



Candlewood Church



HOLY HABITS

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BIG IDEA – Checking in with God, not checking Him off a list.

Scripture Focus – Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray. **Mark 1:35 NLT**

Blurb: Checking in, not checking off.

As a Jesus follower, habits are supposed to create freedom, margin, rhythm: room for God to move. But have you noticed how easily that flips? Our habits get so fixed that a disruption doesn't just inconvenience us, it offends us. And here's the catch: you don't have to be old to get set in your ways. Somewhere along the way, the habit that was meant to serve the relationship starts competing with it.

A checklist doesn't care if you were present. It just wants the box checked. Checking in only happens when we actually show up.

REST VIDEO



I miss Kindergarten. I miss the joy of getting a carton of milk for a nickel or chocolate milk for a dime. But more than that, I miss naptime! The lights in our classroom would be dimmed,

little floor mats neatly arranged across the floor, our teacher quietly reading out of a book, like [The Mouse and the Motorcycle](#) by Beverly Clearly.

Close your eyes. Take a deep breath and just relax in the presence of God and reflect on how good He is. Pause for a moment of gratitude, letting God's peace roll over you.

NAPS

I love naps. I tell people, if they ever have napping as an Olympic Sport, I would win the gold medal.

HOLY HABITS

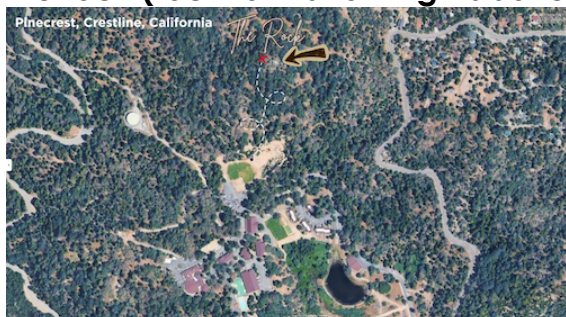
Today we are looking at holy habits. From the day after I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ until today, I have had a habit. For me it's a holy sacred habit of meeting with God in the beauty of His creation. Over the 49 years of following Jesus, **I have come to cherish four places of significance where I both talked to God, but mostly just listened. Prayer is a conversation, but I believe often times, I talk to much; I complain too much.** Then, at some point, God says, "Are you done? Do you want a little cheese with that whine?"

I call these places the stump, the rock, the cliff and the sky.

- **The stump** (Big Bear, Oak Knoll Lodge),



- **The rock** (rock formation high above Pinecrest Christian Conference Center),



- **The cliff** (the bench on the cliffs of Big Corona Beach, and



- **The sky (Lakeside in Tahoe).**



These are my favorite places to rest in God. To talk with God. To listen for His voice, sometimes with Bible in hand, other times just with open hands.

What are our rhythms of less?

What are our Holy Habits, not to produce but rest in and with the presence of God?

Jesus had habits?

Yeah, **Jesus had habits and rhythms of rest!**

To see the way Jesus set his patterns, his rhythms, let's look at 18 hours in the life of Christ out of Mark's gritty gospel:

One day out of Jesus' life in Mark 1:21-39.

An 18-hour day!

This single stretch of Mark actually contains almost everything you've ever wondered about how Jesus spends a typical day:

- **Jesus teaching in the synagogue as expected practice,**
 - **healing a crowd at Simon's door that evening,**
 - **withdrawing before dawn to a solitary place to pray,**
 - **the disciples finding him and saying everyone is looking for him, and**
 - **Jesus choosing to move on to other towns rather than stay with the crowd that wanted more.**
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Mark's passionate pace fits this passage perfectly.

The Greek word euthys, "immediately," shows up five times in these nineteen verses.

- In the Synagogue, with an unclean spirit,
- his fame spreading quickly,
- at Simon's mother-in-law's home,
- Healing the whole town at the door,
- then a hard out leaving before dawn.

It's seems exhausting, which is exactly why I love the raw urgency in Mark's gospel.

Plus, it's a great passage to see how "less is rest!"

The pace of the day is the argument for why the early-morning withdrawal is critical.

Here are four movements of habit through Jesus' day.



1. The Habit of Presence — verses 21-22 Sabbath, synagogue, teaching.

- "And they went into Capernaum, and **immediately** on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes." Mark 1:21-22 ESV

This is Jesus in his expected rhythm, doing what would be a regular custom, a holy habit of any rabbi of that day. Notice that Mark points out, that people were struck by something different in how he did it.

THEY WERE ASTONISHED AT HIS TEACHING.

Jesus experienced an ordinary practice before anything extraordinary happens.

