

# **The Practicing the Way Course**

**Companion Guide**

# Following Jesus

## Session 01

### Opening questions

Before we begin our first session, process your thoughts and feelings together as a community as you embark on this course.

**01** What drew you to this Course?

**02** What are you looking forward to?

**03** Describe in brief your spiritual journey thus far.

## Teaching

### Scripture

*As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him.*

—Mark 1v16-18

### Session summary

- Following Jesus is based on the first-century practice of rabbis and apprentices.
- Today, to follow Jesus means to apprentice under him.
- To apprentice under Jesus is to organize your life around three driving goals:
  - Be with Jesus
  - Become like Jesus
  - Do as he did
- Apprenticing under Jesus means practicing a way of life.
- One of the best ways to begin is through a daily prayer rhythm, where you create a time and place for solitude, silence, and prayer.





# Practice

## Developing a daily prayer rhythm

We need more than information for transformation. The practices of Jesus (which we'll learn more about in Session 04) help to get the teachings of Jesus into the muscle memory of our bodies. They turn the *idea* of following Jesus into a *reality* in our daily life.

And one of the best ways to begin to “be with Jesus” is by developing a daily prayer rhythm.

There's no “right” way to do this — you may choose to go on an early morning walk with your dog or curl up under a blanket with a cup of tea or sit cross-legged on the floor and breathe deeply.

You may pray the Psalms or let a prayer app guide your meditation. You may do this before the sun rises or as it sets.

Whatever you decide, our exercise for Session 01 is to develop a daily time and place to commune with God through the practices of silence, solitude, and prayer.

Here are a few suggestions for your practice:

### **01 Find a quiet *place* that is distraction-free.**

- This could be a corner in your home or a nearby park. Find somewhere that you can focus and be at peace.

### **02 Find a quiet *time*.**

- For many people, first thing upon waking is the best possible time to do this; but for you, it may be before bed, or while your baby is napping mid-morning, or on a lunch break.
- The general rule is: *Give God your best time of the day.*

### **03 Come to quiet.**

- If at all possible (unless you're using an app such as Lectio 365 or Pray As You Go to guide your prayer time), put your phone away in another room. Start with a few
- deep breaths ... in and out of your nose, and let your mind and body calm down.
- This may take a few minutes. You're not in a hurry.
- And then...

### **04 Open your heart to God in prayer.**

- Again, there's no “right” way to pray. But you don't have to start from scratch.
- For thousands of years, followers of Jesus have used the Psalms for daily prayer.

- The Psalms are a collection of poetic prayers found in the middle of the Bible, and they were designed to be *prayed*, not just read.
- You can pray one psalm or pray a few; it's up to you. You can start in Psalm 1 and keep going to pray a selection. If you want to pray one psalm, here are some we suggest you start with: Psalms 1, 23, 37, 40, 42-43, 63, 84, 86, 103, and 139.
- This whole exercise can be done in five minutes, or it can easily take up to an hour — again, that's up to you. The key is: Start where you are, not where you feel you "should" be.
- If two or three minutes is all you can make happen, start *there* and take the next step.

*If you didn't get a chance to take the Spiritual Health Reflection before Session 01, please remember to do so before you come back together.*

*Visit [practicingtheway.org](http://practicingtheway.org) and create an account, or follow the QR code, and answer the prompt questions slowly and prayerfully.*



## Practice reflection

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

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

**01 What was most challenging about practicing a rhythm of prayer?**

**02 What is something you enjoyed about it?**

**03 What are you hoping for as you continue this rhythm of prayer?**

# Formation Part 01

## Session 02

### Overview

Spiritual formation isn't a Christian thing or even a religious thing; it's a **human** thing. To be human is to grow, to mature, to adapt over time. Formation is simply the process by which our "spirit," or inner person, is formed into a particular shape or character. Over a lifetime, we are spiritually formed by a complex alchemy of genetic inheritance, family patterns, childhood wounds, education, habits, decisions, relationships, environments, and more.

The problem is, most of our spiritual formation is unintentional. ***It just happens.*** And often, we are "conformed to the pattern of this world," **more** than "transformed by the renewing of our mind."

## Practice reflection

Before we begin Session 02, break up into small groups and share your reflections on last session's practice of prayer.

**01** What was most challenging about practicing a rhythm of prayer?

**02** What is something you enjoyed about it?

**03** What are you hoping for as you continue this rhythm of prayer?

## Teaching

### Scripture

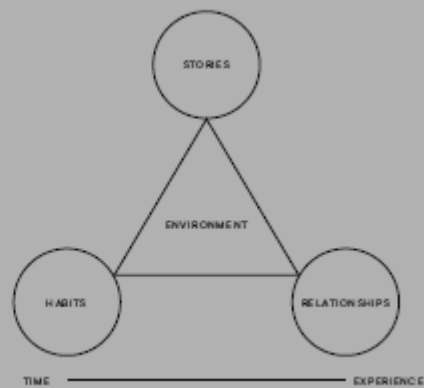
*"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."*

—Romans 12v2

## Session summary

- Spiritual formation isn't a Christian thing; it's a *human* thing.
- We are formed by a complex web of forces, but especially by:
  - Habits
  - Relationships
  - The stories we believe
  - Environment
  - Time
  - Experience
- Most of our formation is unintentional.
- Some of the most important questions to reflect on are:
  - Who am I becoming?
  - Am I being intentional about who I am becoming?
- One of the best ways to do this is through a Formation Audit.

