



RHYTHM:

a weekly reflection guide for students

VOLUME	02	07 JULY	WEEK FIVE
YEAR C	HANNAH JONES-NELSON		

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...

Asking questions is an important practice in our faith. Sometimes it can be easy to feel like we aren't supposed to be asking or challenging, but in Genesis 18, we see something different. God was willing to meet with Abraham and to be challenged by him. The same is true for us today - God is not afraid of the questions that we might bring. What are you wondering right now? What questions about faith, God, and the Bible do you have? Write down a list of questions, find an adult whom you trust, and ask if they would be willing to listen to your questions. We don't have to have all the answers; sometimes, even the people we look up to the most don't know the answers, but that shouldn't stop us from asking whatever is on our minds.

We Read...

Do you think that God listens when you speak? Does the Bible have anything to say about that question? A theme for our readings this week is that God does hear us. God hears us, God wants us to share our thoughts and our hearts, and nothing is too much to bring to God. Abraham bargains with God on behalf of the people around him, and it's interesting to see how God responds - God listens! God is moved because of Abraham's heart for the people. It's a beautiful picture of God's care for us and God's closeness to us. God isn't far away or distant; God is up close and personal. God wants to hear from us. We find this same idea in Psalm 138 as the Psalmist tells us that when he called out, God heard him and answered him. And Jesus, years and years later, reminds his followers of this same truth. God hears us, God cares for us, and God wants us to share. Prayer helps connect us to God, and we can bring our whole heart and self to God.

Genesis 18:20-32

²⁰ Then the LORD said, "The cries of injustice from Sodom and Gomorrah are countless, and their sin is very serious! ²¹ I will go down now to examine the cries of injustice that have reached me. Have they really done all this? If not, I want to know."

²² The men turned away and walked toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing in front of the LORD. ²³ Abraham approached and said, "Will you really sweep away the innocent with the guilty? ²⁴ What if there are fifty innocent people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not save the place for the sake of the fifty innocent people in it? ²⁵ It's not like you to do this, killing the innocent with the guilty as if there were no difference. It's not like you! Will the judge of all the earth not act justly?"

²⁶ The LORD said, "If I find fifty innocent people in the city of Sodom, I will save it because of them."

²⁷ Abraham responded, "Since I've already decided to speak with my Lord, even though I'm just soil and ash, ²⁸ what if there are five fewer innocent people than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city over just five?"

The LORD said, "If I find forty-five there, I won't destroy it."

²⁹ Once again Abraham spoke, "What if forty are there?"

The LORD said, "For the sake of forty, I will do nothing."

³⁰ He said, "Don't be angry with me, my Lord, but let me speak. What if thirty are there?"

The LORD said, "I won't do it if I find thirty there."

³¹ Abraham said, "Since I've already decided to speak with my Lord, what if twenty are there?"

The LORD said, "I won't do it, for the sake of twenty."

³² Abraham said, "Don't be angry with me, my Lord, but let me speak just once more. What if there are ten?"

And the Lord said, "I will not destroy it because of those ten."

Psalm 138

¹ I give thanks to you
with all my heart, LORD.
I sing your praise before all other gods.

2 I bow toward your holy temple
and thank your name
for your loyal love and faithfulness
because you have made
your name and word
greater than everything else.

³ On the day I cried out, you answered me.
You encouraged me with inner strength.

⁴ Let all the earth's rulers
give thanks to you, LORD,
when they hear what you say.

⁵ Let them sing about the LORD's ways
because the LORD's glory is so great!

⁶ Even though the LORD is high,

3

Notes

12

We Believe...

In Colossians 2, we're told not to let anyone judge about eating, drinking, sabbath, etc. Does this mean we can do whatever we want? Does this mean that our spiritual life practices don't matter? I don't think this is what the author means here. At the time, there were different churches and sects that promoted an intense, works-based holiness. If you didn't check off every box and line up exactly how the leaders said, you weren't really holy. You weren't really a part of the church. Colossians 2 is a response to that. We're reminded that our holiness doesn't come from someone else, it doesn't come from how someone else has judged us, it doesn't come from rules someone else has created. Holiness can only come from God. This doesn't mean we should ignore spiritual practices or guidelines set out to help us, but we remember that these practices cannot make us holy. Only God can do that.

he can still see the lowly,
but God keeps his distance
from the arrogant.

⁷ Whenever I am in deep trouble,
you make me live again;
you send your power
against my enemies' wrath;
you save me with your strong hand.

⁸ The LORD will do all this for my sake.

Your faithful love lasts forever, LORD!

Don't let go of what your hands have made.

Colossians 2:6-19

⁶ So live in Christ Jesus the Lord in the same way as you received him. ⁷ Be rooted and built up in him, be established in faith, and overflow with thanksgiving just as you were taught.

⁸ See to it that nobody enslaves you with philosophy and foolish deception, which conform to human traditions and the way the world thinks and acts rather than Christ. ⁹ All the fullness of deity lives in Christ's body. ¹⁰ And you have been filled by him, who is the head of every ruler and authority. ¹¹ In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not administered by human hands. The circumcision of Christ is realized in the stripping away of the whole self dominated by sin. ¹² You were buried with him through baptism and raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

¹³ When you were dead because of the things you had done wrong and because your body wasn't circumcised, God made you alive with Christ and forgave all the things you had done wrong. ¹⁴ He destroyed the record of the debt we owed, with its requirements that worked against us. He canceled it by nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ When he disarmed the rulers and authorities, he exposed them to public disgrace by leading them in a triumphal parade.

¹⁶ So don't let anyone judge you about eating or drinking or about a festival, a new moon observance, or sabbaths. ¹⁷ These religious practices are only a shadow of what was coming—the body that cast the shadow is Christ. ¹⁸ Don't let anyone who wants to practice harsh self-denial and worship angels rob you

of the prize. They go into detail about what they have seen in visions and have become unjustifiably arrogant by their selfish way of thinking. ¹⁹ They don't stay connected to the head. The head nourishes and supports the whole body through the joints and ligaments, so the body grows with a growth that is from God.

Luke 11:1-13

Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

² Jesus told them, "When you pray, say:
'Father, uphold the holiness of your name.
Bring in your kingdom.
³ Give us the bread we need for today.
⁴ Forgive us our sins,
for we also forgive everyone who has wronged us.
And don't lead us into temptation.'

⁵ He also said to them, "Imagine that one of you has a friend and you go to that friend in the middle of the night. Imagine saying, 'Friend, loan me three loaves of bread ⁶ because a friend of mine on a journey has arrived and I have nothing to set before him.'
⁷ Imagine further that he answers from within the house, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up to give you anything.'
⁸ I assure you, even if he wouldn't get up and help because of his friendship, he will get up and give his friend whatever he needs because of his friend's brashness. ⁹ And I tell you: Ask and you will receive. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ Everyone who asks, receives. Whoever seeks, finds. To everyone who knocks, the door is opened.

¹¹ "Which father among you would give a snake to your child if the child asked for a fish? ¹² If a child asked for an egg, what father would give the child a scorpion? ¹³ If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

Notes

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 have you called out to God? Did you feel like you received a response? Maybe that response was from the words of another person, from a situation, from Scripture, or even audibly from God.
- Jesus prays that God's kingdom will be brought in - what does this mean in your own life?

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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?
- Abraham bargains with God - what does that show you about God's willingness to engage with us?
- What does it mean to be made alive with Christ?

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.