

RHYTHM:

a weekly reflection guide for students

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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.

We Practice...

Last week, we reflected on people who have been pillars of faith in our lives. Hebrews 11 goes on to list other prominent people who have had faith. This week, consider the stories in the Bible that stick out to you. Who can you look to in Scripture as someone who has lived in a way you want to live? Write down one or two stories, and then list the characteristics these people have that you see value in. Then, take time to reflect on your life. How can you grow in those characteristics you listed? Who can help hold you accountable in your faith journey?

Notes

We Read...

A major theme for our readings this week is this idea of rooting out what isn't good, taking away the stuff that is rotten, destructive, damaging. It's probably not everyone's favorite subject to talk about, and some of these passages can make us feel a little uncomfortable. Last week, we looked at passages that reflected on living a life that lines up with our faith, a life that lives out God's love and care for the world. This week, we see the other side of this. What happens when we live out bloodshed and violence instead of justice? How does God feel when we cause pain instead of bringing in righteousness? When we choose to live a different way, God won't force our hand. God won't cause us to bear good fruit when all we want to do is live in unholy, selfish ways.

But the good news is that even when we choose the wrong path, God is still willing to restore what we have broken. Even when we turn our backs on the ways we know we're called to live, God is still willing to meet us where we're at and bring us back home. We see this list of faithful people in Hebrews, and we're reminded that God has done incredible things with normal, broken people, and God can do that in our own lives if we are willing.

Isaiah 5:1-7

Let me sing for my loved one

a love song for his vineyard.

My loved one had a vineyard

on a fertile hillside.

² He dug it,

cleared away its stones,

planted it with excellent vines,

built a tower inside it,

and dug out a wine vat in it.

He expected it to grow good grapes—

but it grew rotten grapes.

³ So now, you who live in Jerusalem,

you people of Judah,
 judge between me and my vineyard:
⁴ What more was there to do
 for my vineyard
 that I haven't done for it?
 When I expected it
 to grow good grapes,
 why did it grow rotten grapes?
⁵ Now let me tell you
 what I'm doing to my vineyard.
 I'm removing its hedge,
 so it will be destroyed.
 I'm breaking down its walls,
 so it will be trampled.
⁶ I'll turn it into a ruin;
 it won't be pruned or hoed,
 and thorns and thistles will grow up.
 I will command the clouds
 not to rain on it.
⁷ The vineyard of
 the LORD of heavenly forces
 is the house of Israel,
 and the people of Judah
 are the plantings
 in which God delighted.
 God expected justice,
 but there was bloodshed;
 righteousness,
 but there was bloodshed;

Psalm 80:1-2, 8-19

¹ Shepherd of Israel, listen!

We Believe...

In Luke 12, Jesus says that he hasn't come to bring peace but to bring division. But don't we believe that Jesus is the Prince of Peace? How do those two statements line up?

When Jesus says that he isn't bringing "peace," this word translates to mean tranquility or security. The kind of peace where things are quiet, still, staying what they have always been. Jesus didn't come so that our lives would be this way. Instead, Jesus came to bring God's peace, or God's shalom. This peace means to be whole, to be one with God. Sometimes, when we are in tune with where God is calling us, it will disrupt our lives and our relationships.

When we say yes to God, we might end up being on the other side of an argument from someone we love deeply. Jesus isn't clapping and cheering for these relationships to be broken, but he's stating a reality. Sometimes following God means turning away from relationships that don't line up with the life God has called us to live. Sometimes living in Jesus' peace means our lives won't be calm and tranquil. But we know that in the midst of this, God is with us and bringing us into God's shalom.

Notes

You, the one who leads Joseph
as if he were a sheep.
You, who are enthroned
upon the winged heavenly creatures.
Show yourself ² before Ephraim,
Benjamin, and Manasseh!
Wake up your power!
Come to save us!

Psalm 80:8–19

⁸ You brought a vine out of Egypt.
You drove out the nations and planted it.
⁹ You cleared the ground for it;
then it planted its roots deep,
filling the land.
¹⁰ The mountains were covered by its shade;
the mighty cedars were covered
by its branches.
¹¹ It sent its branches
all the way to the sea;
its shoots went
all the way to the Euphrates River.
¹² So why have you now torn down its walls
so that all who come along
can pluck its fruit,
¹³ so that any boar from the forest
can tear it up,
so that the bugs can feed on it?
¹⁴ Please come back, God of heavenly forces!
Look down from heaven and perceive it!
Attend to this vine,
¹⁵ this root that you planted

with your strong hand,
this son whom you secured
as your very own.

¹⁶ It is burned with fire.

It is chopped down.

They die at the rebuke coming from you.

¹⁷ Let your hand be

with the one on your right side—

with the one whom you secured

as your own—

¹⁸ then we will not turn away from you!

Revive us

so that we can call on your name.

¹⁹ Restore us,

LORD God of heavenly forces!

Make your face shine

so that we can be saved!

Hebrews 11:29-12:2

²⁹ By faith they crossed the Red Sea as if they were on dry land, but when the Egyptians tried it, they were drowned.

³⁰ By faith Jericho's walls fell after the people marched around them for seven days.

³¹ By faith Rahab the prostitute wasn't killed with the disobedient because she welcomed the spies in peace.

³² What more can I say? I would run out of time if I told you about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. ³³ Through faith they conquered kingdoms, brought about justice, realized promises, shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴ put out raging fires, escaped from the edge of the sword, found strength in weakness, were mighty in war, and routed foreign armies. ³⁵ Women received back their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured and refused to be released so they could gain a better resurrection.

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?
- When Jesus says that families will be divided, how does this make you feel?
- Have you ever poured your heart and time into something?
- How does it feel when that time and effort lead to something good?
- How does it feel when you don't get the results you hoped for?
- Can you relate to God's frustrations about Israel as the vineyard in Isaiah 5?

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³⁶ But others experienced public shame by being taunted and whipped; they were even put in chains and in prison. ³⁷ They were stoned to death, they were cut in two, and they died by being murdered with swords. They went around wearing the skins of sheep and goats, needy, oppressed, and mistreated. ³⁸ The world didn't deserve them. They wandered around in deserts, mountains, caves, and holes in the ground.

³⁹ All these people didn't receive what was promised, though they were given approval for their faith. ⁴⁰ God provided something better for us so they wouldn't be made perfect without us.

12 So then, with endurance, let's also run the race that is laid out in front of us, since we have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us. Let's throw off any extra baggage, get rid of the sin that trips us up, ² and fix our eyes on Jesus, faith's pioneer and perfecter. He endured the cross, ignoring the shame, for the sake of the joy that was laid out in front of him, and sat down at the right side of God's throne.

Luke 12:49-56

⁴⁹ "I came to cast fire upon the earth. How I wish that it was already ablaze! ⁵⁰ I have a baptism I must experience. How I am distressed until it's completed! ⁵¹ Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, I have come instead to bring division. ⁵² From now on, a household of five will be divided—three against two and two against three.

⁵³ Father will square off against son and son against father; mother against daughter and daughter against mother; and mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

⁵⁴ Jesus also said to the crowds, "When you see a cloud forming in the west, you immediately say, 'It's going to rain.' And indeed it does. ⁵⁵ And when a south wind blows, you say, 'A heat wave is coming.' And it does. ⁵⁶ Hypocrites! You know how to interpret conditions on earth and in the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret the present time?

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?
- Why does God call the people's offerings worthless in Isaiah 1?
- What does it mean to be restored?
- Why does the author of Hebrews list these different examples of people who had faith?