

# Hatfield Christian Church

## Ladies Life Group Guidelines

Term 3

2007

*Rest*

*What the word says about ...*

Compiled by the pastors' wives  
of Hatfield Christian Church.

Including insights adapted from  
*When Women Long for Rest*

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Dear Lady Leader

There are very few women in the world who do not stop to admire beauty in its various forms: mountains, music, flowers, little children, friendship ... This is the heartbeat of our Creator within us. We need to, and want to, see the beauty in our world.

One of the most beautiful scenes to me is the image of Jesus becoming more and more evident in a person's life – her eyes become soft, her speech becomes graceful, her shoulders are held up by hope, her plans are guided by faith. I think that this too is the kind of beauty that makes our God smile.

And I think He smiles on leaders like you, who guide people to become more and more like Jesus, adding a form of beauty to the world that is eternal; it does not fade.

And so, after an intense six months, we have sensed that it is time to slow down a bit. Just as much as we need endurance, we need **REST**; the God-kind of rest, that brings us closer to Him. So this is the theme for this term's guidelines.

There is a Sabbath-rest for God's people, the writer of Hebrews says, and we are instructed by the Creator Himself to 'strive to enter that rest'.

Where is your quiet place? Can you afford to take the time to stop?

May the evidence of our Sabbath-rest be reflected in our hearts and attitudes towards those around us. Come, let's meet each other at the 'resting place' often.

Bless you.

Ansa and the pastors' wives

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*Week 1* FOLLOWING GOD'S CALL TO BE STILL, AND  
FINDING SOOTHING WATER ON A SLOWER PATH

Rest Rest Rest Rest Rest Rest Rest Rest Rest Rest

'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'

Mark 6:31 (NIV)

### Objective

To recognize that God is calling us to a rested, not a rushed, life.

### Ice-Breaker

Circle the words/phrases that best describe you:

- A night-owl – I only get going after 8pm!
- 'Early to bed, early to rise.'
- An afternoon napper.
- I can get by on very little sleep.
- I need at least eight hours' sleep a night.
- I love the crisp, early mornings.
- I love being in bed, **asleep**, early on crisp mornings.
- I'm still traumatised by the afternoon naps I was forced to take when I was younger.
- The only thing better than an afternoon nap is a mid-morning nap!

### Word and Discussion

#### 1. Rush vs. Rest

Read the scripture on the following page, from two different translations.

Can you relate to it?

'Oh, how I wish I had wings like a dove; then I would fly away and rest! I would fly far away to the quiet of the wilderness.'

Psalm 55: 5-7 (NLT)

'Get me out of here on dove wings; I want some peace and quiet. I want a walk in the country, I want a cabin in the woods. I'm desperate for a change from rage and stormy weather.'

Psalm 55: 5-7 (MSG)

Why are we so stressed out these days? Why have we lost our joy? Why do women from all walks of life have this in common: they are exhausted? Write down/discuss some of the things that you think are responsible for this.

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Whatever the reason, Jesus' response is: 'Come away with Me ... this is not how I intended for you to live.' He wants to show us how we can lead a rested life, not a rushed one.

Which of the following statements more accurately reflects where you are?

- The more I know Him and the more I grow with Him, the more beautiful my heart and life becomes.
- The more I want to please Him, the more I do for Him, the busier my life becomes.

How did Jesus respond to the demands placed on Him by people who constantly wanted to be healed, taught, delivered, etc. by Him? Read Mark 6:31: Jesus withdrew to \_\_\_\_\_.

'Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me -watch how I do it. Learn **the unforced rhythms of grace**. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.'

Mathew 11:28-30 (MSG - Emphasis added)

Discuss and write down the aspects of this portion of scripture which appeal/stand out to you.

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Do you feel guilty when you are not doing anything? Consider that:

- Jesus told his disciples to rest after a busy day of ministry – Mark 6:31.
- God rested after creating the heavens and the earth – Genesis 2:2.
- God created a Sabbath day, a time set aside specifically for us to pause. *Sabbath* means to 'cease' or 'desist'.

In other words, God **commands** us to rest!

## 2. Rest: a command!

- Read Isaiah 28:12. Jesus is the resting place – to find true rest we must get alone with God and hand things over to Him. When God lovingly urged the Israelites to slow down, they 'would not listen'. What were the consequences of their decision in Isaiah 28:13?

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- Why do you think God commands, rather than suggests, we rest?

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- What is your response to God's command for you to rest?

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- Read Psalm 23:2. Have you ever considered why God 'makes' us lie down in green pastures?

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### 3. How to rest

How do we receive God's gift of rest?

