A 40-Day Experiment That Changed My Life

Why Church Will Never Be Enough

It worked for me, for years. Sunday morning. A 30 minute worship set. A teaching, prepared by a skilled communicator. A time of prayer. Maybe communion, maybe not. Often we leave moved, impacted, even changed. Then we leave – but what happens next? While it's all good and important, I came to a place in my life where I said, "If this is my discipleship, it's not working for me." It just wasn't working – and I've heard it's not working for others.



It's off to Sunday lunch, and a week dotted with quiet prayer to start each day. Mid-week we connect with a small group. Maybe, maybe not.

Meanwhile we work, we play, we struggle, our hearts grow tired, and we forget to be thankful, to feed on the Scriptures, and to meet in silence with God.

Yes, I was serving others, but I was not being formed into Christ by weekly, or even bi-weekly rhythms. I didn't realize that I was being drawn to a daily rhythm that would – literally – change my life.

Plan Your Rhythms – Or They Will Plan You

By nature, my mind is buzzing, my work is constant, and I accumulate feelings throughout a day like a punctured boat hull takes on water.

Residual thoughts from every conversation, task, and responsibility are always pressing on me, ready to overtake me 1, 2, even 3 or more times a day.

I needed more than the spiritual rhythms that had become the "norm" for most of my Christian life to date. Most Christians I know hunger for the same, but we don't all know what to do about it.

The ancients understood that daily rhythms, set pauses in the day for a "mini-sabbath", a re-focusing and re-centering on the Scriptures and Christ's presence within us, were absolutely vital to the discipleship of the average Christian.

In the absence of daily rhythms that we choose, we plan, we repeat by habit, our rhythms will become those dictated to us by our job, our meals, or our relationships.

All day long, we react to the last conversation, the last email, the next task coming up. Our emotions gather, layer upon layer, and we are disoriented from who God is – and who we are – multiple times a day.

Weekly Rhythms Will Never Be Enough

It's not until the next deep spiritual breath that we are reoriented, and for many of us that comes just a few times a week.

Weekly rhythms, on their own, do not work. They will not, they cannot, keep us tethered and growing in Christ minute by minute and hour by hour. We need more.

Sadly, most church communities are trained to focus all of our energies on a person's Sunday experience, never seeing it as our ***essential discipleship responsibility*** to train everyone in our community in daily rhythms and habits.

But life is lived in moments, minutes, hours, and days, and if we're not in training to self-feed at the table of friendship with Christ, then we are… failing at discipleship.

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One day, my wife said, "What if you tried the 40-day daily office?" I'd read Peter Scazerro's work, along with hundreds of other spiritual formation books.

I've taught university courses on Spiritual Formation, for goodness sake, and have trained hundreds of friends in daily prayer exercises. But moves, trauma, new jobs, and transitions with children had thrown me off.

The best tool in my tool belt, How Is Your Soul? was anchoring me through the Daily Examen and weekly touchpoint. Now I just needed a supplement to bring it home.

Major changes throw us all off; but we must reorient and regain our rhythms in different seasons of our lives.

What if, for 40 days, I tried another way? What if, at 50, I needed a new pattern? What if that pattern would change the next 40 years of my life?

I'm here to tell you that I did try another way, and I'm a different person than the harried soul I was.

How I Did It

Let me say first that I have a quieter spirit again by doing the following, and though I'm still treading water like a duck under the surface with my work and commitments, I sense the closeness of Christ and a joy in ***re-orienting to him multiple times a day***.

In fact, I now hunger for my daily rhythms every day I wake. I do it in hotels, at work, on vacation, on airplanes – wherever I am.

Here is, simply put, what I did. It worked for me, and it may work for you, to kickstart a new daily rhythm for feeding on the strength of Christ:

1. Get Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Day By Day: A 40-Day Journey by Peter Scazerro. and read the Morning/Midday Office in the morning before you turn on your smart phone. It will take you 5-10 minutes.

   (I would suggest reading the book, Emotionally Healthy Spirituality *before* digging into the Daily Office, but it's not necessary and not delaying is best).

2. Read the second meditation, the Midday/Evening Office, at 12 noon, before you grab lunch. It will take you 5-10 minutes.

3. Bookend your Daily Office by starting and finishing your day with a simple *Morning Prayer* (am) and *Daily Examen* (pm) from How Is Your Soul? as soon as you get up, and as soon as you go to bed.

All of this, together, adds up to about 20-30 minutes of your day.

Try It For 40 Days

Do this for the 40 days of the booklet. Do the 2-minute pauses it suggests for centering on the presence of Christ in you, with you.

Read the Scripture it provides, and the short meditation. Consider the question at the end, then do the 2-minute pause again to center on Christ before you jump up and continue into the day.

Try to add in the Morning Prayer and the Examen, to top and tail your day.

Push through the awkwardness of having a rhythm. Set your smart phone to remind you of the times you've chosen.

But start small. Get a rhythm, then fight for it for 40 days.

It's A Good Time To Begin

I am convinced that gaining this rhythm, a practiced habit that has staying power over time, will alter the next decades of your life if you let it. As for me, I now hunger for those moments; I've developed a taste for daily food, that makes the weekly food more a feast – as it should be.

Is there a better time to start? When your kids are grown up? When you're distressed and feel desperate for a centering habit? Start now.

In my experience, now is the time to put rhythms in your daily discipleship life. There truly is no better time than the present to be… present to God.

Comment below if you're diving into this, or doing some kind of daily rhythm. Let us know how it's going.

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Question: Have you ever carried on a daily office (daily habit) more than one time a day, for more than a week? What impact did the rhythm have on you?

Resource: How Is Your Soul? is a great tool (and very inexpensive) from Vineyard Resources that has a *Daily Examen*, a *Morning Prayer* and an *Evening Prayer*. I've memorized the morning prayer and the examen to do whenever I'm driving, or when I'm in any location where a booklet is not handy.

Bio: Dan Wilt, M.Min. is an author, communicator, and innovative voice in the fields of Worship and the Arts. He is the creator of the Essentials In Worship Video Training Course for worship leaders and teams, and is the Founder of the 35K member WorshipTraining.com. Dan serves as the Director of Communications & Resources for Vineyard USA, and his ancient-future worship leadership blog offers weekly tools and team encouragements at DanWilt.com.

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