

# Jesus Calls us to Develop His Up-In-Out Rhythms

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at [ChristChurchEastBay.org](http://ChristChurchEastBay.org). Today's scripture reading are various passages from the Gospel of Mark, as printed in your liturgy.

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark. They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went off to a solitary place where he prayed.

Then he said to them, The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord, even of the Sabbath. Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him.

[ 1 : 15 ] He appointed twelve that they might be with him, and that he might send them out to preach. Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.

Still others, like seeds sown among thorns, hear the word, but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.

Others, like seeds sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop, some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.

The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all that they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.

So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. Immediately, Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.

[ 2 : 24 ] After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray. Jesus replied, Are you not in error because you do not know the scriptures or the power of God?

Then he went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, Sit here while I pray. Abba, Father, he said, everything is possible for you.

Take this cup from me, yet not what I will, but what you will. Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. Simon, he said to Peter, are you asleep?

Couldn't you keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. This is the gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ. Good morning, Christ Church. We're continuing today exploring the gospel of Mark, which we have said is the earliest of the four gospels written in about 65 A.D.

[ 3 : 27 ] and you can also read this little book from cover to cover in about 65 minutes. I encourage you, if you've never done that in one sitting, to try it out. You can open in your Bibles there in the pews to page 812.

I encourage you to open that up and explore a little bit what we're going to be talking about. You can see there on the very first page that Jesus invites and he challenges Peter, Andrew, James, and John.

He says to come follow me and I'll send you out to fish for people. How did they respond to that invitation to come follow me?

It says that they left their old life behind and they started a new life with Jesus. And we're exploring together what that new life with Jesus as disciples means. And last Sunday, we said that Jesus had

this three-dimensional life.

He had three great loves, three great priorities, and that the Jesus-shaped life is up with the Father, in with the disciples, and out with the crowds. And my kids told me, Dad, you need to pull this out so we can actually see it.

[ 4 : 36 ] And they said, you also need to write more words up there, which I've done. And you can see that I wrote up with the Father in red, in with the disciples in green, and out with the crowds in blue.

And the reason I did that, the deep theological mystery behind that is that the markers come in a four-pack of black, red, green, and blue.

And that's why I randomly chose those colors to go with each of those themes. Jesus, wherever he went, he would build community in three particular ways.

Up with the Father, in with the disciples, out with the crowds. And this forms the essential pattern of our life together if we truly want to live as a community of people who are following Jesus.

Last Sunday, we took time to kind of really dive into each of these, but really to dive into discipleship. What is discipleship? If you missed that, I encourage you to go back and listen to it.

[ 5 : 41 ] We said that discipleship in the first century was this deeply committed covenantal relationship in which a rabbi would invite his disciples to come and share every aspect of his life so that they could become like him.

And that's what Jesus is doing. From the crowds, Jesus gathers this smaller group of disciples who are going to live in a kind of relationship with him that not only taught them to know what he knew, but also to do what he did and ultimately to become like him.

And so being a disciple of Jesus Christ, following him as your Lord, means that he's inviting you and he's challenging you to share the pattern of his life and to be conformed to the shape of these three loves, these three priorities.

Now, you may be wondering why in the world we're just jumping all over the Gospel of Mark today with these readings and not just focusing on one particular text. And that's because I want to ask this question.

What was Jesus' relationship with time? What was Jesus' relationship with time and how did he invest his time? Jesus experienced tremendous pressure in his life like none of us have ever experienced.

[ 6 : 58 ] He experienced tremendous pressure. He had countless demands on his time, but it did not overwhelm him. And the question is, why? When we look at Jesus' extraordinary life, we can see that the secret of that life is that he modeled these intentional, fruitful rhythms and patterns and habits of life, and he trained his disciples to imitate his way of life.

I'm the way, the truth, and the life, so I want you to walk in my way and trust my truth and live my life, Jesus said. And so, we can see in these texts that Jesus spent time alone with his Father in prayer each morning, and from that place, he would step out into the busy yet fruitful life that God was calling him to live.

