

WORD RHYTHM 1: Why does it Matter?

So, a few years ago I got to go to one of the poshest restaurants in the country. I have to say it was quite an experience - creativity, vibrant presentation and wonderful flavours - but when pudding was served (sorry, dessert), I was surprised and then a little disturbed to see a piece of gold leaf adorn one of the amazing dishes.

It left me cold, and I couldn't eat it on principle - I'm not dietician, but I suspect that Gold has no nutritional value. In one end, out of the other. And what for? So I could say I'd been to a restaurant so fancy I ate gold? What kind of statement is that in a world where people go hungry? It was a moment of realisation that what we eat matters.

We all need to eat, it is a basic daily reality. The food we choose to eat, directly affects our health, without it we waste away, too much junk food and we risk disease. Isn't it interesting then the Bible is full of analogies that connect the word of God and sustenance. We also need to eat well.

This is true of our diet spiritually. When tempted by satan to turn the stones to bread, *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matt 4:4.*

Feeding on the word of God is part of how we are to be nourished as human beings - it builds up and strengthens our Spirits. It is a word that is alive, and it is the principle means by which God speaks to his people as the Holy Spirit brings that word to life in our lives.

This is all part of getting into the Nitty Gritty of the CROWN rule of life. Over this series of short talks we're going to be looking at forming the WORD rhythm, and whilst the different elements of CROWN don't need to be taken in any specific order, I would say that if you have no idea where to start, start here.

A WORD rhythm is built upon the value of pursuing a living relationship with Jesus and his word... We believe that

Jesus is the word made flesh. We long to sit at his feet in worship, hearing his word to us from the Bible. We seek to set time aside for worship, prayer and praise regularly, aiming to keep growing in this area of life. We consider this a priority, even when it is hard, the ancients called this an "oblation", a sacrifice of praise. We are choosing to live in the truth that our life flows from him.

Now, it's important to note from the outset that we are not setting Jesus the living Word, and the Word of Scripture in opposition. There's some of that thinking around, and we need to be a bit careful about it. The basic premise is that if Jesus is the Word of God, then to suggest that the Bible is, is akin to Bibliolatry!

But that's a false opposition, Jesus is the embodiment of the Scriptures, and Jesus himself affirms Scripture's authority. Blogger Ian Paul who explores this more fully - it's worth a look - notes, *Expounding Scripture in a way which does not accord with the person of Jesus is as serious a problem as expounding the person of Jesus in a way which does not accord with Scripture.*

What we **are** saying though, is that our engagement in devotion must be a living one. Our rhythms should position us for encounter with Jesus and that is what we pursue - it is not an academic exercise. We come seeking Jesus, and we expect to meet him in his Word. We seek more than understanding, we long for personal knowledge of the living God.

In the charismatic tradition, the nuance is made between the the *rhema* word, and the *logos* WORD. The *rhema* word is God's word spoken by the Spirit into our situation, this might be through prophecy, through preaching, or indeed through the Scriptures being applied into our lives. Have you ever had that moment when a verse leaps off the page and speaks into your life and situation.

Again, these have been sometimes held in opposition - but that should not be so. No *rhema* word can ever contradict the declared word of the Scripture - the *logos*. If it does - it's not a WORD.

As Paul instructs in 1 Thessalonians 5:20-22 *Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil." But when it does, it brings life to us.*

In devotion we're saying let us be hungry for it all, fresh bread and encouragement - these truths together can bring us to a much deeper place. The Word of the Bible can bring us to the living Word Jesus - the living Word can speak into our lives with clarity and authority — all of this is experienced in relationship with Jesus.

Then, we won't just grow in knowledge of Jesus, but he will shape, form and change us, his word's are Spirit and life. We won't simply know more about God - but will come to know him more deeply. As John Piper writes, "Seeing

the divine glories that are really there in Scripture is always a miracle — always supernatural. As we come, let's ask God to meet with us and speak.

But don't let's come at this the wrong way. We can only come because he made the way... it's all a gift. We can only come because the word was made flesh and blood - blood he shed on the cross. Let us not make this another way of trying harder, and in so doing forget just how much he wants to meet with us.

A WORD rhythm then is an invitation, it's an invitation into deeper relationship with the God of the universe. A place when anything might happen. Why chase after what will not satisfy, come to him and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.

