. Their goal is to be “seen by men” rather than heard by the Father.

In *The Divine Conspiracy*, author Dallas Willard points out that the word *hypocrite* is lifted directly from classical Greek terminology for a “stage actor.”¹ Not until Jesus used it here did the word carry any kind of moral meaning. He pulled this term from common life to show the nature and character and lack of depth in the actions of many religious practitioners. Actors play a role, a momentary embodiment of a character, but they are not really the person they portray on stage. Yes, actors can be convincing and even bring great conviction to their work. But in the end, no matter how passionate the performance or valiant the execution of the craft, the curtain always falls. The actor always leaves the stage and sheds the role. As the applause fades, so does the feigned love of the hypocrite. Jesus says not to pray like that. God is not listening from a box seat, waiting to be entertained or moved to action. This is our Father we are talking to. We should be ourselves.

II. Our Father

Jesus then gave a model prayer in Matthew 6:9–13. He traced out the heart of authentic communication with God. Interestingly enough, it begins with an earthbound concept of an intimate family relationship. In a profound move of grace, Jesus pulled us into this divine Father-Son intimacy that he experiences with God. Throughout the Gospels, he hammered away at the idea that God is his Father. But in this passage, he instructs us to pray, “Our Father” (v. 9).

This changes everything. Prayer is no longer a futile attempt to win over a far-off deity, but trusting our hearts to a good and loving Father who wants what is best for his children. For some, this image opens prayer up, infusing the practice with a new sense of freedom, security, and hope. But for others, imagining God as a father instantly shuts off and strangles any ability or even desire to relate to him at all.

Many people have an incredibly difficult time believing in and grasping the idea of God as a father. Because of real-life experiences and unshakable disappointments, this image falls dead on some hearts. Failure on the part of a father is so deeply painful and utterly scarring. It is because we know, innately and instinctively, that it should be different. The ache is there because something deep inside whispers to us what a father should be like. But when reality tells a different story, the hurt runs deep.

But herein lies the beauty of Jesus’ gift. Somehow we know what a father should be like. And now we can experience the unexpected reality of that in our heavenly Father. Some people dream of what it would be like to have a father that cared, protected, stayed, believed, and loved. We can let our dreams run wild. We still won’t come close to imagining how good this Dad is. He is everything we’ve ever hoped for and he has the power to heal all the scars and restore the broken places. He is the best kind of father, brimming with goodness and mercy and love. Jesus, in kindness and grace, frames everything else he says about prayer with this foundational thought about exactly what kind of God we are praying to. We can approach him like the good and loving father we’ve always wanted.

III. Thy Will Be Done

Jesus walked us deeper down the path of prayer by instructing us to ask for the Father’s will in Matthew 6:10. Having been shown his heart, we should now trust his design. Once again, this is an invitation into submission. It is a posture of the heart that signals surrender to the wisdom and dreams of God.

It is easy to imagine Jesus teaching on the hillside of Matthew 6, astounding the crowd with his authority and eloquence. To hear him say, “Thy will be done” in this setting is one thing. But now fast-forward to the night-covered garden. On the last night of his life, he was burdened with the weight of his mission. The reality of the cross was moving over him like a gathering storm. Broken, he pled with his Father to let this cup pass from him. Then, with resolve and surrender he prayed, “Yet not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42).

From the comfort of the hillside Jesus told us how to pray. But beneath the shadow of the cross he showed us. Out of a heart of submission, he asked for and embraced God’s will above his own.

In this dark scene, we learn a lot about prayer. We see how Jesus prayed. But we also catch a glimpse into how God answers.

IV. In Jesus' Name

Jesus taught us that God is a good and loving Father who desires the absolute best for us and wants to “give good gifts to those who ask him.”² But does this mean that God will respond to every request with yes? Not necessarily. The best kinds of dads know when to say no. Jesus pled for the cup of suffering to pass from him. But God did not answer this prayer in the affirmative. Jesus himself knew the sting of no. Hours later, however, this no to Jesus' deliverance morphed into an eternal, sweeping, swelling “Yes” for us. Had Jesus escaped the cross, we would still be slaves to sin.

Jesus taught us to pray in his name, saying that when we do, what we ask will be given to us (John 14:13–14). Doesn't this guarantee God will answer, bound by this promise? Is “in Jesus' name” a foolproof formula for successful prayer?

Some have been misled to believe that we can somehow corner God and force him into action by simply mentioning these words, as if we can use the name of his beloved Son to manipulate him into serving us. These are not magic words for getting what we want (open sesame, abracadabra, in Jesus' name, amen). Instead, to pray in his name is to establish the framework for a surrendered heart.