### Unintentional Spiritual Formation







# Practice notes

As you continue to watch Session 02 together, feel free to take notes here.

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## After the video

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

**01** When you consider the list of forces that can unintentionally form us, does anything surprise you or stand out to you?

**02** When do you plan to set aside time for your Formation Audit? Is there anything coming up for you as you think about doing the audit?

## Closing prayer

End your time together by praying this liturgy:

*Good Creator, who made our inmost parts,  
You see more of us than we do,  
You know us better than we ever will,  
and yet You call us "beloved";  
give us courage to see ourselves in the light,  
to be honest with who we are, and what we're not,  
that in our being fully seen by You,  
we may be transformed ever more greatly,  
by Your love, into Your holy image.*

*Amen.*

# Practice

## Formation Audit

Practice helps the information we take in become a part of who we are and transform our lives. Our exercise for this session is to take an inventory of all the forces that are currently forming you.

**01** This is one of the longest exercises in this Course, and we recommend you carve out a quiet time and place to spend ample time in thoughtful reflection and prayer.

**02** Invite the Spirit of Jesus to come and illuminate your mind, silence the voice of the evil one, and to “give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better,” and that “the eyes of your heart may be enlightened.”

**03** Remember to answer *honestly* and non-judgmentally. You will likely feel your heart drift toward shame and denial, both of which will sabotage the effectiveness of this exercise.

**04** Above all, do this exercise *with God*. Slowly and prayerfully, and with your heart at peace.

## **Habits — *What habits make up your everyday life?* *Write out your habits.***

**Morning routine:**

**Activities of a typical workday:**

**Evening routine:**

**Activities of a typical weekend:**

## **Reflection:**

How do you think your habits are shaping you as a person? (See the two lists on pages 19-20 for a list of possible effects)

## **Relationships — *What relationships make up most of your life?***

**Family:**

**Friends:**

**Work:**

**Community:**

**Other:**

## **Reflection:**

How are these people shaping you as a person? The key questions to ask are: What kind of person do I become when I'm around this person? What do they draw out in me or suppress in me?

## **Stories you believe — *What are the “stories” you have come to believe?***

**01** What stories do you believe about God? (What is he like/not like? How does he feel toward you?)

**02** What stories do you believe about yourself? (How does God see you? How do others see you? What kind of person are you? What do you see for your future?)

**03** What stories do you believe about happiness? (What do you think will make you most happy and peaceful? Is it God? Money? Marriage? Success? Vacation?)

**04** What stories do you believe about the meaning of life? (What do you think matters most? Perhaps your career? Family? Health? Something else?)

## **Reflection:**

What are the core stories of my life? How are they forming me as a person?

## **Environment — What are the cultural distinctives of my environment?**

**City:** What is my city like? What is it known for?

**Nation:** What is my nation like? What are its highest cultural values?

**Generation:** What are my generation's values?

**Digital Algorithm:** What are the algorithms feeding me news, information, and social connection like?

**Ethnic and/or Socio-Economic Group:** What are the values and cultural norms and expectations of my cultural heritage and socio-economic class?

## **Reflection:**

How am I being formed or deformed by the cultural forces that are “normal” in my city/nation/generation/social media feed, but possibly far from the vision of Jesus?

## **Experience — What life experiences have most shaped me into who I am today?**

**Family of origin:** What is my family like? What are its highest values? Deepest dysfunctions? Greatest legacy?

**Traumatic events:** Have I experienced a traumatic event? What story has my body wordlessly learned from that trauma?

**Key experiences:** What are the key moments on the timeline of my life that have altered the trajectory of my story?

**Spiritual autobiography:** What are the key moments of my spiritual journey thus far?

### **Reflection:**

How have my experiences formed and deformed me over the years? Where do I still need healing? What do I need to never forget and hold on to? What am I still missing?

