



# DEVOTE YOURSELF:

## *James*

READ.

THINK.

PRAY.

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EACH PERSON IS TEMPTED  
WHEN HE OR SHE IS  
LURED AND ENTICED BY  
HIS OR HER OWN DESIRES.

**READ:** James 1:1-18

**THINK:** Let's get one thing clear, God's not tempting you to test your faith. You are tempting you. People think Christians judge others for something called “sin” and they think sin refers to things you do wrong that God judges you for. Sin though isn't so much something God looks to judge you for as something God looks to cure you from. Sin messes with God’s good world and twists people so that they want things that are bad for them and bad for others. Sin is like a sickness where even though you know it's wrong, you choose things that are hurtful. That sick and sinful part of you tempts you to do bad things. God isn't waiting for you to fail so he can judge you; He is waiting for you to ask so he can help you. When you are tempted, turn to God for strength, and you will find that He gives good and perfect gifts and is there to help. Where have you been tempting you lately?

**PRAY:** for God’s help today when your sinful desires draw you to do things that will hurt yourself or others.





BE

DOERS OF THE WORD,

AND NOT HEARERS ONLY,

DECEIVING YOURSELVES

**READ:** James 1:19-27

**THINK:** Christians talk a lot. People go to church every week to listen to a preacher talk about faith for at least 20 minutes. Books and articles are continually written and read. Right now, you're taking some time to read me talk about faith. Christians talk a lot about faith, but talk is just talk. If you just spend some time reading Scripture or thinking about God, but don't do anything differently, what good is it? Real faith isn't about knowing the right answers, it's about living the right life. The time we spend devoting ourselves in Scripture and prayer is not to make us knowers or hearers of the word. All these words, all these sermons and devotionals, and the words of Scripture that come alive to us are intended to help us become caring, loving, and honest people. What have you done recently that was caring, loving or honest?

**PRAY:** for God to remind you throughout the day of ways you can be more caring, loving, or honest.





**READ:** James 2:1-13

**THINK:** Scattered around the Bible are verses like this that seem to say that people who are poor or oppressed are often blessed by God with a greater measure of faith. We are bad at recognizing this reality, especially in America. We envy famous people or friends with more expensive things than we have. We want to be wealthy and we normally see wealthy people as a success. We might even offer places of honor or authority within the church because they are successful with their money. Here, James points out that in that time the wealthy people are those who take every advantage and opportunity for themselves. While not all wealth is gained dishonestly, James is clear: Money is not our goal. If it happens it happens, but fighting for it tends to make you more selfish and less loving. Don't get caught in the trap of thinking more money will make your life better, it won't. More mercy, more care, and more kindness will. How much hope do you put in money?

**PRAY:** God will help you set your priorities right.





# SHOW ME YOUR FAITH APART FROM YOUR WORKS, AND I WILL SHOW YOU FAITH BY MY WORKS

**READ:** James 2:14-26

**THINK:** I love when the Bible seems like it's taunting you. It feels like it says "Show me. Do it. Show me your faith without showing it by what you do. What are you going to do, tell me all the things you believe? Tell me the Bible verses you know? Tell me how often you go to church or read your Bible, none of that matters if that knowledge doesn't change you." Does it matter if you went to church this week if you ignore a friend who is hurting? Does it affect anything if you read your Christian books every day, but you're mean to your family? Does it have any real meaning if you have memorized all of scripture but cannot muster empathy for a stranger in need. When faith is real, it changes you. The Holy Spirit empowers you to be more caring, more loving, more peaceful, or more joyful. You cannot show faith without works because a trust in God produces fruit. It's perfectly natural, when you trust Jesus, you change. How is the Spirit making you more loving?

**PRAY:** for opportunities to show God's love through your actions.





FROM THE SAME MOUTH  
COME BLESSING AND CURSING.  
MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS.


