

Listen to the invitation of Psalm 116:7 (NIV) *Return to your rest, my soul, for the Lord has been good to you.*

## 4. Delight

Isaiah 58:13 (NIV) speaks of calling the Sabbath a “delight”. It is not drudgery or religious obligation.

So, what is it you enjoy? Or what is it that is life-giving to you? Most Christians are delight deficient.

God gave us our five senses, not just for functional reasons, but as a means of pleasure and enjoyment.

- Beautiful music to hear
- Majestic creation to see
- Sweet delicacies to taste
- Colorful flowers to smell
- Soft hands to touch and hold

### LIVE IT OUT

At the end of this lesson is an exercise called The Replenishment Cycle. It is designed to help you know what fills your tank and what keeps you healthy. If you don't take the time to do this exercise during this week's lesson, be sure and do it sometime this week. Remember, self-care is not selfish, it is good stewardship... of your ONE life.

## 5. Worship

Exodus 20 says that the seventh day is a “Sabbath to the Lord your God.”

So, Sabbath is a day for unhurried, quality time with God. A Sabbath should be a time where our love and affection for God increase. It might include time participating in a worship service at Oakwood. It could also include listening to some of your favorite worship songs. It might include a leisurely walk for reflection and gratitude. It might include lingering over a rich passage of Scripture.

## Replenishment Cycle Instructions

The purpose of this exercise is to identify the things/activities that fill your tank and keep you healthy. In life, there are all kinds of things that suck/drain the life out of us. But to stay healthy, we need to have a few things that put life in us.

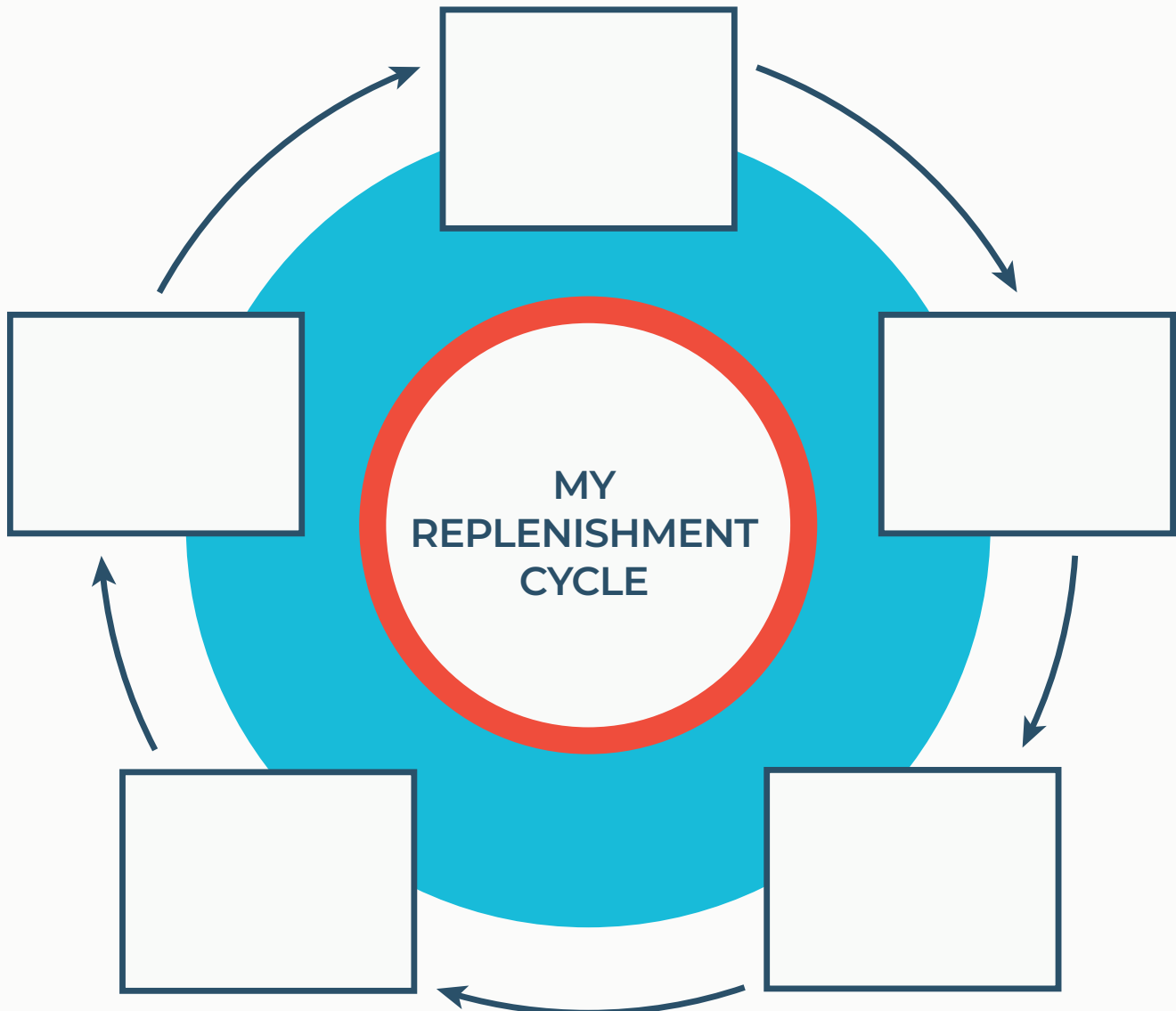
**1.** In each of the 5 rectangles on the next page, write down an activity that is bucket filling for you. Think about this for a moment. What is it, that when you do, it fills you. It could be alone time in the morning, or a date night with your spouse, or working out, or dinner with friends, or being in nature, or painting, or something else.

