

## “Crafting the Rhythm of Life” (Psalm 16:8-9)

### 1. Holding a Rope in a Blizzard

We are together taking a journey of series “Being Set Free.”

“If we believe in Jesus, everything goes well”? We know that that is not the case. That is only an illusion. We will face various walls. And we will experience griefs, sorrows. We may have experiences so painful that we don't even have words to express our grief. And we also lose various things.

“We live in a blizzard. And few of us have a rope.”<sup>1</sup>

I learned an interesting story. Farmers on the Great Plains, at the first sign of a blizzard, would run a rope from the back door out to the barn. As soon as they noticed a blizzard is coming, they ran a heavy rope line attached to a hook outside a window connecting it to the barn door.

Holding on to that rope was the only way he can get to the barn and care for the live-stock: horses, cows, and chickens. And it's the only way he can come back to his house.

They all knew stories of people who had wandered off and been frozen to death, having lost sight of home in a whiteout while still in their own backyards.<sup>2</sup>

Today we live in a blizzard of another sort. It spins around us as economic injustice, ecological ruin, physical and spiritual violence, and their inevitable outcome, and war. It blows within us as fear and frenzy, greed and deceit, and indifference to the suffering of others.<sup>3</sup>

If we recognize these blizzards, we can do something about it. We can wear a coat or jacket when we go outside. We can take hold of the rope. Or we may stay inside until the blizzards calm down.

The most dangerous situation is while we are in the midst of the blizzard but we don't recognize it.

There is a common form of contemporary blizzard yet many of us are not aware of. That is, activism and overwork. “The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence. To allow

---

<sup>1</sup> Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality (Book)*, Zondervan, 2006, p.153

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.couragerenewal.org/leading-through-the-blizzards/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://sites.duke.edu/theconnection/2013/12/09/what-is-your-rope-to-the-barn/>

oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to violence. It kills the root of inner wisdom that makes work fruitful.”<sup>4</sup>

“Many of us are overscheduled, tense, addicted to hurry, frantic, preoccupied, fatigued, and starved for time... We battle life to make the best use of every spare minute we have... We end our days exhausted from work and raising children. And then our “free time” on weekends becomes filled with more demands in an already overburdened life... If we aren’t busy, we feel guilty that we waste time and are not productive... It is like being addicted – only it is not to drugs or alcohol but to tasks, to work, to doing... God is offering us a rope to keep us from getting lost. This rope consistently leads us back home to him, to a place that is centered and rooted.”<sup>5</sup>

What is the rope? In his book “Emotionally Healthy Spirituality” Peter Scazzero says that is, the Daily Office and Sabbath.

“The Daily Office and the Sabbath offer us a rhythm so powerful that they anchor us from whatever catastrophic blizzard that may be blowing in our lives so we can feel the rope and make our way home.”<sup>6</sup>

“When placed inside present-day Christianity, the Daily Office and Sabbath are groundbreaking, countercultural acts that go against the grain of our fast-paced Western culture. Stopping for the Daily Office and Sabbath is *not* meant to add another “to-do” to our already busy schedules. It is the resetting of our entire lives toward a new destination — God himself. These practices enable us to stay attuned to God’s presence throughout our days and weeks.”<sup>7</sup>

“The Daily Office and the Sabbath serve as ropes so we might live in a rhythmic and joyful way even in the midst of blizzards.”<sup>8</sup>

Today we will focus on the Daily Office and we will study about Sabbath Rest another time.

---

<sup>4</sup> *Book*, p.174

<sup>5</sup> *Book*, p.154

<sup>6</sup> *Book*, p.156

<sup>7</sup> Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Course Workbook*, Zondervan, 2014, p.77

<sup>8</sup> *Book*, p.157

## 2. Crafting New Rhythm

“The purpose of the Daily Office is to remember God and commune with him all through our days.”<sup>9</sup>

Please don't be destructed by the word “Office.” It is “an act of offering... by the creature to the Creator... prayers of praise offered as a sacrifice of thanksgiving and faith to God and as sweet-smelling incense... before the throne of God.”<sup>10</sup>

If you don't like the word “Office,” you may call it “Selah” or a “between time.”

Jesus comes to the Father from time to time.