To ask in Jesus' name is ultimately to ask for his will. When a king's name is stamped on something, it is a sign and symbol of his reign, his realm, and his rule. If his name is on it, then his authority is over it. In the same way, when we pray in Jesus' name, we ask according to the ways of his kingdom. We fix his name over our prayer and place our prayer under his jurisdiction. To pray in his name is to pray in line with the overall framework of his heart for us. We ask for what we want but trust that he will give us what we need.

conclusion

Jesus invites us into his school of prayer. We know we should pray to Jesus, but what if we started to pray with Jesus? This week, practice praying the Lord's Prayer. Take note of how the Holy Spirit leads you each day, how he highlights different parts at different times.

Want to explore it further? Search through the Gospels and take note of the places where Jesus is praying. What does he ask for? How does he pray? What pours out of his heart and stirs in his mind? Walk with him in his school of prayer. Pray with him.

notes

1. Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*. (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 191.

2. Doug Pagitt, *BodyPrayer: The Posture of Intimacy with God* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook, 2005), 4–5.

4

worship

I. Worship Is Reality (Deut. 6:4)

Richard Foster captures this idea when he says, “To worship is to experience Reality, to touch Life.”¹ It is not a momentary, experiential escape from the difficulties of the real world. Instead, it is a clear-eyed recognition and declaration of the ultimate reality.

Worship establishes in our hearts and souls the undeniable framework through which everything operates. It reminds us that there is only one God and his name is Yahweh. He is the undisputed king of the universe, the creator and keeper of all things. He is in absolute control. If he were to remove his hand from us for even a moment, the whole show would spin out of control and into destruction. He is God. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—distinctly three, yet the one and only. He is great and good, loving and holy. He is everything true, everything real. Because of this, we give him our undivided praise, our full-hearted worship, our entire selves.

Joan Chittister, Benedictine nun and spiritual teacher, says, “Worship is the natural overflow of those who, with humble and grateful heart, understand their place in the universe and live in awe of the God who made it so.”²

Worship reveals to us the world as it really is. It pulls back the curtain on the chaos and brings into focus the One who is making things right. It puts tragedy and pain into perspective. It instills humility and thankfulness while moving us into our proper place. It illuminates a wildly powerful God who loves with an untamed fury.

This is not an escape from reality, but a revelation of reality. Worship is like saying, “Yahweh is God. He is in control, and I belong to him.”

II. Worship Is Response (Deut. 6:5)

The essence of worship is to respond to what God has done. It is saying, “I love you too.” Again, Richard Foster finds a way to help us understand. He writes, “It is God who seeks, draws, persuades. Worship is the human response to the divine initiative.”³

God always initiates. He creates, speaks, promises, intervenes, sends, and calls. He even steps into human history himself, becoming one of us. God always makes the first move.

Theologians refer to this as God’s “prevenient grace” or “grace that goes before.” John Wesley described it as “the first light of dawn in the human soul.” You might also call this awakening grace. The point is, God has always been drawing us to himself. Worship is our response to this love that has been calling our name. Worship answers back, “I love you too.”

So, how do we respond?

A. With Surrendered Heart

In Romans 12:1, Paul urged his readers, “In view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.” To worship in spirit and truth means to become living sacrifices to God. In our culture, sacrificing means to give something up, usually involving emotional or financial discomfort. But remember the context in which Paul wrote these words. When Paul chose the word *sacrifice* to describe worship, it had a different kind of weight and significance. Fresh out of a religious system where animal sacrifice played a central ritual role, this word was tangled up with graphic and gruesome imagery. It did not mean to give something up. It meant, bluntly, to submit to the painful process of dying to ourselves. Worship calls for all out abandon. It asks for a fully surrendered heart with nothing held back. It warns us that this might just cost us everything.

B. Creative Expression

Creative expression should be encouraged within the church. We are made in the image of an infinitely creative God. With an artist’s eye, he paints the landscape, sculpts the canyons, and composes the symphony that sends stars dancing across the sky. When we awaken and express this creativity, we are speaking his language.

For centuries, art played a central role in Christian worship. The church commissioned masterpieces, classics that continue to capture the imagination. How did we lose that? Let’s make the church a hub for creativity and art in our culture again. Let’s make our faith community a place where the inner artist is awakened, empowered, and released.

Historically, the breathtaking works of stained glass that grace the windows of our churches and cathedrals actually served as a way of communicating the salvation story to worshipers. As the sun shines through them, intricate images of grace and mercy come alive in the light. So what will become our new stained glass? What art forms will emerge as a way of telling the story in creative ways? Art and beauty have a disarming quality that allows the walls to come down. Simultaneously, beauty draws us in. It is compelling. It invites our participation, and our

interpretation of the truth that lives within it. Art and beauty are stunning avenues through which we are challenged to respond to what we see.

notes

1. Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 158.
2. Joan Chittister, *The Liturgical Year: The Spiraling Adventure of the Spiritual Life*, The Ancient Practices Series (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 48.
3. Foster, 158.