2. Now, either in the box or next to it, I want you to write down how often you need this ideally. If there are things in your rectangles that you can't do at least once a quarter, I would find something else to put in the box. So, for each of these... is it something that you ideally need daily, weekly, monthly, twice a month, etc.?

3. Now, in each box I want you to write one of three letters... R, Y, or G. The letter stands for red, yellow, green. This is to indicate the current status of the activity you have written in the box. Use the last 3 months as the time frame to determine which letter to put in each box. If it's green, that means its flourishing and thriving in your life right now. Yellow means it's not terrible, but it's not great. Red means it is almost nonexistent in your life right now.

4. Next, circle the one that is most critical to you staying in a healthy place. In other words, it is most important for keeping you replenished.

5. If you are married, I would encourage you to have your spouse fill out this sheet as well and then talk about it together.



February 5, 2023

# Shock and Awe

## OVERVIEW OF TODAY'S STUDY

Dallas Willard has said, “You must arrange your days so that you are experiencing deep contentment, joy, and confidence in your everyday life with God.” Christianity is not just about living life FOR God. It is also about doing life WITH God. It is about a growing relationship with your heavenly Father. To do life WITH God means that, like any relationship, we must work on communication. As believers, we call that communication prayer. Most Christians would say they feel very inadequate when it comes to their prayer life. We secretly wonder, “Does prayer really make a difference?” Today we are going to look at a biblical story that might just revolutionize your view of prayer.

## GET READY

- In the book *Your ONE Life*, read chapters 16–20 in the section called “Enjoying Life with God.”
- What three words would you use to describe your current relationship/connection to God?
- When in your life did you feel closest to God?
- How would you say you are doing these days with “enjoying” life with God?

## START HERE

Today's lesson is about a spiritual practice that is a key to you having a deep connection with God and spiritual power in your life. But it is a practice that is anemic in most churches and the individual lives of most Christians. If you grew up in a Baptist Church, you might remember Wednesday night prayer meeting. For many, it was the most boring hour of the week. It was usually just a handful of people. Most of the hour was spent sharing prayer requests and most of those were for people's physical ailments. A lot of prayer was directed toward broken hips and sprained ankles. When the group finally got around to praying, there was usually about 10 minutes left for actual praying.

There didn't seem to be any real passion or fervor in those prayer meetings. And the prayers were anything but faith-filled and bold. It doesn't seem like we actually expected anything to happen as a result of our prayers. Our prayers came more from a place of duty than delight. It's no wonder that so few people showed up.

Even though we know it is not true biblically or theologically, it can feel like prayer is passive. We can wonder if our prayers matter, and it can feel as though we're not really DOING anything.

## Discussion Question

What is a word or phrase that would describe your current prayer life?

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But there is a biblical story that stands in stark contrast to that Wednesday prayer meeting and the prayer experience of most individual Christians. This story is definitely not boring. It is filled with faith and boldness and can inspire us to radically alter our approach to prayer.

*One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.” Then Jesus said to them, “Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.’ And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need. Luke 11:1,5-8 (NIV)*

## Discussion Question

What most stands out to you from this story?

