



REDEEMER
DELFT



THIS IS **THE WAY**

A Short Field Guide for Following Jesus

CONGRATULATIONS!

Well done for picking up this booklet. Wherever you are on your journey with Jesus this short booklet is designed to help equip you to move further along the path of **discipleship** or apprenticeship to Jesus. This journey holds many great and precious promises for you, not just when you die, but here and now. Jesus told his first disciples (or followers) the following in the Gospel of John, he said:

John 10:10 *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*

We all like the sound of having “life to the full”, because frankly, most of us do not experience that right now. In fact, I imagine most people’s lives are very much not being lived to the full. Why? We live at a moment in history where there are many “thieves” that come to steal the life that Jesus wants us to have. We find ourselves in an exhausting daily battle for the full life that Jesus promised he would provide yet few seem to experience it. We are confused, tired and if we are honest a little disappointed with this so-called “promise” and relegate it to only something we will experience when we die.

There are good reasons for our lack of experience. The original followers of Jesus were called followers of the Way (Acts 9:2) referring to the way Jesus had taught them to live. Following Jesus is adopting a lifestyle based on the teaching and methods of Jesus. This is often far from our own experience of following Jesus, where we continue in the ways of the world and tag some extra belief on top. This does not work and will not deliver the life we are promised.

The goal of this short booklet is to help us start to follow the Way of Jesus. To do this, we have organized the booklet into **three parts** highlighting the core aspects of The Way:

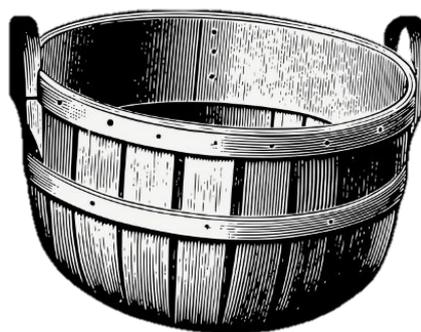
- (1) Laying Good Foundations
- (2) Forming Rhythms of Grace
- (3) Fighting for Life to the Full

Each of these parts are an **essential part** of the lifestyle of a disciple of Jesus. We cannot pick and choose, if you are going to find this life to the full that Jesus has promised us then you need to focus on them all. Let us give a bit of introduction to these aspects.

Part 1: Laying Good Foundations

Starting to follow Jesus or becoming a Christian, is well *following Jesus*, i.e. following his ways not our own. We do not get to define what this looks like or that would just be following ourselves, wouldn't it? We see in the Bible that there are certain things that we need **to do** to **begin this journey** and things also to **continue** it if we are to grow into all that God has for us in this life. The first part of the booklet covers these essentials.

Example Imagine an old-school wooden bucket with the sides made up of wooden planks held together with metal (see right). This is a picture of our “life bucket” and to flourish we need to keep our bucket full. Having the foundations in place is like making sure that we have slotted all the wooden beams together and put the metal rings on to complete our bucket. Without all of these in place, no matter how hard we try to fill them the water is just going to run out. This means our bucket is never full and we can never enjoy the life that God intends for us now.



Part 2: Forming Rhythms of Grace

Rhythms of grace are a set of personal practices and relational routines that allow us to be with Jesus, become more like him and do what he would do. They are like healthy heart that rhythmical pumps oxygenated blood throughout our bodies. We all have rhythms, patterns and habits which either drain us or replenish us even if we have not thought about them consciously. As a follower of Jesus, we want to live purposefully and intentionally and this requires looking at these habits, practices and rhythms that we have in our lives and assessing whether they are delivering the life we want. Building in rhythms of grace is a long-term process to slowly re-engineer our lives to live in line with God's purpose for us and our own deepest desires. The second part covers how we can begin to build these rhythms.

Example Our bucket does not just remain full on its own. As we go around living, we spend “life” as well as receive it. We use it in the work that we do, the people we love and in the problems we face. We need to be continually refilled and renewed by patterns that sustain us. If the essentials above are making sure the bucket is complete, rhythms of grace are learning finding the right taps so that our bucket never runs empty.

Part 3: Fighting for Life to the Full

In our quote from John's Gospel, Jesus warned us that "the thief comes only to kill, steal and destroy." Becoming a follower of Jesus does not stop the thief trying to do these things to us. Who is this thief? This thief is known as Satan and he and his demons are constantly at work to destroy our lives. Sound's fun, right? The Bible tells us that we do not need to be afraid, as followers of Jesus, we have been given authority over these thieves, but we should also be sober and take this reality seriously. Jesus said:

Luke 10:19 *I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.*

The question is not whether we have the authority, but whether we learn to exercise it in our lives. We need to be sober and vigilant in recognizing areas in our lives where we are at risk and work to renew and restore our souls with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Example Now imagine that we are using this bucket in a place where it is likely to get damaged and we have also built it out of imperfect and damaged wood. This bucket is likely to leak water from time to time. We must be active in finding these leaks and repairing them so that we can hold more and more water.

PART 1: LAYING GOOD FOUNDATIONS

How to start your journey with Jesus.