5

mercy and justice

The thing about love is that it seems to be restless. It refuses to politely stay put. When a person experiences the transforming love of Jesus Christ, it has a habit of working all the way through that person, touching every single corner of his or her life. And it doesn't stop there. Love continues to run wild through that life until finding its way out into everyday, common expressions and actions. Love starts in the deepest places of the heart, but quickly gets to work on an escape plan. It wants to break out of us and spill over into the broken places of the world. This love often manifests itself through avenues of mercy for the broken and justice for the oppressed.

Mercy and justice are wrapped up in our spiritual experience. They are, in fact, inseparable from it. These good works do not produce salvation and holiness. But they are, without a doubt, the genuine products of salvation and holiness.

I. A Reflection of God's Heart (Isa. 61:1–2; Amos 5:24; Mic. 6:8)

Injustice and brokenness are scars and fractures that can be followed all the way back to the fall. They are rotting fruit, born from the seed of sin. In the same way, mercy and justice are the ripple effects of redemption. They roll out and rise up like a tide of grace triggered by the reality of salvation. They are the pounding echoes of the heartbeat of God.

Throughout the story of Scripture, we see God's heart for the poor, outcast, and oppressed. The central narrative of the Old Testament reveals a God who hears the cries of slaves and actually does something about it. His prophets couldn't help but proclaim his desire for mercy and justice. Isaiah said in poetic fashion, "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim the good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives" (Isa. 61:1). Later, Jesus used this passage to launch his ministry on earth.

In his first sermon, he lined himself up with these words, establishing the framework for what his ministry would be about.

Amos declared, “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!” (Amos 5:24). Micah summed up what God requires of his people, “What does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic. 6:8). God cares deeply about the plight of the forgotten. As we practice mercy and justice, we step in rhythm with his heartbeat.

II. Authentic Worship (Matt. 9:9–13)

We also practice mercy and justice because they are our authentic expression of worship. Twice in the book of Matthew Jesus was challenged by the Pharisees because he stepped beyond the bounds of respectable religion. Once, he was eating with a group of outcasts with well-earned reputations for questionable character. Another time, he was healing a man with a shriveled hand on the Sabbath day. In both cases, Jesus answered his accusers by quoting the prophet Hosea. He said, “Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice’” (Matt. 9:13).

The Pharisees were experts at obedience, but they missed the heart of authentic worship. To reflect God’s heart is to become intentionally aligned with the very people that no one else will stand beside. It is to throw in your lot with the broken and enter into their pain.

After all, isn’t this what God did in the Incarnation? Jesus stepped into our world, entered into our pain. This is where we continue to find him. As the poet Flannery O’Connor put it, “You will have found Christ when you are concerned with other people’s suffering and not your own.”¹

III. To Love God Is to Love Others (Matt. 22:36–40)

When Jesus was asked to describe the Greatest Commandment, he summed up every command in one: To love God with all you have and all you are, and to love others in the same reckless, ridiculous way. Everything we have ever learned of God, he said, hangs on this (Matt. 22:36–40). True love for God will, without fail, give way to true love for others. Genuine concern and active compassion are sure signs that love is taking root in us.

To love God is to love others. But, by some mystery, it also works the other way. To love others is to love God. Jesus taught us that whatever we do to the least of these, we also do to him. He is so present in the suffering of the weak, that acts of love shown to them are actually acts of love shown to God.

E. Stanley Jones captured this mystery: “And to the heart that has learned to love him [Jesus] it is irresistible to think of him hungry, thirsty, sick, in prison, naked, a stranger in the throbbing needs of our brother men. We take them Christ—we go to him. He is the motive and the end.”²

conclusion

What will you do? How will you tangibly express the mercy and justice of God this week? Who are the oppressed around you? How will his love in you, spill out of you? What is one small way that you can put this love into action?

notes

1. Robert Ellsberg, ed., *Flannery O'Connor: Spiritual Writings* (New York: Orbis Books, 2003), 47.
2. E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road* (New York: Abingdon, 1925), 52.

6

sabbath

The idea of Sabbath (Hebrew, *sabat*), meaning a dedicated time of intentional rest, comes from two key passages in the Old Testament. The first is the creation narrative found in Genesis 1–2. Having invested six days of explosive imagination and energy into the creation of the universe, God rested on the seventh day. In doing this, he established by his example a rhythm of work and rest. Just as he drew boundaries between day and night and established a difference between winter and spring, he also carved out markers of time for work and rest and weaved them into the very fabric of nature.

The second key passage is found in Exodus 20:8–11 and 31:14–16. Set against the iconic backdrop of Mount Sinai, Moses delivered to the newly freed and formed nation of Israel the divine law of God. A key piece of this legislation was the command to “remember the Sabbath day” (Ex. 20:8).

This command was given to a nation of recently freed slaves who had been subdued by ruthless masters. These slaves had taught that their only value was in what they could produce. Their ability to work was the reason they were kept alive. Generations of God’s people were raised under this lie. Now he wanted to show them the truth about who they were.