- Seek out a resting place. This is a place of stillness where you can get away from the busyness of the moment and be with God. Take a look at Psalm 107:29-30. Where is your resting place or 'desired haven'?

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- Sit in His presence. This is a time just to **be** with God. Allow the distracting thoughts and the noises around you to fade away. Experience the joy of being in His presence – Psalm 16:11.
- Set your minds on things above (Colossians 3:1-2). Let Him take you to the place where your thoughts are no longer preoccupied with your list of things to do. Ask Him to help you to slow down and notice the things that He wants you to notice.

### 4. The slower path

The strategy of the enemy in the age we live in now is busyness or drivenness ... the enemy's plan is this: 'Keep them running, that way they'll never take care of their hearts. That way we'll burn them out, then we'll take them out.'

John Eldredge

Discuss how God's call to be still and to walk a slower path could be the antidote to the enemy's attempts to burn you out.

Sometimes we look for a change of location to bring us rest, but what we really need is a change in lifestyle: instead of escaping into things like chocolate, shopping trips, bubble baths, massages, etc. we need to turn to the Living Water. The Israelites pursued cheap substitutes for God and in Jeremiah 2:13 God says that His people had 'forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their

own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.' Have you dug your own cisterns/followed after substitutes, instead of turning to God?

Read Jeremiah 6:16. If we walk in the ancient paths we will find \_\_\_\_\_ for our souls. What do you think these ancient paths could be?

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An ancient path means walking a route that has long been forgotten, taking the path less travelled. It means going back to the old ways, when life was simpler and the pace was slower. An ancient path is the slower path on which we are able to commune with Him and enjoy His presence the whole way. For example:

- Enoch – who walked with God for 300 years – Genesis 5:23-24.
- Abraham – the friend of God – Isaiah 41:8.
- David – who often rose early in the morning and waited on God – Psalm 130:6.

The world gives empty promises of quick and easy ways to find 'sudden relief' or instant rest. The holy path is one that will take time to walk. 'Hurry up, get going, faster!' are not generally part of God's vocabulary; instead, His words to us are often, 'Be still', 'Wait' and 'Rest'.

The ancient path leads to soothing waters that refresh us. Read Psalm 23:2. What comes to your mind as you think of soothing waters?

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### Conclusion

By following God's call to be still, we not only immunize ourselves against the enemy's attempts to burn us out, but we also open a door to a multitude of blessings that we discover as we walk a slower path.



- We need to come to Him in total submission – Jeremiah 29:13.
- We must delight ourselves in Him – Psalm 37:4.

## 2. God’s success search

- Read 2 Chronicles 16:9. Spend some time meditating on this scripture and write down what you sense the Lord is saying to you.

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- Rather than striving, we need to trust and rest. Read Psalm 1:1-3 and Jeremiah 17:7-8.

## 3. Abandoning ambition

- We usually run ourselves ragged because we follow after our own ambitions.
- God begins to work in our lives when the ambitions are gone. John the Baptist said, ‘He must increase and I must decrease.’
- 1 Peter 5:6 says that if we humble ourselves before God, He will raise us up.
- Ask the Lord to show you the things that you may need to lay down:

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## 4. God’s principle of promotion

- ‘Promotion comes neither from the east, nor from the west, nor the south. But God is the judge: he puts down one and sets up another.’ – Psalm 75:6

## 5. Waiting for God’s best

- In order for us to know God’s best for us, we need to remain in a place of surrender to Him so that we will be obedient to what He is saying.
- Our attitude should be, ‘I only want You and what You have for me, Lord.’

## 6. Toiling or trusting

- *Toiling* is choosing to work ourselves silly, usually looking for recognition from man.

- *Trusting* is choosing what we sense is right and trusting God to honour us in His time.
- Proverbs 16:3 says to that we should commit to the Lord whatever we do, and then our plans will succeed.
- What are your goals? Do you need to adjust some of them to line up with the Word? List the things that you feel that you are either toiling or trusting the Lord in:

Toiling	Trusting

## 7. The rewards of rest

- Read Genesis 2:3 and Exodus 20:11.
- You may want to pray a prayer like this, ‘Lord, you know where I’ll be and what I’ll need to be doing, and You already know what blessings await as well, so make it clear to me if I am to work or if I am to rest so I can be fully available to You for service or worship. Don’t let me commit to something and lose the reward You might have had for me if I had only rested.’
- We need to be obedient and humble and to rely on Him. Remember that with God all things are possible – Matthew 19:26.

## Ministry

This would be a good time to repent of striving. Ask the Lord to teach you how to enter His rest. Pray for one another.

## Prayer Focus

Pray for families and friends that they too would come to a place of entering His rest and learn to live from the inside out.



