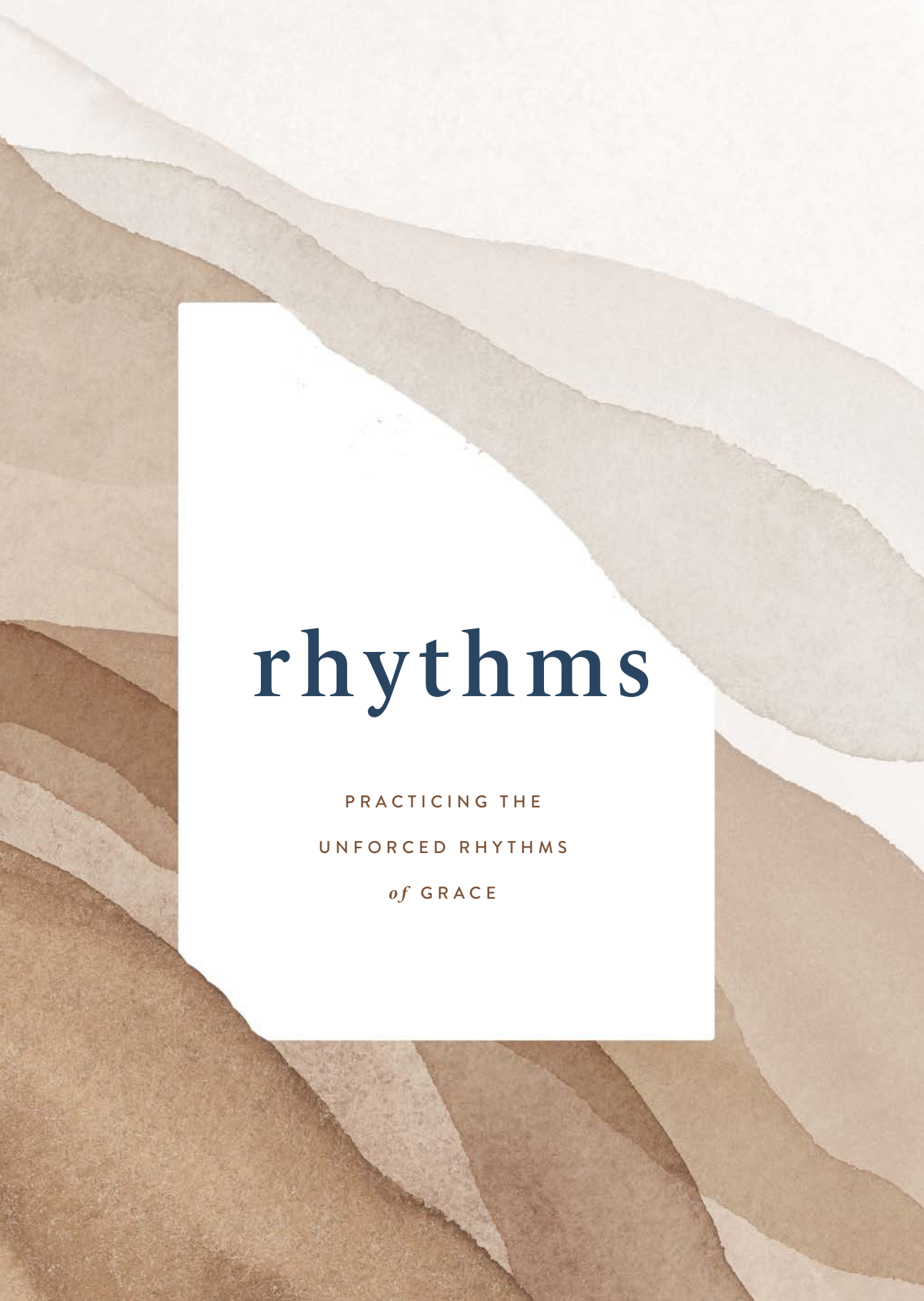
rhythms
PRACTICING THE
UNFORCED RHYTHMS
of GRACE

PRACTICING THE UNFORCED RHYTHMS *of* GRACE

All of life is built on rhythms. We wake, eat, work, play, and sleep. We listen and we respond. We hurt and we heal.

Whether it's the New Year or a random moment of spontaneity, sometimes I feel the urge to make a bunch of changes to my life. I want to sleep more and worry less. I want to do more but experience each moment fully. I want to connect with my friends and family, but I also desperately need meaningful time to myself.

Jesus makes an invitation in Matthew 11 that you and I need to hear as we begin a new year. Read this invitation slowly, fully taking in the meaning of each word:

> *"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it.* ***Learn the unforced rhythms of grace****. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."* (Matthew 11:28–30 MSG; emphasis added)

What we need is rhythms—good rhythms that, when practiced, lead us into a more vibrant, abundant life in every way that matters.

For the next four weeks, let's learn the "unforced rhythms of grace" together. Let's respond every morning to God's invitation to walk with him, to work with him, to watch how he does it. Let's center our time and energy on that which will make life better both for our sake and for the sake of those we love.

God, come and teach us the rhythms of grace,
the rhythms of life that mold and fashion our days
into a lifestyle of abundant living.

Infuse every moment we set aside with
your love, your voice, and your power.
You are our teacher. We are your students.

May new rhythms produce new life
for your glory, and our good.

Amen.





WEEK ONE

connection

“Your word is a lamp

to my feet...”

PSALM 119:105

Connection through Scripture

DAY

4

One of the quickest ways to change and growth is by setting new rhythms, practices that weave moments together into wholly beautiful, life-giving days.

And when beginning new rhythms, there's no better place to start than looking at opportunities for meaningful connection. You and I were made to connect, to have authentic, façade-free relationships with God, ourselves, and others.