I. Sabbath as Identity

Too often we forget that we are free. Instead, we measure success by outdated and irrelevant standards that are dismantled by our new reality. We respect people who keep a frantically full work schedule, and then shake our heads and whisper in disbelief when they burnout and break down. Perhaps the shame on their shoulders belongs to us for honoring the wrong things and guiltling them toward “greatness.”

Our chronic unwillingness to slow down comes from a spirit of competition and false sense of worth found through our work. And it's quite likely that we are fueled by the fear of what might catch up with us if we let the pace slip.

Sinai has something to say: You are no longer slaves, but free sons and daughters. You are not defined by your work or measured by what you produce. Your identity in this new reality hangs on who he is, not what you do.

II. Sabbath as Alternative Story

Because time is such a governing force in our culture, it says something when you are governed by a different kind of time. How we function in and relate to time is one significant way to signal that we are caught up in a different kind of story—an alternative story with peculiar priorities.

To carve out regular and rhythmic periods of rest is a declaration of what is important to us. It is a clear demonstration of what we value and love. It even sends a message about who or what we trust.

Time is a precious commodity, consistently on the move. We therefore feel pressure to capitalize on every unit of it in order to accomplish the most with what we have. To surrender such a precious and fleeting thing to God is a radical and risky move of trust. It says we have more faith in him than we do in ourselves, that we worship the true God who provides what we need, not the false idols of wealth and achievement that are never satisfied. Maybe that is why Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel called the Sabbath “a sanctuary in time,” and “our great cathedrals.”¹ It is a sign and symbol of whom we worship. In this light, Sabbath should be seen not as time lost, but time redeemed.

III. Sabbath as Memory

The Sabbath remembers and reenacts the creation event. And in doing so, it reminds us of the God who, out of the love firing back and forth within the Trinity, calls all that we know into existence. We pause and reflect on the moment when he invented humanity and rejoiced over his best idea. We remember, with awe, that he created us in his own image. We rest, as he did and look back over the genius of his creative love and strength.

IV. Sabbath as Rising Action

The practice of Sabbath is a way to actively remember what God has accomplished in the past. But it is also a means for anticipating what God has promised to accomplish in the future.

Sabbath helps us reflect on the event of creation, but it also draws our minds and hearts toward the coming and ultimate restoration of all things—the new creation. It rekindles the hope that one day God will redeem the world once and for all; that what went wrong in the garden will be set right through Jesus. It is a recurring reminder that the fallen will be lifted up and the broken will be healed. It looks forward to the day when God will rest again. It is rising action in this drama, hoping for the climax and resolution of restoration.

conclusion

Choose one or two of the following challenge options to emphasize, based on the needs of your group members

Remember the Gift

We should seek to practice the Sabbath as a gift of grace, not as a legal obligation. To become consumed with the mechanics of how to precisely and properly observe it is to miss the point entirely. Remember the Pharisees?

When Jesus healed on the Sabbath day, the Pharisees were outraged. Looking beyond the miracle, they focused on the minor matter of legal infractions. They were offended and objected over the fact that Jesus carried out his work on the instituted day of rest.

But we know that the Sabbath is bigger than this. And Jesus is bigger than the Sabbath. A spiritual practice can be a helpful way to express our love and worship to God. Sometimes it is even a commanded way to do this. But we must always remember that the practice is an expression of worship, not the object of worship. It is dangerous to confuse the two. (Warning: When the meaning of a practice gets distorted, the thing to do is reclaim the meaning, not do away with the practice itself.)

Cultivate a Pattern

Break the cycle of work with a rhythm of rest. Carve out a regular day (or even part of a day) when you can participate in focused, intentional rest. Then guard that time. Ask a friend for accountability in keeping it. We were designed for this, and life works best when we engage with this gift.

Trust

To deliberately and regularly step away from your work is a bold move of trust. While you are resting, someone else is working, possibly progressing past you. Unsettling isn't it?

But at the heart of this whole thing is a spirit of surrender, abandon, and trust. We submit to the sometimes counterintuitive ways of God. We trust his wisdom and actively give to God our clients, academic rankings, projects, promotions, deadlines, start-ups, ideas, and dreams.

Worship

Try setting aside Sunday as your day of rest. For many who serve in roles of ministry, this is practically impossible. The demands of this day make it the most stressful and draining of the week. If this is the case for you, pick another day.

But if Sunday works for you, give it a try. It gives you the opportunity to make community worship a central part of your rest. It allows you to find renewal in the presence of God and his people. It opens the chance to enter into worship with an uncluttered schedule and focused mind.

Rest

Use your set-aside Sabbath as a time to rest. Relax. Unwind. Take a breath. Resist the temptation to catch up or get ahead.

Relationship

Invest this time in your most important relationships. Share the experience with your family or close friends. These relationships are designed to be life giving. Let them be that.

Restoration

To rest doesn't necessarily mean to rigidly restrict all motion. You can do something with your time. Just be sure it is something that restores you and energizes your soul.