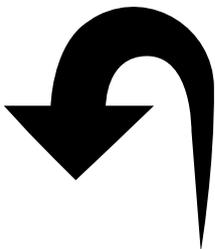
You can call yourself whatever you like: “a Christian”, “a disciple”, “a follower of Jesus” or “Trevor” but that does not make you one. The Bible tells us what it looks like to start a journey with Jesus. These instructions come straight out of the apostle Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost, where he told a crowd of Jews (who already believed in God) who wanted to know how to follow Jesus, Peter said:

Acts 2:38 *“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

We identify four actions: they need to do: (1) repent, (2) believe in the name of Jesus, (3) be baptized and (4) receive the Holy Spirit. These are the four steps to starting your journey. We will look more closely at these.

(1) REPENT: TURN FROM YOUR OWN WAYS

Mark 1:15 *“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”*



Jesus’ message when we walked around teaching was quite simple. He claimed that God’s Kingdom, i.e. the place where God rules and reigns had come near to people and they needed to make a choice of whether they wanted in on this Kingdom. To do this people needed to make a decision to turn from doing their own thing (our autonomy) to doing God’s thing (His authority) and give allegiance to Jesus their King. The first step in following Jesus is to turn from being the boss of our own lives.

(2) BELIEVE: TURN TOWARDS GOD’S WAYS

Mark 1:15 *“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”*



Repentance is never neutral, it means to change one’s mind. It is turning from our own ways towards God’s way as we know and understand them. We believe

the good news (of the Kingdom) that Jesus is the King of the Universe, one day He is going to bring a perfect world into being and that he promises that all those who trust him and ask for forgiveness, for going their own way, will be able to enter into this new world. The second step in following Jesus is making Jesus the boss of your life.

(3) BAPTISM: THE SIGN OF NEW LIFE

Acts 2:38 *Peter replied, “Repent and **be baptized**, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*



It is one thing to say that you believe in Jesus, it is another thing to prove it and display it to the world. Baptism is to be submerged underwater symbolizing the death of our old life, our burial with Jesus, and our resurrection to new life in Jesus. Whilst baptism has no power to save us, it is a big sign that we are saved because it displays our changed (repentant) heart through our willingness to be obedient to do what Jesus asks us to do, i.e. believe and be baptized.

(4) THE SPIRIT: EMPOWERED FOR NEW LIFE

Ephesians 5:18 *Be filled with the Spirit.*



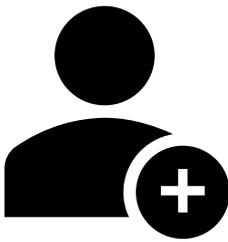
Jesus said it was better that he would go and send the Holy Spirit in his place to be with us. When we repent and believe, we can receive the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to be a follower of Jesus without the Holy Spirit in us. With that said, the Bible tells us that there is a measure of the Spirit we can have. We are encouraged to go on being filled with the Holy Spirit as we go. The ease of our growth in God is proportional to our willingness to be filled and transformed by the Holy Spirit who empowers moral transformation and gives us gifts to serve.

How to continue your journey with Jesus.

Just as with starting the journey, the main outline of continuing the journey with Jesus is defined for us in the Bible.

MEMBERSHIP: BELONG SOMEWHERE

Romans 12:5 *so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*



When we start to follow Jesus, we become part of the global Church (big-C, church means “those called out”), but God’s intention is for us to be part of a local family of believers where we genuinely belong to one another. Every follower of Jesus should always be a **member of a local church** to help them flourish and grow to maturity. There is a growing trend in our consumer culture to treat local churches as “walk-in workshops” where we go to receive something. This type of behaviour is far from the biblical picture and actually keeps us trapped in immaturity because whilst church remains about us, we have not begun to love and our ability to love is the true marker of our maturity.

SERVE: USE YOUR GIFTS

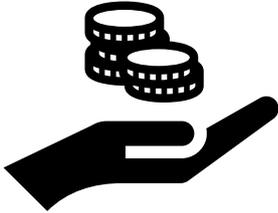
Romans 12:6-8 *We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.*



Jesus came as a servant and told us to do the same. As a follower of Jesus, you are also a servant of God. God has work for you to do and people for you to serve. Practically, this tends to be worked out in the context of a local church. Here we love one another by serving each other. The Bible is very clear that God has given gifts to every single person and they have a responsibility to use them to **serve one another in a local church.**

GIVE: BECOME GENEROUS

Luke 16:13 *No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.*



We either worship God with our money or we worship money – we don't have any other choices. As followers of Jesus, we are expected to become more and more generous like the God we worship. After all, we become what we worship. **Giving financially to the local church** is a biblical principle that helps our hearts, builds up others and extends the region of Jesus' influence in the world.

WITNESS: POINT TO JESUS

1 Peter 2:12 *Live such good lives among the pagans (unbelievers) that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*



If we follow Jesus, then we also have a responsibility **to help others discover and follow him**. Our lives are supposed to point to Jesus and his good news through what we do and what we say. Everyone has a different social circle, a different character and different skills and talents. Through our uniqueness we are to reveal (and not hide) Jesus to the world where we are.