When Jesus had just started his ministry, there was a very busy day for him and his disciples. He went to Capernaum with his disciples, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people in the synagogue. There was a man who was possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. Jesus drove the demon out of him. Right after that, Jesus visited the home of Simon and Andrew. When he saw Simon's mother-in-law was sick in bed with a high fever, he healed her. In the evening, after Sabbath ended, all the people in town came to him. They brought to him those who had various kind of sickness and those possessed by demons. Jesus healed them one after another, and he drove out demons. What a busy day it was! Although Simon and other disciples didn't particularly do anything, they also felt good kind of tiredness and they fell asleep.

Now Simon got up a little late that morning, and he couldn't find Jesus around. Other disciples also noticed Jesus wasn't with them and they started to search for him.

“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. (Mark 1:35)”

Another time, the day started with a shocking news, Jesus' cousin John the Baptist was killed. When Jesus heard this, he went away in a boat to a solitary place to be alone. His disciples followed him. However, when they arrive at the

---

<sup>9</sup> *Book*, p.162

<sup>10</sup> *Book*, p.157

other side, the crowd were already there waiting for them. Jesus began teaching them many things and healed the sick.

When they realized it was already evening. There were still so many people around Jesus. One of his disciples said, "Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding villages and buy themselves something to eat." Jesus was so busy, he even forgot that they had not eaten. Jesus received five loaves, he gave thanks, blessed the loaves, and gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. Disciples cannot remember the details of what happened after that. What they remember was everyone ate and they were all full. It was a lot of work to collect the leftover food too. There were twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish.

"After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone (Matt 14:23)."

Luke summarizes that "Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed (Luke 5:16)."

Perhaps, most of us were taught to have a quiet time or devotion time in the morning and are practicing it. Waking up in the morning, I spend time with God before I start the day. I read the Bible and pray. I charge myself with the strength for the day, and I begin my day.

Then I do my daily work, I reply to emails, write articles, write notes, prepare for meetings, I get into the taxi, meet people. By mid-morning I already forget what I have read in the Bible in the morning. I was rarely even thinking about God by midday. I underestimated like many of us, how many distractions are coming their way all day long that cut us off from union with God, as well as there is the power of evil in the world, and my own tendency to go my own way with myself will.

I wanted to be attentive to God all through the day. I longed to keep the sense of being in the presence of God whole my day. But that is nothing but pie in the sky.

My life used be like; God, work, work, work, work, work, break, work, work, work, work, work, and down. And the next day, God, work, work, work... But since I practice the Daily Office, my life's got new rhythm. God, work, work. God, work, work. God, work, work. It's like you're dancing waltz with God all through the day. It's so good!

By practicing the Daily Office we are taking care of our inner world or soul, that is “the only place from which we can gain the strength to be brave, or even beat, any outer turbulence.”<sup>11</sup> “They received from the Creator who made us to work most effectively from the inner world toward the outer.”<sup>12</sup> That is the words of Gordon MacDonald, in his book “Ordering Your Private World”. It is a great book.

David says, “I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure” (Psalm 16:8-9). He crafted the rhythm of his day. We can get it. You can get it. I can get it.

I want to invite you to come to God not just once a day but actually two or three times, or more. This pausing to be with God can last anywhere, from 2 minutes to 10 minutes to 30 minutes. It's up to you. When you practice “Selah” or a “between time,” you are crafting the rhythm of your day. Practicing the Daily Office is centering myself in Jesus through whole day. It's aligning my day with the Word. You might be more attentive to his voice and his presence at other time of your day.

Crafting the rhythm of life. It must be done intentionally. Because we are usually too busy to maintain our inner world or soul, which is the central point of a life in touch with God.<sup>13</sup>

There are four elements in the Daily Office regardless of what approach you ultimately choose.<sup>14</sup>

The first is Stopping. That's the essence of the Daily Office. We stop our activity and we pause to be with the living God.

Secondly it's Centering. Psalm 37:7 says, “Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him.” And Psalm 46:10, “Be still and know that I am God.” Basically we come to God, stay in His presence and rest there.