So let me ask you a question?

1. If people looked at your life, what would they say you were the hungriest for?

Think about that, talk to those around you, or leave you comments below... and we'll continue in a moment.

WORD RHYTHM 2: Sitting

We sit at Jesus' feet and listen to him speak.

A rule of life, we have heard, is about positioning ourselves to meet with God in the patterns we form. And the thing is, we're so easily distracted. Those who know me, know I have a secret joy in watching aeroplanes.

A couple of years ago I happened to find myself at the end of Birmingham Airport runway, *how did that happen*, and it was exciting as one of the new Boeing Dreamliner was about to head off...

Now, here's the thing, I decided I'd take a photo, I'd not seen once close up before, and so I was fiddling with my phone and essentially watching this thing through the screen.

And then I looked up - and there it was - massive. It took me aback. I almost missed what was really going on in front of me.

A WORD rhythm is all about focus - about how we can miss what is right in front of us, even the most important thing, if our attention is elsewhere, our even half elsewhere. In our busy world, with relentless feeds, messages and communication we are so easily distracted - but there's nothing new in that - let's visit the home of Martha and Mary...

Luke 10:38-42 (NIVUK) **38** As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. **39** She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. **40** But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, 'Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!' **41** 'Martha, Martha,' the Lord answered, 'you are worried and upset about many things, **42** but few things are needed – or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.'

I wonder who do you most identify with in the story? It certainly seems a story for our age - we can't switch off, always on the go, too much to do. Apparently we are 26% more productive if we don't have our smartphones beside us.... But doesn't that data also tell a story? Research was only interest in work or activity?

But from these verses see how Jesus measures what is truly productive and useful.

I'm sure you must have some sympathy Martha - she seems to get a hard time, after all they need to eat don't they? But within the passage are some interesting plays on words in their banter.

Verse 42 might be more literally understood that Mary has chosen *the better portion*. What Jesus is telling Martha (and by extension, us) is that she's going to the wrong food source. If He is to be our primary "food source" time with Him is indispensable. We can worry about other food later, that's of secondary importance.

However, whether it's cooking the food, finishing the task, sorting out the family, doing that job, going to the shops, resolving that problem, fixing that cupboard, playing that video game, checking Facebook - this passage teaches us that we are choosing second best, we are missing out.

Mary chooses to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to what he would say to her. That's the essence of finding a rhythm in WORD, drawing aside, slowing down, coming to that place where we can hear Jesus speak.

As we do, we might find that the anxieties and things on our mind fall away, or that we get better perspective, even get specific wisdom about how we might deal with them. Drawing close to Jesus also gives us the space to talk with him, to pray, and in so doing we maybe find he then begins to work in our stresses - and we experience his grace as prayer is answered.

So, what might it look like for you to 'sit at the Lord's feet' and listen to what he says? It may mean a deliberate step of refocus.

Could it mean specific steps - leaving your phone in another room when you come to pray? Finding a "winnable" time in the day when you know that it will be easier to pray without being disturbed.

Is there a bigger underlying challenge for you about what you really value? Are their idols you need to dethrone? Does all your time go on your work? Do you invest in every relationship except your relationship with God?

Jesus says Mary has chosen the better portion - she will be the one who is the best fed that day. If you applied this analogy, to your life, then how would you describe your present diet? Are you starving? Are you well fed? Do you rely on junk food?

Jesus said without abiding in him, we won't be fruitful, without him we can do nothing of lasting worth. No wonder then, this area of our lives can be such a battle. Satan is more than happy for us to pursue 'religious projects' or busy ourselves doing "Christian" things as long as we do that with little reference to Jesus.

Forming a WORD rule faces this head on. We choose to sit at his feet, and we make space to do that practically. *For me, a key step forward was identifying with others that I was more distracted if I tried to start praying too late - this meant my personal rule of life began by stopping work and coming to pray at 930 - this simple step revolutionised everything.*

This is about consistently positioning ourselves to meet with Jesus and hear his word. How - when - where will you choose to do this? This may be different for all of us, and different during changing seasons of life.

If we rise up as a rooted and prayerful people we will rise as a people of power, seeing more of God in our lives, and more of his work in our churches.