PART 2: FORMING RHYTHMS OF GRACE

Introduction

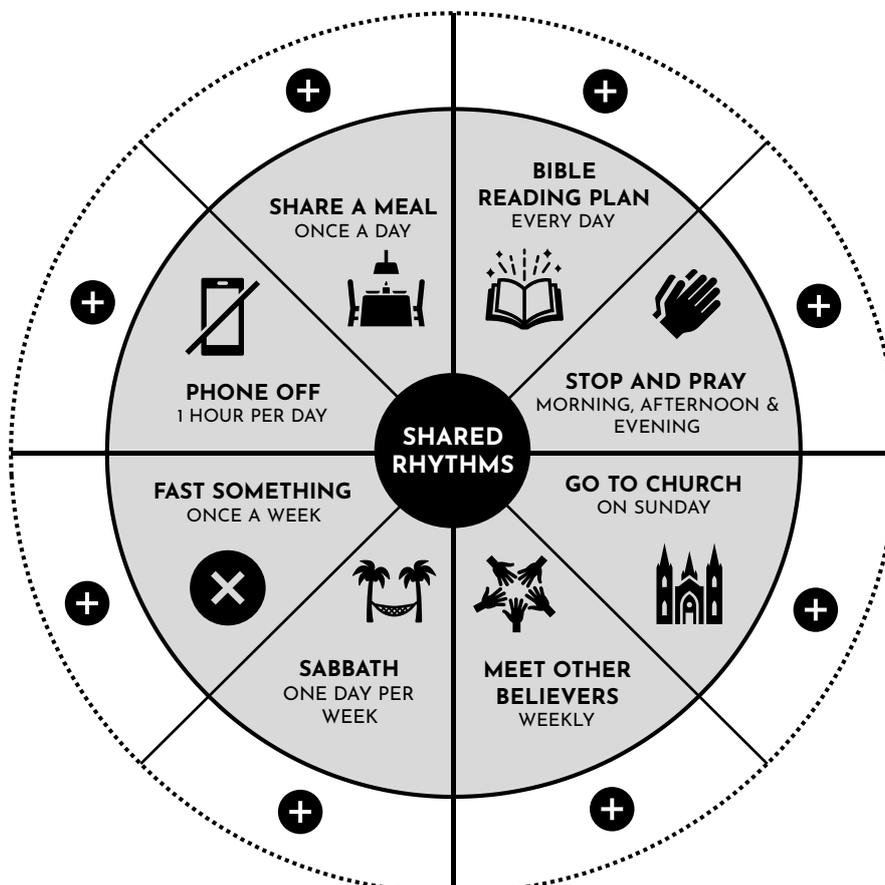
The goal of building **rhythms of grace** into your life is to help you love God and love people better, or to put it another way to help you grow into maturity and help you look more and more like Jesus day-by-day. Sounds good, right?

These rhythms of grace are a set of **spiritual practices** that you commit to over an extended period. These rhythms act like a healthy heartbeat pushing rich oxygenated blood to all our organs and muscles to keep the body alive. In the same way, these simple practices are designed to help you be with Jesus, become like Jesus and do what Jesus did over the course of your whole life.



Redeemer's Shared Rhythms

We believe that there are some key core spiritual practices that will benefit everyone if they implement them in their lives. These core habits can be found in the disc below:



Often spiritual practices and habits are better done together. By sharing a common basis in the church we can better help one and encourage another to keep going in them. We want to invite everyone into these **shared rhythms** with us. You may be sceptical. So, why are these things a good idea?

Rhythm 1: Phone Off for One Hour Per Day

We all know that smartphones are a big part of our modern lives allowing us to do so many things quickly and efficiently from the palm of our hands. They allow us to project our presence to anywhere on earth and divide our attention like nothing else in human history. Our ability to be present everywhere means that we struggle to present here and now with those around us. To give the gift of our presence to God and to those around us we suggest you disconnect from the metaverse and be present where you are for at least one hour a day giving time and attention to those geographically close to you.



Rhythm 2: Share A Meal Once A Day

Eating is something that we all need to do around three times a day. It reminds of us our dependence on the world around us, things need to die so we can keep on living another day. It reminds us that we are not God, but are created beings dependent on Him. Food is more than fuel, it is a window to connection and community. We are made to enjoy food together. So, skip the peanut butter sandwich at your desk and find people to eat with, enjoy your food and celebrate another day.



Rhythm 3: Read The Daily Bible Plan

We are bombarded daily with millions of stories. The stories of outrage from social media, the stories of doom and gloom from the news, the story of things that must be done and responded to from our emails and messages. These stories shape the course of our days. God invites us each morning to live in His story and the rest, peace and purpose that flows through it. We suggest before the computer, the phone, the tablet or the TV starts to tell us its story, our day should begin



with reminding ourselves that we are made, loved and rescued by God's unfailing love by reading the Bible. As a church, we have a reading plan that helps us read the whole Bible in three years – that's just five minutes at the beginning of your day.

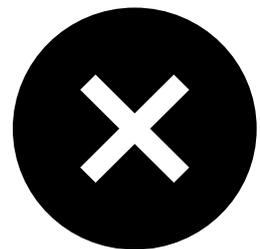
Rhythm 4: Stop and Pray in the Morning, Afternoon and Evening

Words have power, we know this instinctively, but words spoken to God have even more power to shape our lives and those around us. God asks us and teaches us to pray to Him. Prayer is essential for a life lived with God. Whilst firing off prayers as we go and being conscious of God in our busyness is good. There is something even better about stopping, changing our posture (e.g. kneeling, raising our hands) and speaking to God purposefully. We suggest that you make this a habit at the start of your day, in the middle (around lunchtime) and at the end. It does not to be long and profound, just taking a moment to return to our Father and remind ourselves that He is.