We can see that Jesus took 24 hours for restoration and renewal every Sabbath day where he gathered with the people of God to worship and then to rest with his extended family.

We can also see that after really, really busy seasons of life and ministry, Jesus took his disciples away to a quiet place where he would retreat with them and give them a time of refreshment and reflection.

Daily, weekly, seasonal rhythms of life. For Jesus, these were not burdensome. They were not legalistic observance, but they were intentional times of renewal.

[ 8 : 24 ] And this is what I think gave Jesus the margin and the rest and the capacity when he met human need to respond with compassion and to live this life that produced incredible amounts of fruitfulness for the kingdom of God.

So, when Jesus is saying, come follow me, he's inviting us to adopt these predictable patterns, these healthy habits, these life-giving rhythms, not so that we might earn the love of the Father, but so that all of us might enjoy more of the grace of the Father that's already been given to us.

Enjoy is a key word today. What is the chief end of your life? It's that you might glorify God and enjoy him forever. And we want to talk about habits of life that will enable you to do that now.

And so, here's the golden thread of this sermon, the thesis of my sermon. My kids said I need to say this more explicitly. The golden thread of my sermon, the thesis of my sermon, is that Jesus

invites us to enjoy rest with our Father by imitating his weekly Sabbaths and daily prayers. Jesus invites us to enjoy rest with our Father by imitating his weekly Sabbaths and daily prayers. I want to start with enjoying the rest with our Father by imitating Jesus' weekly Sabbaths. [ 9 : 54 ] Look with me at chapter 2, verse 27. Then Jesus said to them, Here's a strong statement. God's will for your life is that you, every one of you, would enjoy a weekly 24-hour period of rest from your work.

That is the clear will of God for every person in this room. It's in the Ten Commandments. It's right up there with do not kill and do not steal. And the first time we're given these Ten Commandments in Exodus chapter 20, we're shown that the pattern of God's own activity as the creator of the world is that he rested on the seventh day.

And we're told that he blessed that day and he made it holy and that therefore we are to bless that day and keep it holy. When those Ten Commandments are given to us in Deuteronomy chapter 5, we're told that the Sabbath rest is for the benefit of weary workers.

We got any weary workers here today? Anybody that has work that wearies you? This is reinforced by the prophets over and over and over more than almost any other of the Ten Commandments.

[ 11 : 10 ] And it's not this odd moral commandment, this burden that is to be observed to earn merit or favor with God. The Sabbath is a sign that we enjoy his blessing and his delight, that we belong to the true God, the creator of the world, and that he himself is offering to us this precious gift to receive from him restorative, humanizing rest.

Does that feel like a burden to you? Notice that Jesus calls himself the Lord of the Sabbath. And right after he calls himself that, what does he do in Mark chapter 3 verse 1?

It says that he goes and he finds this man with a shriveled hand on the Sabbath who needs to be healed. And Jesus says, which is lawful on the Sabbath, to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?

And then Jesus makes this man's hand completely whole. And by doing that, he makes this man in his life totally restored.

And this is a sign for us that Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, wants to use this 24-hour period of rest to do good to you and to give life to you.

[ 12 : 31 ] We may not bring a shriveled hand with us to the synagogue today, but I imagine there's at least one person that has a shriveled soul. And if that's you, if you brought a shriveled soul here today, the Lord of the Sabbath wants to heal you.

He wants to restore you. He wants to humanize you with the rest of God. He wants to give you the blessing of God and the delight of God and to give you the joy of the life-saving, life-giving goodness of God.

I read a book a few years ago on sleep by Matthew Walker down the hill here at the Sleep Lab in Berkeley. And when I read this book, I realized that one of the best ways that I could love my family and love this church is to sleep more.

