



“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.”

Matthew 11:28-30
The Message

Growing up on a hospital ship in Africa, rhythms were a natural part of my early, very structured life. As an adult living in urban America and working in a busy medical center, I feel the constriction of tasks, pressure, and responsibility. I long to live freely and lightly in the midst of this so that I might continue to give and receive for the benefit of all. How though?

In Jesus’ words we hear a simple call to follow his example (“watch how I do it”) coupled with a caution to not try and manage challenging times in our own strength (“walk with me and work with me”).

Jesus was no stranger to the constrictions and pressures placed upon him. Large crowds followed him wherever he went, pressing in on him, hoping for his healing touch and to hear his teaching. In the midst of the crush of the poor and disenfranchised and all of their truly legitimate needs, we don’t find Jesus complaining, or even annoyed, but rather full of compassion and grace. And, here in this passage he calls us to do likewise by learning the *unforced rhythms of grace* (which are not heavy or ill-fitting).

Rhythms of grace? It is the attunement to our own needs as well the needs of others. It is the ebb and flow of reaching out and pulling in. In such ways we find how to maintain our energy and ability to engage life. A healthy spiritual life helps us to navigate this. Practices of prayer, meditation and solitude (for example) help us find restoration when a life of service can exhaust us. Likewise service can provide deeper meaning and purpose to balance a life of prayer and meditation.

If you find yourself unbalanced in life, consider how this is impacting you. What keeps you from moving into the rhythms of grace? How are you served by service and what is the cost to you? What would it take to pause, move inward, and be restored? What may begin as forced rhythms of grace, with some time and effort, can become unforced - and you will find your life renewed.