Rhythm 5: Fast Something Once A Week

We live in a society that asks us to feed and give in to our wants and desires constantly. As followers of Jesus, however, we are actually at war with our own desires, which are constantly trying to sabotage our relationship with God. As a follower of Jesus we have to say “No” a lot. Fasting is a tool we can use to train ourselves to resist our own appetites and say “Yes” to God. We suggest that you fast in a suitable way once a week (e.g. 24 hours with no food, no breakfast and lunch, no alcohol for the week, no Netflix or phone for a day, etc). The key thing about fasting is that you should feel the lack and emptiness of something missing that drives you to go to God instead.



Rhythm 6: Meet Other Believers Every Week

We live at a moment in history where it is possible to live alone, work alone and try to follow Jesus alone. We retreat to our own little islands and wonder why we feel so lonely. The God we worship is in His own being a community of love. As people made in His image, it is never good for us to be alone and God encourages, equips and invites us to live in community with other believers, where we share our homes, our lives and our goods with one another. We suggest that you plan to meet up with other believers (where you can be honest, open and vulnerable) at least once a week. Whether this is part of a Community Group or with a friend one-on-one it does not matter so much, the important thing is that we are not doing life on our own and we are part of a community who worship Jesus.



Rhythm 7: Go To Church On Sunday

Followers of Jesus have gathered together to worship on Sunday mornings for two thousand years. The gathered community of believers is a place where Jesus has promised to presence Himself. We come together on a Sunday to meet with Jesus, to come into His Presence and allow Him to serve us as we celebrate Him. We need to be strengthened, encouraged and healed by His love and mercy to continue to follow Him faithfully. Coming to church on a Sunday regularly allows us to participate in activities that build up our faith and that of others. We suggest that you make coming to church a number one priority in your week.



Rhythm 8: Sabbath One Day Per Week

Sabbath is a day without an agenda. Agenda comes from the Latin word *agere*, which means “to do”. In our context, the agenda is king whispering to us that our lives are only the sum of things that we get done. We are not human doings, but human *beings*. We need time in our week when we can come back to this central aspect of our very nature. We are. We suggest you take one day per week when you have no agenda. This



does not mean no plans or activities or people, it means nothing that *needs* to be done, nothing that is going to frustrate you if it doesn't happen. Just time where you take life as it comes and enjoy God's varied world.

Making It Your Own

It does not stop with the shared practices. Why? Well, no one lives a life just like you. You are unique and your spiritual needs are unique to you, which means if you are going to flourish as a follower of Jesus then you are going to need to put some work into discovering the rhythms that works for you and adapting it over time. We want to help you in this!

The most important thing to recognize is when your rhythm of life is **NOT** working. This will result in certain moods and behaviours that are unhelpful and are **NOT** the Way of Jesus as revealed in the Bible – they act as **red-flag warnings** that something is wrong in our souls.

Red-Flag Moods

Moods that persist for weeks.



Grumpy or Frustrated

Nothing is ever good enough.



Rushed or Hurried

You never have enough time.



Exhausted

You are always tired.



Condemned or Guilty

You feel cut off or distant from God.



Anxious or Stressed

Your mind or body cannot rest.

Red-Flag Behaviours

Patterns of behaviour, not one-offs



Doom-scrolling

You are swiping up through articles or social media for long periods.



Comfort Eating / Drinking

You are eating or drinking just to feel better.



Consumerism

You are finding comfort in buying new things.



Pornography

You are using sexual imagery for comfort.



Escapism

Spending long periods immersed in games, books, shows, etc.

Simply trying not to do these things or ignoring how we feel rarely works. They are just the **symptoms** and not the **disease**. Your life is out of balance and it is important that we treat the disease and also relieve the symptoms. What is the disease? It is quite simple. The disease is lack of God's love and Presence in

our hearts. The treatment can be trickier because we need to change our lifestyle so that it is able to keep us filled with the Holy Spirit.

The following table contains some basic spiritual practices to help us get more of God in our lives.

Things to try adding to your daily or weekly rhythms...



Celebration and Thankfulness

Take time to give thanks and celebrate what is good in your life right now.



Slow Down

Set aside a period where you actively go a little slower than you normally would.



Engage More in Community

Make an effort to spend some more time with other believers.



Scripture Meditation

Purposefully embed truth by meditating and memorizing sections of Scripture.



Solitude & Silence

Get more time alone with yourself and God.



Exercise & Healthy Eating

Make sure you are getting regular exercise and a balanced diet.



Get Accountable

Agree with someone you trust to share what is happening in your life (building this type of relationship can be hard).



Journaling

Empty your mind and heart onto paper.

Step-by-Step Guide

Having a plan is one thing, making it happen is another. Changing our lifestyle is not something that is done instantly or easily, it often requires a bit of work and no small amount of failure. However, if we want to flourish as a follower of Jesus in a culture that is opposed to Him, we will need to fight for the rhythm and habits that can sustain us in the long-term.

The good news is that we are not supposed to do this in our own strength, these are *rhythms of grace*. They are designed to help us connect with and receive the grace (i.e. strength and power) that God has to help and transform us.