Perhaps we can hear Jesus saying something like this to us: 'Do you want to learn about rest? Then let us go over to the other side. There will be a storm on the way, but it's part of the learning process. I'm going to teach you what it means to sleep during the storm. Then you will truly know what it means to rest.'

Jesus wants us to know that to **rest** is to **trust** and to **trust** is to **rest**! God wants us to know that to rest is to recognize that He is in complete control and to have the assurance (be able to sleep peacefully) that He will get us safely to the other side.

## 2. A Refuge of Refreshment

God's Word is full of promises of peace, protection, rest, refuge and refreshing when we are weary, discouraged, confused or desperate. As we become still and delve into His Word, He strengthens, calms and revives us.

'In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength'

Isaiah 30:15

We need to make God's promises our very own. As we **believe** the **word** He speaks to us in our situation, this **word** will take us 'to the other side' of the situation or problem.

We can save ourselves from so much worry and distress if we will begin each morning in His presence, receiving His words for us for the day ahead. For example, He could say to you: 'I will fight for you; you need only to be still.' (Exodus 14:14)

## 3. Hungering for His Word

'I am the bread of life.'

John 6:48

Jesus is the bread of life and the living water (John 6:48; 7:37-38). This makes Him an essential part of our daily lives. He wants to speak to us and feed us from His Word. When a storm arises, we need to create a quiet place inside ourselves where His word to us can settle and bring peace to our hearts and minds.

Here are some examples of words that the Lord could speak to you to bring you peace in stormy situations as you seek refuge in His Word:

- When you are facing a conflict situation at work, He might speak to you through:
  - o Psalm 32:7.
  - o Isaiah 54:17.

- When you need wisdom to make a big decision, He might say:
  - o Psalm 32:8.
  - o Isaiah 30:21.
- When you need financial breakthrough, remember:
  - o Ephesians 3:20.
  - o 3 John 2.
  - o Isaiah 48:17.
- If you are feeling lonely, you can hold on to:
  - o Hebrews 13:5b.
  - o Psalm 16:11.
  - o Isaiah 49:15-16.
- When you are concerned about your children, meditate upon:
  - o Isaiah 54:13.
  - o Isaiah 44:3.
  - o Proverbs 22:6.

Ask God to increase your **hunger** for His Word. The more we hunger, the more God will feed us and refresh us from His Word.

Do you have a testimony about how a word from God (or a promise in the Bible) gave you hope or changed your desperate situation? Share with one another.

## 4. How do I find this place of rest in His Word?

Take your Bible, a pen and notebook and find a quiet place where you can be alone for about half an hour.

- a. Sit down in your quiet place and still your heart.
- b. Clear your mind of personal agendas and distracting thoughts.
- c. Welcome the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- d. Ask God for an open heart to hear what He wants to say to you.
- e. Relax and enjoy His presence.

Here is a practical exercise you can do based on Psalm 23. As you come to the Lord, hear Him say:

'Welcome to this quiet place with Me. I am here. I love you so much and am looking forward to spending this time with you. Please open My Word to Psalm 23 and let's talk together about My relationship with you. As you read this Psalm of David, allow Me to show you My love towards you.'

Now read through the Psalm while listening to Him asking you the following questions:

- ‘Do you really believe that I can satisfy all your needs?’

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- ‘What needs do you have right now?’

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- ‘Are you longing for quiet waters in your life?’

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- ‘What would these waters look like in your life?’

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- ‘In what ways do you need Me to restore your soul?’

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- ‘What evils are you facing right now?’

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- ‘I would like you to experience My comforting presence in a real way. Come close to Me. Experience My love for you right now.’
- ‘Picture a table spread for you, with everything on it that you need. Start helping yourself to My provision. Start thanking Me for My provision for you. I love you. How much do you love Me?’

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Perhaps you can do a similar exercise with other passages of Scripture. Take time to be with the Lord and allow Him to minister to you from His Word.

## Conclusion

Run to the quiet place of refuge in God’s Word. He will speak to you. He is always waiting to reveal His love to you. (Isaiah 30:18; 40:28-31)

## Ministry

Has the devil caught any of you in his trap of busyness, where we have neglected spending times of quiet refuge in God’s presence, with His Word? Let us purpose in our hearts today to make this time of refuge and refreshing a priority in our lives. Pray for and minister to each other around this heart’s desire.

## Prayer focus

- Pray for a fresh hunger for God’s Word.
- Pray that God’s people will not neglect spending time in His presence with His Word.
- Pray that the life of God’s Word in us will affect our lives and cause us to be fruitful in our communities.