It may be a battle, but it is a battle worth winning. In many ways a strong WORD rhythm is the foundation of all the others...

So let me ask you a question?

- 1. Martha is described as 'distracted' (v40), what kind of distractions prevent you from drawing closer to God? Naming them may be the first step to facing and overcoming them.**

Think about that, talk to those around you, or leave you comments below... and we'll continue in a moment.

WORD RHYTHM 3: Scripture - A firm foundation.

As we look to build a WORD rule of life, we've already learnt that we need to sit at Jesus' feet, to position ourselves to listen to the Lord, but how do we hear? What should we be listening too?

I was amused recently when a satirical Christian website, ran an article with this headline: *Man Sitting Literally Three Feet Away From Bible Asks God To Speak To Him.*

The point is this - for Christians the principle way that God speaks to us is through the Bible. The Scripture is no dusty or dead book - it's subversive, alive - it has power and authority. It shows us the truth about God and ourselves. A foundation of any WORD rhythm calls us to a consistent, healthy and life-giving engagement with the Bible.

I can recall some crucial moments in my life when God has spoken with direct and complete clarity into a situation. There was a time when Rosie and I were moving out of our house, heading on holiday, with nowhere to live when we returned. Our Bible reading that day was from Psalm 121, *The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forever more.*

More recently, in a difficult situation I was facing, I came to God in some anguish, and opened the word to read a passage that not only spoke into the situation but also showed how it would resolve - my part was just to trust. At other times, the Scripture has presented me with a bigger, more wonderful and glorious vision of Jesus to behold, and my faith and adoration has grown.

This should not be a surprise, Hebrews 4:12 records, *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

It gets under the skin, unpicking our motives but it works like a scalpel, for our healing and our health.

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 St Paul notes, *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.*

God-breathed, the same breath that breathed life into Adam & Eve in creation (Genesis 2:7) breathed life into the Scriptures - they flow from him and proclaim to us truth.

Psalm 119 notes,

- God's commandments are faithful; v86
- His word is settled in heaven forever v89
- His word makes us wise

that's wiser than teachers or those of reputed knowledge AND wiser than enemies, so we can stand against the evil one's schemes; v97-99

- His word gives direction, it is a lamp to my feet, And a light for my path.
- It's truth. v142 / 151
- It gives understanding to the simple. v130
- It endures forever. v160

And above all this, the Psalmist adds - *I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Ps119:11*

God's word in our hearts is a source of power. We can't live on bread alone. We need a living pattern engaging with the Bible because in doing that we meet with God.

A daily encounter with God's word is a daily encounter with the one who speaks it.

So, how do we build this into a good WORD rhythm?

Well, we're not seeking to reinvent the wheel with CROWN. We're gifted with so many good resources for spending time in the Bible today that we encourage you to find the one that really works for you. *Then make that your pattern as you mark out that time to sit at Jesus' feet and listen.*

Now some of you will know straight away what that is, you may have resources, apps, notes you use already, that's brilliant. A rule of life is a commitment to make them a habit. I knew I'd nailed my pattern when if I missed it things just didn't feel right.

Getting to that means being honest about the things that get in the way of your pattern and taking steps to overcome them. So, if you're easily distracted, I'd suggest don't use an app on your phone, as you may find you're playing a game or one emails without being clear quite how that happened!

Others of you, are like, *help*, where do I start! One of the things, as I look back, was that as a new Christian I got lots of books and daily Bible notes but nobody really sat with me and talked me through how they prayed.

Of course, if we don't form good patterns at the beginning, we may find we go many years without them.

If you don't know where to start ask someone who is more mature in their faith to teach you how they pray and engage with the Bible.

At St Michael's we have a list of recommended resources (some will be in the description) but also a number of prayer coaches who you can meet over a cuppa for a few weeks to help you form a good pattern. The point is these are flexible and short-term, time limited patterns people can hook into quickly, rather than waiting for the next course or programme - or to be tied in an extended commitment.

These mentors can also be a real resource for those of us who feel we want to go deeper. And that's the thing with a WORD rhythm. There is always the possibility of more. For me, the experience of the short term pattern of Retreat in Daily life was just that. I learnt less is more, dwelling on passages over several days and picking out a verse or phrase to linger on has been life to me.