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## GO DEEPER

Luke 11 opens with the most general, vague, non-descript statement maybe anywhere in Scripture. “*One day Jesus was praying in a certain place.*”

- One day... the passage doesn’t tell us which day.
- Jesus was praying... the passage doesn’t tell us whether he was standing or sitting or kneeling. It doesn’t tell us the words he was speaking or whether his eyes were closed or how long he prayed.
- in a certain place... the passage doesn’t tell us where he was praying. We don’t know if he was inside or outside.

Even though the description is generic, there must have been something gripping about watching Jesus pray. Because when he is done, one of the disciples says to him “Lord, teach us to pray.”

The only thing the disciples ever asked Jesus to teach them was how to pray.

Jesus then launches into the well-known Lord's prayer. Although this is a little different from Matthew's version, it is basically the same. Jesus gives the disciples and us a model for the kinds of themes that ought to dominate our prayers.

This is about the "what" of prayer... the content of prayer. Most of us are familiar with the "what" of prayer and could probably recite from memory The Lord's Prayer.

But Jesus knows that there is another fundamental issue and that is our attitude toward prayer. Prayer is not just about saying the right words or speaking prayers that are simply theologically correct.

So, Jesus launches into a story to teach us about the attitude and posture of prayer. This passage also gives us a glimpse into the "divine side" of prayer. It helps us see God's attitude and response to our prayers.

To truly understand this story, you have to grasp the 1<sup>st</sup> century context for such a story. Remember that there were no cell phones and there was no email. And it was before the days of Hilton and Marriott. There is one other cultural reality that you have to understand. Hospitality was not just a nice gesture; it was a cultural obligation. You HAD to open your home not only to family and friends but also to strangers.

Because of the lack of communication ability, it was not uncommon for people to show up unannounced. In this story, you have a friend who shows up at your house unannounced and it's late at night. You are glad to see him and welcome him into your home. The problem is that you have no food to offer him.

Remember that this is also before the days of refrigerators. Kenmore and Frigidaire aren't going to arrive on the scene for another 1900 years. So, there really wasn't a technology that allowed you to store food. And there wasn't an HEB down the street.

So, you have a huge dilemma. You have unexpected guests that show up to your home and you are obligated to provide for them. But you don't have any food on hand to offer them.

Finally, you decide there is only one viable option. Even though it is midnight, and everybody is asleep, you are going to have to walk next door to your neighbor's house. You are going to have to ask to borrow some bread and lunchmeat so you can make a few sandwiches.

There was no late-night TV, so everyone in the house is down for the night. When your neighbor hears the knock on his door, he is grumpy and irritated. Basically, his response is "You've got to be kidding. It's midnight and the family is asleep. I'm not going to wake up everyone just to get you some bread."

You don't want to be the high maintenance neighbor. It's an awkward situation, but you can't blow off your obligation of hospitality for your guests.

You just can't take "no" for an answer. You knock again and say, "I'm really sorry, but I need to borrow a couple of loaves of bread... and I need it now."

Then, the punch line of the story comes in v. 8... *I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.*

It wasn't friendship that got the neighbor out of bed and throwing loaves of bread out the front door. No, it was your boldness and "shameless audacity" that won the day.

The Greek word for shameless audacity means lack of sensitivity to what's proper. It is a compound word which means no respect or no modesty.

When you are desperate, you don't worry about good manners or protocol or policy. You don't care about image or what people will think.

Remember that this is a teaching about prayer. Notice that the man who went and knocked on his neighbor's door had a real need, and he was desperate.

God blesses "holy desperation." And he always has.

In his book *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire* Jim Cymbala says, "I discovered an astonishing truth: God is attracted to weakness. He can't resist those who humbly and honestly admit how desperately they need him. Our weakness, in fact, makes room for his power."

**Discussion Question**

When it comes to prayer, what turns God off? See Matthew 6:5-8 and Luke 18:9-14 and James 4:3

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**1. We are invited to come to God with shameless audacity.**

That statement might sound a little presumptuous and aggressive. Maybe you're thinking "I thought we were supposed to approach God humbly".

There is a difference in coming to God boldly and coming to God arrogantly.

Hebrews 4:16 (NLT) says, *So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.*

Hebrews 4 portrays a very different attitude than how most Christians pray. We pray sheepishly... "God, if it's your will and you have time and you don't mind, if you could potentially, maybe, possibly hear my prayer..."

## Discussion Question

There is a tension in prayer. On one hand we are invited to pray with boldness and on the other hand we are to submit to God's will. How do you reconcile that tension?

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This story that Jesus tells invites us to come boldly and with shameless audacity. When you are desperate, you don't worry about good manners or protocol or policy. You don't care about image or what people will think.