Here are some step-by-step guidelines for getting your rhythms of grace working in the reality of your life.

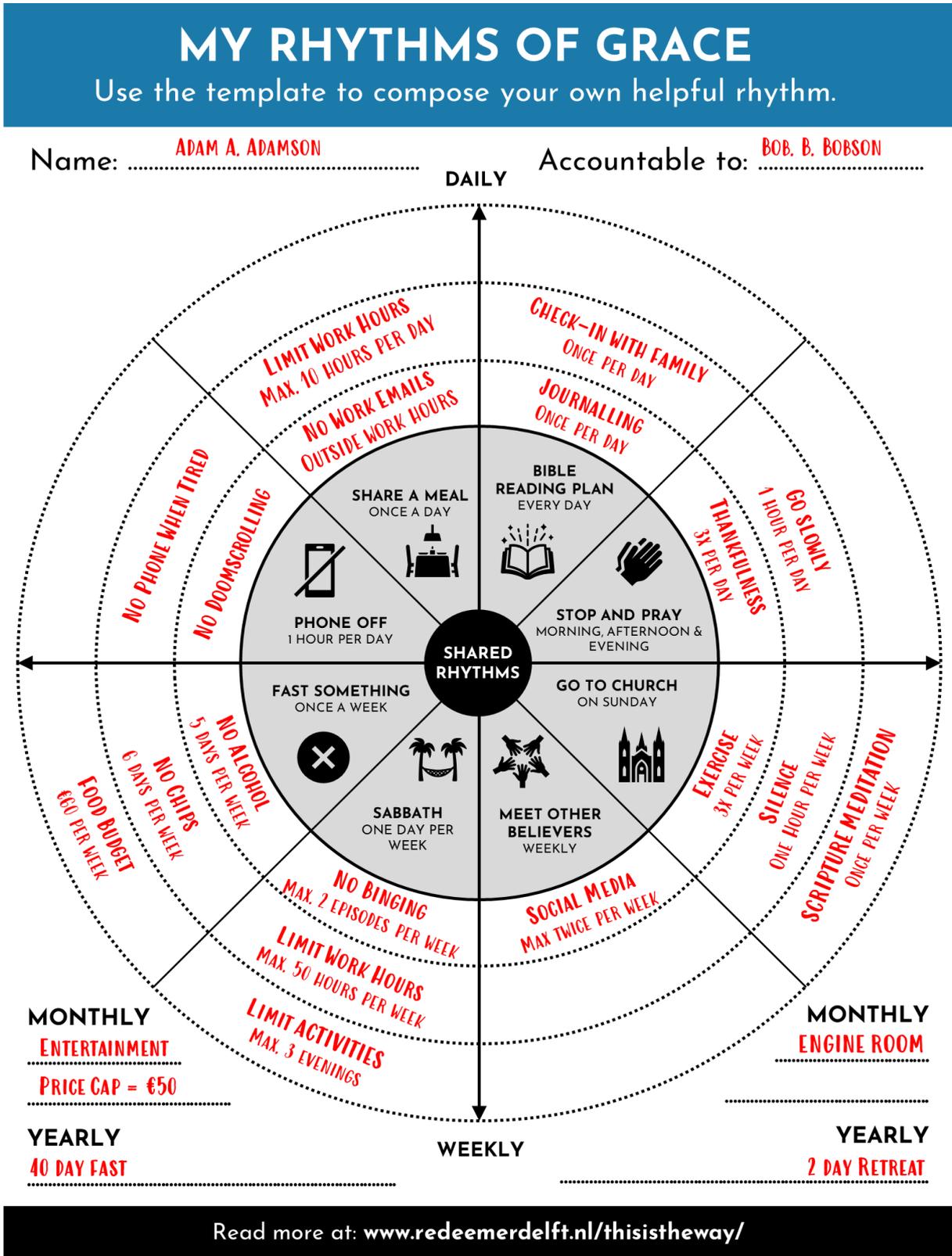
1. Print out several copies of the “This Is The Way” worksheet (see redeemerdelft.nl/thisistheway/ to download) – if you have a digital pen this is also fine!

2. Fill in the “Initial Evaluation” of your current life on the worksheet. Here you will give yourself scores out of ten (0 – never to 10 – always) for:
 - Unhelpful moods and behaviours such as grumpiness or doom-scrolling on your phone.
3. Implement first the **Shared Rhythms** from the central disc as these will go a long way to making your life more receptive to the Holy Spirit.
 - We recommend that you choose **one practice** to form into a habit at a time (especially at the start).
 - **IMPORTANT!** Remember these are **not laws**, they are helpful rhythms to help you get more of God and more life to the full.
 - If it helps you, ask a friend or partner to **check in on you** to see how you are doing with them.
 - Give a daily habit **two weeks** and a weekly habit **a month** to settle in before evaluation.
4. Continue this process until all the **Shared Rhythms** are formed into habits (it may take some people longer than others. Failure and slowness are permitted and normal, this is about making long-term change and progress.).
5. After this process is complete, go back and fill in the “Second Evaluation” of your current life on the worksheet again. Here you will look at:
 - Unhelpful moods and behaviours such as grumpiness or doom-scrolling on your phone – have your scores improved?
 - More helpful practices such as Scripture meditation or accountability.
6. Using the evaluation identify the one new spiritual practice you want to try. Here are some pointers:
 - Pick the helpful behaviour with the **lowest score** - this will be our first target.
 - Reflect on why this is not a practice in your life.
 - If you do not understand this practice, then get some advice on what it is and how it is done. **Don’t assume you know!**
 - Think about how you could best implement this practice in your life (what times, places, people, attaching it to other habits, etc.).

