

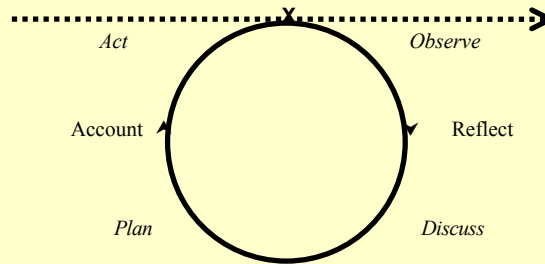
Session 2

The Semi-Circle : Rhythm of Life Teaching Outline

Review the Learning Circle

Can you identify any *kairos* events that have happened in the last week?

🕒 2 mins



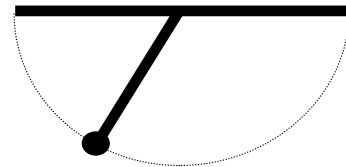
🕒 4 mins

Feedback: Refer to the homework from last session and give feedback and questions as to how you have applied and reflected on the practice of the Learning Circle.

INTRODUCTION

In our hectic, stressful world how do you recognise effective, Godly patterns of work, relaxation, ministry and reflection in your life?

WORKBOOK PG. 1



This session is about: *how to live for God as a human being, not a human doing. It provides a framework to understand how to have Godly responses to enable us to live a life guided by his hand.*

- The Semi-Circle is like the arc of a pendulum swinging. It represents a process that helps us identify rhythms and patterns of work, rest, fruitfulness and abiding, to acknowledge the need for effective rhythms and patterns in our lives to prevent us from becoming overstretched.

In this session we will look at:

1. God's plan of rest and work for humanity.
2. Jesus' example and teaching on rhythm.
3. Establishing effective rhythms and patterns in our own lives.
4. How to be guided by the Holy Spirit to achieve this goal.

Our Culture and the Context of ‘Activity’

Overstretched Lives:



- Today’s pace of life leads to blurred perspective on managing time.
- We’ve all got busyness in our lives...even in our churches.
- Stress and burnout leave us feeling unable to maintain a normal grip on life.

Doing vs. Being:



- Admired, respected or accepted for what we ‘do’, rather than who we ‘are’.
- Pressure to strive in all kinds of activity is high.
- Building one’s identity around the activities one does is increasing.
- We are defined by God, not by what we do.
- Misconception: You are what you do...we work hard to find acceptance...what are the root issues?



Share a personal experience either of finding acceptance apart from performance, or of being over-worked and stressed out which led to finding a rhythm of life...

We need a biblical framework for a rhythm of life.

Key Point

We need to learn how to manage our lives so that we don’t find ourselves having breakdowns. There is a pattern that all of us were destined to live from the beginning and are now called to live in the Kingdom.

SCRIPTURAL BASIS – GOD’S MASTER PLAN

WORKBOOK PG. 2

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground--everything that has the breath of life in it--I give every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.... The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Genesis 1:26-2:3 & 15

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

Genesis 3:8-9

There are several things we can learn about work and rest from Genesis:

WORKBOOK PG. 2

WORK ... blessing of creation, not curse of the fall

Image: “Let us make man in our image...”




- God is Creator. We are made in his likeness and intended for creative work.
- Work is an essential part of human existence. Productive lives are what we’ve been called to. There’s no unemployment in the Kingdom and there is work in heaven!

Productivity and Blessing: “The Lord took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to take care of it.”

- Adam and Eve were to produce something with their lives.
- They were to be fruitful through the things they did - through work!
- The blessing of work can continue throughout our lives – no retirement in the Kingdom!

Key Point

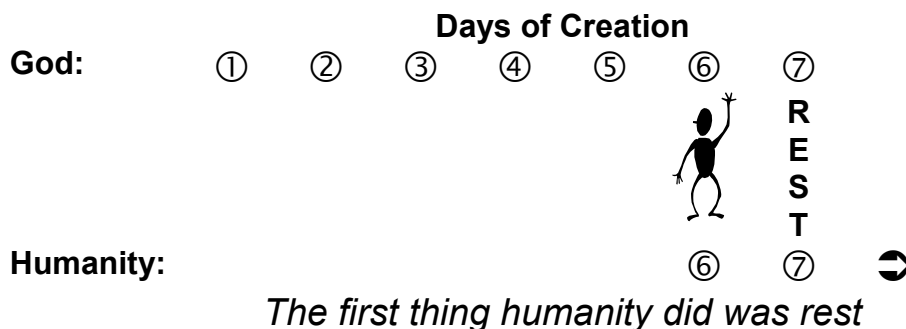
We were designed for intentional activity to produce a sense of fruitfulness in our lives and in our surroundings. Being co-workers with God in his creation ... what a privilege! We should teach people to expect God’s blessing on work.

