

*Following
Jesus
Together*

**Overwhelmed: Fighting for Peace
3-week plan**

Throughout these three weeks, we'll spend some time fighting for peace in Jesus through practicing breath prayer, managing our time, and ending with a mini-retreat.

As we walk through this plan, we are intentionally pushing back against the enemy of being overwhelmed. Too often we can allow our circumstances and events to run our lives and breed a posture of hurry, restlessness, and exhaustion. The biblical call, however, is to fix our minds on the peace of Jesus and to apply wisdom to our schedules.

So as you work through this guide, view this as your 3-week guide to press into the abundant life made available to us now in and through Jesus - to be with Him, to become like Him, and do the things He did.

Research shows it takes about 3 weeks to develop a habit, so it's our hope at the end of these three weeks that we create sustainable practices to more closely follow Jesus as we do this together with others in our LifeGroup.

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Coming up is STC Weekend. Serving reminds us that our lives are best spent when spent on others. Take some time in prayer now for that weekend. Pray that God will use it to help you be fully present as you serve others.

If you haven't yet - sign up at STCWeekend.com

Week 1

Day 1 - An Introduction to Breath Prayer

Breath prayer focuses on saying a short quiet prayer - usually less than 6-8 syllables long and said in a single breath - to help fix your mind on God. Practitioners of breath prayer often find it helpful to repeat the same prayer a number of times over until their mind is at rest, undistracted, and grounded on the presence of God and His Word.

READ

Romans 8:1-8

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

DO

Read through the article "[What is Breath Prayer?](#)" in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- What's one thing you learned about breath prayer?

Week 1
Day 2 - Breath Prayer

Breath prayer focuses on saying a short quiet prayer - usually less than 6-8 syllables long and said in a single breath - to help fix your mind on God. Practitioners of breath prayer often find it helpful to repeat the same prayer a number of times over until their mind is at rest, undistracted, and grounded on the presence of God and His Word.

READ

Romans 8:9-11

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

DO

Spend some time in prayer, asking the Lord what you need from Him. Afterward, write a breath prayer for today. Consider writing it on your hand, on a post-it note, or somewhere you'll see throughout the day. When you begin to feel overwhelmed, say that breath prayer.

If need be, read the resource "[What is Breath Prayer?](#)" in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- What was your breath prayer you wrote for today?

Week 1
Day 3 - Breath Prayer

Breath prayer focuses on saying a short quiet prayer - usually less than 6-8 syllables long and said in a single breath - to help fix your mind on God. Practitioners of breath prayer often find it helpful to repeat the same prayer a number of times over until their mind is at rest, undistracted, and grounded on the presence of God and His Word.

READ

Romans 8:12-17

So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

DO

Spend some time in prayer, asking the Lord what you need from Him. Afterward, write a breath prayer for today. Consider writing it on your hand, on a post-it note, or somewhere you’ll see throughout the day. When you begin to feel overwhelmed, say that breath prayer.

If need be, read the resource [“What is Breath Prayer?”](#) in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- What was your breath prayer you wrote for today?

Week 1
Day 4 - Breath Prayer

Breath prayer focuses on saying a short quiet prayer - usually less than 6-8 syllables long and said in a single breath - to help fix your mind on God. Practitioners of breath prayer often find it helpful to repeat the same prayer a number of times over until their mind is at rest, undistracted, and grounded on the presence of God and His Word.

READ

Romans 8:18-25

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

DO

Spend some time in prayer, asking the Lord what you need from Him. Afterward, write a breath prayer for today. Consider writing it on your hand, on a post-it note, or somewhere you'll see throughout the day. When you begin to feel overwhelmed, say that breath prayer.

If need be, read the resource "[What is Breath Prayer?](#)" in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- What was your breath prayer you wrote for today?

Week 1
Day 5 - Breath Prayer

Breath prayer focuses on saying a short quiet prayer - usually less than 6-8 syllables long and said in a single breath - to help fix your mind on God. Practitioners of breath prayer often find it helpful to repeat the same prayer a number of times over until their mind is at rest, undistracted, and grounded on the presence of God and His Word.

READ

Romans 8:26-30

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. **30** And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

DO

Spend some time in prayer, asking the Lord what you need from Him. Afterward, write a breath prayer for today. Consider writing it on your hand, on a post-it note, or somewhere you'll see throughout the day. When you begin to feel overwhelmed, say that breath prayer.