'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.'  
John 14:27

'Grace and peace be yours in abundance.'  
1 Peter 1:2

**Objective**

To show us how we can experience the peace of Jesus and see His power at work in our lives as we spend time in His presence through prayer.

**Ice-Breaker**

The hectic pace of our modern lifestyle brings anxiety, fear, negativity, tiredness and exhaustion. We are just so busy – too much to do and too little time. As a result, we become frazzled, and lose our serenity, graciousness and peace.

Prepare a tray with items such as: a bottle of medicine (attach a home-made label with the words 'Take 2 tsp for PEACE'), a box of headache tablets, a container of small, multicoloured sweets, a slab of chocolate, a book, and pictures of peaceful scenes. These are some of the things we turn to when life gets too hectic. Let some ladies share what they do to get a moment of 'peace and quiet'.

**Word and Discussion**

Women who make prayer a priority in their lives display an unconscious peace, calmness and serenity. Spending time in the

presence of God on a regular basis causes us to slow down on the inside, despite the hectic pace that many of us live at.

Can you think of someone who epitomizes this?

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Prayer also reminds us that God is our Father and that He **is** in control of our lives and that His power is at work in and through us. On the other hand, prayerlessness results in feelings of hopelessness, being constantly on the run, overwhelmed by the rush of life and defeat.

Spending time in the presence of Almighty God is a privilege. It should not be taken for granted and just squeezed into our schedule 'sometime, if I can find a gap somewhere today'. Rather, communion with our Father is an appointment we should look forward to.

**Father longs for our communion with Him** – that is why He created us! Prayer brings us into His presence, into a **place of rest**, and makes our lives more manageable and enjoyable.

Here are some reasons why we should take the time to pray:

**1. Prayer unleashes power into our lives – Ephesians 1:18-19**

- When we pray into the situations we face, we release the power of God into them. Prayer also brings fresh perspective and hope that God is able to empower us to do all we need to accomplish – 2 Peter 1:3.
- Discuss the following statement by Martin Luther: 'I have so much to do today that I shall never get through it with less than three hours' prayer.'

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**2. Prayer brings peace into our lives – Philippians 4:6-7**

- King David, the psalmist, knew much trouble and turmoil, but he found peace in bringing his concerns before God in prayer – Psalm 142:2-3.
- Read Matthew 11:28, 29. We are to come to Jesus, give Him our burdens and He will give us \_\_\_\_\_. In other words, when we come to Him in prayer, He will give us His **peace** in exchange for our burdens.

Can you think of some burdens you would like to lay down in exchange for His peace?

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- Prayer slows us down and stills our souls so we are able to relax in the arms of Father God.

### 3. Prayer brings *perspective* into our lives – Romans 4:20

- When we pray, we acknowledge that He is in control and that we can depend on Him, no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in. **He is God** and **He is able** to carry us through, to supply all our needs and to bring answers and solutions where we cannot see any.
- Share about a time when, as you prayed, He brought a new perspective to the way you saw your situation.

### 4. Prayer is a time of *listening* – Luke 14:35b

- Prayer is not just a time of speaking to God; it is also a precious time of sitting in His presence, quietening our hearts and our minds and listening to His voice.
- Read Luke 11:28.
- Father is able to teach us and direct our day when we take time to listen. When we have His plan for the day ahead, we can go forth in confidence, peace and in His rest.

Perhaps you are struggling to find the time or you are not sure how to pray and spend time with the Lord. Here are some easy steps to get you started and/or to help you on the way:

- Find a place.**  
Somewhere you can be alone and comfortable, without distractions.
- Choose a time.**  
Early in the morning before the rush of the day; before bedtime or during the day, but plan for a specific time. Make an appointment!
- Have your bible, notebook and pen ready.**
- Write a prayer to the Lord.**  
You can begin by praising and telling Him the things that you are thankful for.

### e. Think about yesterday.

It is good to look back on the day before and learn from it. You can assess your mistakes, learn from them and grow. This is a good time to forgive others and to ask for forgiveness, where necessary. Read Philippians 3:13. Unfortunately, with today's hectic pace of life, we often don't take the time to evaluate events and we do not always learn from them. Perhaps we need to adjust our pace of life? Ask the Lord to show you what adjustments you need to make.

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### f. Keep a prayer journal of whom and what you pray for.

Keep a record of your prayers and leave a space where you can record the answers. God always answers our prayers – not always in the way we would like, but He does answer. Sometimes we can be overwhelmed by the number of people and things we need to pray about. Because of time restraints, we could group our prayers on certain days – organize your prayer list. On Monday, for example, pray for your spiritual growth, as well as for your husband and children; on Tuesday, pray for your church and spiritual leaders. Be careful not to become rigid in your prayer time, the journal should only be a starting point and from there you move as the Holy Spirit guides you.