- I understand Jesus teaching with authority, but why compare it to the scribes? It's the difference between borrowed authority versus his own! **The Greek word used for "authority" is the right to act, not just the ability to persuade. Scribes authority came from constantly quoting famous Rabbis of the past. There's nothing really wrong with that. But when Jesus spoke, we find out that it rattled the demons in the room! See Dig Deeper notes below.**



2. The Habit of Availability — verses 23-34 Fully ready to engage in Kingdom business.

- And **immediately** there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.” But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! **He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.**” And **at once** his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee. **Mark 1:23-28 ESV**



- And **immediately** he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon’s mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and **immediately** they told him about her. And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them. That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And **he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons.** And he would not permit the demons to speak, **because they knew him. Mark 1:24-34 ESV**
- This is Jesus’ habit of being ready for anything:
 - **an exorcism in public, then Simon's mother-in-law healed in private, then the whole town gathered at the door once the sun set.*** (historical detail: the crowd waits until sundown to come, because Sabbath travel restrictions were still in effect until then.)
 - **The moment Jesus’ day of rest technically ends the urgency of the day rushes in.** Jesus doesn't get the evening off. Jesus references this idea when he says “we must work while it is still day.”



3. The Habit of Withdrawal — verses 35-37 Very early, still dark, solitary place of prayer.

- And **rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark**, he departed and **went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed**. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, **"Everyone is looking for you."** Mark 1:35-37 ESV
- When Simon and the others go looking for Jesus, they find him praying. This is the explicit "time with God." Luke's gospel mentions that the busier Jesus got the more important it was for Jesus to get away with God! **It wasn't a reaction, it was a pattern, a habit in Jesus' life.**
- "But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray." Luke 5:15-16 ESV
- *Mark doesn't say Jesus was exhausted here, like the Apostle John writes about Jesus arriving at well in [John 4:6](#). But we know that Jesus experienced very human exhaustion. Dallas Jenkins' "The Chosen" Season 2, Episode 3, titled "[Matthew 4:24](#)," beautifully captures moments like these. There is something supernatural about this holy habit of **withdrawal**. Where God replenishes and restores us like he did with Elijah in the desert. **See Dig Deeper notes** below.



4. The Habit of Clarity — verses 38-39 Purpose, rather than passivity drives this habit.

- **Choosing to make the decision, do the next right thing, do the hard thing, rather than the convenient, popular or persuasive thing.**
- And he said to them, **"Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out."** And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. Mark 1:38-39 ESV
- **Remember why Peter and their others were looking for Jesus to begin with.** Sure, they could have been concerned, but Jesus clearly had disappeared for a while before. I don't want to read into Mark's motives, but Jesus' words follow, **"Everyone is looking for you."** Were the disciples simply hoping he would return to the crowd, maybe even back to what was making Jesus popular?

- **Jesus calls out a completely different priority instead.** Jesus wasn't rejecting the crowd as unworthy. Jesus having this mission, this holy habit of clarity driving him to what he actually came to do.
- **Mark 1:38, is where Jesus names his own priority instead of going with the successful flow. It is the strongest example of us "examining our habits" as we understand these moments in the Gospels.**

You realize by now saying "no" is much harder than saying "yes" to busyness!

- Verse 38 is really a decision about **what not to keep doing** (even if it's highly effective or successful, but choosing to move on instead).

Jesus moves through this 18-hour day going from his ordinary rhythm, into full demand, into withdrawal, then into clarity of mission and purpose.

Which of these four is closest to where you actually are right now?

APPLICATION

Habit of Presence (vv. 21-22)

- What's an ordinary rhythm you keep showing up to, whether or not you expect anything to happen there anymore?
- **Has showing up become about being seen as faithful, or is there still a real expectation that something could shift?**

Habit of Availability (vv. 23-34)

- **Is your instinct with an interruption to resent it or to notice it? What would it take to shift that?**
- **Where have you started guarding your own presence, actually showing up, deciding in advance who's worth the interruption and who isn't?**
- **Is your struggle actually protecting your time, or is it that you never withdraw long enough to have anything left to give?**

Habit of Withdrawal (vv. 35-37)

- **When did you last step away before you were forced to?**
- **What's your version of "getting away"? Do you protect it, or do you give it up because calendar fills up?**
- **When you do withdraw, do you still feel like "everyone's looking for you"? What's underneath that pressure to be reachable?**

Habit of Clarity (vv. 38-39)

- What's the next "right thing," you already know you're supposed to move toward, but you don't because the noise of the "crowd" in front of you is louder?
 - Where has urgency been setting your priorities instead of calling?
 - What would look like to say **no** to something good this week because there is a better **yes** waiting?
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SCRIPTURES

Mark 1:21-22 ESV

And they went into Capernaum, and **immediately** on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.