There is a little prayer that captures well the spirit of this story in Luke 11. "Lord, I crawled across the barrenness to you with my empty cup, uncertain of asking for any small drop of refreshment. If only I had known you better, I would have come running with a bucket."

That's the invitation of Jesus to you.

## 2. Make prayer our first response, not our last resort.

It is implied in the passage that the first thing this guy does is go to his neighbor and start knocking on his door. He didn't ponder his dilemma overnight. He didn't have a brainstorming meeting. No, he immediately went to where he thought he could find help and provision.

### LIVE IT OUT

Start learning to pray "with" people, not just "for" people. We often glibly tell people that we will pray for them and then move on with our day and forget our promise. When someone shares a need or a prayer request, stop and pray for them right then.

Right after this story, in v. 9-10 of Luke 11, Jesus says, "*So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.*"

Jesus says, just like the man who went to his neighbor, you can come to God boldly and with shameless audacity. You are not bothering him, disturbing him or annoying him. So, don't be bashful, hesitant or fearful.

Let this sink in. Our great and majestic and holy and all-powerful God graciously invites us to boldly bring our needs before him.

All three of the key words in verses 9 and 10 are present imperatives in the Greek. As an imperative, it is a command, and it is ongoing. The words could be translated "ask and keep on asking;" "seek and keep on seeking;" "knock and keep on knocking."

God is inviting you to pound on heaven’s door. And in v. 10, God promises to respond. He who ask receives. He who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

### Discussion Question

For you personally, what are barriers or roadblocks to prayer?

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The Bible is also clear about the power of persistence. Luke 18:1 (NIV) says, *Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.*

Jesus then launches into a story about a cold-hearted judge and a relentless widow. She keeps going to him day after day pleading for justice. And day after day he refuses her request. But every day, she gets up, goes down to the courthouse and gets in line to see the judge.

The punch line of the story comes in verses 4-5 when the judge says to himself, “Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice...”

Her persistence won the day. The obvious contrast is that our God is a loving, responsive Father, not a disinterested, cold-hearted judge.

What have you given up on? Who have you given up on? Maybe today you just need to get back in line and boldly bring your request to God.

### Discussion Question

Is there something you have given up praying for that you need to start taking to God again?

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Samuel Chadwick has written, “There is no power like that of prevailing prayer....It turns ordinary mortals into men of power. It brings power. It brings fire. It brings rain. It brings life. It brings God.”

### 3. Our shameless audacity is based on God’s character.

Our coming with “audacity” is not just based on our desperate need, it is also rooted in God’s character.



Luke 11:11-12 (NIV) says, “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?”

Those of you who are parents or grandparents can relate to the logic of Jesus. No decent mother or father would want to do harm to their kids. Good parents are always looking out for what is best for their kids.

Here’s his point; if we can trust the sinful, fallen, nature of an earthly parent, how much more can we have confidence in the holy, righteous, and loving character of our heavenly father.

### LIVE IT OUT

When you gather as a class or group, spend more time praying than just sharing prayer requests. During your prayer times, make it your habit to talk to God more than talking to each other.

As Jesus wraps up this teaching in v. 13, he throws us a bit of a curve ball.

## 4. The Holy Spirit is God’s gift to us in prayer.

He says, “if you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him.” Is that how the verse reads? NO!

That’s what we might expect the verse to say. That would be logical. But Jesus says something quite different.

v. 13 says, “If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

The almighty God of the universe says, “I invite you to come to me with shameless audacity. And the reason is because I am a good father and I desire to hear your needs and meet them. And, because you don’t always know how to pray, I am going to give you the gift of the Holy Spirit to help you as you pray.”

The Holy Spirit is God’s gift to us in prayer. Our God is a good God, and he wants to give us good and helpful gifts. And, when it comes to prayer, he gives us the 3rd person of the trinity.

You ask for the gift; God provides the giver.

You ask for a drink of water; God gives you a well.

You ask for money; God gives you a bank.

You ask for a cookbook and God gives you Bobby Flay.

Paul elaborates on this in Romans 8:26 (NIV) when he says, *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.*

The truth is, sometimes we don't know how to pray. We don't know God's will. We don't have the words. So, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us. He knows what we don't know and brings our needs before the Father.

As you pray this coming week, hear God's gracious invitation to knock on heaven's door. And come to God with boldness and "shameless audacity". He is not like a grumpy neighbor who reluctantly grants our request. He is a good and perfect Father who delights to respond to our needs.