Prayer time is a time of entering the throneroom of God. You are His precious daughter. Your heavenly father is the King of kings! You have permission to enter into His presence, not as a servant, but as His child. He has a special place for you where you can sit with Him in close fellowship and communion. There is always room for you. Father God longs for your presence with Him. You are always welcome!

## Conclusion

As we consistently spend time with our Father, He lightens our load, He guides our ways, He comforts and strengthens us. He does not expect us to change everything, be responsible for everything and do everything. He calls us to 'take it to the Lord in prayer.'

## Ministry

- Pray for those who are caught up in the rush of life. Pray also that each lady will know the peace and power of God in her life. Let us spur each other on to be women who regularly enter into the throneroom of our Father.
- Here is a prayer that you can pray, taken from the book *The Perfect Love* by Ruth Myers:

Dear Lord

I quietly leave in Your hand each concern that could cause me stress today:  
The things You want me to do and the things You want me to leave unfinished or even unstarted.

The relationships You want me to have and the ones You want to withhold or take away.

The joys You will bring my way, and the trials You will allow or send.  
The ways You want me to succeed and the ways You may let me fail, or seem to fail.

The opportunities You want me to accept and the ones You want me to pass up.

The doors You want to open and the ones You want to close.  
The ways I would like to glorify You and the ways You may use others instead of me.

The times You want me to meet people's needs actively, and the times You want me just to listen, or to stand aside and 'merely' pray.

The deadlines You want me to meet and the ones You may want me to miss.  
The results of my labours – great or small, noticed or hidden.

The ways I will bless or disappoint other people, and the ways they will bless or disappoint me.

The human approvals that You will give, and the disapprovals that will prod me to rest in Your gracious evaluation.

I leave it all quietly to You, my God, and depend on You to work in me and in those I love:

- o to nurture and protect;
- o to tear down and to build up;
- o to wound and to heal;
- o to reprove and to guide;
- o as seems best to You, my wise and loving Father.

I step out of Your shoes and leave Your responsibilities to You.

I let my life drop back behind you, to follow at the pace You prescribe.

Help me sense inner tensions quickly and then 'leave it all quietly to You.'

I am Your servant, I am available to You to fulfil Your purposes, and Yours alone, in Your way and time.

Amen.

## Prayer Focus

Pray that as the pace of life intensifies, our prayer lives would flourish rather than decline.



Think for a moment and jot down how you can change the mundane in your life into something majestic.

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Worship refreshes our hearts and makes us come alive. You can come alive doing the mundane things!

Just as our cars need regular oil changes and tune-ups to keep them running effectively, and just as our bodies need food, water, exercise, and sleep to function properly, you and I need to regularly reconnect with our Maker, through worship, so that we can live the kind of lives that He has meant for us to live and so that we can outlive the wear and tear that busyness causes on our lives.

### 3. Ways to worship

How can you make worship a part of your everyday life? One way is by asking God to slow you down and open your eyes every day to see Him in the ways He wants to reveal Himself. Then you can't help but respond in worship.

'The revelation of God is the fuel for the fire of our worship.'  
Matt Redman

How has God revealed Himself to you?

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Worship can flow from us like living water when God reveals Himself to us. It starts by drawing from a number of wells.

#### a. The Well of Experience

God puts songs in our hearts! We cannot help but worship God when He does something extraordinary in our life. When God parted the Red Sea, the people sang. When He saved David from his enemies, David sang. When the disciples broke bread with Jesus in the upper room, they sang. When you and I take time from our busy day to reflect on what He did for us at Calvary, we can't help but sing ... and be refreshed in the process.

Discuss things from your own life that God did which cause you to worship Him.

#### b. The Well of His Word

'No matter where I am, your teachings fill me with songs.'  
Psalm 119:54 (CEV)  
  
'I set your instructions to music and sing them as I walk this pilgrim way.'  
Psalm 119:54 (MSG)

God's Word has been a source of inspiration for many hymns and spiritual songs. When we get into God's Word we can't help but praise Him for who He is.

What scripture verse makes you praise the Lord?

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#### c. The Well of What He has Created

Look out for one or two moments every day when you feel the warm sun on your back or a warm breeze on your face or when you hear a bird chirping or children playing. Close your eyes at that moment and whisper a prayer of gratitude for what God has just given you. This not only teaches us to search for quietness and beauty, but it will calm our hearts in the midst of hectic activity and centre us in a position of praise. You can also practice praise each time you see a rose, a rainbow, a sunset or a starry night. As we look for signs of beauty or little moments of quietness, we are also teaching our hearts to return to our Creator and acknowledge all that He made for us to enjoy.