**THESE THINGS OUGHT NOT TO BE SO**

**READ:** James 3:1-12

**THINK:** I don't know if this is true for you, but a lot of times there is a moment in your life when you say something rude, hurtful, or mean and then you remember that just this week, you were at church singing praise music. There is a reason James refers to the tongue as restless and untamable. It is so difficult to be your best self all the time. Sometimes anger, boredom, or a joke push you to say things that hurt people. From our mouths we praise God and we degrade people, it shouldn't be that way, but it is. People around you know that Christians hold a high standard and continually fall short of it. You're never going to be able to only speak kindly or lovingly, but when you are hurtful, you can tame your tongue by letting go of our pride or defensiveness and taking the chance to simply say "I am sorry, you didn't deserve that." People know you're not perfect, but when you apologize well, you work to tame the hurts you inflict on yourself and others. Who do you need to apologize to for hurtful words?

**PRAY:** that God would convict you when you hurt people with your words so you can apologize.





*w i s d o m   f r o m   a b o v e*  
IS FIRST PURE,  
*t h e n   p e a c e a b l e ,   g e n t l e ,*  
OPEN TO REASON,  
*f u l l   o f   m e r c y   a n d   g o o d   f r u i t s ,*  
IMPARTIAL AND SINCERE

**READ:** James 3:13-18

**THINK:** This is the opposite of the debate team type of knowledge that seeks to prove to others why they are wrong and win the argument. No shade to debaters, it's a great club, but if it's the way you act in everyday conversations, it's exhausting. No one wants to continually battle over who is the smartest or who has the most knowledge. Elsewhere in the Bible we read, “knowledge puffs up but love builds up.” True wisdom that you get from the Bible is open to reason and is not so self assured that no one wants to talk to you. It's full of mercy, way more mercy than judgment. It is not so focused on proving truth regardless of who it hurts, but is gentle. This is the wisdom that the Spirit helps us to gain. It is not the unassailable self righteousness that people expect, but is the wise and gentle welcome of our Lord. This wisdom is enticing and draws people into conversation and relationship with the living Jesus who is truth and who is wisdom embodied. Do you tend to value knowledge or wisdom?

**PRAY:** that God would make you pure, peaceful, gentle, open, merciful, impartial, and sincere.





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# DRAW NEAR TO GOD, AND HE WILL DRAW NEAR TO YOU.

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**READ:** James 4:1-12

**THINK:** Being near God is the center of faith, it's what Christianity is all about. We can get caught up in talking about *how* God sanctifies you or *what* you need to do, but here is the heart of the gospel: God made you, loves you, and even though you continually fight against him, God died and rose from the dead so that you can draw near to Him and be His friend. It's easy to get caught up in our sinful desires, in the brokenness of the world, in habits that we are ashamed of, but God's continual presence is the center of our faith. This moment right now- you protecting the time to read God's word, think about it, pray to Him is how you reach out to and draw near to God. Here is what He promises in return, when you do this, He will draw near to you. Whether you feel it or not, when you seek to spend time with Him, He is near. Right now. He is near. What is it like when He is near?

