

FORMATION

THE ART & SCIENCE

OF HOW WE CHANGE

VOLUME III: REST

PRACTICE GUIDE

TALKIN' BOUT PRACTICE.

So many of us want to change, but simply don't know how to kickstart the process. We are plagued by all these grand visions of the type of people we could be—the type of people we want to be—we just don't know how to get there.

That's where a little something called practice comes in. Practice helps us bridge the gap between what we want to be, and what we are. Between what we know and who we are. Practice is what the Holy Spirit uses to make us into who we were supposed to be all along.

In the words of James K.A. Smith, “the things you do, do things to you.” So this booklet is intended to help you practice. And our prayer is that the Spirit uses it to accomplish what only he can accomplish.

Whoever hears these words of mine and puts them into practice will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

– Jesus

SILENCE & SOLITUDE

Designate an uninterrupted period of time each day (ideally longer than 15 minutes) to be alone in a quiet place with nothing around except perhaps a journal and a pen. This practice makes use of silence and solitude to speak to and hear from the Holy Spirit.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

- Do your best to remove any potential distractions (TV, your phone, etc.)
- It may help to pray aloud so your mind doesn't wonder. So instead of praying silently, try speaking aloud to God in prayer.
- It also may help to use a journal to write down what God seems to be saying.
- Compare and contrast the things you feel like you heard God say with things he says in Scripture: do any of them match or echo things found in the bible? Do any of them contradict or run contrary to things in the bible? If so, this is a good sign that you may have misheard.
- Run the things you feel like you heard by other followers of Jesus (i.e. your LifeGroup), and let them affirm or guide as needed, based on what they know about you, your relationship with Jesus, and the Scriptures.

UNHURRYING PRAYER

This practice is intended to help us slow down and fight against hurry, anxiety, and stress. It consists of praying a brief prayer throughout the day. The prayer is as follows:

Father, I am concerned with many things right now, but only one thing is necessary. Help me to remember that my worth is not in what or how much I accomplish—it's not even in how busy I am, but rather in what you have done for me. Amen.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

- Before praying, take a slow, deep breath. Spend more time exhaling than inhaling (i.e. count to three while inhaling, and six while exhaling).
- You can 1) pray this prayer anytime throughout the day when you feel yourself becoming hurried or anxious, or 2) at set times, like once at 10:00am and once at 2:00pm. Or you can do both—whatever is most helpful.

PARENTING YOUR PHONE

For those with small kids, generally the way bedtime works is that the children go to bed well before their parents do, and the parents wake up well before the children do (at least ideally this is how it works). This practice takes that concept and applies it to our smartphones.

The idea is to give your phone a consistent “bedtime” and “wake up” time. If you normally go to sleep around 11:00, maybe your phone goes to bed at 9:00 or 9:30. If you normally wake up at 7:30, maybe your phone doesn’t wake up until 8:30.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

- Have your phone “sleep” in a different room than you sleep, so it’s not as tempting to be on it too late or grab it first thing in the morning.
- If you normally use your phone as your alarm clock, get an old school or digital alarm clock to use instead.
- If you struggle, have your spouse, roommate, or friend set time restrictions on certain time-wasting apps that correlate to your phone’s bedtime and wake time.

BONUS CHALLENGE

- After each successful week of parenting your phone, try moving its bedtime up by 15 or 30 minutes, giving you more and more screen-free time.

MAKE YOUR PHONE JUST A PHONE

This practice purposefully limits the capabilities of your phone and keeps it that way for an entire 21-day period, to help eliminate distractions in your life.

At the beginning of the 21 days, delete every app off of your phone except for the apps you absolutely have to have (likely leaving some combination of your text messaging app, phone app, calendar app, and maybe a navigation or maps app). Spend the entire 21 days using your phone like this without installing new apps. This challenges you to use your phone for only what is essential, and not for time-wasting apps.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

- If your phone won't allow you to delete some apps, and you're concerned they might distract you, have a spouse, roommate or friend set password-protected restrictions to prevent you from using those apps.
- For most smartphones, there is a way to change your phone to black & white or grayscale mode, that removes all color from the screen. Sometimes this can help at a psychological level to take some of the appeal out of constantly checking your phone.

BONUS CHALLENGE

- After the 21 days, slowly add apps back to your phone, one by one (rather than all at once). Only add an app back to your phone if there are three legitimate *needs* for it in a week. For everything else, just use the app's corresponding website (in many cases, the websites are just as mobile-friendly and aren't as likely to become time-wasters).