Read. Grab a fishing pole and head for the lake with your kids. Explore the local hiking trails with your spouse. Take a nap in your favorite chair. Play basketball with your friends. Discover the community farmer's market with your roommate. Or just do nothing at all.

The key is not whether you fill your time or empty your time. The idea is to use that time for intentional rest and restoration.

note

1. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).

7

creation care

The purpose of this message is to examine creation care from a biblical perspective. With Scripture and Christian tradition as our guides, we will venture to put forth a call that is consistent with the heart of God and the soul of our movement. As we will discover together, this is not simply a reaction to hot cultural trends. The church has been voicing this call for centuries. It runs through the pages of Scripture, the teachings of the early church fathers and the convictions of the reformers. This is not a new idea, but it is a vital one for our generation. And we must rediscover and reclaim our voice on the matter.

I. Creation Care as Theology

The practice of creation care is a common sense response to the most basic ideas of Christian theology. In this, it is a natural outflow of our faith. If we believe that God created the earth and called this creation good, it only seems natural that his people would care for it.

The entire narrative of Scripture opens with this idea. Our first glimpse of God shows him creating the universe out of divine imagination and holy love. Our initial understanding of him is formed in the fresh light of earth's first morning. He made order out of chaos. In the beginning, God created.

Not only does the Bible begin with this foundational truth, but the Apostle's Creed starts here as well. For centuries Christians have committed this ancient creed to memory, understanding it to contain the doctrinal essentials of our faith. Many communities still recite it together every time they gather for worship. And what is the first line of this common creed? "We believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." Our entire concept of God, our bedrock doctrines, our starting points for making sense of him, all begin with the idea that he created the world we live in.

If this is where our faith begins, where our oldest stories and most trusted theology starts, shouldn't our next natural step be to praise him for his work, and treat it with respect and gratitude, and to take seriously the mandate to tend the garden? This is the reasoning behind the practice of creation care.

But what about the fall as it's described in Genesis 3? Doesn't this great disaster plunge nature into a broken state, setting it at odds with humanity and sealing its fate for destruction? We base the rationale for creation care on a command given in the garden, when the original glory was still intact, prior to the current reality of our broken world. Doesn't our present condition change the picture?

Without a doubt, the effects of humanity's fall into sin are disastrous. Our rebellion sends shockwaves throughout the entire realm of creation, and nothing is left untouched and unscarred. Like humanity, creation is fallen. And like humanity, creation will one day be healed. Scripture promises that all things will be redeemed and set right. The curse of sin has been broken and its reign is revoked. In Romans, Paul described a creation that groans along with us for redemption and longs to share in our salvation. God did not abandon humanity after the fall. Will he abandon everything else he made?

We often view the physical world as inherently evil, as a lost cause destined for destruction. We break it down along these lines: the physical is bad; the spiritual is good. Makes sense, doesn't it? The only problem with this way of thinking is that it's called Gnosticism, a heresy that was fiercely opposed by our spiritual ancestors in the early church.

They were against Gnosticism because the life of Jesus stands as a direct critique of this heresy. Rather than deem physical nature as evil, Jesus took on human nature, becoming fully human while remaining fully God. It is called the incarnation, one of the great mysteries of our faith. It was through this all out engagement with the natural world that he accomplished our salvation. He was born, crucified, and raised from the dead, all with a physical body. He stepped into creation to save it from the inside. As C. S. Lewis put it, "In the Christian story God descends to reascend. He goes down to come up again and bring the whole ruined world up with him."¹

II. Creation Care as Heritage

It is easy to see creation care as a passing trend, as yet another attempt on the part of the church to be seen as relevant to culture. But this is not a new idea in Christianity. The renewed focus and revived energy toward this practice is actually a reawakening for us. As Christians, this is part of our heritage. Some of our greatest thinkers and boldest leaders have urged us to look to nature as a source of spiritual insight and inspiration.

Tertullian described nature as our teacher, nurturing us in the growing knowledge of God.² St. John of Damascus said, "The whole earth is a living icon of the face of God."³ And early church fathers Augustine and Chrysostom, along with the great reformer-theologian Martin Luther, together called creation a compelling book through which God is telling the story of redemption.⁴

John Wesley also recognized our special relationship and responsibility to the rest of creation, noting the intimate and intrinsic connection between all things that find their origin in God. He

said, “I believe in my heart that faith in Jesus Christ can and will lead us beyond an exclusive concern for the well-being of other human beings to the broader concern for the well-being of the birds in our backyards, the fish in our rivers, and every living creature on the face of the earth.”⁵

Clearly, Wesley was not advocating a decline in our concern for humanity. One glance at his legacy of mercy and justice toward the least and the last cuts through that misunderstanding. Instead, he was trumpeting an ever-expanding capacity for care. As we are drawn deeper into the heart of the Father, formed into the likeness of the Son, filled and sanctified by the Spirit, then our hearts and lives will reflect the active and overflowing love of God toward all he has made.