**PRAY:** by telling God anything about yourself and just enjoy a few moments with God.





YET YOU DO NOT

KNOW WHAT TOMORROW

WILL BRING

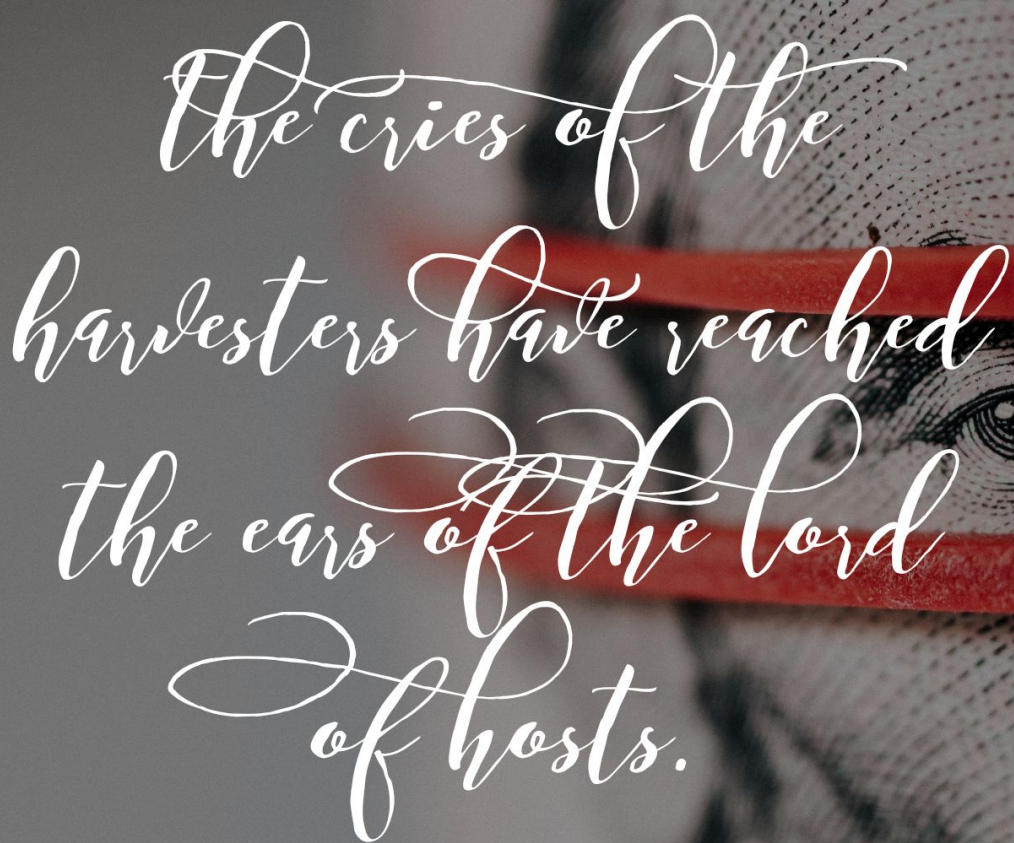
**READ:** James 4:13-17

**THINK:** There is a myth of control that we all operate under. Each and every one of us lives our lives as if we are in control. We study for tests, we practice for teams, we make plans with friends as if we even know we will be there tomorrow. Maybe there will be a flood, maybe your car will break down, maybe there will be a world pandemic. James is not advising that you never make plans or to just fly by the seat of your pants. He is pushing you to recognize that control is a myth. You cannot control tomorrow and you cannot ensure that it comes. We pretend we have control, we pretend we have power, we pretend we have security, but in truth, those things belong to God alone.

Recognizing that control is a myth and we are powerless to make things happen helps us take the right position in relation to God. He is Lord, we are not. Where are you tricking yourself into thinking you have control?