Whether you're just starting, you've lost your way, you are hungry for more, or just to confirm what is already alive for you - a WORD rhythm that engages with Scripture is foundational and crucial.

As you form yours, build a pattern you can sustain, that may be baby steps at first, but as you hear God speak into your life through the Bible, that itself will be an invitation for more.

So let me ask you a question?

**1. When have you experienced God speak to you through the Bible?
Why not share a story with those around you?**

Think about that, talk to those around you, or leave your comments below... and we'll continue in a moment.

WORD RHYTHM 4 Song - Worship and Devotion

As we think about forming a WORD aspect of our CROWN rule of life, we've noted the importance of Intentionally making space to sit at Jesus's feet - to make time to be with him. We've also highlighted the fundamental foundation of Scripture in our patterns, but when it comes to personal devotion for many, the place of Song, is a life-giving way to fix our gaze upon Jesus.

Worship is the right response to God - it celebrates who he is and what he has done. **Francis Chan** notes, "Isn't it a comfort to worship a God we cannot exaggerate?" Worship matters because the Bible tells us we become "like" what we worship. (Psalm 135:18) After warning against idolatry in this way, the Psalmist urges Praise to the one true God. Worship connects us with the life of heaven.

Worship is taking place in Heaven, even now as we speak - it is our direction. We often see this reflected in the language of our songs, in liturgy, can you think of any phrases?

But if a convincing case needs to be made for the centrality of worship in our devotional life then it's found in the middle of the Bible - The Psalms - they are songs themselves... But what you might ask has this to do with a WORD rhythm?

Well - I think the full answer to that lies behind the Psalms, and in the life, and more to the point, the heart of their principle author... King David... **David was not preoccupied with success. He was preoccupied with God.**

So, when David is anointed to be King, in 1 Samuel 16:7 - he's not even in the original line up with his older brothers - but God is looking at the heart, and the prophet Samuel gets them to call him in from the fields.

Now this is interesting to me because what David has learnt in the fields, tending sheep, guarding them from danger, God then uses. His worship and heart expressed when alone, invisible to almost everyone but God, is the very basis on which he is chosen to be King. God saw his worship in the secret place, and blessed David. As we bring worship into the secret place, to an audience of one, we enter a place of intimacy and blessing.

We aren't going to get anywhere unless we go deeper with God. My Grandad was a trawler-man, if they wanted a catch - then they had to set out into the deep. If we learn the lesson—private before public—we have learned the greatest of lessons and that will overflow into our lives. Devotion comes before activity.

But perhaps David's own words in the Psalms will help us see why that's so important...

*Psalm 27:4 shows us **priority** - One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.*

Psalm 40 proclaims God's goodness in song:

¹ I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. ² He lifted me out of the slimy pit; out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. ³ He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in him.

As declare God's goodness- what he has done for us - and so many songs do that well - we remember his word in our lives - that he's lifted us from the pit of sin - He puts a new song in our mouths - we see things differently.

Worship gives us Perspective

Do you ever come to pray with your head spinning - thoughts pressing in on all sides... Worship helps us 'Get Out of the Way'

We have to learn to lay down our worries, our pressures, our busyness our questions and putting our focus on God helps us do that. We let these things go, no longer getting in the way of our own seeking of God.

Psalm 63 is a good example, David is in the desert, when his son is leading a rebellion against him - he cries, God I need, you earnestly I seek you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land... before thanking God for his faithfulness and goodness.

That perspective for David was also the knowledge of protection, Psalm 91:1 *He who dwells in the shelter [lit Secret Place] of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.*

Perspective comes in the secret place of praise - perspective on God, on ourselves, on others and when we see straight, we can pray effectively.

From this secret place, we start to see our lives from an eternal perspective. Earthly frustrations lose significance. We're drawn to greater surrender to the Holy Spirit - offering the whole of our lives to the will of God is true worship:

But David isn't afraid to pour out his **pain** in the Psalms too... He keeps it real - he names the challenges, like when an enemy presses in... How's this from Psalm 38... *all day long I go about mourning. I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart.*

Every emotion is here, but as David tells it like it is. But there is a pattern, he also declares something of who God is, calling on God to help him because of their relationship... 20 years he was pursued in the wilderness by King Saul but he found the power to keep going...