Creation care is not a new idea. It is a spiritual practice that the historic church of Jesus has taken seriously through the centuries. It is part of our heritage. And it should be part of our legacy as well. Our children and grandchildren will inherit the world we are shaping today. As we walk in obedience to our calling as faithful stewards, we follow in the footsteps of those before us and pass this gracious gift to those coming behind.

notes

1. C. S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: HarperCollins, 1947), 179.
2. Tertullian, *De Testimonio Animae*.
3. St. John of Damascus, *Treatise*.
4. “Creation Care throughout the Ages,” Blessed Earth: Suggestions for Honoring God’s Creation, accessed November 15, 2011, <http://www.blessedearth.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Creation-Care-Quotes.pdf>.
5. Ibid.

8

covenant friendship

I. The Root of Relationship

Let's trace the origin further back and see just how deep this root will lead us. The seed of relationship is seen in the garden at the dawn of human history. But it is a reflection of a truth even older than this. In fact, we see the beauty of full relationship fired by love at work within God himself. He is community. The triune God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, existing as three in one since before the foundation of time, bound together by perfect love. Our desire to relate, to become one, is built into the bone. Written into our DNA is this reflection of who God is. Part of what it means to be made in his image is to be a relational being. We were made for community.

The Genesis narrative, then, does a number on our embedded values. In our culture, rugged individualism is a cardinal virtue. But individualism stands in opposition to the idea of true community because it values the self as first. It is an outlook that does not look out at all, but is turned inward, and is therefore distorted. Hear this clearly: God celebrates every individual, but he did not intend individualism. We are each different, yet made for unity. Every soul represents an utterly unique creation, and yet every soul is unmistakably linked to the whole of humanity. There is a sharp distinction between being unique and living alone.

II. The Command of Jesus

When Jesus was asked what the most important command was, he gave a brilliant answer that unites every command ever given: Love God with all you have, and love your neighbor as yourself. The second is a natural outgrowth of the first. Authentic love of God will always lead to genuine and generous love for others.

Jesus later said that love for others should begin within the body of believers. In John 13, while sharing his last meal with his disciples, Jesus said, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34–35).

This seems somewhat counterintuitive. Wouldn't it be a more compelling story for the world if we loved those on the outside first? We are absolutely called to love the world in a way that points to Christ. But if we don't love each other, our boldest feats of mercy and justice are empty. You cannot love a stranger and hate your brother. Unity is stirring. The people of this world will believe in our love for them if they witness our genuine love for each other.

III. The Example of Jesus

Jesus did more than teach on the importance of Christian community. He modeled it. First, he entered into our story and shared in our burdens. To think of the incarnation fills the heart with a strange kind of hope. It proclaims that God walks in our shoes and experiences every thrilling high and crushing low. His experiences are now tangled up with our own. He is not far off, but he walks the road with us. There is dirt on his hands and dust on his feet. Jesus laughed and wept. In the moment between the mystery and the knowing, John Wesley used his last breath to whisper our first hope, “Best of all, God is with us.” For the sinner there could be no better news than to find a friend like this.

It's like the story of the man trapped in the pit who turned to find that a friend had dropped down into the hole beside him. “Now we're both stuck,” cried the man. With a knowing smile, the friend answered, “Yes. But I've been here before and I know the way out.”

Then, selecting a shocking collection of unlikely followers, Jesus invited twelve to become his disciples. He poured his life into this eclectic, ragamuffin band of brothers. He opened his life to them. He spent most of his ministry traveling with them from town to town, and along the way, invested in them the curriculum for kingdom living. The disciples were exposed to Jesus in a way that the massive crowds never experienced.

And of course, the ultimate image of covenant friendship is displayed on the cross. In this act of self-sacrifice, Jesus demonstrated with the most eloquent articulation what it means to love. Through his death, he made a way for God's enemies to share in his friendship. Having blatantly broken our first covenant with him, God invites us into the new covenant through the broken body and poured out blood of Jesus. It is an act of opening himself wide, and inviting the other to become a part of his life. On the cross, God not only opened himself, but he emptied himself. This is the most shocking, stirring, irresistible invitation into friendship ever expressed.

IV. The Model of the Early Church

The disciples were marked by their friendship with the Savior. It is no surprise, then, that friendship emerged as one of the distinctive characteristics of the early church. Embedded in this young faith

was a rare strand of mutual and selfless love. Rooted in Christ, this love was cultivated within the community and branched out to touch every corner of their context, capturing the imagination of even the strongest critic.

Filled with the Holy Spirit and empowered by the transforming love of Christ, the church broke into existence in Acts 2. It was a dynamic movement marked by prayer, power, and a peculiar kind of love for one another. Verse 42 of the chapter says that the earliest expression of the church of Jesus was known for the way its people cared for and devoted themselves to one another. We are inspired and challenged by this example, and recognize authentic community and covenant friendship as an essential part of every pure and genuine expression of God's church in every context and culture.