**PRAY:** for the Spirit to show you where you rely on the myth of your own control.





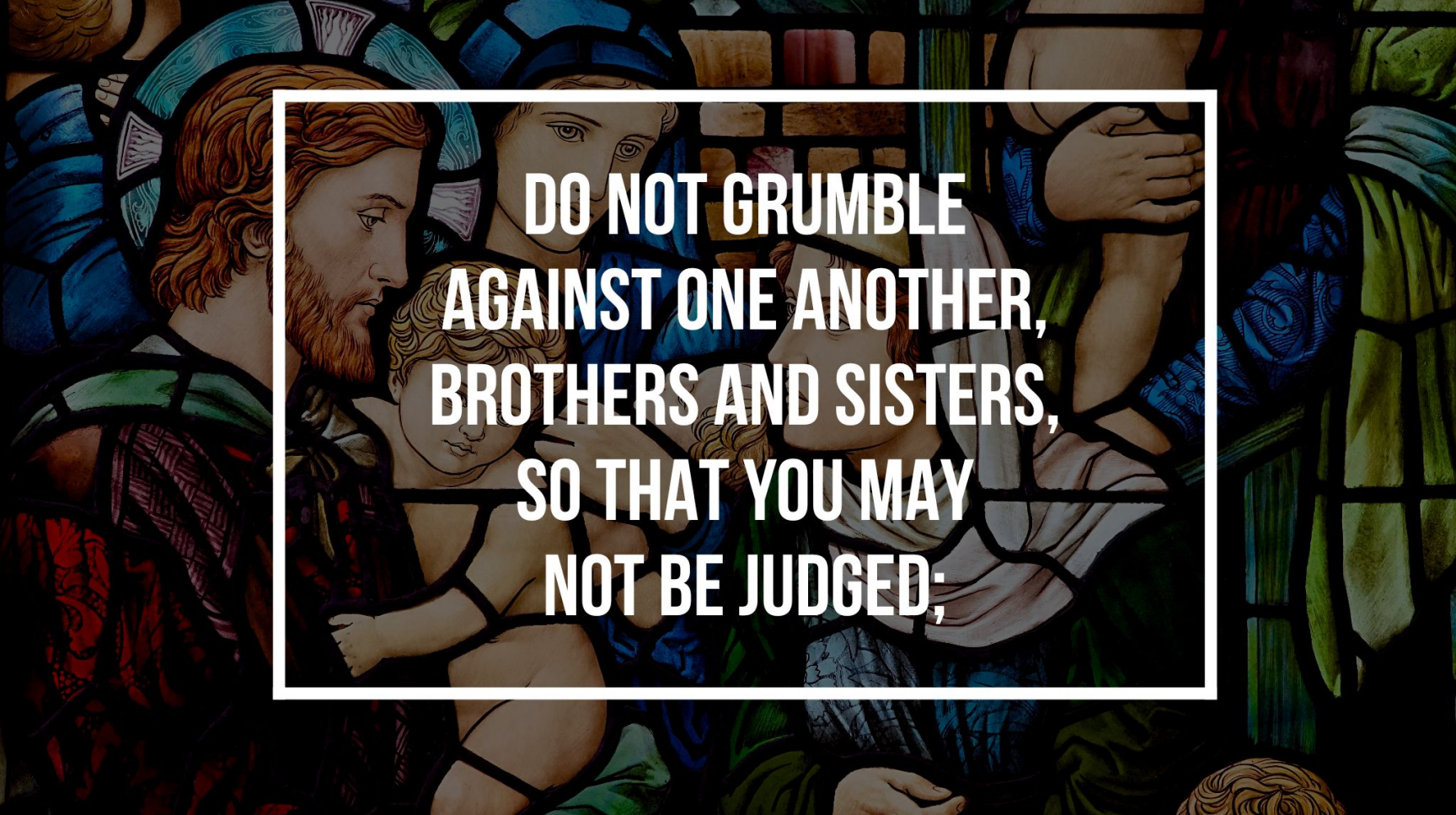
*The cries of the  
harvesters have reached  
the ears of the Lord  
of hosts.*

**READ:** James 5:1-6

**THINK:** It's easy to read these passages and think that the Bible is saying, "All wealthy people are bad," but that is not the case. James speaks against those who exploit and abuse others for their own gain. Maybe this is you, and you need to think through the way you treat people. More likely, you are neither the wealthy abuser nor the poor person who is being defrauded. But there is power in knowing that the cries of the oppressed and abused reach the ears of the Lord of hosts. God listens to the cries of people who are downtrodden, outcast, taken advantage of, or abused; and God stands on their side. The one whom we worship more often stands on the side of those who are taken advantage of than those in power. This gives us an insight into who we should ally ourselves with. When we take the time to listen in sympathy and trust to people who feel taken advantage of or abused, we hear and can act on the words that reach the ears of our Lord. What people groups are crying out to the Lord in distress today?

**PRAY:** for opportunities to listen in trust to someone from a different background than you.





**DO NOT GRUMBLE  
AGAINST ONE ANOTHER,  
BROTHERS AND SISTERS,  
SO THAT YOU MAY  
NOT BE JUDGED;**

**READ:** James 5:7-12

**THINK:** Grumbling seems like such a small thing in the larger picture of evil actions or worldwide problems. Sometimes though, it seems like Christians have the market cornered on grumbling against one another. We grumble against another denomination or church that has more members. We grumble against a person who says they are a Christian but doesn't act just like we would. We grumble over silly interpersonal things that stick around because we avoid dealing with them in confrontation. Christians are often seen as a grumbly and discontent group of people partially because that's what we are. Instead of becoming defensive, let's take every opportunity to not grumble. Someone hurt you? That's ok, your Lord is your friend. You feel overwhelmed? That's ok, your God is your guide. You disagree with the way someone is living out their faith? That's ok, Your King is the only true judge. Let's be people who walk in love, instead of grumblyness. What do you tend to grumble over?

