



SATURATE

STUDY GUIDE

Living out the family, missionary, and servant identities we've discussed should not be, and cannot be, relegated to mere activities we do, on top of everything else that fills our lives. That's not how God designed life to work! If we're learning to see all of life through the lens of the gospel, how do we wrap our lives around the gospel and our identities? In other words, "How do we infuse the gospel into the everyday stuff of life?"

EVERYDAY RHYTHMS

Seeing church mainly as an event creates a significant problem for mission, because most people are very busy. And the more we fill our lives with church events and programs, the more we get pulled out of everyday life with people who don't yet know Jesus. Besides, we will never be able to live out our identities as family, servants, and missionaries in one or two church events a week. It must involve everyday life. We need to see that life is the program, because people need to see what it means to follow Jesus in the everyday stuff of life. We realized we needed to help our people see that life has a normal rhythm. All people everywhere are engaged in things that happen in rhythm, day in and day out. When we engage in these everyday rhythms with Jesus-centered, Spirit-led direction, mission can happen any time and everywhere, and anybody can be a part of it.

If we're not going to add things to our busy lives, then the question we ask this week and next is, "How do we infuse the gospel into the everyday stuff of life?" The answer comes in understanding our everyday rhythms. We'll look at six rhythms: eat, celebrate, recreate, listen, story, and bless. But the idea of these rhythms is that everyone does these six things, they're some of the best, easiest ways to live out the gospel and infuse our gospel identities into our everyday lives, we just have to be intentional about doing so.

EAT

"Eating" means we regularly eat meals with others, as a display of the love, provision, and acceptance of God. We overcome idols like selfishness (giving up "family time" and extra cost to feed others), perfection ("the house is a mess"), safety ("they're not like me"), and control (when folks just show up). We "lay down our lives" and invite people in, followers of Jesus or not, and generously share good food and drink with them.

Something very significant happens at a meal. We are hungry. We are in need. And that need is met only by something outside of our bodies. It's interesting that Jesus called himself "the bread of life" (John 6:35). We have a deep spiritual hunger that can be met only by Jesus ... When people eat together, they experience something more than a physical event. A spiritual event takes place, whether they acknowledge it or not. God has provided a means to sustain life outside of our own lives, and whenever we eat, we are experiencing God's care and provision.

The meal creates an experience of unity, of oneness at a table. This is why most business deals take place during meals and why more conversation happens when people have drinks in their hands or are sitting together around a table. This is also why Jesus was called a friend of sinners, he identified with them over meals (Matt. 11:19). And this is why the Lord's Supper or Eucharist is also called Communion, it is a common meal eaten together to remind us of a

common provision we share. We are one in our need and one in taking in God's provision for our need, thus, we have communion.

You're already eating, probably three times a day. Don't do it alone. Do it with others and watch Jesus join you at the table and change the meal. He's well acquainted with joining people at the table. Invite him to dinner with a few others and see what he does.

CELEBRATE

"Celebration" means that when we gather together, God is the reason we celebrate. Celebrations, festivals, and parties are seen throughout the Bible and history. By seeing God as the reason to celebrate everything, this rhythm asks you to think about what you celebrate, and to create times to remember and display the One who is truly worth celebrating.

Everybody engages in some form of celebration, from birthday parties to national holidays. Disciples celebrate the grace of God given to us through Jesus in order to express how good and gracious God is. As people made in the image of God, we were created to celebrate. God celebrates. He parties! When God created, he celebrated. He said, "This is very good!" God's Word also directs us to celebrate his good work with him. God's people look back to what God has done for us through Jesus and forward to what we will enjoy forever in Jesus's presence. We celebrate these blessings. Jesus actually compared his kingdom to a great party (Matthew 22:1-2). One day, we will have an amazing celebration, with Jesus at the center of the party (Revelation 19:6-9). In bringing the better wine to the party at Cana (John 2:1-11), Jesus was bringing what they lacked in a generous and loving way. In stripping down to take on the posture of a servant sent to wash his disciples' feet (John 13:1-11), Jesus was bringing a servant towel for clean-up. And in the lives of those around us, sometimes there is simply no party where there should be one. As disciples of Jesus, we follow Jesus by bringing what is lacking to the celebrations in our culture.