## **Possible effects of following “the pattern of this world”:**

- Stress
- Hurry
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Insecurity
- Hypervigilance
- Jealousy
- Anger
- Irritation
- Impatience
- Resentment
- Outrage
- Pride
- Distraction
- Numbness
- Overwhelm
- Exhaustion
- Discouragement
- Loneliness
- Isolation
- Shame
- Division
- Disconnection
- Lying
- Dirty speech
- Sarcasm
- Put downs
- Dishonor of authority
- Contempt
- Careerism
- Overwork
- Materialism
- Discontent
- Debt
- Laziness
- Alcoholism
- Addiction
- Substance abuse
- Impulsiveness
- Lust
- Pornography
- Racism
- Bigotry

## **Possible markers of following the Way of God’s Kingdom:**

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness
- Gentleness
- Faithfulness
- Self-control
- Faith
- Hope
- Unhurried living
- Simplicity of life
- Calm
- Generosity
- Contentment
- Freedom
- Warmth and affection
- Relational connection
- Community
- Sense of belonging
- Equity
- Diversity
- Trust
- Acceptance
- Authenticity
- Honesty
- Integrity
- Harmony
- Vulnerability
- Compassion
- Restfulness
- Diligence
- A sense of meaning and purpose
- A clear sense of direction
- Creativity
- Growth



# Practice reflection

Reflection is a key component in our spiritual formation. Like practice, it allows what we learn to become a part of who we are. Before our next time together, take five to ten minutes to journal out your answers to the following three questions.

**01** What did you find helpful about taking the Formation Audit?

**02** When you consider the ways you are being unintentionally formed, what felt most challenging?

**03** Did anything surprise you?

## Formation Part 02

### Session 03

## Overview

In the last session, we explored the reality that we're *already being formed* by our habits, relationships, environments, and more. Therefore, all formation in the Way of Jesus is **counter-formation**. As apprentices of Jesus, our goal is to intentionally slow our lives down to find deep joy in walking with Jesus.

# Practice reflection

Before we begin Session 03, break up into small groups and share your reflections on last session's Formation Audit exercise.

**01** What did you find helpful about taking the Formation Audit?

**02** When you consider the ways you are being unintentionally formed, what felt most challenging?

**03** Did anything surprise you?

## Teaching

### Scripture

*The apprentice is not above the rabbi, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their rabbi.*

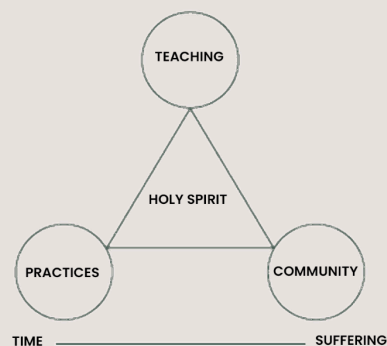
—Luke 6v40\* (keywords apprentice and rabbi adapted)

### Session summary

- We may desire to become more like Jesus, but feel stuck.
- The problem is that we don't know *how* to become like Jesus.
- We need a training program — a reliable pathway to transformation.
- We find this in the Way of Jesus, where we are formed by:
  - The Practices
  - Community
  - Teaching
  - The Holy Spirit
- Formation happens over time and through suffering.
- And one of the best ways to begin to change is to replace an unhealthy habit with the practice of reading Scripture daily.

Intentional  
Spiritual  
Formation\*

\*Adapted from Dr. James Bryan Smith's 'Triangle of Transformation' in *The Good and Beautiful God*.



# Teaching notes

As you watch Session 03 together, feel free to use this page to take notes.

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## Discussion questions

Pause the video and take some time to process together as a community. Here are some questions for discussion:

**01** Have you ever had a moment in your discipleship where you felt “stuck,” whether in habits, unhealthy emotional patterns, or in your relationship to God?

**02** With the paradigm of Intentional Spiritual Formation in mind, how have you participated in your own formation over the years?

**03** How have you understood the Holy Spirit’s role in spiritual formation?

**04** Have you had an experience of intentionally opening your pain and suffering to God? What did God produce in your formation through that experience?

# Practice notes

As you continue to watch Session 03 together, feel free to take notes here.

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## After the video

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

**01** How do you currently engage with Scripture?

**02** What comes up for you when you think about starting your day with a rhythm of reading Scripture? What would you like to share with your group?

**03** As a group, talk about your plan for this week. Will you use a reading plan or a particular book of the Bible? What time and setting is best for you?

## Closing prayer

End your time together by praying this liturgy:

*Thank you, Father, for your word,  
for your Son who speaks it to us,  
and for your Spirit who illumines it within.  
Teach us how to read it with you,  
that we may learn to love its wisdom,  
goodness, and truth, growing in your Way.  
Amen.*

# Practice

## Daily reading of Scripture

Information alone doesn't produce transformation. To grow, let's put what we've learned into practice. Last session, you conducted a Formation Audit. You made a list of all your habits and relationships, and then you attempted to connect the dots between them and your formation or deformation.

Did you identify any habits or relationships or stories that seem to be having a negative effect on you?

This session's practice is to take the next step and replace an old habit with a new practice. And if it's not already a part of your daily life with God, we invite you to begin the practice of reading Scripture. The best way to do this is likely to **add** it to the daily prayer rhythm you began two sessions ago. Hopefully by now you're learning to carve out a quiet place and time, and come to quiet before God.

A next step could be to integrate the reading of Scripture into your daily rhythm in a prayerful, peaceful way.