Mark 1:23-28 ESV

And **immediately** there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! **He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.**" And **at once** his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

And **immediately** he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and **immediately** they told him about her. And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them. That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And **he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons.** And he would not permit the demons to speak, **because they knew him.** Mark 1:29-34 ESV

Mark 1:35-37 ESV

And **rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark**, he departed and **went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.** And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, "**Everyone is looking for you.**"

Mark 1:38-39 ESV

And he said to them, "**Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.**" And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.



DIG DEEPER NOTES



The Word Mark Can't Stop Using

Read Mark's gospel in Greek, or even just read a good translation slowly, and you'll notice a word he can't seem to put down: euthys, "immediately." He uses it 41 times, more than any other gospel writer by a wide margin. It's part of what gives Mark that breathless, on-the-move feel, like the whole story is being told by someone who can't quite catch his breath.

Watch what happens in our passage, Mark 1:21-39. In the span of ten verses, from Jesus walking into the synagogue to the news of a healed fever spreading through the house, "immediately" shows up five times, in verses 21, 23, 28, 29, and 30. **Five "immediatelys" in ten verses.**

Then, from verse 31 all the way through verse 39, nothing. Not once.

That's not an accident of Mark's editing. The moment Jesus actually reaches out, takes Simon's mother-in-law by the hand, and lifts her up, the sentence itself slows down. It stays slow through the whole town gathering at the door that evening, through Jesus slipping out before dawn, through the disciples finding him alone in prayer. None of it carries that urgent word anymore.

Make of that what you will, I certainly have, but it's worth noticing: the same gospel that can't stop saying "immediately" for ten straight verses goes completely silent the instant Jesus touches someone, and stays silent through the prayer that follows. **Maybe Mark is showing us something he never bothers to say outright: some things in a day are worth rushing. Others are only ever done well slow.**



Borrowed Authority vs. His Own

Mark doesn't spend any time explaining what made Jesus' teaching different. He just tells us **people were amazed**, and then lets the next event answer the question. A man with an unclean spirit cries out, Jesus tells it to be quiet and come out, and it does. The crowd's own reaction in verse 27 defines "authority" for us: "A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." Whatever set Jesus apart, Mark ties it to power, not polish.

The Greek word behind "authority" is *exousia*, the right to act, not just the ability to persuade. That distinction matters, because it points us toward what the scribes were actually missing.

Scribes were trained scholars of the Torah, a distinct group from the Pharisees though the two often overlapped, and their teaching worked by citation. A ruling carried weight because it could be traced back through a chain of respected teachers before it. We see this pattern clearly in the Mishnah, compiled around 200 AD, where teachings are consistently anchored to named predecessors, "Rabbi so-and-so said, in the name of Rabbi so-and-so." Scholars generally read that same convention back into the first century scribal method Jesus would have encountered, though it's worth saying plainly that we're inferring backward from a later source, not reading a first-century scribal transcript.

Whatever Jesus had, Mark never describes it as borrowed. No chain of predecessors, no citation. He speaks, and a spirit obeys.

We tend to build our own credibility the way the scribes did, citing sources, deferring to experts, borrowing weight from someone more established than us. There's nothing wrong with that; it's often wise. But it's worth sitting with the fact that Jesus needed none of it, and the room noticed the difference immediately.



Withdrawal and God's Restoration

Elijah gives us the clearest version of this. After the confrontation with Baal's prophets on Carmel, he runs from Jezebel, walks a day into the wilderness alone, sits under a broom tree, and asks God to let him die. He falls asleep. An angel touches him and says only, "Arise and eat," and there's bread and water already there. He eats, sleeps again, and the angel wakes him a second time: "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you." On the strength of that meal, he travels forty days to Horeb, the mountain of God (1 Kings 19:1-8). It's worth noticing what actually happens in that sequence: **Elijah doesn't withdraw because he's strong enough to seek God. He withdraws collapsed, and provision meets him there before any word of correction or commissioning does.**

Earlier, during the drought, Elijah hides at the Kerith Ravine and is fed by ravens, then moves in with a widow in Zarephath whose flour and oil don't run out for as long as the famine lasts (1 Kings 17). Withdrawal, then provision, both times ahead of his next major assignment.

Moses gives us a similar picture. On Sinai for forty days and nights, Exodus says he "neither ate bread nor drank water" (34:28). Not fed supernaturally, sustained instead by presence itself replacing the need for food. Worth holding these as two different mechanisms making a similar point: withdrawal with God isn't empty time, whether it's filled by provision or by God's presence standing in for what the body would normally require.

And then there's Jesus, Mark 1:13 tells us that after forty days in the wilderness being tested, "the angels were ministering to him." Same shape as Elijah: wilderness, testing, angelic strengthening, immediately before stepping into public ministry. It's the same "withdrawal that restores" thread.

One more instance, Luke 22:43 says an angel appeared to Jesus in Gethsemane and strengthened him during his prayer before the arrest.

Withdrawal in Scripture is rarely where the story pauses. It's usually where something meets the person who withdrew.