9

generosity

Consider the story of the widow’s offering in Luke 21:1–4: “As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. ‘Truly I tell you,’ he said, ‘this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.’” One version captures Jesus’ assessment this way: “All these others made offerings that they’ll never miss; she gave extravagantly what she couldn’t afford—she gave her all!” (v. 4 MSG).

And just like that, Jesus redefined our understanding of generosity. He moved the discussion away from the question of quantity and made the real issue the heart behind the gift. Stunning endowments and trusts don’t outrank the sacrifice of a meager offering. In this backwards economy of the kingdom, heart and motive are the ruling currency. The worth of the widow’s gifts was the equivalent of a few pennies. Yet we are still talking about her. We might not bother to bend over and pick that up off the sidewalk. But God stopped everything to revel in it. Jesus honored this woman because “she gave extravagantly what she couldn’t afford—she gave her all!”

To be clear, this is not to belittle the gracious gifts of the rich; some defy the grip of money by letting it go. Instead, this is intended to magnify the opportunity we have to be generous now with what we have.

I. The New Standard

This act of redefining our understanding of an issue was common practice for Jesus all through the Gospels. He consistently set a new standard for what it means to live in and live out the reality of God’s kingdom. He proclaimed the end of legalism’s reign and introduced a new freedom won by grace and love. In light of this pattern, people often draw the conclusion that, in this New Covenant,

the Old Testament principle of tithing (giving a tenth of all you earn to God as an offering) is obsolete.

But the New Covenant doesn't destroy the Old. It completes it. In fact, we repeatedly see Jesus raise the bar on expectations to shocking new heights. He did the same again here. The Old Testament standard was to give 10 percent. You can make the case that the New Testament standard is to give all you have and all you are. Again, Jesus breaks us free from the tyranny of legalism, but binds us to the highest law—love. In this, we find our fullest freedom.

Jesus called for more than walking the line on a rule or regulation. Jesus invited us into the joy of generous living: the daring, frightening, courageous act of giving ourselves away. This is the new standard—the new normal—marked by trust-filled, full-hearted generosity.

II. The Church and the Money Problem

Before we go any further, let's be honest about something. The unfortunate truth is that the moment we start talking about money in conjunction with Christianity, things can get pretty uncomfortable; and for good reason. Tragically, some have manipulated hearts and minds in order to open up purses and pockets. And now, because of some of God's representatives, the church as a whole is often painted with the same sad stain.

But God is not a thief. And God is not greedy. In fact, Scripture reveals a God whose sharpest anger is reserved for two crimes: idolatry and the exploitation of the poor by the powerful, especially in the name of religion. It is this divine frame of heart that sparked the righteous rage of Jesus in the temple (Matt. 21:12–13; Mark 11:15–17; Luke 19:45–46; John 2:13–16). Since the poor generally did not have their own livestock to bring for sacrifice, they had to purchase animals from merchants at the temple. Realizing they were dealing with necessary commodities, these merchants would often run up the price. The law of supply and demand had smiled favorably on them, and they were taking full advantage of the situation. This turned worship into a profit machine and an unfair burden for the poor. Enter Jesus. Suddenly, tables started flying, animals scattered, and crooks dove for cover. This is a sign of how God feels about manipulating money in his name. He will not take it.

III. Why Does Jesus Want My Money?

Jesus talked about money repeatedly through the Gospels. But it's not because he wants your money. It's because he wants you. And he understands that the two are intimately intertwined.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus stated plainly, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:21). He understood that we reach for what we love, and love what we reach for. We hide the things we love in our hearts, and give our hearts away to them. As E. Stanley Jones said, "Whatever has your attention has you."¹

Jesus wants us to reach for him, to hide him in our hearts, to give our hearts away to him alone. He knows that money makes a weak yet tyrannical god, and its promises of happiness and security

are bankrupt. He's watched far too many rich young rulers choose that empty hope for fear of empty hands.

It's not that Jesus wants to steal our money. He is out to steal our hearts. And that is why he warns of the crucial role that money plays in our discipleship journey. The purpose is not to fill the baskets. The purpose is to fashion a generous community and shape generous hearts.

IV. The Blueprint

The early church is our model for practicing generosity. Acts 2 tells the story of this grassroots movement, sparked by the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. These believers were radically transformed by the fullness of salvation, and every part of their lives came under the unrivaled reign of God. To look at them is to see holiness alive and in motion.