Here are a few reminders from the Prayer Practice:

### 01 Identify a quiet *place* that is distraction-free.

- This could be a corner in your home or a nearby park. Find somewhere that you can focus and be at peace.
- If at all possible (unless you're using an app to read or follow a reading plan), put your phone away in another room.

### 02 Identify a quiet *time*.

- For many people, first thing upon waking is the best possible time to do this; but for you, it may be before bed, or while your baby is napping mid-morning, or on a lunch break.
- The general rule is: *Give God your best time of the day.*

### 03 Come to quiet.

- Start with a few deep breaths ... in and out of your nose, and let your mind and body calm down.
- This may take a few minutes. You're not in a hurry.
- And then ...

### 04 Open your heart to God in prayer

- Again, there's no "right" way to pray. But you don't have to start from scratch.

## **05 Read Scripture**

- Choose a section of Scripture or follow a Bible reading plan suggested in the Keep Growing section below.
- As you read, you might want to notice what resonates with you, what emotionally lifts off the page and into your heart.
- Your goal is to listen for Jesus' voice coming to you.
- This whole exercise can be done in five minutes, or it can easily take up to an hour – again, that's up to you. The key is: Start where you *are*, not where you feel you "should" be.

# Practice reflection

Reflection is a key component in our spiritual formation. Like practice, it allows what we learn to become a part of who we are. Before your next time together, take five to ten minutes to journal out your answers to the following four questions.

**01** How did your practice of reading Scripture go following the last session?

**02** Where did you experience resistance in this practice?

**03** In what ways did you encounter God in it?

**04** Did anything surprise you?

# The Practices

## Session 04

### Overview

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

### Practice reflection

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

**01** How did your practice of reading Scripture go following the last session?

**02** Where did you experience resistance in this practice?

**03** In what ways did you encounter God in it?

## Teaching

### Scripture

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

—Mark 1v35

## Session summary

- The Practices are disciplines based on the lifestyle of Jesus that create time and space for us to access the presence and power of the Spirit and, in doing so, be transformed from the inside out.
- Practices are a means to an end: to live and love like Jesus.







# After the video

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

**01** What comes to mind for you when you think about ceasing some things and embracing what gives life?

**02** Talk about your plan with your group. When and where will you practice Sabbath?

## Closing prayer

End your time together by praying this liturgy:

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

## Practice

### Sabbath

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

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

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

#### Four things to keep in mind as you begin:

##### **01 Begin by connecting with God.**

The Hebrew people called this “sanctifying the day,” setting it aside from the other six days. You could light two candles, or pray a Psalm or share a meal or begin with Sunday worship at your church. But have a clear ritual or moment with God that *begins* and *ends* your Sabbath time.

**02 If you can, spend part of the day with your family or friends who follow Jesus.**

You could throw a Sabbath meal or just spend unhurried time in conversation.

**03 Do whatever makes you come alive in God.**

Nap, read poetry, play basketball with your kids. Pursue whatever activities make you feel joyful, rested, and alive to God; whatever it is you do that makes your heart spontaneously burst into gratitude and worship.

**04 Keep at it.**

Integrating Sabbath-keeping into your life usually takes months or years, not weeks. Just start small and aim at joy.

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

- When will you sabbath?  
(Include your start and end time)
- How will you mark the beginning and end of your sabbath time? (A ritual or liturgy or prayerful moment)
- What will you do with your devices?
- What do you need to do to prepare? (Grocery shopping, emails, errands, work tasks, phone calls, etc.)
- How will you include friends and family?
- What will you do that fills your heart with joy and peace?
- How can you help create sabbath for those who have none?

## Practice reflection

Reflection is a key component in our spiritual formation. Like practice, it allows what we learn to become a part of who we are. Before your next time together, take five to ten minutes to journal out your answers to the following four questions.

**01** What was challenging about your Sabbath practice?

**02** Where did you feel delight in your practice?

**03** Where did you most experience God's nearness?

**04** Is there anything different you would like to try related to the practice of Sabbath?

# Meeting God in Pain and Suffering

## Session 05

### Overview

Jesus once said, "In this world you will have trouble." Pain and suffering are inevitable in this life. Often, when we begin to practice the disciplines, the unhealed wounds of a lifetime rise to the surface of our hearts.

Everything in us wants to run in the opposite direction--to deny, detach, or drug our pain. But the invitation of Jesus is to meet him *in* our pain, and let it become the crucible of our formation.

### Practice reflection

Before we begin Session 05, break up into small groups and share your reflections on last session's practice of Sabbath.

**01** What was challenging about your Sabbath practice?

**02** Where did you feel delight in your practice?

**03** Where did you most experience God's nearness?

**04** Is there anything different you would like to try related to the practice of Sabbath?

# Teaching

## Scripture

*Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”*

—Matthew 26:36-39

## Session summary

- The practices are not a religious formula to habit-stack our way into spiritual formation.
- When we slow down and come to quiet before God, often the first thing that comes up is emotional pain, as our soul begins to process and discharge all the pain and suffering of our life.
- There are three primary ways people deal with pain:
  - Deny
  - Detach
  - Drug
- The Jesus way is to meet God in our pain.
- Left unhealed, emotional pain can sabotage our transformation. But if we open it to God, it can become the secret to our transformation.