And I'm hoping this sermon will do that for you, that one of the ways that you could love God more and love the people around you more is to practice the Sabbath. I actually want to just wonder aloud that if over the next three months, six months, 12 months, if all of us on Saturday evening after the sun goes down, if all of us were to take a 24-hour digital fast, we were to put ourselves to bed and put the people in our house to bed early and get a good night of sleep, what kind of healing the Lord of the Sabbath would want to do in us, perhaps even healing we don't even know needs to be done in us.

You guys with me so far? How did Jesus practice the Sabbath? Did He sleep in, go to brunch, read the New York Times, hike in the hills, hang at the beach with His friends, post some photos on Instagram and say hashtag Sabbath?

[ 14 : 19 ] For many reasons, Jesus did not do that. And one of the reasons He didn't do that is because He was Jewish. And if you look at Mark 1, verse 21, it says, when the Sabbath came, He did what all Jews do and He went to the synagogue.

And what did they do at the synagogue? Well, He worshipped with the people of God, which included prayers and songs and readings from the law and the prophets and expositions on the scriptures and benedictions, much like we do here.

And Jesus and His disciples, they were coming to center their lives. They were gathering with the assembled people of God to center their lives on the love of the Father and the power of the Father

and the presence of the Father.

You see, Sabbath wants to do two things for us. Sabbath invites us to realize that if we stop working, the world's not going to fall apart because it's in the hands of our Creator God. But more than that, the Sabbath invites us to listen like Jesus came to listen to the voice of His Father and His Word and to see the great drama of redemption that His Father was carrying out in the world and to remember all these incredible promises that had been made in the Old Testament and for us, all those promises that had been kept in the New Testament.

The Sabbath is an opportunity for us to come and to hear those great words from the Son of the Father that were spoken on the cross. It is finished.

[ 15 : 53 ] The work of salvation is finished. And therefore, salvation doesn't depend on us and the work that we do because that work has already been accomplished for us by the work of another.

And that is how our restless souls can actually come and find rest. Now Jesus, what's interesting is Jesus took this Sabbath principle and He injected it into the really, really busy times.

And I want you to see in chapter 3, verse 13, it says Jesus went up on a mountainside and remember this is after last week, everybody's pressing so hard on Jesus He has to get into a boat and leave the land, right?

He's getting crushed and it says they went up on a mountainside and He called to Him those He wanted and they came to Him and He appointed 12 that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach.

And what Jesus is doing here is He's retreating and He's inviting His disciples to retreat with Him so that they can focus on this smaller group of 12 disciples together. Why?

[ 16 : 55 ] It says so that they can just be with Him. So they can be with Him and learn from Him. Look with me at chapter 6, verse 30. It says, These disciples have been working hard day after day doing what Jesus did, saying what Jesus said.

The crowds, because of that, are demanding more and more and more from them. They're pressured in their time. They're pressured in their energy. They can't even eat a meal. And so what does Jesus do?

He injects Sabbath rest into their lives. And He teaches His disciples this habit of regularly pulling away together into quiet, into solitude, and He says, Come with me and get some rest.

And I imagine it was in this place where He said these words, which He says in Matthew 11, verse 28. He says, Come to me. It's not just that you need a vacation somewhere.

You need to come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I'm gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest not just for your body but for your souls.

[ 18 : 28 ] For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. And so I want to ask you today and just encourage you to look at your calendar and how you schedule your time and just to ask yourself this question.

And if you're exploring Christianity, this is your chance to sort of look in the window at what it means to become a Christian and follow Christ. But if I'm following Jesus as my Lord, if I'm His disciple, if I'm imitating His life, am I taking a 24-hour Sabbath to enjoy the Father as my powerful creator and gracious redeemer?

And if not, why not? What about your plan is better than God's plan for you? And another question is, have I committed myself to a circle of disciples that's regularly retreating with Jesus to a quiet place, receiving that soul-deep rest that only He can give by learning from Him His easy yoke and His light burden?

And again, if not, why not? I read this great book by James Clear called Atomic Habits. And the subtitle of that book is An Easy and Proven Way to Build Good Habits and Break Bad Ones.