If need be, read the resource "[What is Breath Prayer?](#)" in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- What was your breath prayer you wrote for today?

Week 1
Day 6 - Breath Prayer

Breath prayer focuses on saying a short quiet prayer - usually less than 6-8 syllables long and said in a single breath - to help fix your mind on God. Practitioners of breath prayer often find it helpful to repeat the same prayer a number of times over until their mind is at rest, undistracted, and grounded on the presence of God and His Word.

READ

Romans 8:31-39

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written,
“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

DO

Spend some time in prayer, asking the Lord what you need from Him. Afterward, write a breath prayer for today. Consider writing it on your hand, on a post-it note, or somewhere you'll see throughout the day. When you begin to feel overwhelmed, say that breath prayer.

If need be, read the resource [“What is Breath Prayer?”](#) in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- What was your breath prayer you wrote for today?

Week 1
Day 7 - Breath Prayer

Breath prayer focuses on saying a short quiet prayer - usually less than 6-8 syllables long and said in a single breath - to help fix your mind on God. Practitioners of breath prayer often find it helpful to repeat the same prayer a number of times over until their mind is at rest, undistracted, and grounded on the presence of God and His Word.

READ

Galatians 5:22-25

the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

DO

Spend some time in prayer, asking the Lord what you need from Him. Afterward, write a breath prayer for today. Consider writing it on your hand, on a post-it note, or somewhere you'll see throughout the day. When you begin to feel overwhelmed, say that breath prayer.

If need be, read the resource "[What is Breath Prayer?](#)" in the back.

Reflect on questions in the Week 1 Review on the next page.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested ideas:

- What was your breath prayer you wrote for today?
- After completing the Week 1 Review, what was one thing the Lord taught you this week?

Week 1 Review

What's the Lord been showing you this week through these practices?

Were any daily prompts especially difficult? Why is that?

How might you press into these practices more to fight for your peace in Jesus?

Week 2

Day 1 - An Introduction to Managing Your Time

Following Jesus isn't about doing more things - it's taking a holistic view of your life and prioritizing it around what matters most - around the teachings and practices of Jesus. When we do this we discover it's not about doing more, it's about doing less. As we eliminate things to prioritize time with Jesus, we begin to become people of peace.

READ

Psalm 16:1-6

Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you."
As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones,
in whom is all my delight.
The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply;
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out
or take their names on my lips.
The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.
The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.

DO

What do you need from the Lord today? Take that to Him in prayer now.

Read through the articles "[Managing Your Time](#)" and "[Managing Your Screen Time](#)" in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- What's one thing you learned from today's articles?

Week 2

Day 2 - Manage Your Time

Following Jesus isn't about doing more things - it's taking a holistic view of your life and prioritizing it around what matters most - around the teachings and practices of Jesus. When we do this we discover it's not about doing more, it's about doing less. As we eliminate things to prioritize time with Jesus, we begin to become people of peace.

READ

Psalm 16:7-11

I bless the Lord who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.
I have set the Lord always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.
Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices;
my flesh also dwells secure.
For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one see corruption.
You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

DO

What do you need from the Lord today? Take that to Him in prayer now.

What can you eliminate in your schedule today to make space to focus on God's presence in your life?

If need be, read through the articles "[Managing Your Time](#)" and "[Managing Your Screen Time](#)" in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- Based on the articles, what's one way you're managing your time to be with Jesus today?

Week 2

Day 3 - Manage Your Time

Following Jesus isn't about doing more things - it's taking a holistic view of your life and prioritizing it around what matters most - around the teachings and practices of Jesus. When we do this we discover it's not about doing more, it's about doing less. As we eliminate things to prioritize time with Jesus, we begin to become people of peace.

READ

Psalm 46:8-11

Come, behold the works of the Lord,
how he has brought desolations on the earth.
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the chariots with fire.
“Be still, and know that I am God.
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!”
The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

DO

What do you need from the Lord today? Take that to Him in prayer now.

What can you eliminate in your schedule today to make space to focus on God's presence in your life?

If need be, read through the articles "[Managing Your Time](#)" and "[Managing Your Screen Time](#)" in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- What's one thing the Lord is teaching you through the Bible readings or practices?

Week 2

Day 4 - Listen to a Sermon

Listening to God's Word preached regularly shapes us to be a people of peace. The more we listen attentively to His Word and obey it, the more we conform ourselves to be more like Him.