## Spiritual bypassing

A tendency to use spiritual ideas and practices to sidestep or avoid facing unresolved emotional issues, psychological wounds, and unfinished developmental tasks.\*

## Emotional maturity

You're aware of your feelings, but you're not run by your feelings.

## Spiritual maturity

The ability and willingness to know and do the will of God.

\* John Welwood, “Principles of Inner Work: Psychological and Spiritual,” *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 16, no. 1 (1984).





# Practice

Noticing and naming your emotions.

Let's put this teaching into practice, so that what we're learning can become part of who we are. The journey into emotional health involves learning to notice and name our emotions in the presence of God.

When we notice and name our feelings, they have less power over us. If you were to name a painful emotion like fear, anger, disappointment, or jealousy, a brain scan would show that your very act of naming it helps to quiet that emotion. This is why psychiatrist Dan Siegel encourages us to "name it to tame it."

This session's spiritual exercise is a simple template for prayer designed to notice and name your feelings and offer them to God in prayer.

- Find a quiet, distraction-free place and time.
- Put away your phone or any devices, and settle into a comfortable but alert position.
- Take a few minutes to breathe and center your awareness in God's presence.

And then do the following:

**01 Notice:** Now that you are centered in your body and in God, begin to let yourself feel. Let whatever is in you come up. Just notice it.

Don't fight it or run away from it or feel guilty about it or judge it — just notice it. Let the feeling be.

**02 Name:** Then name the emotion and be as specific as possible. You may want to use the following list of emotions. Just pick out one to three words from the feelings list on the following page that put language to what you're experiencing in your body.

**03 Feel:** Just sit in those feelings. Sink into them. Normally, we turn away from them and run in the opposite direction. Instead, turn and face them, like you would an ocean wave, and let it wash over you and then pass you by.

**04 Offer it to God:** Remember and follow Jesus' Gethsemane Prayer.

- Give God your feelings — Tell him what you are feeling, with no filter.
- Give God your desires — Tell him what you really want, good or bad.
- Give God your trust — Surrender your heart again to him. Stop grasping for control and yield yourself to God and his will for your life. You may want to pray Jesus' own prayer, "Not my will, but yours be done."
- You can do this exercise one time before the next session, or every day. It's also an exercise you can practice for the rest of your life, to open deeper and deeper parts of your inner world to God.



# Feelings list\*

## **Happy**

Admired  
Alive  
Appreciated  
Assured  
Cheerful  
Confident  
Content  
Delighted  
Determined  
Ecstatic  
Elated  
Encouraged  
Energized  
Enthusiastic  
Excited  
Exuberant  
Flattered  
Fortunate  
Fulfilled

## **Sad**

Alienated  
Ashamed  
Burdened  
Condemned  
Crushed  
Defeated  
Dejected  
Demoralized  
Depressed  
Deserted  
Despised  
Devastated  
Disappointed

Discarded  
Discouraged  
Disgraced  
Disheartened  
Disillusioned  
Dismal

## **Angry**

Abused  
Aggravated  
Agitated  
Anguished  
Annoyed  
Betrayed  
Cheated  
Coerced  
Controlled  
Deceived  
Disgusted  
Dismayed  
Displeased  
Dominated  
Enraged  
Exasperated  
Exploited  
Frustrated  
Fuming

## **Scared**

Afraid  
Alarmed  
Anxious  
Appalled  
Apprehensive  
Awed

Concerned  
Defensive  
Desperate  
Doubtful  
Fearful  
Frantic  
Full of Dread  
Guarded  
Horrorified  
Impatient  
Insecure  
Intimidated  
Nervous

## **Confused**

Ambivalent  
Awkward  
Baffled  
Bewildered  
Bothered  
Constricted  
Directionless  
Disorganized  
Distracted  
Doubtful  
Flustered  
Foggy  
Hesitant  
Immobilized  
Misunderstood  
Perplexed  
Puzzled  
Stagnant  
Surprised

\*<https://www.ndapandas.org/wp-content/uploads/archive/Documents/News/FeelingsWordList.pdf>

# Practice reflection

Reflection is a key component in our spiritual formation. Like practice, it allows what we learn to become a part of who we are. Before your next time together, take five to ten minutes to journal out your answers to the following three questions.

**01** Describe your experience of noticing and naming your feelings in God's presence.

**02** What were the most common feelings that came up for you? Was anything a surprise to you?

**03** Where did you most experience God's nearness in this practice?

# Healing From Sin

## Session 06

### Overview

Jesus once said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."\* He likened sin to a disease and himself to a healer. Based on this text, ancient Christians called Jesus "the doctor of the soul." And trying to go on the spiritual journey of discipleship without healing from sin is like trying to run a marathon with a broken leg — you're not going to get very far, and it's not going to be very fun. A key step in our apprenticeship to Jesus is healing from sin.

