

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 Read...

"Because my people are crushed, I am crushed." Have you ever felt this before? Have you ever felt crushed because of what your people are experiencing? Even when we aren't the ones directly dealing with harm or hurt, our love and connection to someone else can cause us to carry the weight of their suffering. In Psalm 79, we read as the psalmist cries out to God to be angry against those who have brought harm and to have compassion on God's people. The psalmist is feeling crushed and turns to God for help.

I wonder how this psalmist, or even Jeremiah, would have felt if they were alive when Saul (the persecutor of Christians) was offered forgiveness and new life? What are we supposed to do when those who have crushed us are offered grace and mercy? How are we meant to react when we read the words of 1 Timothy 2 that talk about Jesus giving himself so that all could be free? It's easy to say that God loves all people and wants all people to be saved, but it can be harder to accept that in our own lives.

We don't need to pretend like we are happy about all things or put on a fake smile for God. God can handle our frustrations, anger, doubts, and sadness. God wants us to come with all of these things! But God also points us in the direction of Jesus. We are called to walk with Jesus and to be transformed by the words and actions of Jesus, to live a life that doesn't align with what the world says (like get even with those who hurt you). We let the Spirit guide us in the ways of Christ, even when those ways are challenging.

Jeremiah 8:18–9:1

¹⁸ No healing, only grief; my heart is broken. ¹⁹ Listen to the weeping of my people all across the land: "Isn't the LORD in Zion? Is her king no longer there?" Why then did they anger me with their images, with pointless foreign gods? ²⁰ "The harvest is past, the summer has ended, yet we aren't saved." ²¹ Because my people are crushed, I am crushed; darkness and despair overwhelm me. ²² Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then have my people not been restored to health? ¹ If only my head were a spring of water

and my eyes a fountain of tears, I would weep day and night for the wounds of my people.

Psalm 79:1-9

¹ The nations have come into your inheritance, God! They've defiled your holy temple. They've made Jerusalem a bunch of ruins. ² They've left your servants' bodies as food for the birds; they've left the flesh of your faithful to the wild animals of the earth. ³ They've poured out the blood of the faithful like water all around Jerusalem, and there's no one left to bury them. ⁴ We've become a joke to our neighbors, nothing but objects of ridicule and disapproval to those around us. ⁵ How long will you rage, LORD? Forever? How long will your anger burn like fire? ⁶ Pour out your wrath on the nations who don't know you, on the kingdoms that haven't called on your name. ⁷ They've devoured Jacob and demolished his pasture. ⁸ Don't remember the iniquities of past generations; let your compassion hurry to meet us because we've been brought so low. ⁹ God of our salvation, help us for the glory of your name! Deliver us and cover our sins for the sake of your name!

1 Timothy 2:1-7

¹ First of all, then, I ask that requests, prayers, petitions, and thanksgiving be made for all people. ² Pray for kings and everyone who is in authority so that we can live a quiet and peaceful life in complete godliness and dignity. ³ This is right and it pleases God our savior, ⁴ who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. ⁵ There is one God and one mediator between God and humanity, the human Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a payment to set all people free. This was a testimony that was given at the right time. ⁷ I was appointed to be a preacher and apostle of this testimony—I'm telling the truth and I'm not lying! I'm a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Luke 16:1-13

¹ Jesus also said to the disciples, "A certain rich man heard that his household manager was wasting his estate. ² He called the manager in and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give me a report of your administration because you can no longer serve as my manager.'" ³ "The household manager said to himself, What will I do now that my master is firing me as his

We Practice...

1 Timothy 2:1 calls for "requests, prayers, petitions, and thanksgiving to be made for all people." Practice this today by yourself or with a small group. What requests do you have for yourself? What petitions do you need God to hear on behalf of someone else? What praises can you share?

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manager? I'm not strong enough to dig and too proud to beg. ⁴ I know what I'll do so that, when I am removed from my management position, people will welcome me into their houses. ⁵ "One by one, the manager sent for each person who owed his master money. He said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' ⁶ He said, 'Nine hundred gallons of olive oil.' The manager said to him, 'Take your contract, sit down quickly, and write four hundred fifty gallons.' ⁷ Then the manager said to another, 'How much do you owe?' He said, 'One thousand bushels of wheat.' He said, 'Take your contract and write eight hundred.' ⁸ "The master commended the dishonest manager because he acted cleverly. People who belong to this world are more clever in dealing with their peers than are people who belong to the light. ⁹ I tell you, use worldly wealth to make friends for yourselves so that when it's gone, you will be welcomed into the eternal homes. ¹⁰ "Whoever is faithful with little is also faithful with much, and the one who is dishonest with little is also dishonest with much. ¹¹ If you haven't been faithful with worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? ¹² If you haven't been faithful with someone else's property, who will give you your own? ¹³ No household servant can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be loyal to the one and have contempt for the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

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We Believe...

Jesus says you can't serve God and wealth, that we will be loyal to one and not the other. Does this mean that we believe any Christian who has money can't love God? No, we don't think that. But we do believe that anything standing in the way of fully loving God is a problem. Anything that we put above God in our hearts is an idol. Anything that we let rule our decisions is something that we have given more power to than God. And for a lot of people, that thing is money. Remember the story of the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-30, Mark 10:17-31, Luke 18:18-30). He asks Jesus what he needs to do to have eternal life. Jesus sees where his heart is - this man loves his wealth. He loves his wealth so much that when Jesus tells him to give it all away, the man leaves in sadness. Is there something in your life that you place above Jesus? Is there something you wouldn't be willing to part with if Jesus asked?

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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?
- The author of Psalm 79 is asking for God's help. Why do you think they are asking God to pour out wrath on the other people?
- Does deliverance have to come through anger and wrath?
- How does that align with what you know about God?
- How does that connect to 1 Timothy 2, where we see that God desires for all people to be saved and found in Jesus?

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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?
- When have you needed God's compassion and forgiveness?
- When have you been able to offer that to others?
- How does Luke 16:13 make you feel?
- Why does Jesus say you can't serve God and wealth?