READ

Ephesians 5:1-2, 15-17

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God...

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

DO

At some point today, listen to the sermon "Be Still and Know That I am God" from our [Personal Liturgy](http://midtownlexington.com/sermons/personal-liturgy-be-still-and-know-that-i-am-god) series (midtownlexington.com/sermons/personal-liturgy-be-still-and-know-that-i-am-god)

What stood out to you from the sermon?

By God's grace and through His Spirit, how can you apply this sermon to your life today?

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- What's one thing you learned from the sermon?

Week 2

Day 5 - Manage Your Time

Following Jesus isn't about doing more things - it's taking a holistic view of your life and prioritizing it around what matters most - around the teachings and practices of Jesus. When we do this we discover it's not about doing more, it's about doing less. As we eliminate things to prioritize time with Jesus, we begin to become people of peace.

READ

Isaiah 40:9-11

Go on up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good news;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good news;
lift it up, fear not;
say to the cities of Judah,
"Behold your God!"
Behold, the Lord God comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
behold, his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.
He will tend his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms;
he will carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead those that are with young.

DO

What do you need from the Lord today? Take that to Him in prayer now.

What can you eliminate in your schedule today to make space to focus on God's presence in your life?

If need be, read through the articles "[Managing Your Time](#)" and "[Managing Your Screen Time](#)" in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- What's one thing the Lord is teaching you through the Bible readings or practices?

Week 2

Day 6 - Manage Your Time

Following Jesus isn't about doing more things - it's taking a holistic view of your life and prioritizing it around what matters most - around the teachings and practices of Jesus. When we do this we discover it's not about doing more, it's about doing less. As we eliminate things to prioritize time with Jesus, we begin to become people of peace.

READ

Isaiah 40:28-31

Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the faint,
and to him who has no might he increases strength.
Even youths shall faint and be weary,
and young men shall fall exhausted;
but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles;
they shall run and not be weary;
they shall walk and not faint.

DO

What do you need from the Lord today? Take that to Him in prayer now.

What can you eliminate in your schedule today to make space to focus on God's presence in your life?

If need be, read through the articles "[Managing Your Time](#)" and "[Managing Your Screen Time](#)" in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- What's one thing the Lord is teaching you through the Bible readings or practices?

Week 2

Day 7 - Manage Your Time

Following Jesus isn't about doing more things - it's taking a holistic view of your life and prioritizing it around what matters most - around the teachings and practices of Jesus. When we do this we discover it's not about doing more, it's about doing less. As we eliminate things to prioritize time with Jesus, we begin to become people of peace.

READ

Phillipians 4:4-9

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

DO

What do you need from the Lord today? Take that to Him in prayer now.

What can you eliminate in your schedule today to make space to focus on God's presence in your life?

If need be, read through the articles "[Managing Your Time](#)" and "[Managing Your Screen Time](#)" in the back.

Reflect on questions in the Week 2 Review on the next page.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- What's one thing the Lord is teaching you through the Bible readings or practices?
- After completing the Week 2 Review, what was one thing the Lord taught you this week?

Week 2 Review

What's the Lord been showing you this week through these practices?

Were any daily prompts especially difficult? Why is that?

How might you press into these practices more to fight for your peace in Jesus?

Week 3

Day 1 - An Introduction to Retreating

When we get away from distraction, we discipline ourselves to delight in who God is so that we may be fueled to live out following Jesus in the everyday. One way we develop this quiet inner life is through retreat/solitude. This requires intentionality and discipline and when we commit to this regularly, we start to become people of peace, not worry.

READ

Matthew 3:16-4:2

And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

DO

What do you need from the Lord today? Take that to Him in prayer now.

Read the article “[How to Plan a Retreat \(For the Good of Your Soul\)](#)” in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- What’s one thing you learned from today’s article?

Week 3
Day 2 - Retreat

When we get away from distraction, we discipline ourselves to delight in who God is so that we may be fueled to live out following Jesus in the everyday. One way we develop this quiet inner life is through retreat/solitude. This requires intentionality and discipline and when we commit to this regularly, we start to become people of peace, not worry.

READ

Luke 5:12-16

While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, “Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.” And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, “I will; be clean.” And immediately the leprosy left him. And he charged him to tell no one, but “go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them.” But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.

DO

What do you need from the Lord today? Take that to Him in prayer now.

Get away for two hours at some point this week to do a micro-retreat.