### Practice reflection

Before we begin Session 06, break up into small groups and share your reflections on last session's exercise of noticing and naming your feelings in prayer.

**01** What was your experience of noticing and naming your feelings before God like? Where did you feel delight in your practice?

**02** What were the most common feelings that came up for you? Was anything a surprise to you?

**03** Where did you most experience God's nearness in this practice?

# Teaching

## Scripture

*It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.*

—Mark 2v17

## Session summary

- A key aspect of the spiritual journey is healing from sin.
- Three dimensions to sin:
  - Sin done *by* us
  - Sin done *to* us
  - And sin done *around* us
- Four layers of sin we move through in our healing:
  - Gross sins
  - Conscious sins
  - Unconscious sins
  - Attachments
- Our part in the healing of sin is the practice of confession

\* M. Robert Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2016).

# Teaching notes

As you watch Session 06 together, feel free to use this page to take notes.

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## In-session reflection exercise

Pause the video and take a few minutes in the quiet to journal through the following questions:

**01** What do you believe about how God sees you and your sin?

**02** What came up for you as we talked about sin?



# After the video

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

- 01** What comes up for you as you consider this session's exercise in confession?
- 02** Is there someone who comes to mind when you consider practicing confession? Or would you be open to partnering with someone in your group?
- 03** What steps do you need to take to set yourself up to practice confession this week?

## Closing prayer

End your time together by praying this liturgy:

*Loving God, we open ourselves to you  
and confess all that we have and have not done,  
both consciously and unconsciously,  
in opposition to your goodness.  
Help us to live more openly with you,  
that in our being seen in all,  
we may also too be healed in all,  
growing in your love.  
Amen.*

## Practice

### Confession

We heal from sin by coming out of hiding. This is why this session, almost more than any other, must be put into practice. The practice of naming your sin to another person is what the writers of the Bible call "confession."

When we feel guilt and shame because of something we've done or not done, confession is likely the last thing we feel like doing.

But the path to being free from shame involves being open and transparent with someone we trust. In James 5:16 we read, "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed." When we name our sin or shame or secret with a trusted person, we can experience healing.

The practice is simple:

**01 Find someone you trust who will both love and accept you, *and* call you up to holiness. This could be a spiritual friend, community member, pastor, spiritual director, or therapist.**

**02 Find a place to meet that is private enough for you to feel safe and at peace.**

**03 Name your sin or shame or secret. Tell them the sin done by you, to you, or around you.**

**04 Let them love you, be faithful to you, and speak Jesus' forgiveness over you.**

For those of you *hearing* a confession, your role is very important. Don't shame or lecture or scold, just welcome in love.

Continue this practice on a regular basis, and keep the conversation going.

## Practice reflection

Reflection is a key component in our spiritual formation. Like practice, it allows what we learn to become a part of who we are. Before your next time together, take five to ten minutes to journal out your answers to the following three questions.

**01** Where did you experience resistance in your practice of confession?

**02** Where did you feel delight?

**03** How does confession impact or change your view of God or yourself?

# Crafting a Rule of Life

## Session 07

### Overview

A Rule of Life is a schedule and a set of practices and relational rhythms that create space for us to be with Jesus, become like him, and do as he did. It's an intentional plan to slow down and simplify our life around being spiritually formed by Jesus. To turn the vision of spiritual formation into a reality. It is an ancient idea, whose time has come again.

### Practice reflection

Before we begin Session 07, break up into small groups and share your reflections on last session's exercise of confession.

**01** Where did you experience resistance in your practice of confession?

**02** Where did you feel delight?

**03** How does confession impact or change your view of God or yourself?

## Teaching

### Scripture

*I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

—John 15:5-8



## Session summary

- Transformation is possible, but it's not inevitable.
- We need an intentional plan for our spiritual formation - what the early Christians called a "Rule of Life."
- A Rule of Life is a schedule and a set of practices and relational rhythms that create space for us to be with Jesus, become like him, and do as he did.
- When crafting a Rule for the first time, it's important to start small, and begin with subtraction, not addition.
- This coming week, our exercise is to design a **Rule of Life**.

## Six Tips

**01** Start small

**02** Think subtraction, not addition

**03** Take a balanced approach

**04** Take into account your personality and season life

**05** There is no formation without repetition

**06** Do this in community

## Teaching notes

As you watch Session 07 together, feel free to use this page to take notes.

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# Discussion questions

Pause the video and take some time to process together as a community. Here are some questions for discussion:

- 01** What makes up your current Rule of Life?
- 02** As you think about designing a Rule of Life, how would you describe the spiritual needs of your personality and stage of life?
- 03** What practices do you want to include in your Rule of Life?
- 04** Who would be important to incorporate in the process of building your Rule of Life?