- Think of a **stepwise path** to your goal. What does progress look like?
 - **IMPORTANT!** Resist black-and-white or **all-or-nothing** thinking.
 - Try to form this into a habit.
7. After two weeks for daily behaviours or one month for weekly behaviours do the evaluation worksheet again. Have your unhelpful behaviours decreased or increased? What about your mood? Is it somewhat better than before or worse?
- If your state has **gotten worse**, don't worry – this was always possibility – in fact, we all probably need to get worse before we get better! We are attempting to change patterns of behaviour that do work for you. Even if they are not helpful in the long-run they do provide a short-term or temporary boost to your mood. Some of the good things only work in the longer term and require much more time investment. For example, bingeing on hamburgers that are high in fat and salt are probably going to give you a significant mood boost with a lot lower effort than persisting in learning to meditate daily on Scripture. With that said, if it is not working - it requires discernment to know what to do next (this is best done with others):
 - a) Do you continue and persist until things get better? If so, how long to persist?
 - b) Or do you stop and try to embrace something else? If so, what?
 - If your state has **improved** – hurrah! Great, we have found something that works for you. Want to continue? Look for the next thing you need to embrace (go back to step 6).

Example of Rhythms

After some time, we want to be able to build up at set of practices that work for us. Like the following example:



PART 3: FIGHTING FOR LIFE TO THE FULL

In our present times, we are a little bit allergic to the language that the Bible uses to describe the life of a disciple of Jesus as a war that we must fight. This is more than a little unhelpful to us. Let us read a couple of quotations from the Bible to get ourselves into the Bible writers' headspace:

2 Corinthians 6:7 *...in truthful speech and in the power of God; with **weapons of righteousness** in the right hand and in the left..*

2 Corinthians 10:3-4 *For though we live in the world, we do not **wage war** as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.*

1 Timothy 1:18 *Timothy, my son, I am giving you this command in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by recalling them you may **fight the battle well**..*

1 Timothy 6:12 *Fight the **good fight** of the faith.*

2 Timothy 4:7 *I have fought the **good fight**, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

1 Peter 2:11 *Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which **wage war** against your soul.*

The language they use is one of a "spiritual battle" that must be fought to follow Jesus. This battle is not something that we can avoid like an ostrich putting its head in the sand. We need to fight for the life that God wants for us. We do have an enemy who is out to destroy us and wants us not to believe this fact too. You may not like this idea, but the reality of a battleground is that you can get hurt whether or not you believe you are in a battle or not. As Jesus said, the thief comes to steal, kill and destroy – are you willing to fight in God's strength to prevent this?

To fight well, we must as Sun Tzu says in *The Art of War*: "Know thy enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles, you will never be defeated." We need an understanding of the enemies we are facing; we need to understand ourselves and our allies to win this battle for life to the full.

Know Your Enemies

The three forces working to ruin your life.

THE DEVIL: DECEPTIVE IDEAS

John 8:44 *You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*



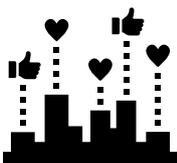
Jesus taught us that we have a spiritual enemy, the devil or Satan, who wants to destroy and breakdown everything good God has made. He hates God and he hates humans made in God's image. Jesus disarmed and triumphed over him on the cross, but he still exists and still wields a powerful weapon: deception. He tells lies constantly. The purpose to distract, mislead and ultimately prevent people from coming into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. He is ultimately behind every idea and thought that sets itself up against God and His ways.

THE FLESH: DISORDERED DESIRES

1 Peter 2:11 *Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul.*



We are beings not primarily of rationality, but of desire. What our hearts wants to have, our wills choose and then our minds come along and justify what we want to do in the first place. This is how we work – how many times has “the unthinkable” become “the done” thing? We live in a society that makes what we desire the most important and unquestionable thing, we must remind ourselves that Jesus teaches us that our heart's desires are not pure and holy, but instead our desires are confused, often self-seeking and normally far from what God has revealed is objectively the best for us. Following Jesus means fighting against our disordered desires, saying “Yes” to the good and “No” to the bad.



THE WORLD: DISOBEDIENT SOCIETY

1 John 2:16 *For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.*

We are social beings and very easily influenced by the people around us. It takes a lot for us to stand up for what we really believe in when faced with peer pressure. We live in a culture that does not worship Jesus, it worships many other counterfeit gods it hopes will bring it happiness and prosperity. This makes following Jesus hard as we are always swimming against the cultural tide. We are bombarded daily with these false messages of hope and freedom and if we are not careful they will begin to influence us and colonize our souls. In order to combat the effect of the world, we need to be in a strong counterculture or a “cognitive minority”. This is a group of people who are confident in their own story, group identity and history.

Know Your Allies

The three forces working to improve your life.