Let's host parties for friends' birthdays, anniversaries, or accomplishments, and as we do, let's celebrate God's work in and through them (whether they follow Jesus or not!). Let's enjoy holidays, and as we do, let's give thanks to the Giver of everything in November, celebrate eternal freedom in July, and outright party at Easter. Let's give good gifts; let's 'bring the better wine' (literally and figuratively)! The kingdom is like a party. And we are the party people, because we belong to the King who parties. He is the best at celebrating.

RECREATE

"ReCreate" is our word for the rhythm of "rest and create." "ReCreating" means we take time to rest, play, create, and restore beauty, in ways that reflect God to ourselves and to others.

Our God created and then rested. He didn't stop sustaining the universe and take a nap. His rest was a deep satisfaction with what he had created. His creation was very good. If you believe the good news of Jesus Christ, you also are able to truly rest. We can live with the confidence that God is running the world, so we don't have to. We can be settled at heart, knowing that Jesus has done all the work necessary to make us acceptable to God, so we no longer need to try to earn his acceptance through our work. We can work with all of our hearts unto the Lord out of gratitude, and actually be at rest while we are working.

And if we believe the gospel, we can create amazing stuff as an outpouring of our new identity as new-creation people. In fact, those of us who are in Christ should be the most creative people, because we have been freed from enslavement to the approval of others, and we also are daily becoming more like our Creator. Because he has restored and is re- storing us, we also are able to bring restoration to things broken, distorted,

or marred by sin. This leads us to work in a state of rest, create at rest, and play at rest.

I have discovered that my lack of faith in God's power to save, sustain, and secure me is displayed in my lack of ability to truly rest, create, and play ... Too many of us can't rest and create. But we should be the most playfully rested people on Earth, because our Dad has it all taken care of for us!

LISTEN

Everybody is listening all the time. But who or what are we listening to, and are we paying attention to what we're hearing? "Listening" means that we pay careful attention to God and others. By knowing God's story, setting aside time to listen to God's voice above others, and listening well to our family and mission field, we speak the greater truth of God's story and work to areas of disbelief - ours and "theirs," by comparing those other, lesser stories to Jesus's greater one.

We listen to God: As God's people, we have his Spirit in us, regularly speaking to us through the Scriptures as we read them and recall them; through his church as we interact with one another; and personally as we listen closely to his voice (in John 10:1-21, Jesus said his sheep hear and listen to his voice, and in John 14:15, he said his Spirit would be the means by which we abide with him and are led by him). Listening also reminds me that the Spirit can speak to others in our silence. In fact, our willingness to quiet our souls and care for others often creates the best space for the Spirit to work. One of Jesus's titles is "Wonderful Counselor" (Isa. 9:6). He said that when he left, he would send "another Counselor" (John 14:16 RSV), the Holy Spirit, to come and dwell in us. If you are a child of God, you have the Counselor living in you.

We listen to others: People are interesting. If we will listen, we will discover this. They are image bearers of God. They are broken, marred, and not fully together, just like us, but they are image bearers, nonetheless. It's amazing, when you take the time to listen, how much you can learn. You begin to see how amazingly unique and creative each one of God's image bearers is. One of the greatest gifts we can give one another is a set of open ears and a closed mouth. Sure, there are times to speak, but are we willing to listen to one another? Quiet your soul and listen to God. And close your mouth once in a while and listen to others. Do both together, and you will find yourself joining in with the activity of the Spirit working through you as his dwelling place. Remember, you are the temple of the living God! If you will listen, people will find themselves meeting with God when they are with you, even though they are not fully aware of it. We have God to give to people. Why would we want to get in the way of that by talking the whole time we are with them?

STORY

The idea of "story" means that we understand, experience, and intersect God's story and others' stories. As we learn to see all of life through the gospel lens, we live out our identities by knowing the story we're living, knowing others' stories and listening for "lesser stories," and finding ways to display God's better story, in our own lives, in our church family, and in our mission field.