# Practice notes

As you continue to watch Session 07 together, feel free to take notes here.

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# After the video

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

**01** As you contemplate crafting a Rule of Life, what are some deep desires that come up for you? What changes could bring more flourishing to your life?

**02** Imagine some practices you might tend to do individually. What would it look like to experience these in community? What does it feel like in your body to envision that?

## Closing prayer

End your time together by praying this liturgy:

*Help us shape our lives, Father,  
in the way of your Son —  
the way of prayer and justice,  
of generosity and purity,  
of self-offering and compassion,  
self-mastery and faith —  
that the rhythms of our living  
may be conduits of your grace,  
welcoming your Kingdom in this world.  
Amen.*

## Practice

### Crafting a Rule of Life

Now we're ready to take all the ideas we've been learning and "put it into practice" by writing our own Rule of Life.

There's no "right way" to craft a Rule of Life, and there's no one-size-fits-all approach to spiritual formation. The goal is to write a Rule that is customized for your unique personality, situation, and community.

To that end, we've created a digital tool called the [Rule of Life Builder](#).

**01 Go to [practictheway.org](https://practictheway.org) and log in.**

**02 Click on the Rule of Life Builder and follow its prompts. It will guide you through daily, weekly, monthly, and seasonal practices in a number of categories.**

**03 You can utilize the suggestions, write yours completely from scratch, or do a mix of both.**

- Remember: start small. Your Rule can begin with just a few small practices and rhythms.
- In this Course, we've covered three basic rhythms:
  - A daily **prayer** rhythm that includes the reading of **Scripture** in the quiet of **solitude**.
  - A weekly **Sabbath**.
  - And next session, we'll invite you to a weekly touchpoint in **community**.
- You can continue these practices and add, subtract, and edit as you sense the Spirit's direction.
- A Rule of Life isn't static, but dynamic. It changes with the seasons of our lives and stages of our discipleship. This digital template is easy to return to and modify. As time goes on, revisit your Rule and take the next step in your spiritual journey.
- You can do this exercise one time before the next session, or every day. It's also an exercise you can practice for the rest of your life, to open deeper and deeper parts of your inner world to God.

**RULE OF LIFE BUILDER**



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## Practice reflection

Reflection is a key component in our spiritual formation. Like practice, it allows what we learn to become a part of who we are. Before your next time together, take five to ten minutes to journal out your answers to the following three questions.

**01** Share about your process of creating a Rule of Life. What worked for you?

**02** What feelings came up for you as you worked through this exercise?

**03** What do you anticipate will be the most life-giving and transformative practice you came up with?

## Rule of Life Resources

### A Rule of Life from Practicing the Way

**01** A community of rest in a culture of hurry and exhaustion, through the practice of **Sabbath**.

**02** A community of peace and quiet in a culture of anxiety and noise, through the practice of **solitude**.

**03** A community of communion with God in a culture of distraction and escapism, through the practice of **prayer**.

**04** A community of love and depth in a culture of individualism and superficiality, through the practice of **community**.

**05** A community of courageous fidelity to orthodoxy in a culture of ideological compromise, through the practice of **Scripture**.

**06** A community of holiness in a culture of indulgence and immorality, through the practice of **fasting**.

**07** A community of contentment in a culture of consumerism, through the practice of **generosity**.

**08** A community of justice, mercy, and reconciliation in a culture of injustice and division, through the practice of **service**.

**09** A community of hospitality in a culture of hostility, through the practice of **witness**.

# Sample Rule of Life 01

## FROM PRACTICING THE WAY

|                    | SABBATH  | PRAYER               | FASTING                   | SOLITUDE  | GENEROSITY   | SCRIPTURE                | COMMUNITY                                    | SERVICE  | WITNESS  |
|--------------------|--|----------------------|---------------------------|---|--|--------------------------|--|--|--|
| DAILY              |  | <i>Prayer Rhythm</i> |                           | <i>A time in silence to begin and end the day</i> |  | <i>Reading Scripture</i> |  |  |  |
| WEEKLY             | <i>Sabbath day to stop, rest, delight, and worship</i> |                      | <i>Fast until sundown</i> |   |  |                          | <i>A meal together and worship on Sunday</i> |  |  |
| MONTHLY/SEASONALLY |  |                      |                           |   | <i>Giving 10 percent of your income, with special attention to the church and the poor</i> |                          |  | <i>An act of service to the poor with the aim of kinship</i> | <i>An act of hospitality and regularly praying for one person in your life who does not know Jesus</i> |