THE WORD: THE TRUTH OF GOD

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*



Think about nothing. What came to mind? The truth is that it is impossible to think about nothing, we need to think about something. It is not enough when faced with the many deceptive ideas, temptations and thoughts that come our way to simply ignore them. We need to actively resist the lies with the truth. This means that we need to know the truth, because as Jesus said “the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). As we study and learn the Bible the lies become exposed and replaced with God’s truth. This is a life-long journey with many ups and downs, but self-study and faithful Bible teaching provide us with many “truth encounters” that can change our perspective and lives for the better.

THE SPIRIT: GOD’S OWN DESIRES

Galatians 5:16 *So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*

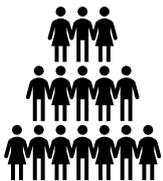


It is impossible for you in your own strength to resist the desires of your flesh (your desires and appetites) over the long term. We can perhaps through discipline avoid doing something “bad” for a short-time, but most of us fail to persist

in a new and better way of life in the long-term. The good news is that we do not need to do it in our own strength. The Holy Spirit comes to help us and give us God's own desires in our hearts. As a result, the life following Jesus is often one of an internal tug-of-war between the desire of the Spirit in us and the desire of our own flesh. The Spirit is able to give us the ability to overcome many habits, addictions and character flaws that would be impossible for us to change on our own. The Spirit is also the one that enables us to understand and be changed by the Word of God.

THE CHURCH: A COUNTERCULTURE

Hebrews 10:24-25 *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another.*



The lone ranger is a dead ranger. We cannot follow Jesus alone, the enemies that are standing against us are much stronger than we are. We need one another in order to remain faithful to Jesus over the course of our lives. God has designed us to be part of local communities of believers who love, serve and support one another through the ups and downs of life. We are to be part of a vibrant counterculture living a radically different lives centred on loving God and loving people. In order to do this, we need to be embedded within this network of relationships where we are encouraged and spurred on toward love and doing good.

How Evil Gets In

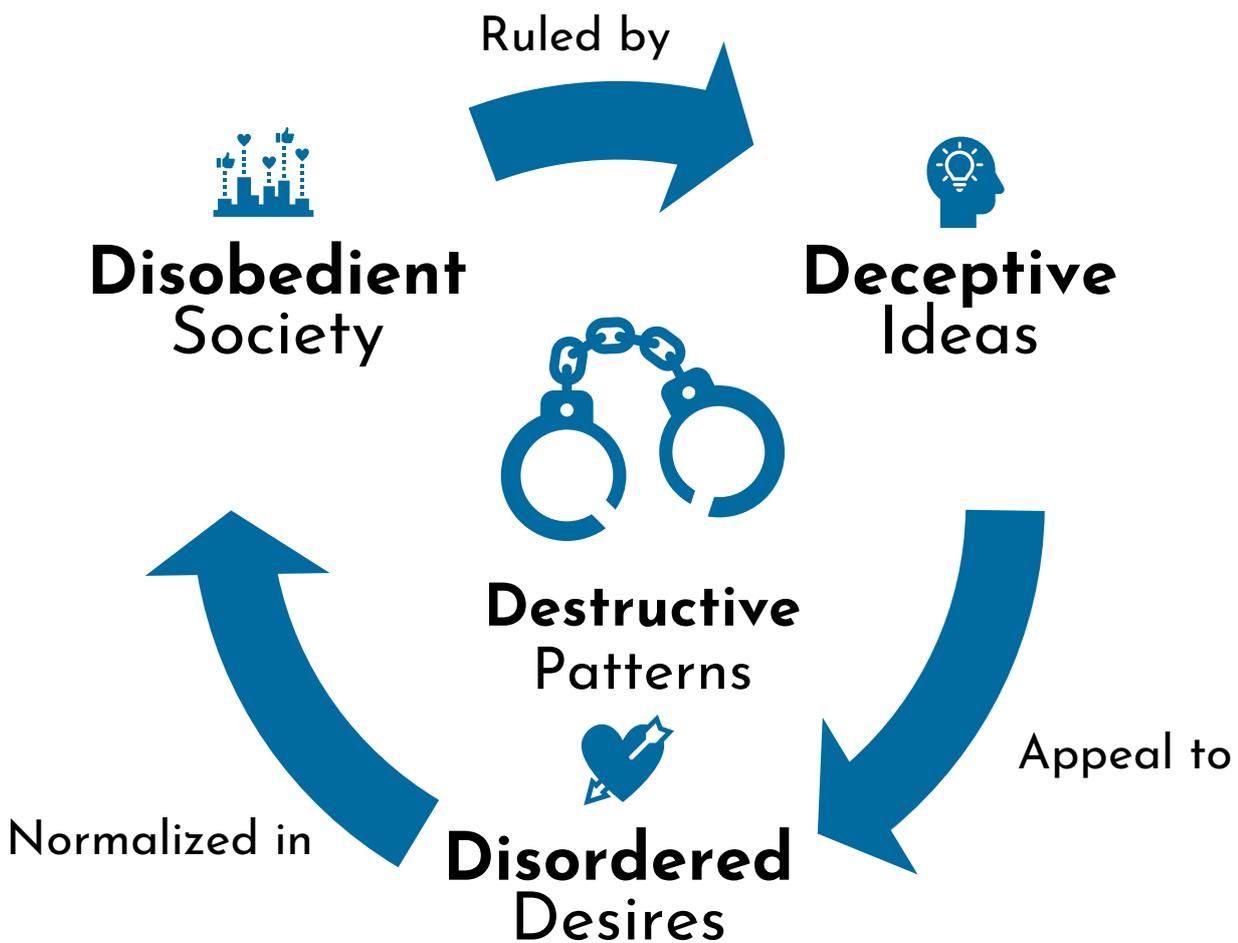
Having good foundations, building in rhythms of grace in our lives will naturally work to decrease our bad habits as our hearts will be more filled with God's love and mercy, however, often these foundations and rhythms will not on their own be enough to beat all our bad behaviours. Why? The answer to this is "strongholds" and "footholds".