**PRAY:** that God would convict you of a place in your life you have become negative and grumbly.



A close-up photograph of two hands, one darker-skinned and one lighter-skinned, clasped together in a prayerful gesture. The hands are positioned with fingers interlaced, palms facing each other. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

**THEREFORE, CONFESS  
YOUR SINS TO ONE ANOTHER  
AND PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER,  
THAT YOU MAY BE HEALED.**

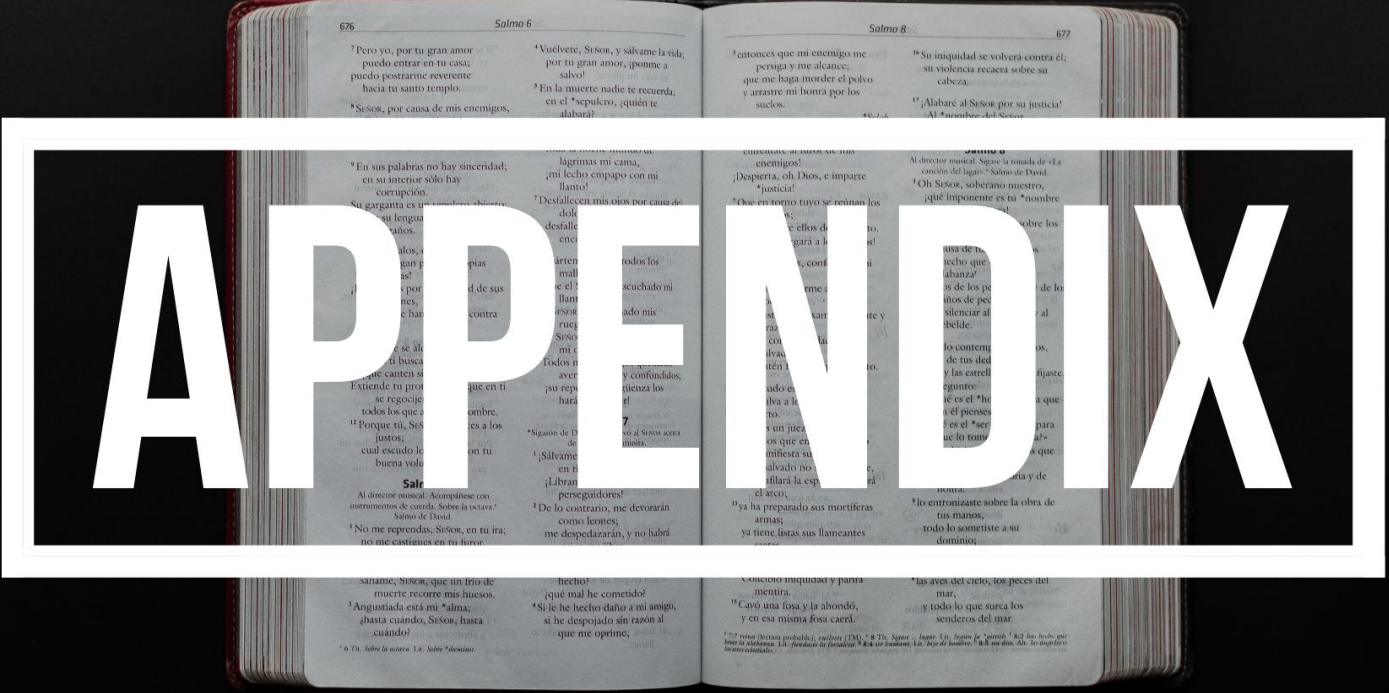
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**READ:** James 5:13-19

**THINK:** This seems like a formula to control God. If you just pray the right way, get the right people to pray over you, or confess your sinfulness enough, then God will do the good thing you want him to do. The only issue is, God isn't a vending machine. Even if you do all the things, you still can't control God. In all things God chooses how God acts. That is immensely frustrating when you want Him to act how you want Him to act, but this is true for every relationship you will ever have: You can only control you. So don't worry about forcing God to do what you want, concern yourself with what you can do. Pray, praise, seek out guidance from older Christians, and weirdly verse 16 tells you to confess not to God alone, but to one another. We confess to each other so we can stop pretending to be "good Christians" and start being able to support each other as we seek to grow in the Lord. Don't pretend you can control God, and don't pretend you are perfect. Be you and seek God. What do you need to confess to a fellow Christian?