If need be, read the article [“How to Plan a Retreat \(For the Good of Your Soul\)”](#) in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- Based on the latest article, what’s one thing you can plan for today to make your retreat happen?

Week 3
Day 3 - Retreat

When we get away from distraction, we discipline ourselves to delight in who God is so that we may be fueled to live out following Jesus in the everyday. One way we develop this quiet inner life is through retreat/solitude. This requires intentionality and discipline and when we commit to this regularly, we start to become people of peace, not worry.

READ

Psalm 46:1-7

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble at its swelling. *Selah*
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.
The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

DO

What do you need from the Lord today? Take that to Him in prayer now.

Get away for two hours at some point this week to do a micro-retreat.

If need be, read the article "[How to Plan a Retreat \(For the Good of Your Soul\)](#)" in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- Based on the latest article, what's one thing you can plan for today to make your retreat happen?

Week 3
Day 4 - Retreat

When we get away from distraction, we discipline ourselves to delight in who God is so that we may be fueled to live out following Jesus in the everyday. One way we develop this quiet inner life is through retreat/solitude. This requires intentionality and discipline and when we commit to this regularly, we start to become people of peace, not worry.

READ

Matthew 6:25-34

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

DO

What do you need from the Lord today? Take that to Him in prayer now.

Get away for two hours at some point this week to do a micro-retreat.

If need be, read the article [“How to Plan a Retreat \(For the Good of Your Soul\)”](#) in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- Based on the latest article, what's one thing you can plan for today to make your retreat happen?

Week 3
Day 5 - Retreat

When we get away from distraction, we discipline ourselves to delight in who God is so that we may be fueled to live out following Jesus in the everyday. One way we develop this quiet inner life is through retreat/solitude. This requires intentionality and discipline and when we commit to this regularly, we start to become people of peace, not worry.

READ

Psalm 118:1-9

Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever!
Let Israel say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.”
Let the house of Aaron say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.”
Let those who fear the Lord say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.”
Out of my distress I called on the Lord;
the Lord answered me and set me free.
The Lord is on my side; I will not fear.
What can man do to me?
The Lord is on my side as my helper;
I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.
It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to trust in man.
It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to trust in princes.

DO

What do you need from the Lord today? Take that to Him in prayer now.

Get away for two hours at some point this week to do a micro-retreat.

If need be, read the article “[How to Plan a Retreat \(For the Good of Your Soul\)](#)” in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- Based on the latest article, what’s one thing you can plan for today to make your retreat happen?

Week 3
Day 6 - Retreat

When we get away from distraction, we discipline ourselves to delight in who God is so that we may be fueled to live out following Jesus in the everyday. One way we develop this quiet inner life is through retreat/solitude. This requires intentionality and discipline and when we commit to this regularly, we start to become people of peace, not worry.

READ

Psalm 118:19-24

Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the Lord.
This is the gate of the Lord;
the righteous shall enter through it.
I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.
The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.
This is the Lord's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.
This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

DO

What do you need from the Lord today? Take that to Him in prayer now.

Get away for two hours at some point this week to do a micro-retreat.

If need be, read the article "[How to Plan a Retreat \(For the Good of Your Soul\)](#)" in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- Based on the latest article, what's one thing you can plan for today to make your retreat happen?

Week 3
Day 7 - Retreat

When we get away from distraction, we discipline ourselves to delight in who God is so that we may be fueled to live out following Jesus in the everyday. One way we develop this quiet inner life is through retreat/solitude. This requires intentionality and discipline and when we commit to this regularly, we start to become people of peace, not worry.

READ

Matthew 5:2-12

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

DO

What do you need from the Lord today? Take that to Him in prayer now.

Get away for two hours at some point this week to do a micro-retreat.

If need be, read the article [“How to Plan a Retreat \(For the Good of Your Soul\)”](#) in the back.

Reflect on questions in the Week 3 Review on the next page.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- Based on the latest article, what's one thing you can plan for today to make your retreat happen?
- After completing the Week 3 Review, what was one thing the Lord taught you this week?

Week 3 Review

What's the Lord been showing you this week through these practices?

Now that the 3 weeks are over, what does it look like for you to practically fight for your peace in Jesus daily? What practices can you implement daily/weekly? Share this with others in your LifeGroup to hold each other accountable.

If this plan was especially challenging, feel free to start back from the beginning or modify the plan to focus more time on one practice.