FIVE-WEEK SABBATH

This practice is relatively straightforward: take a full Sabbath five weeks in a row. One day every week that you intentionally *don't* do the things you spend the rest of your week doing.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

- Pick a five-week span of time that you are unlikely to have something interrupt your Sabbath rhythm (i.e. if you have somewhere to be on 2 or 3 Saturdays out of the five weeks, and you plan to make Saturday your Sabbath, that's probably not a great five-week span for this practice).
- Generally speaking, staying away from your phone as much as possible on the Sabbath is a great idea. Maybe even stow it away in a drawer or cabinet the night before and leave it there for the all or most of the day.
- For those with younger children: figure out ways to get both you and your child(ren) out of your normal habits and settings on the Sabbath. If you spend a lot of time at home during the week, you may want to get out of the house or outside somewhere for your Sabbath. If the normal pattern is for the kids to watch a show or two on a normal day, get away from the TV for your Sabbath.
- On each Sabbath, spend a few minutes towards the end of the day journaling what you're thinking and feeling after a full day of rest. At the end of the five

weeks, compare your journal entries to each other and see if there is any change in your general mindset or posture after integrating the Sabbath into your life.

CALENDAR AUDIT

This practice takes time to evaluate where your time is going each week and then adjust your schedule to your priorities.

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS:

1. Pull up the prior week's calendar (if you don't keep a current calendar, making one can be step one!)
2. Either on paper or by physically adjusting it on your device, modify the prior week's calendar to be more accurate. If something is normally scheduled for one hour, and it regularly takes two, change it to two. If something was scheduled for an hour and only took thirty minutes, make it thirty minutes on the calendar.
3. Add in anything that you normally don't put on your calendar, but you do regularly. If you always like to eat lunch with a coworker or classmate on a certain day, put that on your calendar. If you come home certain days and watch an hour or two of Netflix, put that on your calendar to reflect it. As best you can, make your calendar reflective of all the ways that you regularly spend your time on a typical week (tip: if you like to keep your calendar "clean," do this on a second calendar instead of your main one).
4. Then, use the following questions to take an audit of your calendar:

- Does my calendar reflect the things I would say matter most in life (time with Jesus; time with roommates, spouse, or family; time with community/LifeGroup)?
- What neutral things (TV, time on my phone, hobbies) are eating up the most time in my schedule? What steps can I take to reduce that?
- How much time on a weekly basis is devoted to things that help me grow in a love for Jesus? How can I increase that time?
- How much time on a weekly basis is devoted to helping others grow in a love for Jesus? How can I increase that time?
- What things have I committed to that are taking unnecessary time away from the things that matter? How can I cut back on that while still honoring commitments as best I can?

PRAYER OF EXAMEN

This practice designates two times each day to pause and be aware of God’s activity in our world. It uses a version of St. Ignatius’ prayer of Examen to help with this. Decide on two fifteen-minute periods of time that you generally have free, put them on your calendar (so you don’t forget), and work through the following prompts:

- 1. Invite the Holy Spirit’s guidance.** For this prayer to be most helpful, we need the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to things we might not have otherwise thought about or notice. So ask the Holy Spirit to be present and active in your time. A good passage to use is 1 Samuel 3:10: “Speak, for your servant is listening.”
- 2. Review the day in thanksgiving.** What things are there to be thankful for since the last prayer of Examen? Search the events of the day for anything to thank God for. Big or little. In the words of James 1:17, “every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.”
- 3. Review the rest of the day.** As you think back over the other parts of the day, what emotions rise to the surface? Anger? Frustration? Disappointment? Sadness? Impatience? As these rise to the surface, spend time praying these emotions honestly to God. In the Psalms, you’ll find the psalmist praying every type of emotion to God. Spend some time doing just that.
- 4. Look forward to tomorrow in hope.** What are the things that you desperately want to hold onto from today that God’s grace will be sufficient for tomor-

row? Think of Jesus' words in Matthew, "each day has enough trouble of its own." What anxieties or concerns can you give over to God today, and (if needed) talk with him about more tomorrow? Ask the Holy Spirit to propel you into tomorrow with a new sense of God's purpose, wisdom, and grace?

And then you're done. You may need to use this page as a guide the first handful of times you pray, but over time this will become a very natural part of your day. It will become simply rails to run on for a regular conversation with God and a regular awareness of his activity in the world.

BONUS CHALLENGE

Eventually, you may want to do this more than twice a day. Try praying a version of the prayer (or an abbreviated version of it) every morning on your way to work or class. On your walk down the office hallway to each meeting. As you go and get the kids up in the morning.