Everybody lives in light of a larger story. They are rehearsing these stories in their minds all of the time, and the stories provide the lenses through which people view their worlds. A person's dominant story will significantly shape his beliefs, behaviors, and everything in his life.

We should all know God's story and regularly rehearse it to ourselves and to one other. We need to be regularly in God's Word, the Bible, in order to be acquainted with his story. We also need to listen well to others' stories so we are able to bring the good news of God's redemptive story to bear on the stories of those who don't yet know how God can redeem their brokenness.

BLESS

To “bless” means we intentionally display God’s grace through words, gifts, and actions. Followers of Jesus believe we’ve been blessed with unmerited favor and provision and see our own blessings as a means God uses to bless others. We don’t truly own anything yet have more than we could have dreamed. So, we use God’s resources for God.

Everybody has been blessed. And God’s people know they have been blessed to be a blessing. We give from what we have to others in the form of words, actions, or tangible gifts. Such blessing is not meant to be a once-in-a-while deal. God intends for us to live in a perpetual rhythm of blessing others. This truth is one of the distinctive aspects of God’s people throughout God’s story. Whatever God gives to his people, he plans to give through them to others who need what they have. We have been blessed to be a blessing.

Another way of saying all of this is: Live in such a way that it would demand a “Jesus explanation.” In other words, you wouldn’t be able to explain what you do or why without needing to talk about Jesus. That’s what this group had done. There was no way to explain their actions without also needing to talk about Jesus. Ask the Spirit to show you who to bless and how to bless them. Listen, and then bless with words, actions, or gifts.

AN INTEGRATED, INTENTIONAL LIFE

As a final point in this conversation of rhythms, we must remember that as we see all of life through the lens of the gospel, everything be- comes integrated: we don’t make, say, just Mon- day your “Christian community” night, then Saturday morning our “mission time,” and so on, that mindset puts on and takes off the various “hats” of each identity. But the truth of the gospel is that you’re always a disciple of God: every moment we’re part of the family of God, we’re always servants, and we’re never NOT missionaries.

The beauty of our daily lives is that God has designed each of us, and indeed, every human in every culture in all of history, with the ability for our gospel identities to intertwine in simple ways: our identities and rhythms overlap as we live out God’s objective story. As just one ex- ample, it’s as we listen well to stories that we know how to bless and what to celebrate, and it’s common to hear those stories around a table or while playing together.

Bottom line: If you have the Spirit of Christ Jesus, you are part of his body, the church. Everything you do matters. You are never alone. He is always with you. And because of this, you are always showing people what being a disciple, one who is submitting to Jesus in all of life and leading others to do the same, is like. You are making disciples every moment. The real question is, “Who are you making disciples of?” Are you showing others what submission to Jesus in the normal stuff of life is like? Can they watch you, hang out with you, eat with you, and vacation with you, and see what it would be like if they were to love and obey Jesus in everyday life? Normal life is lived with gospel intentionality for the sake of seeing others come to know Christ.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. When, where, and with whom do you normally eat? What is the typical tone of your breakfasts, your lunches, and your dinners? (For example: rushed, relaxed, tense, celebratory)
2. What holidays, events, and everyday things do you typically celebrate? Considering the past year, what has each of those celebrations looked like?
3. In a typical month, how well and how often do you rest and have fun? What types of things do you do when you rest and play?
4. Do you consider yourself a creative person? If you don't, was there a time in your life when you did, and what would you create if you could? If you do, what types of things do you create?
5. With what consistency do you listen to God? How do you normally listen to him? (For example: Bible reading? Prayer? Discerning the voice of the Spirit?)
6. How well would you say you listen to others? Does your listening stem more from a place of information gathering, compassion, genuine interest, looking to fix things, or something else?
7. Considering earlier weeks' conversations, what are some of the "lesser stories" you find yourself believing? How often do you remind yourself of the Story of God, to yourself or others?
8. In what tangible ways have you blessed others this past week? What was your motive in those blessings? If you can't think of ways you've blessed people, what can you do today?