And God has given us tools, incredibly meaningful ways that we can grow in our ability to foster a thriving connection with him, ourselves, and others.

So today, we focus on connection by looking at how Scripture provides a vital avenue to knowing and being known, to loving and being loved.

SCRIPTURE

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Psalm 119:105



WEEK 1: CONNECTION

Devotional

As high of a value as we place on Scripture as Christians, as strong of language as we use to describe the authority and merit of the Bible, something is fundamentally off about our approach to engaging with God's word.

The sentence I've written that has received by far the most negative feedback is:

"The Bible is not God."

Now, a portion of the negative feedback is warranted. There has been a severe mistranslation, or at least misteaching, in John 1 that is deeply confusing. John's gospel begins by saying, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"* (John 1:1). So my statement that the Bible is not God seems in direct contradiction with John writing *"the Word was God."* That is, until you understand that John is actually talking about Jesus himself.

The Greek for *Word* is actually *Logos*, a term that would be better translated as "divine reason," or "the mind of God." But John 1:1 is maybe best clarified

in simply reading through the next few lines. So, in context, John 1:1–4 says:

> *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **He** was in the beginning with God. All things were made through **him**, and without **him** was not any thing made that was made. In **him** was life, and the life was the light of men. [emphasis added]*

But beyond a misunderstanding of the true intent of John 1, I believe there is a deeper problem in our approach to God's word.

Growing up, spending time alone with God was a direct equivalent with reading the Bible. And still today, when I speak on the subject of spending time alone with God, I have people who come up to me to let me know that they read their Bibles every day.

The center of so many of our worship services is a teacher standing up, and across the better part of thirty minutes, unpacking the words of Scripture.

Here's why that's a problem: Scripture was never intended to be a substitute for God. The Bible was always meant to be an avenue to fully knowing its author, a way of connecting—heart, mind, and soul—with its Creator.

As humans, we tend to mold our life and experiences into that which we can control. We can control a time every day where we simply read and study a book. We can control a gathering once a week where educated teachers speak and apply principles from Scripture.

But what we need is not more things under our control. What we need is rhythms of giving God control. What we need is a Bible that guides us to its Author so that our time alone is centered on knowing and being known by God in an intimate, transformative, personal way. What we need is a service that invites God to show up in power, that courageously equips us to make space in our busy life for God to be the center, even when we don't know for sure where that will lead.

What we need is to reorient our engagement with Scripture as an avenue to connection instead of an end unto itself.

A. W. Tozer said it this way:

> If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference.



I believe the same sentiment applies to our time alone with God. And in that reality lies an immense opportunity.

You can connect with the God of the universe in an unexpected, personal, life-changing way every day. The Inspirer of the Bible himself wants to illuminate the pages of Scripture for you every day. And today, right now, as you make space to meditate and converse with the God of John, of David, the God who divinely ensured that you could have his word, anything and everything is possible.

Right now, decide to give God control over the next ten minutes and make space for him to simply be with you. May Scripture serve as a perfect guide to true, deep, meaningful connection with the God who loves you more than words could ever say.



MEDITATION

As you take time to be still, fighting for even a few moments of quiet before the noise of the day, read these words from Psalm 46:10 slowly and carefully:

> *Be still, and know that I am God.*
> *I will be exalted among the nations,*
> *I will be exalted in the earth!*

Now lay those words before God and give up control today to the only one who actually has control. More than reading or understanding them, practice them right now.

Breathe in, and out, and be still in the presence of a personal, highly exalted God.



CONVERSATION

Now, from a place of stillness, begin a conversation with the God of Scripture. Journal your thoughts and questions about God word and invite him to give you wisdom and revelation today.

1. What questions do you have about Scripture, and how God wants to best use it in your life?

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Joshua 1:8

2. Where do you need wisdom and revelation today? Search for Scripture on the subject, or ask God to put an applicable passage on your heart and mind.

3. What verse do you need to be front and center today? Take time to pick a verse and ask God for revelation on it.

I've heard Scripture called a "manual for living," but the reality is that the Bible is so much more than that. A car manual, for instance, is a book written by a manufacturer or mechanic you'll likely never meet, and who cannot apply its pages and principles to your life.

But you have the Holy Spirit in you, and *with* you. The Author and Inspirer of Scripture longs to give you direct revelation on how to apply its value and principles to your circumstances.

Read, study, memorize, and engage with Scripture. But don't limit its power in your life by ending there. Allow God himself to use Scripture for higher, better purposes. And in doing so, discover what it's like to be a "*tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither*" (Psalm 1:3).

My growth tracker S M T W T F S

ACTION

Pick one verse today and place it somewhere that you'll see throughout your day. Write it on your hand, make it your phone or computer background, write it on a sticky note at your desk. And allow it to foster and build meaningful, abiding connection with your heavenly Father who knows you and loves you.

RECOVER YOUR LIFE. TAKE A REAL REST. LIVE FREELY AND LIGHTLY.

When we read these words from Jesus in Matthew 11, it's easy to think they're for someone else. Someone with a more laid-back personality. Someone who's super spiritual. Someone's anyone else's who must have their act together.

But here's the deal. Jesus's invitation to find real rest is for YOU.

It's for the you who *doesn't* have their act together. The you who *doesn't* have life figured out. The you who he loves and the you whose load he wants to lighten!

Each day of this 28-day devotional invites you to break away from your normal rhythm of waking, eating, working, and sleeping to discover a spiritual rhythm that, when practiced, will lead you into a more vibrant, abundant life in every way that matters.



Jesus wasn't kidding when he said you can find rest in the midst of the craziness of life. He can give it to you, and *Rhythms* will guide you in that direction.

***So please request your copy today* and thank you for your donation to help create more content that helps more people connect with God each day!**

Get "Rhythms" devotional book