 Share your personal testimony of the blessing of work as an illustration.

WORKBOOK PG. 3

REST ... work from rest, not rest from work

(you may want to draw this on the flipchart)



- Man was created on the 6th day
- Our first experience on the 7th day: Rest...because God rested on the 7th day.
- The first experience of Adam and Eve was rest

Key Point

Our starting point should be rest. Healthy work comes out of our settled place with God.



The Pattern: “*The Lord walked with Adam and Eve in the garden in the cool of the day.*”

- Pattern of retreat and rest produces refreshment in our relationship with God.
- It’s not a kind of optional extra; it’s the design spec of humanity.
- This was the experience of Adam and Eve before the fall.

Misguided work ethics:

- We work ourselves to death and raise our work ethics up as a standard of Godliness
- This creates havoc in our lives, and in our families, and it’s contrary to the Bible.
- In many ways we have perverted the blessing of work.

Note: We need to recognise that the emphasis of this teaching may need to vary according to the following contexts:

- Generational
- National
- Season of life

In the West, the generations described as builders and boomers may need to hear a greater emphasis on rest, whilst the Gen X or emerging generation may need encouragement to work. For other nationalities the culture may be different and we need to be sensitive to these factors and teach to redress imbalances. Some seasons of life may have a legitimate emphasis.

Keeping the Sabbath:

- It’s as bad not to keep the Sabbath as it is to kill, steal or commit adultery.
- It’s absolutely contrary to the will of God that you work seven days a week.

🔑 Key Point

Since our first experience of life as humanity was resting with God, that means this should also be our first priority. So *rest* should be the thing we put on our calendar first, the thing we build into our family life first, the thing we put into our agenda first.

THE SWING OF THINGS ... GETTING RHYTHM – *What does it mean to rest?*

Extroverts and introverts



How do you recharge your batteries? There is grace in understanding your personality type when it comes to examining your rhythm of life. Different people rest in different ways. Don’t assume that the only way to rest is to sit doing nothing. A good indicator of how you naturally rest would be whether you are an introvert or extrovert.

- Extroverts are energized by being in the company of others and doing active things.
- Introverts are energized by spending time alone.

EXERCISE
WORKBOOK PG. 3

- 🕒 **2 mins** List what you do as recreation to ‘re-create’ yourself (inc. how often)
- 🕒 **5 mins** Share in groups of four what you do and why (including what you would like to do more of...)

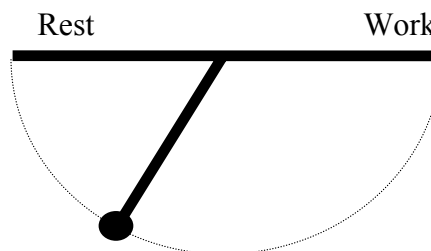
The purpose of this exercise is to get participants thinking about their current rhythm of life, ways in which they rest, and whether they are resting appropriately. You may want to get some feedback from the groups.

❤ Share how you ‘re-create’ as an illustration

Understanding rhythm

A time and a season: The Bible is full of apparent opposites, and makes it clear that there is an apt time for everything: “*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven.*” **Ecc 3:1** “*There is a proper time and procedure for every matter.*” **Ecc 8:6**
You may want to read more of Ecclesiastes 3.

Examples of Life’s Rhythms (Ecclesiastes 3)



Recreation.....	Relaxation	Activity
Children.....	Retreat	Exploration
O.T.....	Hide	Present
N.T.....	‘come’	‘go’
Church History....	Ebb	Flow
Your church.....	In	Out

Variety: Our time is always precious, but in one sense, it has to be multi-faceted. It is intended that there is variety and contrasting elements or experiences within it, which produce a much enriched whole. The Celtic view of life is full of rhythm, contrasts, ebb and flow.

One expression of rhythm that God has put into our natural development are seasons of life.

Childhood	Adolescence	Adulthood	Elderly
Single	Married	Family	Children left home
School	Training	Career	Retirement

Exercise

WORKBOOK PG. 4

Stop for a moment and think...what does your life look like currently?
 How are you currently prioritising your life? How much time do you spend daily, weekly, monthly, etc. planning in times of rest? How much time do you work?

**the elements I recognise in
 the rhythm of...**

5 mins

my day	Time with the Lord, time sleeping, time working, time resting and recreating	
my week	Church, small group, time with family	
my month	Catching up with friends, personal retreats, community involvement	
my season/term	Taking courses at church, going on mission trips, vacation	
my season of life	Are you teenage, married, single, with or without children, empty-nester, retired, health, etc.	