When you're finished, we'd love to hear how the Lord grew you in these three weeks. Share with us your story at teaching@midtowncolumbia.com

APPENDIX

What is Breath Prayer?

Breath prayer is another way to practice abiding with Jesus dating as far back as the sixth century. As the name suggests, this simple practice focuses on saying a short quiet prayer - usually less than 6-8 syllables long and said in a single breath - to help fix your mind on God. Practitioners of breath prayer often find it helpful to repeat the same prayer a number of times over until their mind is at rest, undistracted, and grounded on the presence of God and His Word. This prayer can be done in an undistracted place to help you focus and/or can be done throughout the day whenever you need to be reminded of God's presence and truth.

This tool is a great way to focus on one thought, one verse, one sentence, one phrase, or one attribute of God that helps you set your mind on Him. You can write your own breath prayer to fit what you need from the Lord by picking a name of God that draws you near to Him (Father, Jesus, Spirit, Abba, Dad, Lord) and asking what you need in as few words as possible (help, peace, rest, joy). Below are sample breath prayers to help you get started.

Sample breath prayers:

Father, thank you for your love.

Abba, thank you for your goodness.

God, give me peace.

Spirit, guide me.

Jesus, give me patience.

Spirit, give me strength.

Father, give me wisdom.

God, I need a Savior and that's not me.

Jesus, be my refuge.

Lord, help my unbelief.

Ways to Manage Your Screen Time (How to Digitally Detox)

“Our eyes are rudders that will direct our hearts. We get to choose where we set our gaze. We become what we behold.”
-Ruth Chou Simons

For many of us, one of the biggest obstacles keeping us from following Jesus together is how we manage our time. According to a recent study, the average American spends over eight hours a day watching TV, their laptop, and their phone for the primary purpose of entertainment consumption. When we allow such entertainment and distraction to eat away at our time, we not only don't create space to spend time with Jesus, we unknowingly develop habits that make it increasingly difficult to spend time with Jesus. Without fighting for margin in our schedules to focus on Him, we become people marked by distraction, worry, and busyness rather than people of peace, love, and joy that God intends for us.

If media/entertainment/screen consumption is one of the biggest practical threats to becoming people of peace, then let's consider how to fight back. Below are some helpful practices in digital detoxing - what's one practice you can implement today?

1 - Limit yourself to viewing one screen at a time

Multi-tasking is a myth.* By focusing our attention on more than one screen or task, we divide our attention rather than multiply it. So rather than sending an email on your phone while there's a TV show playing in the background, choose one. Pause your show to send your email, wait to send the email until after your show is done, or walk out of the room to finish your email.

2 - Put your phone away one hour a day and one day a week

The quip, “What is important is seldom urgent, what is urgent is seldom important,” can easily be applied to our phones. Fight back the need to always be in the moment with your phone so that you can be in the moment with the people and places God has you in. You'll notice the world will keep going on even if you're away from your phone.

3 - Turn your smartphone into a dumb phone

Business execs are beginning to trade in their smartphones for “dumb phones” that are only capable to text and call in order to be more focused and less distracted. While this may be a viable option for you, consider turning your smartphone into a dumb phone by turning off all notifications on your phone besides text and phone calls.

4 - Create time limits on your apps and browsing

Tech companies are catching onto the long-term numbing effects that screens can have on us. If you have the updated iOS on your iPhone go to Settings, then Downtime. From there set limits on your phone. We'd recommend significantly decreasing the total amount of time you spend on apps that eat away at your time.

5 - Remove social media apps, use your browser instead

Research shows using your browser for social media networks rather than using their apps decreasing the amount of time you spend on them.

6 - Keep your bedroom free of screens

From a neurological level, what you look at and what you think about right before you go to bed and right when you wake up have significant long-term effects on how you operate - not to mention your sleep. If you use your phone for waking

up, buy an alarm clock. If you use your phone to play white noise, turn it on Airplane mode and/or Do Not Disturb so as to avoid notifications overnight.

7 - Leave your phone in the car when you run an errand, with your LifeGroup, and/or with family.

The knee-jerk reaction for many of us when we experience “boredom” is to look at our phone. But to fight for peace, leave your device in a place out of your immediate reach so that you can simply be in the moment. Fight for the pull to always be stimulated by whatever’s on your phone.

8 - Select what you will look at and when you will look at it ahead of time.