# Sample Rule of Life 02

## BRITTANY'S RULE - GRADUATE STUDENT IN HER 20s

|                    | SABBATH                           | PRAYER                               | FASTING | SOLITUDE   | GENEROSITY   | SCRIPTURE                                      | COMMUNITY  | SERVICE | WITNESS |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------|--|--------------|--|--|---------|---------|
| DAILY              |                                   | <i>Spend time with God in prayer</i> |         |  |              | <i>Spend time with God through Bible study</i> |  |         |         |
| WEEKLY             | <i>Take a Sabbath each Sunday</i> |                                      |         |  |              |  | <i>Participate in church at the Sunday evening service and at young adults group on Monday night</i> |         |         |
| MONTHLY/SEASONALLY |                                   |                                      |         | <i>Reflect on how I am meeting my goals, living my rule and where I need to grow</i> | <i>Tithe</i> |  | <i>Connect with my peer-mentor /spiritual friend</i>   |         |         |

# Sample Rule of Life 03

## JUNE'S RULE - MARRIED WITH YOUNG SON, WORKS AS A TEACHER

|                    | SABBATH   | PRAYER   | FASTING | SOLITUDE | GENEROSITY  | SCRIPTURE  | COMMUNITY  | SERVICE | WITNESS   |
|--------------------|---|--|---------|----------|---|--|--|---------|---|
| DAILY              |   | <i>As I can, pray through out the day - in the car, on a walk, before mealtime</i> |         |          |   | <i>Read Scripture at night before I go to bed; as I can, pray through these Scriptures the following day</i> |  |         |   |
| WEEKLY             | <i>Rest and Sunday worship, typically on a Saturday or Sunday (depending on what is going on)</i> |  |         |          |   |  | <i>Small group with families with young children (currently working through a Bible study book on parenting)</i> |         |   |
| MONTHLY/SEASONALLY | <i>Travel once a year in the summer time</i>  |  |         |          | <i>Tithe every month<br/><br/>Support missionaries and other charitable organizations every month</i> |  |  |         | <i>Through friendship and invite people to church and through our Easter and Christmas outreach</i> |



# Life Together

## Session 08

### Overview

“If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together.” We are not designed to travel the spiritual journey by ourselves. We need a community to practice the Way. And Jesus’ call to community goes far beyond church attendance to relationships of depth, vulnerability, and a commitment to transformation.

### Practice reflection

Before we begin Session 08, break up into small groups and share your reflections on last session’s exercise of creating a Rule of Life.

- 01** Share about your process of creating a Rule of Life. What worked for you?
- 02** What feelings came up for you as you worked through this exercise?
- 03** What do you anticipate will be the most life-giving and transformative practice you came up with?

## Teaching

### Scripture

*A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.” “Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”*

—Mark 3v32-35

### Session summary

- Jesus’ invitation was to come and do life together.
- Through Jesus, we have been adopted into the family of God.
- Jesus’ desire is not just to form you into a person of love, but to form a community of love.
- You can’t follow Jesus alone; spiritual formation is a relational process.





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# After the video

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

- 01** What comes up when you consider meeting in an intentional community?
- 02** What natural pathways exist in your life for this, whether within your church or other spaces?
- 03** As you examine your own desires, what do you envision for your time? Engaging in a Practice? Reading a book? Taking a BibleProject class? Meeting for a meal or prayer? Or something else?

# Closing prayer

End your time together by praying this liturgy:

*Lord Jesus,  
There is no greater prayer than yours —  
make us one as you are one,  
in devotion, in living, in love.  
Amen.*

# Practice

Do life in community

Jesus' call to community isn't a theory or an idea, it's a practice — a relational way of doing life together.

Jesus would preach to crowds of thousands, but he spent most of his time with a small circle of disciples, in homes and around tables.

It's important to worship in church on Sunday and be part of a larger community, but it's just as important to know and name your "twelve" and your "three." To cultivate spiritual friendships that last for years.

So our final practice is to identify our intentional community and begin to meet with them regularly.

**01** Identify a community to meet with regularly.

**02** This community could be with just one or two others, or a dozen or even more.

**03** We recommend you meet weekly, but it could be bi-weekly or monthly.

**04** We also recommend you share a meal when you meet. The act of “breaking bread” is central to the Christian way. Something powerful happens when we eat together.

- But remember, there’s no one “right” model for you to follow. You may choose a house church with 20 kids running around a backyard on a Sunday afternoon or a small triad for group spiritual direction early in the morning.
- We encourage you to follow the pathway of your church – whether in a small group, table community, or house church, or a women’s or men’s Bible study.
- You could follow this Course with any of the nine Practices available from Practicing the Way, share a weekly meal and pray for one another, or work through more free resources from BibleProject, like the following:
  - Reflections mini-cast with discussion questions: [bibleproject.com/podcasts/reflections](https://bibleproject.com/podcasts/reflections)
  - Reading plans: [bibleproject.com/reading-plans](https://bibleproject.com/reading-plans)
  - Heavier classes: [bibleproject.com/classroom](https://bibleproject.com/classroom)

## Practice reflection

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

For your final reflection in this course, take five to ten minutes to journal out your answers to the following two questions.

**01** As you think back over this Course, what is sticking with you most?

**02** Take a moment to remember how you felt when you first started this Course. What has changed in how you feel or think? How do you see yourself or God differently? Do you notice any change or growth?