The aim of this exercise is to help people to recognise their daily, weekly, monthly and 'seasonal' priorities.

You may like to give a personal testimony of how you manage your time and priorities together; the table above gives some examples.

It is clear that God intended us to have a rhythm of rest and work, and Jesus gives us a perfect example of this pattern throughout his life recorded in the gospels.

Just the middle two references are included in the participants' workbook. Have them turn to Mark and Luke in their Bibles and follow along or listen as you read the passages aloud.

- **Mark 1:12-13** 40 Days in the Desert – Jesus, guided by the Spirit, knew where he needed to start: before he began his ministry, he retreated.
- **Mark 1:35-39** A solitary place to pray. Jesus starts the day resting in the presence of his Father for instructions. If we want revelation from God, we need to get into the pattern of regular retreat with God.
- **Luke 5:15-16** During the same period in his ministry, it says, *“Yet the news about him spread all the more so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.”* Even as the crowds grew, he often retreated to spend time with his Father.
- **Mark 6:30-32** Jesus sets an example for the disciples. They are busy and have no time to eat, so Jesus calls them to rest and eat. Even in the midst of revival Jesus' priority is rest.

The Greek words for ‘wilderness place’ are *eromos topos*, which means solitary place and is also used for ‘desert, mountain, lake’

The passages below are given in the homework in the participants' workbook as references to look up in their own time for further study on Jesus' rhythm of life.

- **Mark 2:13** Jesus is alone at the lake before teaching
- **Mark 3:7:** Jesus withdraws to the lake with the disciples
- **Mark 3:13:** Jesus goes up the mountainside and calls the twelve
- **Mark 4:35:** Jesus leaves the crowds by getting in a boat
- **Mark 5:1** Jesus at the lake/ hillside
- **Mark 5:21:** Jesus crosses the lake to the other side again
- **Mark 6:46:** Jesus goes up a mountain to pray

Key Point

Jesus frequently retreated to quiet places. In fact, it seems as if he was, more often than not, trying to get away from crowds for periods of quiet and rest.

To Summarise:

- Jesus received his orders for the day by drawing aside at the beginning of it.
- Jesus retreated before doing anything else. We should follow his lead.
- Matthew 11:28 Jesus said, “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.” Jesus is the source of rest amidst the busyness of life.

You may want to refer to this principle, or go straight to the major theme in John 15.

JESUS AND THE SABBATH: GRACE, NOT LAW

- Luke 4:16 “...on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom.” It was Jesus’ habit to keep the Sabbath...however...
- Mark 2:23-28 Where the Sabbath is concerned, we are under grace not law... The Pharisees questioned whether it is lawful to work on the Sabbath. Jesus’ response was that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath
- Mark 3:1-5 Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? Jesus’ response was to ask if it was right to do good or evil on the Sabbath, then he healed the man with the crippled hand.

🔑 Key Point

God commanded us to rest on the Sabbath because he created us with an innate need for regular rest. However, there are times when insisting on rest can stop us from doing good, or even be destructive; just as we often learn through experience that insisting on working can be harmful.

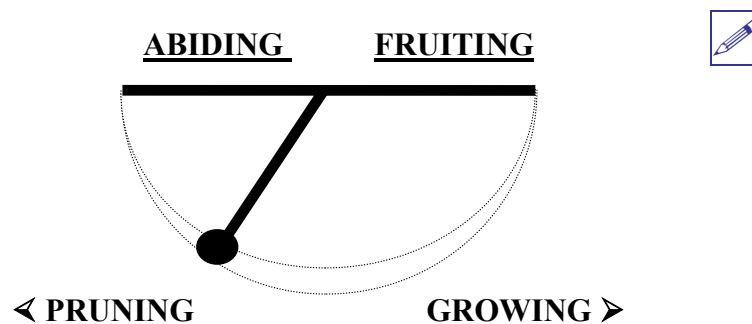
JESUS COMMANDS US TO ABIDE! - JOHN 15:1-17

WORKBOOK PG. 5

Read aloud John 15:1-17 – You may like to get a participant to read

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other."

Fulfil the God-given desire of your heart by learning the rhythm of life, the pattern of fruitfulness.



The analogy of the Vine

WORKBOOK PG. 5



- Cultivated vine not allowed to fruit for several years so that it would be more fruitful.
- Annual pruning developed a central stocky little tree from which vulnerable branches would sprout each growing season.
- Once the growing season had been completed, grapes would appear.
- After the fruit is harvested, the branch is cut back to within an inch of its life.
- The branch abides in the vine all winter until the next growing season
- The pattern is clear...abide and then produce fruit.
- Bearing fruit is natural for a branch. It doesn't do it by straining.