Thirdly there's an element of Silence. Gordon MacDonald pointed out a very important thing, “[God] cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is

---

<sup>11</sup> Gordon MacDonald. *Ordering Your Private World*, Thomas Nelson, 2017. Kindle edition, Location 604

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., Location 607

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., Location 516-7

<sup>14</sup> *Book*, p.160-162

the friend of silence. See how nature—trees, flowers, grass— grow in silence.”<sup>15</sup> So it's really critical. Dallas Willard said, “Silence and solitude are the two most radical disciplines of the Christian life.” And Henri Nouwen said, “Without solitude it's almost impossible to live a spiritual life.” For me this is the most challenging part. Perhaps this is least practiced among Christians today.

Fourthly it's Scripture. John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” “The focus of Daily Office is to be with God, not to get something from him. The focus is about communion or abiding remaining in Jesus.”<sup>16</sup> So Scripture must be there in the Daily Office.

### 3. Tools

Now I am going to introduce some tools for your Daily Office. They are the elements in my Daily Office. So far they are working great for me.

#### Bible Reading Plan

As you know our Bible reading plan has four parts. OT, NT, Psalm and Proverbs. I usually read the OT in the morning and the NT after lunch. And I read Psalm sometime in the morning, and Proverbs in the late afternoon. For Psalm and Proverbs, it takes only 1 minutes to read.

#### Pocket Prayers

In his book “Pocket Prayers,” Max Lucado suggests a prayer outline, based on the Lord's Prayer.

Father,

you are good.

I need help. Heal me and forgive me.

They need help.

Thank you.

In Jesus' name, amen.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Gordon MacDonald. Location 2302

<sup>16</sup> Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Course DVD*, Zondervan, 2014, Session 6

<sup>17</sup> Max Lucado, *Pocket Prayers*, Thomas Nelson, 2014, p.10

You can pray following this outline. And the wonderful thing of this book is you have 40 prayers. It starts with the Scripture. For example,

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:20–21)

Now, the prayer begins:

God above, you have torn the veil. You have conquered death and made a way for me to have a relationship with you.

I forget so quickly that I can talk to you anytime. Allow me to turn to you today with each step, question, and difficulty.

Surround my friends and family with your forgiveness today. Remind them that you are eager to forgive them. Help them let go of any guilt they cling to.

Thank you for making us your ambassadors on this earth.

In the name of Jesus, the One who knew no sin, amen.<sup>18</sup>

It's great, right? I usually start my morning intercessory prayer with this book. Here, I have a good news. This book is actually free. Just google "free pocket prayers" you can get it.

### Kingdom Streams

This is another book I'm using. "Kingdom Streams 366 Devotions." Sandra K. Dubois, the author shares what she heard from God in her quiet time. It sounds like God is speaking to you. For example:

It begins with the title, "Stress."

And the scripture.

Out of my distress,

I called on the LORD.

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.39

The LORD answered me with freedom.

The LORD is on my side. I will not be afraid.

What can man do to me?

(Psalm 118:5-6 WEB)

And it goes like this.

Whatever your source of stress, it feels like a cage.

You feel captive to its iron bars, separating you from what you want and need: freedom.

I came to set the captives free.

I didn't create your soul and body for stress, but here it is!

It's here, it's there, it's almost everywhere.

Where is the freedom from stress?

In heaven. In Me. In My Presence. In My shalom.

Invite heaven to invade your stress.

Invite heaven to occupy the shack of stress where you are living, and I will build you a mansion of peace, a holy ambassador's dwelling.

Yes, you are on earth. Yes, it's full of trouble.

Yet, I have called you to be here now. I have things for you to do before you come to your eternal home.<sup>19</sup>

You can find it only at Kindle. You can read it on your phone or PC.

### Deep breath in Silence

Take a few minutes alone for silence "between times."

Close your eyes. Take deep breath very slowly. Pay attention to whether or not your body feels tense or anxious. During breathing in, imagine the Holy Spirit the peace you seek is coming in and filling you up. During breathing out, imagine the worry or anxiety or fear is moving out from you. Do this set 1 minute. And keep deep breath very slowly. Recognize you can control your breath, and remind yourself that you can choose to be filled with Him.

This is very helpful when you are under pressure, in a stressful situation. You can do this prayer, even in the middle of hard conversation.