Both strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:4) and footholds (Ephesians 4:27) are biblical words that used to describe the ways in which the enemy obtains ground and influence in our lives. A **foothold** is essentially an access point where you are sensitive to manipulation. This may come to exist through an area of unbelief, unforgiveness, hurt, disappointment or disobedience in our lives.

From this access point, the enemy desires to create a **stronghold** in your life. This term refers to when you have come into agreement with a particular deceptive idea. You believe some things about God, yourself or reality that is not grounded in God's truth.

Once you have come into agreement with a deceptive idea this leads you into destructive patterns of behaviour or **bondage**. We come into agreement with a deceptive idea, it appeals to our own disordered desires and is validated in a disobedient society.

Example You come to believe that alcohol is necessary for a good time. This idea appeals to our desire for pleasure and good experiences, but also to our desire for control over our lives. Alongside this, we see that it appears to work in the world around us, many people are using alcohol and seem to have a good time, it is acceptable and encouraged. Over time you begin to need alcohol to feel good, leading to more drinking and you become trapped in a cycle of destructive behaviour (health, relationships, spiritually) as a result.



How We Get Free

As the name suggests, strongholds are hard to break down, which is why we are encouraged not to give the enemy a foothold to get into our lives. It is important for us to understand that strongholds are also places that begin to form areas of our identity giving us a sense of security and safety. Strongholds can come from many places: our ancestry (passed down in our family), due to our pre-Christ lifestyles or due to us falling into temptation as a Christian. However strongholds are formed, they are always locked from the inside and we are the only ones who have key and authority to open the doors again.

Part of following Jesus is a commitment to searching for, recognizing and breaking down these strongholds in our lives, the things that we are clinging onto for safety, security and worth outside of the love of God.

A helpful framework for this process is often called the **5Rs of Repentance** or similar, here is an introduction to the concepts:

1. **Recognise** – the first step to freedom is to recognise and confess that there is a stronghold in operation in your life and you are sinning. This may be very obvious (e.g. drug addiction) or more subtle (e.g. greed). – e.g. “I have agreed with the enemy about alcohol being necessary for a good time, I recognise this does not fit with the truth God has revealed and that this belief and its following behaviours are sin.”
2. **Renounce** – the next step is to make the definite step to turn from the sinful behaviours that you have engaged in and deceptive idea you have believed. It is best to speak this out to God. – e.g. “I choose to turn from my agreement with Satan that alcohol is necessary for enjoyment and choose to turn from my drinking habits.”
3. **Receive** – we need to receive forgiveness and grace from God to move forward. The blood of Jesus has bought us forgiveness and by faith we can receive this and the strength to move forward in new way of life. – e.g. “Father, I thank you that on the cross Jesus paid for all my sins and broke the power of sin in my life. I receive the forgiveness for these beliefs and behaviours and I asked you to cleanse me of all unrighteousness as you have promised.”
4. **Rebuke** – Having confessed, turn away and received forgiveness the enemy no longer has any right to operate in your life. Jesus gives us authority to rebuke and tell the enemy to stop operating in our lives. You must speak this out loud as the enemy does not need to listen your thoughts – e.g. “I command in the name of Jesus the spirit of debauchery to cease operation in my life.”

5. **Replace** – it is not enough to simply turn from what is wrong, we need to turn towards what is good or we end up replacing one sin for another. We need to understand the truth that we are replacing the lie with and the helpful behaviours we are replacing the sinful ones with. – e.g. “I choose to believe the truth that I do not need alcohol to enjoy myself and that God is the source of my joy.”

IMPORTANT! Fighting these battles and destroying the strongholds in our lives is not something that we need to do alone. In fact, you can make the situation worse if you are not careful (see Matthew 12:45). At Redeemer, the Pastoral Care Team is there to help anyone who need help and support breaking free from unhelpful patterns of thought and behaviour.

God desires us to be free, so we urge you to do everything in your power to seek to be free of these patterns for as it says in Proverbs 14:12: *There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.* Bondage to sin leads to death and drains the life to full God wants us to have. We all have a battle to face and we must not let shame get in the way of seeking help, as the apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:13: *No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind.*

EXTRA RESOURCES

There are many more good resources out there to help you find the life to the full that Jesus promises. Here are some extra resources we recommend if you want more detail that found in this booklet.

Practicing the Way, <https://practictheway.org/>

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry, John Mark Comer

Live No Lies, John Mark Comer

Common Rule, Justin Whitmel Earley

Celebration of Discipline, Richard Foster

The Rest of God, Mark Buchanan

A Better Story, Glynn Harrison

One World, Two Realms, Mike Riches

Strongholds, Mike Riches