Don't only look for those perfect moments, but also look for ways to turn ordinary, everyday things into something that's cause for praise. By doing this you are turning the mundane into the majestic!



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## 2. Identify space stealers

These are some of the space stealers that add pressure and distract us from spending time with the Lord:

- Having to have something – now!
    - Wanting something immediately is a sign of immaturity.
    - We need to learn to wait and even be able to go without the thing we want.
    - We must not be controlled by our selfish desires.
  - Work that puts me under pressure:
    - Deadlines, whether imposed by myself or by others, can make us feel cornered.
    - Work can wait, but God’s Word often doesn’t – if we miss His timing, we lose the moment in the Spirit.
    - Don’t let the pile of work trick you into thinking it is more important than what God might be trying to say to you at a given moment.
    - Write down the pressures that you are currently feeling, and trust the Lord to help you to make adjustments.
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- Drivenness
  - Being an achiever is good, but being an over-achiever can easily put you into a place of striving.
  - The Lord says, ‘Cease striving and know that I am God.’
  - God is not impressed with how fast we can run but rather with how long we are willing to sit at His feet.

## 3. Be with Him

- God is calling us to come and sit with Him.
  - Sometimes the silence of sitting with Him is awkward, simply because we are not used to it.
  - Wait with Him, whether He talks to you or not – just be with Him.
  - Be at home with Him.
  - Spend some time with Him now. Just be with Him. If He says something write it down. Otherwise just enjoy being in His presence.
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## 4. Living in the quiet place

- Living in the quiet place is a choice!
- Jesus also often had to withdraw from the commotion and the crowds to rest His body, reconnect with His Father and refresh His heart.
- Jesus must have longed for these spacious places with His Father where He could drink in the quiet and gain strength for His next task.

## 5. Finding your spacious space

- Martha was cornered in the kitchen, and Mary managed to find her wide open space in the living room at His feet.
- Finding a spacious place with Him involves going away with Him in our hearts – this is called **REST!**
  - Realize that He is in control. We submit ourselves to Him.
  - Expect Him to come through. We wait for Him to move.
  - Surrender your strategy – ‘God I don’t have the solution, but I know that you do.’
  - Trust His next step. We walk by faith.

## 6. Protect your space

- As we find spacious places each day, we need to protect them at all costs.
- We must set boundaries around our time and space!
- There is always place for flexibility but the boundaries must be honoured:
  - Effective and efficient planning is essential;
  - Plan margins (spaces between things) into your day;
  - Don’t worry about what will happen tomorrow;
  - Don’t regret what happened yesterday;
  - Don’t check e-mails before checking-in with God;
  - Pace yourself by starting your day with worship.



Are you satisfied with what you are investing in God's Word and in people? Give some reasons for your answer.

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What areas of your life are you investing too much time in, resulting in an unhealthy lifestyle (e.g. television)?

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Can you think of eternal things to collect? Here are some ideas:

- The fruit of the Spirit – Galatians 5:22-23.
- Memorised scripture verses – Psalm 119:11.
- People with whom you've shared the gospel – Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19-20.
- Orphans you've cared for or widows you've 'adopted' as grandmas – James 1:27.
- Edifying moments – Ephesians 4:29b.
- The Word of God – 2 Timothy 2:15.

'... strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress. And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish.'

Hebrews 12:1b-2 (NLT)

What might be slowing you down? Too many appointments? Too many obligations? Too many clothes? Write down your answers.

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We have to constantly remind ourselves to 'strip off' the things that can easily distract or deter us from being with God and living a simple, uncluttered, uncomplicated life.

'To reorder one's own world, the need to simplify is imperative, otherwise we find ourselves unable to be at rest within, unable to enter the deep, silent recesses of our hearts, where God's best messages are communicated. And if we live very long in that condition, our hearts grow cold toward Christ and we become objects of seduction in a wayward world. What perils await us in that condition.'

Charles Swindoll

What about the above quote stands out for you?

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Reflect on the verses that follow. How does each verse represent living a simple, uncluttered, and spacious life:

Examples

- Psalm 37:4 – If I am delighting myself in God, I will not be running after 'things'.
- Psalm 119:11 – \_\_\_\_\_
- Psalm 119:32 – \_\_\_\_\_
- Psalm 119:45 – \_\_\_\_\_

When we slow down long enough to catch our breath and get out into a spacious place where we can sense the presence of God, we can be like children – experiencing this world as if it were exciting and new once again.