And I want to just ask if we can pull up a slide. I think we have a slide from his book. He says that it's really important to clarify an action plan of how you intend to implement a particular new habit.

[ 19 : 58 ] And so I want to invite you to take out a pen and a sheet of paper and I'd love to see you write this sentence down and to fill it in for yourself. And the reason I'm urging you to write it down is because if you don't, you won't really commit yourself to anything.

But what he says is, after a particular habit that I've already created in my life, I will do this new habit, this new behavior for this duration at this time and in this location.

And if you can fill in those blanks, if you can write something down, something you want to start doing, something you want to continue to do, something that you used to do that you'd like to get back to doing, I urge you to write something down today.

Here's something you might write down. After making dinner on Saturday, that habit that you already have, you're going to eat, right? I will light a candle and take a Sabbath rest for 24 hours at 7 p.m.

starting at my dinner table. Or here's another thing you might write down. After leaving work on Thursdays, I will retreat to my community group for one and a half hours at 7 p.m. in Berkeley.

[ 21 : 11 ] Jesus is inviting us to enjoy rest with the Father by imitating His weekly Sabbath and injecting Sabbath rest into our lives more and more and more.

But not only that, He's inviting us to enjoy rest with our Father not just through weekly Sabbaths but through daily prayers, through imitating His daily prayers.

Last Sunday, we talked about the source of Jesus' power and authority was that He had this close relationship that He maintained with His Father who's the King of the universe.

And He would spend quality time in the Father's presence praying that He might be filled with the Father's Word and with the Father's love and with the Father's power. And we said it was like spiritual breathing that Jesus would just inhale the Word of His Father that He might go out and exhale the will of His Father.

We said that Jesus was like a sponge that was just there soaking up the love of the Father that He might go out and the Father might just wring out that sponge of love on all the people around Him.

[ 22 : 24 ] And we said that Jesus wants His disciples to live this kind of life as well. And so I want to look a little bit deeper at that. Mark 1.35 says that very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus left the house and He went off to a solitary place where He prayed.

And what that's showing us is that behind all the visible activity of Jesus that we see in the Gospels, He had this hidden life that was totally dependent on His Father.

Jesus, before this verse, He's just had a very intense and demanding day. And in Mark 1.15, we're told that He begins to tell people about the good news about the kingdom of God.

And then He goes and starts showing people what that good news is all about, healing their diseases and driving out demons. And at the end of that day, Jesus, I'm thinking He's pretty tired, and He knew that He had a need for some fresh, God-given sense of direction and inner strength. And so He continued this intentional rhythm of life where He nurtured His intimate connection with the Father. And so He went home that night and He slept really, really hard.

[ 23 : 37 ] And then He rose early that next morning while it was still dark and He sought out this deserted place so that He could have quality time with His Father. And what He would do is He would go up on the hillsides there above Capernaum, which was His home base on the Sea of Galilee, and there He would watch the sun just rise up on the waters of the sea, this beautiful first light just shining and reflecting off.

And you can just imagine Jesus there each morning spending time being renewed in His covenant identity with the Father, just letting the light of the Father's love rise and shine on Him.

And He would just soak in those scriptures of Deuteronomy and Psalms and Isaiah that we hear Him quoting from memory over and over and over, and He would just be there enjoying the Father. And then and only then, Jesus would dare to step out into His kingdom mission from the Father, this daily rhythm He had of going to do the will of the Father, telling people about the kingdom of God and showing them what the gracious rule and the liberating reign of the Father is all about.

Jesus had time with His Father in the morning, but He would also return to His Father throughout the day, and especially at night, He would return to His Father. And you can see that in Mark chapter 30.

[ 24 : 59 ] Sorry, Mark chapter 6, verse 45. There are not 30 chapters in the Gospel of Mark, actually. It's only 16. Mark 6, 45, it says, Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of Him to Bethsaida.

