

RHYTHM:

a weekly reflection guide for students

VOLUME	02	04 APRIL	WEEK FIVE
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What is Rhythm?

Rhythm is a weekly lectionary reflection guide designed with students in mind! Each week you'll find lectionary readings from the Old Testament, Psalms, New Testament, and Gospels, along with different types of questions and readings to reflect on. Rhythm will help students connect with God and each week's readings in various ways, challenging students to put what they're hearing into practice throughout the week.

Rhythm is broken up into five sections, each with a unique purpose. In *We Read*, students are guided in reflecting on an initial reading of the week's passages. In *We Think...* students are encouraged to engage scripture on a deeper level by asking questions about the text. *We Feel* invites students to engage their emotions, bringing their feelings into conversation with God's word. In *We Believe*, students are invited to connect what they've read in scripture to the larger Wesleyan theological heritage. Finally, *We Practice* guides students in discovering the practices they might use to help develop a rhythm of life shaped by scripture and the community of faith to which they belong.

Rhythm: A Weekly Reflection Guide for Students can be used in a small group setting, as a guide for youth group time, or even with adults! We hope you find Rhythm as something that leads you and your students into a deeper faith.

Notes

We Read...

What does it mean to be a witness to something? Last week, we celebrated Easter. Christ has risen, and this is good news for all of us! We know about the resurrection because people were there to witness it—the women and the disciples saw Jesus, shared about Jesus, and wrote about Jesus. We come to know Christ through witnesses around us, people who have also experienced the love of Jesus and the transformation he brings into our lives.

In Acts, Peter and the apostles describe how they had to share about Jesus because they witnessed these things. Psalm 150 tells us to praise God when we witness the work God has done in our lives. Revelation reminds us that every person who witnesses will acknowledge that God is Alpha and Omega (beginning and end). And, of course, we find the story of Thomas, who witnessed Jesus's resurrection as he touched the wounds on Jesus's hands and side.

It's important to see that Jesus didn't shame Thomas for needing to experience Jesus in this way. Instead, he meets Thomas where he is, with exactly what Thomas needs. Jesus says, "Happy are those who will believe without seeing," but he never says that Thomas's belief was any less than others.

Acts 5:27-32

²⁷ The apostles were brought before the council where the high priest confronted them: ²⁸ "In no uncertain terms, we demanded that you not teach in this name. And look at you! You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching. And you are determined to hold us responsible for this man's death."

²⁹ Peter and the apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than humans! ³⁰ The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God has exalted Jesus to his right side as leader and savior so that he could enable Israel to change its heart and life and to find forgiveness for sins. ³² We are witnesses of such things, as is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

Psalm 150

¹ Praise the LORD!

Praise God in his sanctuary!

Praise God in his fortress, the sky!

² Praise God in his mighty acts!

Praise God as suits

his incredible greatness!

³ Praise God with the blast

of the ram's horn!

Praise God with lute and lyre!

⁴ Praise God with drum and dance!

Praise God with strings and pipe!

⁵ Praise God with loud cymbals!

Praise God with clashing cymbals!

⁶ Let every living thing praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD!

Revelation 1:4-8

⁴ John, to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace and peace to you from the one who is and was and is coming, and from the seven spirits that are before God's throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ—the faithful witness, the firstborn from among the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To the one who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ who made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father—to him be glory and power forever and always. Amen.

⁷ Look, he is coming with the clouds! Every eye will see him, including those who pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of him. This is so. Amen. ⁸ "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "the one who is and was and is coming, the Almighty."

John 20:19-31

¹⁹ It was still the first day of the week. That evening, while the disciples were behind closed doors because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities, Jesus came and stood among them. He said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them

We Practice...

Just like in his interaction with Thomas, Jesus meets us where we're at and invites us to witness what we have experienced. Even in our doubts or struggles, Jesus cares for us and helps us to move towards belief. Take time this week to talk to a mentor or someone you admire in your faith journey and ask them about a time that Jesus helped them walk through doubt or struggle. It can be easy to think we're alone, but that isn't true. We have the body of Christ to support and share with us, which can be so beneficial when we need help.

Notes

his hands and his side. When the disciples saw the Lord, they were filled with joy. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am sending you." ²² Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you don't forgive them, they aren't forgiven."

²⁴ Thomas, the one called Didymus, one of the Twelve, wasn't with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ The other disciples told him, "We've seen the Lord!"

But he replied, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, put my finger in the wounds left by the nails, and put my hand into his side, I won't believe."

²⁶ After eight days his disciples were again in a house and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus entered and stood among them. He said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here. Look at my hands. Put your hand into my side. No more disbelief. Believe!"

²⁸ Thomas responded to Jesus, "My Lord and my God!"

²⁹ Jesus replied, "Do you believe because you see me? Happy are those who don't see and yet believe."

³⁰ Then Jesus did many other miraculous signs in his disciples' presence, signs that aren't recorded in this scroll. ³¹ But these things are written so that you will believe that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son, and that believing, you will have life in his name.

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We Believe...

Revelation 1 tells us that we believe in the God who is and was and is coming. We believe that God has always been God, from before creation until now. We believe God is the only all-powerful, all-loving God of the world. God has chosen to send the Holy Spirit so we can live with God's presence in our hearts. We also believe that God is still coming, has not yet redeemed creation to the fullest extent and that all things will be made new one day.

Notes

We Think...

- What stands out to you in these verses? Does anything confuse you or not make sense?
- How do these verses compare to your own experience in life or the church? What are you considering? What questions come to mind?
- What does the word "witness" mean to you? How does this connect to our faith? Why did Jesus let Thomas put his finger in Jesus's wounds?
- If you have heard this story before - how has this reading changed your thoughts about Thomas?

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We Feel...

- What emotions are you experiencing today? How are you making space for these feelings?
- Where have you seen God today or this week? What is pointing you to God (maybe it is something in creation, a friend or adult that cares for you)?
- What has God made new in your life? In your heart?
- Psalm 150 tells us to praise God with everything we have - how do you praise God? (Maybe this is through music or art or speaking).
- When have you had questions or doubts about Jesus?
- What or who has helped you through these moments? How can you support others when they are experiencing the same things?