Applying the analogy to our own lives




- Surrender to the pruning that stops your activities...church-wide, family, individual.
- Pruning is not a suggestion to the branch...or for us
- The branch will not rest of its own accord. It must be cut. The same is true of us.
- We have to intentionally surrender to the process of pruning.
- When the Lord is moving you to a time of abiding, just surrender to it.

The Rhythm of Fruitfulness

- Abide ⇌ Grow ⇌ Fruit ⇌ Prune ⇌ Abide. This is the pattern.
- Growth is not mentioned in the text. It's an incidental outworking of the right rhythm. Growth is not the same as producing fruit.
- To produce fruit is to do the works of the kingdom and to make more disciples of Jesus. When we take on more of the character of Jesus, our lives become salt and light and should have the effect of growing the kingdom by making disciples of others.
- Seeing more disciples of Jesus begins with abiding!

Exercise WORKBOOK PG. 5

Take a moment to reflect on your life as a whole and think about whether you are abiding, growing, being pruned or producing fruit in your life.

 5 mins

Discuss with one other person.



Briefly share where you are in your rhythm of life.

BEING GUIDED IN YOUR RHYTHM

Pace-setter and Peace-giver

Jesus said:

*“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another **Counsellor** to be with you forever– the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”*

John 14:16-17

The Greek word for ‘counsellor’ is *paraclete*



- Paraclete means, “pace-setter” - someone ‘who gets alongside’...
- The Holy Spirit working in us should set the pace and direct the rhythm of our lives.
- We need to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

Here again the swing of the pendulum describing a semi-circle is so appropriate to illustrate the help of something (or someone) keeping you in time.

Paul wrote:

*“Let the peace of Christ **rule** in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.”*

Colossians 3:15

The Greek word for ‘rule’ is *brabeno*



- which means, “to arbitrate”, or to referee, blow the whistle.
- In a football game for example, the whistle is blown when a foul has been made.

Key Point

In one sense, having the peace of Christ rule in our hearts is like having a meter by which we can gauge whether or not we are going off track. Only God can give us peace; we cannot create it ourselves, and so it is important to *know* God’s peace in the first place, so that future decisions can be made in relation to sensing God’s will through the peace of Christ in us.

- Giving thanks - being able to give thanks flows naturally when we have rhythm.
- Speed bumps - The Lord will often guide us or get our attention using speed bumps. By bringing us up short and making us slow down he helps us to make the time to be with him, to get rest, and to discern his will instead of racing ahead alone.
- Seasons - For each phase or ‘season’ in our lives God will use specific circumstances not only to guide and teach us, but also to develop our character.

Exercise
WORKBOOK PG. 6

Lead into the final exercise, as this is the most important, since it is time for the participants to actually apply the teaching to their own lives and make concrete plans for change in the future.

- 🕒 **5 mins** Personal application: In groups of four discuss with one other person how this can be put into practice in your life. Write down issues, changes and questions that this raises. Pray for one another.

If time allows, have a short period for feedback with questions and answers.

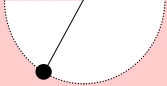
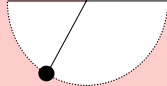
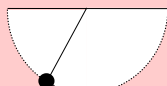
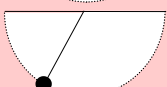
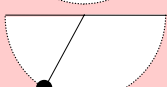
Close the evening with prayer.

Taking this further... (otherwise known as Homework!)

WORKBOOK PG. 7

Application to Life

- ☉ Identify the areas in your life in which you would like to improve your rhythm. How could you realistically make this work?

my day		
my week		
my month		
my season/term		
my season of life		

- ☉ Take the areas you most sense God raising with you (*kairos*) and take them through the Learning Circle, to come up with a plan of how you will respond in this area. Set achievable and measurable goals. Make yourself accountable for those goals.

Further Reflection

- ☉ Where can you identify the Abide ➔ Grow ➔ Fruit ➔ Prune ➔ Abide process having been at work in your life before?

Further Bible Study

- ☉ Spend some time this week looking at Jesus' example of rhythm in Mark. Try to read through Mark 1-6 noting Jesus' rhythm and pattern of life. If you haven't time to do this focus on:



Mark 1: 12-13

Mark 1: 35 on

Mark 6:30

Jesus goes to the same environment a number of times during this narrative. The Greek word is *eromos topos* and is translated here in various ways. See if you can spot the environment in:

Mark 2: 13

Mark 3: 7

Mark 3: 13

Mark 4: 35

Mark 5: 1

Mark 5: 21

Mark 6: 46