While He dismissed the crowd, after leaving them, He went up on a mountainside to pray. Now it's evening, and the sun is setting, and He's just multiplied the loaves and fishes, which we'll talk about next week.

He's had a very long day of teaching and of feeding, and He doesn't go after this day and just numb Himself out with some beer and media. You know, social media, news media, Netflix media.

No, what He does is He walks up into the hills, and He says, Father, hallowed be Your name. Father, thank You for all that You've done today. Father, Your kingdom is breaking through into the lives of people in a way it never has before.

Father, thank You that Your kingdom is erupting into all these multitudes of the crowds. Father, I prayed to You today for daily bread, and I was totally desperate and dependent upon You to bring us daily bread, not just for me, but for the thousands, and Father, You did it.

[ 26 : 11 ] Thank You. And Father, just continue to deliver me from the evil one and continue to deliver all these people from the schemes of the evil one in their lives.

Jesus just went up, and He would pray like that. We know He prayed like that, right? That's how He taught us to pray. Jesus' predictable pattern, His healthy habit, His life-giving rhythm was morning and evening prayer, and He modeled this for all of His disciples.

And you may be wondering, well, how in the world do I do it? I want to encourage you to read the Psalms. That's the prayer book of the Bible. It's where Jesus learned the language of prayer and the patterns of prayer.

We've given you a guide to sort of help you. This is not the way to pray. It's just a way to pray and have some training wheels on your prayer life. I'm tempted to get deeper into Jesus' prayer here in Gethsemane, but what's amazing is that Jesus, it says in Mark 14, 32, He went to this place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to His disciples, sit here while I pray.

They probably heard Jesus say that a thousand times. Sit here while I pray. Sit here while I pray. You can pray too if you'd like. And what did Jesus pray? He says in verse 36, Abba, Father.

[ 27 : 31 ] Abba, Father. If you have no other words for prayer than those, you can start to pray. Because the Apostle Paul tells us in Romans chapter 8, he says, The Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship, and by Him we cry, Abba, Father.

He says in Galatians 4, 6, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, Abba, Father. And Jesus just very simply wants to enjoy rest with our Abba, Father by imitating His daily prayers.

Now, as we close, how in the world do we come to share in Jesus' habit of daily prayer? It's much easier said than done, right?

I mean, we're talking about rewiring neural pathways, which is way beyond what this sermon can accomplish. We're talking about the reformation of cells in your brain.

And I'm concerned that many of us might walk away just totally unchanged. Nice sermon, pastor, but just like I've got the same old habits that I had when I came today. And so I just want to turn to this little passage from Mark chapter 4 as we close, where Jesus says, still others like seeds sown among thorns hear the word, but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.

[ 29 : 05 ] Jesus here, He's talking about the seed of the word of God, which is the message of the kingdom of God, which is the rule and reign of the Father in our lives. And He says that there are three things that threaten to choke God's word and His will and His work in your life.

Three self-centered concerns that take priority over the kingdom of God and that will rival God for your loyalty and will make you spiritually unfruitful.

He says, first of all, there are the worries of this life or literally in the Greek, it says the anxieties of the age. Secondly, He says there's the deceitfulness of wealth, all those promises of prosperity and pleasure, all the seductions of success, and the satisfaction it will bring you.

And thirdly, He talks about the desires for other things and I'm sure if Jesus were with us today, He'd talk about the desires for more and more digital dopamine or however you're getting your dopamine.

The worries, the wealth, the wants that choke out the kingdom of God in your soul. And I bring this up because I'm concerned that maybe for some of us, the soil of our souls has become a little bit weed infested.

[ 30 : 16 ] That maybe some of us have thorns that are threatening our spiritual vitality. That the kingdom of God is trying to sprout up in you and it's trying to grow but it just can't get enough water, it can't get enough nutrients because it must compete with many, many distractions.

And it's getting crowded out by other issues and other concerns that have taken up the center of your life. And Jesus says to us, He says, if there's not space for God, if you've not created time for God, you're not gonna bear any spiritual fruit.