Worship in his devotional life sustained him until his time came, and was a foundation as to how he remains such a key figure in the Old Testament. DAVID danced before the LORD. He instituted 24/7 worship - He knew its power... So does song have a place in your rhythms? Do you need help with perspective - make God your priority...

Now in our group and mentor notes we explore this further - but what might this look like for you? If you are musical it maybe you can play, but for people like me, it may be using worship songs. It's more than listening through, whether we sing, play or listen the point is we enter into worship with out hearts. We set aside every distraction, just to focus on God.

With that right priority we proclaim his goodness, get perspective and express where we are really at. In a personal rule, song may begin or end a daily time of devotion, but it may be something you can express when you get more extended time perhaps a little less often.

It's a chance to cultivate a heart like David, obviously the adultery bit aside, but a heart God commended as one after his own.

So let me ask you a question?

1. How has music helped draw you closer to God?

Think about that, talk to those around you, or leave you comments below... and we'll continue in a moment.

WORD RHYTHM 5: Solitude, Silence & Stillness

So, alongside Sitting which is positioning ourselves at Jesus' feet, to hear his voice in Scripture and draw close in worship and Song, our final core principle for building a WORD rule is Solitude, which includes silence and stillness too.

But why, you might ask, should a rhythm of life include creating regular space in which to draw apart and be still and silent before God? How can this help us in our journey of discipleship?

GK Chesterton said this, *We are perishing for lack of wonder, not for lack of wonders.* Meaning, that if we choose to look, if we are positioned to see, there is much that can inspire and moves us. **Slowing down, and giving God our sole focus helps us to connect with wonder again...**



Solitude is not so much being alone, It is about intentionally choosing to spend time with God to listen to him. It's a place of conversion, transformation and struggle. In solitude we get rid of the scaffolding of our lives – the friends and family, phone calls, meetings, music, books... leaving just ourselves and nothing more before God.

Our primary task in solitude is not to pay attention to the many thoughts, ideas, worries which will all crowd in. Instead we seek to keep our minds and hearts on him who is our Saviour. It can help to note jot thoughts and leave them for later, we enter into solitude first of all to meet with our Lord and to be with him and him alone.

Silence is the practice of quieting every inner voice and outer voice to attend to God. "Without silence the word of God cannot bear fruit. As long as our hearts and minds are filled with words of our own making, there is no space for the Word of God to enter deeply into our hearts...to become our inner guide and to bear fruit in our lives." *Henri Nouwen*

But why does this matter? **It matters because it was part of the rhythm of Jesus' life here on earth. He modelled it for us.**

He spent a lot of his time with his disciples and surrounded by crowds but in all the busyness he regularly drew apart to be alone with the Father.

He did it in seasons of revival when the crowds were looking for him? At those points our instinct would be to work harder?

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: 32-39

He did it when making big decisions, Before Jesus chose his disciples he spent the whole night alone in the desert hills. Luke 6:12

He did it when distressed, when hearing of John the Baptist's execution he withdrew by boat to a lonely place to be by himself. Matthew 14: 23

But he also invited his disciples to do the same. When they return from a preaching and healing mission, he instructs them, *come away by yourself with me to a lonely place and read a while.*

But why would Jesus do this? Solitude, silence and being still away from the crowds seems to be a pattern that brings him renewal and in which he hears God's voice. Certainly, this echoes the experience of Elijah, in 1 Kings 18, who rather than in earthquake, wind and fire, hears God's still small voice in a whisper.

For many of us we have to admit, silence isn't easy. *Henri Nouwen noted from many, it creates itchiness and nervousness; it seems empty and hollow; it is like a gaping hole that might swallow them up. But with practice, empty silence can become full silence; anxious silence can become peaceful silence; restless silence becomes restful silence. It can become a place where real encounter with the loving Father could take place. Silence is a quality of the heart. Simply refraining from talking without a heart listening to God is not silence.*

The challenge of this poses some significant questions...

Who is really in control in your relationship with God? Silence is intimately related to trusting God, if our posture in prayer is always to say something, to speak something, how will we ever hear?

When did you last spend any time being completely quiet and still? How did you feel? How do you avoid or resist silence? Are you tempted to fill silences? Do you believe that God can fill them?