---

<sup>19</sup> Sandra K. Dubois, *Kingdom Streams 366 Devotions*, 2017, Kindle, p.111

### Prayer with Psalm

“Our job is not to try to control God’s response to our prayers, as if we ever could. But to be open whatever God speaks. It makes us better able to hear whatever we most need to hear, and to experience the Spirit’s moving and power to enable us to fulfill God’s will and serve Christ’s good purposes for our lives.”<sup>20</sup>

We know this. We want to do like this. And some of us may wonder how the prayer can be the fellowship with God, hearing from Him, instead of just repeating my wish list. I was one of them.

Here is how I’ve been learning prayer. It’s very simple. Choose one Psalm. Read out one verse aloud. And rephrase it with your own words. It’s okay if your words or thoughts move out from the main line of the verse. Do it continually until you have no other words. Then, go to the next verse. And repeat the same pattern. You may do three, four or five verses.

This is interesting. You are talking, and you will hear from God.

I give you an example. Psalm 23:1. “The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not be want.” Lord you are my shepherd. You are always with me. You are my true shepherd and you gave me life. And you promised me abundant life. I am your sheep. I used to be far away from you. But I am redeemed by your blood, and now I belong to you. You never forsake me. Even if I lose my way, you will surely find me. You are my shepherd. And I am your sheep, I know your voice. When I feel anxious, downcast with sorrow, I hear your voice and I find peace. I long for you, and I seek you. Please let me hear your voice. Please let me walk with you. Remaining in your gentle support, this is the best place I can be. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not be want.

It can be done by a spoken prayer or by writing a journal.

### Scripture Observation

What you need is: The Bible. Please use the book. Then a notebook and a pen. I don’t recommend you to use your computer or phone. It’s important to make a difference between this and your work. Go a quiet place and sit down silently.

- 1) Quiet your heart. And invite the Holy Spirit.
- 2) Read the Bible, just a portion, about 10 to 20 verses. Read it slowly once.

---

<sup>20</sup> Timothy C. Geoffrion, *Saying Yes to God*, Cascade Books, 2017, p.49

- 3) Summary. Write down the summary of the portion. But “Jesus healed the sick.” That is too simple. Write down the summary so that you can understand the content.
- 4) Observation. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you about God and about yourself through the scripture. And write them down.
  - (1) About God. For example, God’s nature, greatness, promises, guidance, and model or pattern.
  - (2) About yourself. For example, who I am for God, what I need to change, what God is encouraging me to do.
- 5) Application. Ask the Holy Spirit how you can apply the truth from your observation to your life. Write down how you are actually going to practice what you learned.
- 6) Close the time in prayer.

There are endless options and tools for what you can do with God during “Selah”, or the “between time”. And God built each one of us differently. So what works for me may not work for you. So if it works for you, use it. If it doesn’t help you, don’t do it. Try something different.

I don’t really have a format to do certain things at certain times. But I try to come to God regularly in my daily activities. When I shift to the next activity, begin something, I will start with coming to God. There is no rule about how long I spend time with Him. When I want to take a short break, it can be 5, 10 minutes. Sometimes I just read a Psalm just for one minute. When I want to change the air, I may spend 15 to 30 minutes.

What I do then will be different from time to time, every day different. I choose one or some from the tools I introduced you just now. It is just like choosing what you like from a box of chocolate with different tastes and shapes. Sometimes I choose just one, and sometimes two.

The point is: Crafting the rhythm of your day rather than driven by demands. By practicing the Daily Office, you are centering yourself in Jesus through whole day. It’s aligning your day with the Word.

You will be more attentive to his voice and his presence at other time of your day. Let us make our day like dancing waltz with God all through the day. Crafting the rhythm of life.

For LifeNet groups and personal reflection:

After being forcibly removed from his country and home, Daniel was given a prestigious education and high-level job in government. The pressure on him to conform to the worldly, pagan values of Babylon was great. The following example gives us insight into one of the secrets of his faithful devotion to God.

Scripture Daniel 6:6-10

1. Reread verse 10 aloud. How do the words in this verse speak to you?
2. How do you think this practice anchored Daniel in God and enabled him to resist the great pressure he was facing?
3. What costs were involved for Daniel?
4. What are the greatest obstacles preventing you from stopping to be with God two or three times a day?

Taken from "Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Course Workbook, by Peter Scazzero, Zondevan, 2014, p.81-2