

DEVELOPING A RHYTHM OF PRACTICE

REFLECTION

From Sacred Rhythms (Chapter 9) by Ruth Hailey Barton

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Schedule some retreat time or some extended solitude at home to reflect on your experiences with the spiritual disciplines you have explored. As you begin your reflection, take time to enter into the kind of quiet that enables your soul to come out in God's presence.

ATTEND TO YOUR DESIRE

Ask: What words, phrases, prayers seem to most consistently capture my sense of longing for God and for spiritual transformation as I am experiencing it these days? What do I sense is most needed these days?

ACKNOWLEDGE THE MYSTERY OF SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION AND YOUR POWERLESSNESS TO BRING IT ABOUT

Ask: In what area(s) of my life right now am I most aware of my need for transformation and my powerlessness to bring it about? Acknowledge your powerlessness to God, and tell him of your desire to make yourself comfortable to him in a consistent way so that he can do his transforming work in you.

LISTEN TO YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Invite God to show you which disciplines, practiced in which ways, have been the most life giving to you. Notice points of consolation and desolation as well as times when it seemed as if God met you in the context of your practices. Notice which ones have been most stretching and which ones are resulting in deeper levels of connection with God and transformation toward Christlikeness. Ask: Which spiritual practices and relationships seem to be most powerful in fulfilling the desires of my heart right now?

BEGIN DEVELOPING A PLAN

Based on your reflections, what are you beginning to understand about your minimum daily/weekly/monthly requirements for ongoing spiritual formation? What have you observed? What concrete activities do you want to engage in as ways of offering yourself to God steadily and consistently? Ask God for his guidance in putting together a rhythm of spiritual practices that will meet your desire for life-giving connection with him and authentic spiritual transformation.

WRITE OUT YOUR PLAN

Write out your plan. Be sure to take into account the limits and opportunities of your life state, your personality, your circumstances.

1. What practices will I seek to engage on a daily basis? Weekly? Monthly? Yearly?
Where will I engage in these disciplines? What time of day/week/month/year?

2. In the “journeying together” process, what have I learned about the importance of community?

What spiritual practices will I share with a spiritual friend, or a group of friends, so as to grow together?

WRITE OUT YOUR PLAN, CONT.

3. What additional activities or practices are particularly important given my personality type or spirituality type? [Meyers-Brigg/Enneagram are helpful tools.]

How will I incorporate these into the rhythm of my spiritual practices?

Are there practices that are particularly needed because of my sins and negative patterns? [See Appendix C in *Sacred Rhythms - Choosing Spiritual Practices*']

WRITE OUT YOUR PLAN. CONT.

4. How will I need to adjust my schedule in order to consistently choose this rule of life?

What arrangements do I need to make with those I live with?

Do I need to have any discussions with those I work with in order to make this possible?

Are you able to commit yourself to this plan out of a desire for God rather than a sense of obligation?

TAKE A BREAK

After you have captured in writing your desire and plan for establishing spiritual rhythms, take a break if you wish. Go for a walk, take a nap, do some reading, pray or sit in silence. If you are spending time on this at home, feel free to set it aside for a day or two. Then come back to it and take another look at your plan.

How does it look and feel to you now? Is it personal enough? Balanced? Realistic?

Are you able to think of it as a flexible understanding rather than a legalistic straitjacket?

Are there any questions or concerns that you would like to raise with your spiritual friend or others who can pray for you?

COMMIT YOURSELF PRAYERFULLY

Are you able to commit yourself to this plan out of a desire for God rather than a sense of obligation?

As you feel ready, commit yourself prayerfully to your personal rule of life as a means of releasing yourself in a consistent manner to God's transforming work in you.
What adjustments do I need to make with those I live with?

NOTICE GENTLY

Feel free to explore and experiment with your rhythms and make adjustments along the way. After about six months, take some extended time in God's presence to evaluate how it is going and decide whether any larger adjustments need to be made.