**PRAY:** for the healing, help, or miracle you want from God, even knowing He gets to choose.





# APPENDIX

Use this appendix to guide you in your devotional reading of James. Below you will find some information on the book of James, how to make space in your day to have powerful time with God, and how to take time each week to rest and reflect.

## How to use the daily guides:

To use the guides protect time each day to do 3 things: Read, Think, and Pray. Each day is intentionally designed to encourage you to wrestle with scripture. You may find that these devotionals raise more questions than answers, that also is intentional. The goal each day read scripture and think critically about it and your own life, then to spend time in prayer with God.

Providing all the answers shortcuts the relational process of seeking God. So seek him. Read slowly, savoring scripture. Think deeply, not merely answering the question but wrestling with the passage, and pray honestly, bringing all of yourself to God.

Remember: Learning about God is only useful if you also draw close to Him.



# About James

This letter was written to all Christians universally and not a particular church. It was written by James (Jacob, the half-brother of Jesus) who taught mostly messianic Jews and was deeply influenced by the Sermon on the Mount and Proverbs. It is a summary of his teachings. It is a mainly non-structured combination of impactful teachings that push a active faith. There are no major textual or linguistic concerns in the letter.

## Themes

**Live it:** Faith is lived in loving action

**“Perfect”:** God is working to perfect us. This means he is making us whole, complete, and mature

**Wisdom:** Faith is lived in loving action

**Values:** Christians don't value what the world does. Wealth and success are not our

**Love:** act and speak for people’s benefit

## Outline

**1:1-27:** Building blocks of “perfection”

**2:1-26:** Faith must produce works

**3:1-12:** Perfect speech is restrained and kind

**3:13-4:12:** Heavenly wisdom isn't strife filled, proud, or judgemental

**4:13-5:12:** Jesus is Lord over plans, wealth, judgement, and promises

**5:13-20:** Final comments



# How do I Devote?

## 1. Pick your Best Time and Space

Give God your best time, not your leftovers. Look for a time in your day when you are alert and uninterrupted. It can be helpful to find a location which feels prayerful to you.

## 2. Be Attentive to Yourself

Before you Devote, be attentive to your own heart and mind. Are you feeling preoccupied... disappointed... resentful? Your personal state will impact your prayer life. Make it known to God.

## 3. Be Attentive to God

This is your time with God. It is personal and relational. Jesus is listening and the Spirit is present with you. Be with God in this time. Even in silence you can know and enjoy His presence.

## 4. Read. Think. Pray.

Devoting yourself to God is simple. **Read** scripture, **Think** about what it means and means to you, and **Pray** about it. This can be a time to engage your heart and mind toward God's calling. Don't rush it. Savor your time in the word and in prayer with God.

## 5. Live it Out

Now do something about it.

# Rest and Reflect

Each Sunday is an opportunity to Rest with God and Reflect on His presence and power in the previous week and how you will respond in the next.

Sabbath can be a powerful force in your life. Take a break and recline into God's grace. Let work take a back seat to joy and peace. Remember all that God has done for you this week. *God is in control.*



# Resting and Reflecting

These are not practices we tend to be skilled at. In America, “Work Hard, Play hard” tends to be more highly valued than reclining into the gift of God’s grace and control. Below are some pointers and ideas for how to take some R&R.

## Pointers

- 1. Don't Work.** It can wait even if it feels like it can't.
- 2. Not all work is work.** If you enjoy mowing the lawn, go for it. If you hate doing the dishes, let them “soak.”
- 3. Play.** God made fun, go have some.
- 4. Rest.** Do what you do to rejuvenate yourself: see friends, nap, go dancing, read, have a fancy dinner.
- 5. Notice God’s Presence.** God is no less present when you watch football than when you pray.
- 6. Reflect.** Protect time to journal or pray over the ways you have seen God this week. This practice helps you notice the patterns God is forming in your life.

## Reflect Ideas

**Realizations:** What did you learn about God? Yourself? Sin? Your community? Our Church?

**Growing Edge:** Where has God been working in your life. This can be struggles or successes

**Patterns:** Think through your time with God. Are there any themes he is drawing out?

**Goodness:** Take time to just meditate on the good things in the world and in God.

Your most important mission of R&R days is simply this: Enjoy God and the life He has given you.