This distilled, pure strand of sanctification pulsing in them stirred an unswerving courage, unbreakable unity, and uncommon generosity—all of which produced waves of awe through the community around them; and for good reason. Acts 2:45 records what generosity looked like for them: “They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.” This strange sacrifice reflected the character of their Savior and captured the imagination of their culture.

conclusion

Track your finances over the next week or month. Where is your money going? Does this match up with your heart? What did you learn about the connection between the two? Does this match with God's heart?

note

1. This quote is widely attributed to E. Stanley Jones, groundbreaking Methodist missionary to India.

10

creative expression

I. Imago Dei

Our entire story of humanity began with an act of creativity. Not only did God create the cosmos, he created us—in his image. This is the first and deepest truth about us. Out of divine love, we were created in the image of a creative God.

Out of this foundation grows countless implications for our theology and practice. It sets the trajectory for how we understand God’s love, salvation, the doctrine of sin, and our relationship to creation and each other.

But it also affirms a truth too often lost—we are all creative. Within every one of us is the spark of creativity that we inherited from God. Unfortunately, most don’t believe it.

Somewhere along the way, we grow up and grow out of our imaginations—probably about the same time that our crayon creations start getting graded. We start to get sorted into different categories based on our areas of academic excellence (or seeming lack thereof). We realize that some people are naturally gifted artists or musicians and that our brains don’t function in that same way. We label those friends as “creative” and surmise that we are not.

But our theology tells us something radically different.

The point here is not that every person should try to be a musician or a painter. The point is that everyone is gifted and needs to discover and unleash those gifts for the glory of God. We find it ironic that most have a limited idea of what creativity can mean. The point is that we need a broad definition of creativity and a bold invitation to express it. You are unique and uniquely gifted. And how you express your passions and gifts can be an act of worship.

When we express our creativity, we express who we are, and in a sense, who God is. While we are not trying to change how art is defined and recognized, we do embrace the way these thoughts

open up the borders and boundaries of creativity. We affirm that when we engage our diverse passions and gifts in the acts of making and creating we are reflecting the divine nature.

II. Exposing God's Genius

God creates each of us uniquely, with specific gifts and passions. When we discover and unleash these gifts and passions, we point to the One who gives them and delights in our design. In this act of expression, we expose God's genius. What does creativity look like for you? What loves and joys and dreams has God written on your soul?

Are you an artist, musician, writer, or poet? Perhaps you are gifted in math, science, technology, or medicine. Maybe you love building things with your hands, tending a garden, cultivating a farm, cooking food, or repairing cars. Do you have a passion for filmmaking? Theater? Design? Storytelling? Maybe you are skilled at solving problems, crafting strategies, building systems, shepherding projects, or leading teams.

Teachers. Photographers. Nurses. Composers. Pastors. Architects. Engineers. Leaders. Activists. Entrepreneurs. Journalists. Inventors. Social Workers.

God invites all of us to express who we are through the limitless ways in which he has designed us. And when you come alive to who you are and how you are gifted, you become a walking witness of his genius.

III. Calling All Creatives

We all have people sitting in our services who are humming with potential and creativity. Let's learn how to unleash your gifts for God's glory. We need to risk the chaos that is often found right at the edge of creativity, and celebrate the diversity of skills and joys within our family. And this expression does not have to happen within the framework of a Sunday worship setting. We want to unleash the creativity of our people into the community. How can we love our town through our gifts? Have you ever considered the potential of art as mission or of creativity as proclamation? What could that look like in our setting?

Artists, consider this your commission. You have been given a unique gift. And the world needs what you have. Tell the story of redemption. Create. Build. Experiment. Dream. Risk. Grow. If the Holy Spirit has sparked an idea, given a burden, or stirred a passion, then that is all the permission you need to go and do it. A word of warning for you: Don't expect somebody else to do this for you. God gave this passion to you, not everyone else. So don't be upset if your friends are slow to get on board. Start small. Be patient. And one more thing to remember: The gift is yours, but the glory isn't. Your gift is not about you. It is always about the One who gave it in the first place. Let your life point boldly back to him. Use your life to tell his story. And tell it well.

conclusion

Discover Your Passions

1. If you could do anything in the world, what would you do?
 2. What is your deepest hope and wildest dream?
 3. What jobs would you do for free?
 4. What classes do you look forward to most?
 5. What kind of stories, movies, and books draw you in?
 6. How do you spend your free time?
 7. What do you look forward to? Make time for?
- Also helpful: What upsets you? What angers you? What drains you?*

Discover Your Gifts

Consider the following questions to discover where you are most naturally gifted:

1. What are you good at? On a scale of one to ten, where are you a ten?
2. What do you receive the most compliments for?
3. What kind of work or activity energizes you?
4. What kind of work doesn't feel like work?
5. When do people seek you out for help?
6. When do you feel in the zone? What is your "sweet spot"?

Also helpful: What are you just flat out terrible at? What kinds of activities or work do you dread? What kinds of work drain you?

Discover Where Your Passions and Gifts Converge

1. Where do you notice patterns of convergence?
2. Where do your gifts and passions seem to overlap?
3. What intriguing combinations do you see emerging?
4. What does this say about how God has created you?
5. How can you express who you are through worship to God for the sake of the world?