Social media apps and streaming services are designed in such a way to maximize the amount of time you spend on them. Algorithms are created specifically catered to your preference in order to consume as much of your time as possible. So rather than conforming to what technology says you should consume through mindless scrolling and binging - earlier in the day select what you will look at and when. If it’s a show or a movie, is there someone you can enjoy it with?

For more practical resources on this, check out the following:

[Digital Minimalism by Cal Newport](#)

[The Tech-Wise Family by Andy Crouch](#)

[12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You by Tony Reinke](#)

*Read [Psychology Today’s “The Myth of Multitasking”](#) and/or [Forbes’ “4 Mindfulness Fundamentals To Transform Your Leadership: The Incredible Myth Of Multitasking”](#)

How to Use a Time Audit

“Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny.” - Stephen Convey

One of the biggest obstacles keeping us from following Jesus together is how we manage our time. And the reality is we live in a world chock-full of distraction that keeps us cultivating an emotionally healthy spiritual life. To think of Stephen Convey's quote another way - how we use our time, shapes our schedules. How we use our schedules, shapes our habits. How we use our habits, shapes us into we're becoming. Who we're becoming, shapes our eternity.

We often say, “If only we had a few more minutes here.” “If only I had an extra day there.” And yet, following Jesus isn't about doing more things - it's taking a holistic view of your life and prioritizing it around what matters most - around the teachings and practices of Jesus. When we do this we discover it's not about doing more, it's about doing less. And as we eliminate things to prioritize around Jesus, we begin to become people of peace.

To begin the process of reprioritizing, consider working through a time audit to assess where your time goes, what needs to be cut, and how you can fill that time with Jesus' teaching and practices that will benefit your spiritual formation.

To do your time audit, go to the next page begin by filling in the “big rocks” in your schedule -

- 1 - when you sleep
- 2 - when you go to work
- 3 - when you go to church events - Sunday Gatherings, LifeGroup rhythms

From there assess - what else goes into the time you have leftover?

After you chart out your time as best you can ask yourself, How were those things forming you? Were they necessary for rest, abiding with Jesus, nurturing relationships? Once you assess your week, eliminate the things that are keeping you from following Jesus.

Time Audit

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6:00am							
6:30am							
7:00am							
7:30am							
8:00am							
8:30am							
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11:00pm							
11:30pm							

How to Plan a Retreat (For the Good of Your Soul)

Jesus shows us in the Gospels that the place of solitude becomes a place of strength (Matt 4:1-11, Luke 5:16). When we get away from distraction, we discipline ourselves to delight in who God is so that we may be fueled to live out following Jesus in the everyday. One way we develop this quiet inner life is through retreat/solitude.

When we retreat, we can enjoy God's creation and set our minds in thankfulness to God our Creator. This requires intentionality and discipline and when we commit to this regularly, we start to become people of peace, not worry.

While both the quantity and quality of retreat/solitude are beneficial for your soul, remember to start out slow. Most people can't just jump into a weekend-long retreat or a 40-day retreat like Jesus without having cultivating that practice before. So to begin to develop this habit, map out time this week to spend two hours away from distraction to simply rest and enjoy God.

Take some time answering the following:

What does it look like for you to retreat? What can you do that will bring you delight in the Lord?

Examples can include jogging, taking a long bath, reading a book, hiking, etc. The point is to simply rest and enjoy.

What distractions might keep you from retreating for those two hours?

Our aim in this is to be with God, to direct our minds upwards while we enjoy His good gifts. We'd recommend limiting your screen usage or leaving your phone somewhere else during this time. (For tips on this, go to "How to Manage Your Screen Time.")

If you have kids, talk with your spouse to take shifts when each of you will go on a micro-retreat this week. Reach out to someone in LifeGroup to see if they can watch your kids for a couple of hours so you can spend time resting in Jesus on your own.

When can you put that in place?

The more specific the better.

Who do you need to reach out to make sure this happens?

We're called to be a people who follow Jesus together which means we can't do this on our own. Share with one or two people in your LifeGroup about your plans to get away for a bit. Share with them your potential barriers and distractions. Have them hold you accountable.

After you completed it, what did you notice?

Reflect on your experience. Thank the Lord that He has wired you to rest. Did you find your mind going to places of distraction on your retreat? Why is that? Take that to the Lord.

How can you make retreating a sustainable practice?

When's the next time you can retreat again? Based on your micro-retreat, how would you modify your plan to further enjoy God and His good gifts? To cultivate and strengthen this discipline, how might you extend your retreat even longer next time?