Remember, we were made to experience a life of wonder, beauty, intimacy and rest in a relationship with God. Life is not about the rat race. It's not about work. It's not about doing. It's all about the One who created this world for us to enjoy with Him. Life is about enjoying God and rejoicing in the simple pleasures of His creation.

I enjoy Him when I repent of the pressured pace of life and turn to indulge, again, in my relationship with Him. I enjoy Him when I stop long enough to look out the window and see what He's left for me in the sky. I enjoy Him when I go away with Him in my heart in a poetic moment or dramatic pause in life.

Jesus, being God in the flesh, came to deliver one basic message: that Father God loves us. We need to watch for lessons of His love, pictures of His provision, and glimpses of His grace.

When we regain our sense of appreciation for what God has put in our path or placed around us, it keeps our minds ever-learning, our hearts in a state of worship and our souls in a state of rest.

What have you missed? What is right in front of you that you've been too busy to notice? What grand gestures of God's love have you missed because your nose was in the paper, or your eyes were glazed over from weariness, or your mind was running full speed ahead?

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'That's how God's Word vaults across the skies from sunrise to sunset, melting ice, scorching deserts, warming hearts to faith.'

Psalm 19:6 (MSG)

Every day, seek pleasure and rest in the beautiful demonstrations of who God is by reading His Word across the skies and letting all He has created around you warm your heart to faith. Psalm 139 tells us there is no place we can go where His presence is not, so it is a matter of opening our eyes and our hearts to rediscover the joy of being with Him wherever we are.

## Conclusion

Satan's best tactic for getting us to forget God lies in getting us busy, even with the things of God. We get too busy to worship, too busy to laugh, too busy to enjoy life, too busy to be in His presence, too busy to notice the simple things that scream of the sovereignty of God. This kind of busyness is a sure formula for a life of no joy.

## Ministry

Spend some time presenting your heart and home before God. Is there anything you feel He is challenging you to repent of so that you can 'run in the path' of His commands (Psalm 119:32)? Examine the following areas in this regard:

- your schedule – \_\_\_\_\_
- your home – \_\_\_\_\_
- your heart – \_\_\_\_\_

Pray with one another, thanking Him for the simple pleasures He has given you and asking Him to open your eyes and reawaken your heart to the glimpses of Paradise He puts in your path every day.

## Prayer Focus

In the materialistic age that we live in, pray that people would embrace a lifestyle of simplicity.



‘ \_\_\_\_\_ in Me and I will \_\_\_\_\_ in you. No  
branch can bear fruit, by itself; it must \_\_\_\_\_ in the vine.  
Neither can you bear fruit unless you \_\_\_\_\_ in Me.’  
John 15:4

When we don't spend time with the Lord, we become like a fruit tree in a drought – our fruit becomes small and scarce. No matter what people think of us, if we don't spend time in His presence, there will be no real new growth in our lives, and what we will have to offer a hungry world will not look very attractive!

### 3. Beautiful

Read the following quote slowly, think about it, and underline the parts that stand out for you:

‘Beauty is the fruit of our relationship with God. Not stress. Or weariness. Or feeling overwhelmed. If beauty is the result of our relationship with God, then the more we know Him, the more beautiful – not busy – we will become. It's not a question of external beauty and how to avoid the aging process. It's not a matter of image management. It's a matter of inner beauty and deep soul work – the kind that comes from sitting at God's feet and depending on Him.’

Think about one of the beautiful women of God who influences you in your walk with the Lord. She may be your mother, or grandmother, a well-known teacher, or a friend in your life group. Have you noticed how she just seems to become more beautiful as she walks with God?

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Daniel 12:3 – Those who are wise will \_\_\_\_\_

and those who lead many to righteousness, like the \_\_\_\_\_ for ever and ever.

### 4. Sit at His feet

This means basking in His presence and getting quiet enough to hear Him speak to our hearts. It means letting the world rush by while we rest in Him.

Read Mark 1:35-37. What was the disciples' reaction (and attitude) when Jesus spent time alone with God?

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You may have to face the same attitude from well-meaning people, as you determine to sit at His feet!

### 5. Soak in His Word

There is a difference between grabbing a quick snack as you run out the front door, and having a leisurely meal with a friend. In the same way, we can survive spiritually on quick 'bites' from the Word, or make huge meals of it that will feed our souls to become strong and thriving in His truth.

Where are you in terms of feasting on the Word? Are you feasting, snacking or perhaps fasting altogether?

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### 6. Seeking His will

‘For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.’

Ephesians 2:10

As we spend time with God, our spiritual ears become more sensitive to hear His voice, and we can enjoy the adventure of a life led by the Spirit more and more. We all want to live lives of purpose – that make a difference; this is possible, as we obey the nudges of His Spirit.

