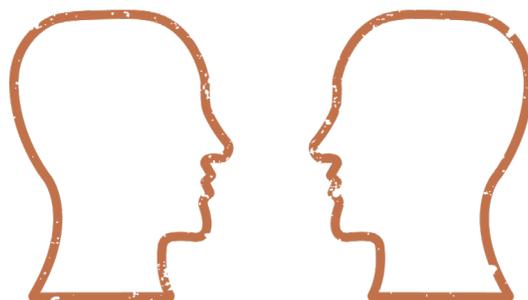


PRACTICES OF JESUS FOLLOWERS

TAKING INVENTORY

“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Psalm 139: 23-24



BY KELSEY WALEGA

TAKING INVENTORY

Recently my husband and I were reminiscing over the last year as we looked through our photostream. What I noticed in these photos was how exhausted and worn down I looked at the beginning of last year. This isn't the kindest thing to say about myself...but I looked terrible. Work had been demanding, getting my master's degree on top of working full time was demanding, figuring out how to have a healthy marriage and healthy relationships was demanding, and I was just so tired. I would go to bed exhausted, wake up exhausted and it felt like I was never fully rested or at peace. Anyone able to relate? It's no surprise to me then that around this time last year I realized my need to make some changes in my life. Instead of just accepting the stress, the anxiety and the exhaustion and hoping that I wouldn't always feel this way, I decided to take inventory of my life.

Inventory might seem like an odd word, but what I mean by inventory is taking a look at what is and is not working in your life and then making changes as needed to make sure you are living a healthy, whole and flourishing life. When I took inventory of my life last year, I was able to see the ways I could help myself feel less stressed, anxious and exhausted. I noticed that when life got busy, the first things to go were the things I did to bring me rest and joy: working out, cooking, reading, journaling, and taking walks. Since the first things to go were the very things that would help me feel less stressed and anxious, it is no wonder I was so worn down. Once I realized this, I started making small changes in my day and week. To name a few changes: I started taking short walks in the evening when I got home from work, I began working out regularly again even if it seemed like I was too busy, I would start my day by reading and journaling before I started school or work, and I stopped working and studying on Saturdays so that I could have a day to rest. These changes didn't happen all at once, they happened slowly over time, and they happened because I noticed what was and was not working in my life.

As Cody and I continued to move through the year on our photostreams, I started to look healthier and healthier as the months passed. I noticed that there were no longer bags under my eyes. I looked rested, I looked healthy, I looked at peace.

Throughout this semester, we will be taking a look at different practices that will help create healthy, whole and flourishing lives if we implement them into our daily, weekly or even monthly rhythms. Being active, eating well, resting, playing and having fun, prayer, fasting, giving, and being generous will all be discussed in the coming pages. Even with all of these practices, there are so many we left out: community, gratitude, forgiveness, scripture reading, caring for the earth, hospitality and so much more.

With all of these practices in mind and any others you can think of, take some time out of your week to evaluate and take inventory of your life. You can either do this in little bits throughout your week, or take 30-60 minutes one day to sit down and really think about the questions on the following pages as your semester begins.

The questions on the next few pages have been adapted slightly from Rebekah Lyon's book, *Rhythms of Renewal*.¹ Her inventory questions are the very ones I used last year, and they are better than anything I could come with on my own. Each day either sit quietly by yourself or take a walk, and think through these questions. Feel free to also use the space on the following pages to write down your thoughts and reflections.

DAY 1

What's right in your life? What's going well? Of the practices listed on the previous page, what comes easily and naturally to you?

DAY 2

What's wrong in your life? What isn't working? What in your life is causing anxiety, stress or even depression?

DAY 3

What's confused? Or rather, what question do you continually return to? What takes up more mental energy than you would like? Where do you feel stuck?

DAY 4

What's missing? What do you love, but seldom have time to do or enjoy?

DAY 5

From the reflection questions this week, what did you notice about yourself? Is there one change you can make this week?

DAY 6

What existing daily or weekly rhythms do you have? What would you like to incorporate into your daily/weekly routine?

END NOTES

1. Rebekah Lyons, *Rhythms of Renewal: Trading Stress and Anxiety for a Life of Peace and Purpose*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 32.



“MANY AVOID THE PATH OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE
BECAUSE THEY ARE AFRAID OF BEING SWALLOWED
UP IN THEIR OWN ABYSSES. BUT CHRISTIANS HAVE
CONFIDENCE THAT CHRIST HAS LIVED THROUGH
ALL THE ABYSSES OF HUMAN LIFE AND THAT HE
GOES WITH US WHEN WE DARE TO ENGAGE IN
SINCERE CONFRONTATION WITH OURSELVES.
BECAUSE GOD LOVES US UNCONDITIONALLY -
ALONG WITH OUR DARK SIDES - WE DON'T NEED TO
DODGE OURSELVES. IN THE LIGHT OF THIS LOVE
THE PAIN OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE CAN BE AT THE
SAME TIME THE BEGINNING OF OUR HEALING.”

-ANDREAS ELBERT