

Welcome

If you or your kids are in Garland ISD (like our Rowlett schools), then you know that school started *last week*. Which, for those keeping score at home, is really, really early for schools in the US. Garland ISD has announced they're moving toward year-round schooling, doing away with the 3-month summer break.

And yeah... it's weird, especially for those of us who grew up with this sort of rhythm. But did you know we're the only country in the world that offers public education that does a 3-month break? That's right. Other developed countries have always done year-round schooling. Our summer-break schedule was created when the US was an agrarian society and the majority of children in public education needed to be home for the summer to help with their family farms.

That hasn't been the case for over 100 years now, and yet our public school calendars are, in many cases, only now changing - or still haven't changed - to reflect this.

And I don't have a strong opinion on Garland ISD's decision. I'm not a teacher there, I don't have a kid in the district. But I think it's interesting that they're making this move now, the first 'back to normal' school year on the other side of the COVID pandemic.

Because the pandemic disrupted all of our rhythms. So if you're going to change things up, now is a good time to do it, right?

And that's what I really want to talk about today. We are created for rhythms and routines. And we've all struggled as the world has opened back up to feel like we're getting our feet under us again. So let's explore together the rhythms that lead us to live.

And since we were created for rhythm, there's no better place to begin than with the one who created us and knows the rhythms that sustain us?

Message

For the month of August, we're in a series called How to Get Your Groove Back. The most common experience we've had throughout the pandemic is a loss of rhythms, the structures, patterns and habits that help us navigate our lives. We made jokes about how the whole lockdown felt like a timeless void where everything was the same. Then we'd all laugh nervously and look to the side because of course it wasn't *really* a joke. We lost so many of the routines and structures that we took for granted. We lost the rhythms of life that helped us make sense of our world.

Everything began opening back up right as we entered into summer - which is another one of those times our rhythms become more fluid. Kids are out of school, we take trips. But now we're looking toward the new normal. Schools are returning to session. Summer is coming to an end.

So we want to ask over the next month how we get back into rhythms of faith. What are the practices that order our lives and lead us to life and flourishing?

Today, we're going to begin with an overview. It's quite something to claim we're created to live in rhythms, after all. What would they be?

Turn with us to [Genesis 1](#).

[Genesis 1](#) is a poem about the creation of the world and humanity. We think Israelite priests recited it in temple ceremonies that celebrated how God created us and our relationship with the natural world (like harvest festivals, for instance).

If we could read Hebrew, we could hear the poetic rhythm woven into the poem. Even still, the English translation has a cadence to it that invites us to focus on the rhythms it invites us to live into.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day" and the darkness "night."

And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day. -- Genesis 1:1–5 (NLT)

This is the rhythm you're likely familiar with if you've read [Genesis 1](#). God said, 'Let there be... and there was.' Then, 'there was evening and morning, the day.' That first rhythm is a daily rhythm. But [Genesis 1](#) presses beyond a daily rhythm. On Day 4, God creates the sun, moon and stars. Here's what they're for, according to the poem:

Then God said, "Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years. Genesis 1:14 (NLT)

They mark not just night and day, but seasons, holy days and years. And the poem ends with God instituting the Sabbath day as a way to organize our days into weeks.

So [Genesis 1](#) organizes our hours into days, our days into weeks, our weeks into seasons (or months) and our months into years.

What's really cool is that as a people of faith, we have spiritual practices that help us lean into these various rhythms. We're going to explore these various practices throughout the series, but I want to give you an overview of them today.

As we're working through these various practices, I want you to reflect on the time they're meant to organize.

So let's begin with our days. How do you feel about your days? Do you have a daily rhythm? And where is God in that rhythm? Is your day organized to invite you to remember that God is present with you?

Turn with us to [Psalm 1](#).

The first song in the book of Psalms is sort of the introduction to the whole songbook. It's a celebration of a faithful person, one who is connected to God and therefore is a source of hope and flourishing for those around them. Notice the daily rhythm the song celebrates:

Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked,
or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers.

But they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night.

They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season.
Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do. -- Psalm 1:1–3 (NLT)

This faith-filled person, this fountain of joy and hope, is a person who uses scripture, meditation and prayer to organize their days. And as a result, their whole lives find a strong rhythm. Their lives bear healing fruit *each season* - that's more rhythm language. I love that the Psalm acknowledges that you never know what life is going to throw at us. There are all sorts of different seasons. And the best way to be ready for them is by immersing ourselves in the daily rhythms of spiritual practices that keep us deeply rooted in God.

Turn with us to [Exodus 20](#).

I bet I don't have to convince you about the weekly rhythm - worshipping together. This was the biggest blow the pandemic had on us, as we had to move to virtual-only worship for nearly 18 months. But God's people have always taken a weekly break to come together and remember who we are - not our jobs, but our vocation: God's beloved people, joining God in being good news to the world. That's why one of the big 10 (commandments) is all about the Sabbath day - and ties it back to the [Genesis 1](#) creation poem.

“Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.” -- Exodus 20:8–11 (NLT)

Once Jesus formed the church, the community of faith continued to meet, though they moved from Saturday (the Jewish Sabbath) to the first day of the week, Sunday - the day Jesus was raised from the dead. And in their weekly worship, they instituted another rhythm: receiving communion together.

On the first day of the week, we gathered with the local believers to share in the Lord's Supper.
-- Acts 20:7

These weekly rhythms remind us whose we are. We do not belong primarily to our jobs or our culture, but to God. Our allegiance is to Jesus and his way in the world, and God invites us to gather weekly to remember that together.

Finally, God invites us to order our years. In the ancient world, this looked like planting and harvest festivals - celebrations that connected us to the rhythms of the natural world, of life.

Of course we have vestiges of those today - Halloween was a harvest festival. Easter was a fertility festival. Christmas was once a solstice celebration. But if you've been around Catalyst, you probably know we follow the Church year calendar. We begin our 'year' with Advent, a season where we prepare for Jesus' birth by remembering he's going to return for us. Then is Christmas, the celebration of God with us. Epiphany helps us meditate on what it means to say God is with us. Lent is a season of confession and repentance that prepares us for Easter - the celebration of Jesus' resurrection. And then our 'year' ends with Eastertide, where we explore the implications of the resurrection and the power of the Holy Spirit, which all culminates at Pentecost.

Every year, we walk through the life of Jesus from birth through life to death and resurrection, ending with his presence among us as his church. It's a way for that weekly rhythm of worship to shape us into people who imitate Jesus. Instead of connections to planting and harvest as our source of life, we connect to Jesus as our source of life.

And that's the heartbeat of why these rhythms are so important:

We live in a noisy world. And it can be really hard to discern God's voice. Our families are messy. Our relationships are messy. Our jobs and commitments are messy. Our politics are messy. Our world is messy.

And all that chaos can drown out the still, small voice of God.

I know I've felt like I've lost the beat more than once in the last couple of years. I bet you have too.

But friends, now is the time to return to these rhythms that shape us, these rhythms help us hear the steady, hope-filled heartbeat of our creator. Still calling us to life.

So as we move into this time of reflection, I want to invite you to consider where you've lost the beat over the last couple of years, and how in the month ahead, God is inviting you to hear the beat again and return to your source of life.

Communion + Examen

This weekly rhythm tells us who we are: Jesus' chosen people.

What rhythms have helped me to connect with Jesus during the pandemic?

Where have I felt disconnected and rhythmless?

How is God inviting me to return to spiritual rhythms in the month ahead?

Assignment + Blessing

What rhythms is God inviting you into?