Sometimes our intentions are very good, but we fail to plan and then get caught up in the rush around us. Let's all prayerfully plan how, when, and where, we will sit at His feet:

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### Ministry

- Repent where you have neglected spending time with the Lord, and incline your heart back to Him.
- Pray for a hunger to spend time with the Lord, and that you will recognize the drawing of the Holy Spirit in the midst of the busyness of life.
- Pray for one another that our lives would become 'radiant' as we spend time with Him.

### Prayer Focus

Pray that Christians in our country will shine like stars because of time spent with Him.



Week 9  
 Rest Rest Rest Rest Rest Rest  
 REMAINING IN THE SECRET PLACE

'He who **dwells** in the secret place of the Most High shall remain stable under the shadow of the Almighty.'  
 Psalm 91:1 (Emphasis added)

### Objective

To look at some keys which will help us to enter into and remain in the Secret Place.

### Ice-Breaker

What were some of your favourite hiding places as a child?

### Word and Discussion

#### 1. What does it mean to abide?

The Greek word for abiding is *epimeno*, which means 'perseverance in continuing'. This is similar to the idea that we must 'labour to enter His rest.'

To abide is to push your spiritual roots deeper into the Spirit of God until you find the 'River of Life' that gives you a constant source of divine life and Spirit empowerment.

We were created for constant intimacy and relationship with God, therefore anything less brings dissatisfaction.

Read John 15:4-7.

Here Jesus asks us to dwell (live) in Him and not to just casually visit Him. We all abide differently because we are all unique creations of God.

How do you view the concept of 'abiding'?

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What hinders your abiding in the Secret Place? (Think of things like busyness, sin, lack of privacy, etc.)

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### 2. What are some of the things we will find in the Secret Place as we abide?

- Anointing - This is the place where we 'buy oil' – Matthew 25:1-13; Zechariah 4:11-14; Luke 24:32
- Love – Song of Solomon 2:4-6
- Truth – John 4:23
- Power – Zachariah 4:6
- Protection – Psalm 91

### 3. Some keys to help us dwell in the Secret Place

#### a. Say 'Yes' to the Secret Place.

Deal ruthlessly with hurry in your life. Think of the pause button on a video machine or DVD player. Press the 'pause button' in your life.

'Hurry is not of the devil, it is the devil'

John Ortberg

o What causes hurry in your life?

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o What can you change in your daily routine to make more time for the Secret Place?

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#### b. Shut the door (Matthew 6:6).

The Father promises that the moment you 'shut the door' (shut out noise, busyness, baggage, etc.), He is there **waiting** for you in the Secret Place. The moment you 'shut the door,' you have your own Secret Place with the Father. Shutting the door is not necessarily a physical door; it is shutting out all distractions and focusing your attention completely on the One you love. This means that the bus or your car can become your Secret Place while travelling to work.

o What places in your daily life can become a Secret Place for you?

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#### c. Abiding involves staying connected.

Remember that sin always separates you from God's presence because of feelings of guilt. Do some 'spiritual house-cleaning' and see if there are some things that must be thrown out, e.g. criticism, unforgiveness, negativity.

#### d. Allow the radiation therapy of God's presence in your life.

Psalm 84:11 says, 'For the Lord is a **sun** and a shield.' Read Malachi 4:2. God's presence radiates on sin like chemotherapy does on cancer. If you want to change you must allow the light of His presence to shine on you because your spiritual chemistry changes in the rays of His presence.

Think of the effect and process of tanning in the sun. The more time you spend in the sun, the more visible your tan becomes. What does your 'spiritual tan' look like? When last did you spend time basking in the 'sunlight' of His presence? (Psalm 84)

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**e. The 3 Cs**

- o **Consistency:** Practice His presence regularly. Learn to recognize His voice by having consistent times in the Secret Place.
- o **Creativity:** Are your times in the Secret Place boring? Think of and ask God for creative ideas to spend time with Him. What about having a 'coffee time' with the Father?
- o **Conversation:** Keep a journal. Write down what God says to you.  
– Habakkuk 2:1-3.

Share with the group **one** thing that Jesus told you to do and what the results were when you obeyed.

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## Conclusion

Jesus said He only does what He sees His Father do and speaks what He hears His Father say. Think on His promise: 'My sheep hear My voice'. The Secret Place is the best place to cultivate hearing His voice.

## Ministry

Share with each other about the things that keep you from getting to the Secret Place. Pray for each other for strength and wisdom regarding how to apply the keys in order to abide in Him.

## Prayer Focus

- Pray that the body of Christ would not get so busy with the things of God that we lose our first love.
- Pray for a return to the Secret Place.