So, how might we begin to grow in this area and build solitude into our rhythms. Well it may help to identify the little solitudes that already fill our day. Maybe your commute (don't just turn on the radio); the first moments as you wake. Offer these moments to God and ask him to reveal himself to you in them.

Perhaps you can identify a time and/or a place in your home or somewhere outside (corner of coffee shop; a park) where you can intentionally be silent – not speak, not look at your phone, not play music, not read. Instead give that space to God - but don't be too ambitious, baby steps!

Beyond the day to day, you may want to give time to retreat or quiet days or times in the year. There is overlap with the Re-Create rhythm too, can any of this be incorporated into your sabbath patterns? At St Mike's we have wider resourcing to help you grow in this area,

Above all, aim for sustainability... So let me ask you a question?

1. Be Still and know that I am God! Literally ENOUGH! Which of solitude, silence and stillness excites or terrified you the most?

Think about that, talk to those around you, or leave you comments below... and we'll continue in a moment.

WORD RHYTHM 6: Summing Up

Jesus said to Martha, that in sitting at his feet, her sister Mary had chosen what is best. To his disciples, urging them to abide or remain in him, he said - apart from me, you can do nothing.

In a world that bombards us with constant messages and images which leave us unsatisfied, Jesus is the bread of life and the living water. We know that time with him is essential and obvious - yet it can feel like a constant battle.

For us, there is no better image to help bring this into focus, than the account of Jesus with Mary and Martha - setting aside the busyness, sitting at Jesus feet and listening to him.

So when it comes to building good WORD rhythms we want to do so in a way that sees us draw close to God consistently.

SO, do you have space to "SIT" [speech marks], away from distraction and others, so you can focus on him.

You may want to ask yourself: *When am I at my best (morning / evening etc)? Do I have natural space in my rhythms for prayer, or do I need to make choices to make that space?*

Whichever way, as we make space for the LORD, he will fill and bless it, there is no doubt of that. *How might you withdraw from activity and find and time and place to come and sit at the Lord's feet?*

But there are gifts we can bring to fill it well. Fundamental and foundational is SCRIPTURE. It is our daily bread - nourishment for our souls, truth and guidance. As we position ourselves to meet with God, by sitting at Jesus' feet, whatever that means to each of us, then let him give voice from his word. Open Bibles and open hearts are a mighty combination.

But there are other riches to be found. Contemplative patterns are something of an antidote to our restless and relentless world. Stillness, solitude and silence are means of focusing our attention and devotion on God. *Solitude is the practice of being absent from people to focus on God. Are you able to Be Still, and know he is God?*

What would help? At St Mike's we have regular quiet days... but it could be something like a good walk alone will restore you?

Then there is the place of song, the joy of worship - the engaging of our souls our emotions with our spirits and minds in praise as we focus on God. Both song and silence can be great ways of preparing our hearts to receive from God's word, to hear his voice with perspective and hope. Our wider resources help us explore these things further.

But- using one of our key images - is there anything that may need to die - if you're to form effective CROWN rhythms and experience God's life?

Be honest - what would you say is the single biggest thing that gets in the way of devotional times for you? How can you overcome that?

*Jesus said But when you pray, go into your **room**, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*

Do you need to leave the distraction of phone / tablet / Facebook / email from that space?

And how might this feel like sailing, not striving?

if you're stuck, it may help to ask, what patterns have worked for you in the past? Jesus counselled the Ephesian Church in Revelation 2 to "do the things they did at first" in order to recapture their first love for him.

Above all, though, breakthrough in this area is to know that God is speaking into our lives. That as we seek him, we find him - that we are renewed and his life is overflowing into ours.

If forming these patterns is a battle, it is one worth winning. When Jesus said, apart from me you can do nothing, he went on to say:

7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

As we close this input, then let's not forget, this is remains nice sounding theory, until we take hold of the principles and choose to form God's patterns in our lives. Will you begin to do that?

A WORD rhythm positions us to meet with God day by day, to sit at his feet and let him speak into our lives. From that place, anything can happen, as the Spirit of God forms us.

As we close, shall we pray?

Father God, forgive us that we can be so easily distracted and fail to choose what is best. Teach us to build rhythms into our lives that will lead us to you. Help us create space in which you speak your Word to us, and in that space, change us into who you are calling us to be. Amen.