

READ: GENESIS 2:1-17

A.C.T.S. is a method for reading Scripture meditatively and prayerfully - not for the purpose of gaining information but for the purpose of experiencing transformation. Using A.C.T.S. helps us remember that the main character in the Bible is God, not us, and that the main storyline of the Bible is God's redemptive love for us in Jesus despite our wanderings and failings. Meditation on Scripture is a largely a lost art. But this lost art can be recovered with practice and in community with others. The exercise is best done slowly and patiently in community. Don't rush through the four questions. Let the text soak in. Ask for and trust the Holy Spirit to illuminate and direct the group through the text. Instead of reading the text, "let the text read you".

ADORATION – How can I praise and adore God for who He is and what He's done?

Prompts:

- Because God exists He's worthy of our worship. Because God has revealed himself as *good*, He's worthy of our adoration.
- God never asks anything of us that He hasn't already asked of himself. (See helpful notes.)
- The rhythm of rest is part of the created order. God isn't an insatiable slave driver. Work and rest have their proper place in God's design.
- God is a good "boss." While we labor for Him as ambassadors in this world, we're given positions of honor as his image bearers, instructions for time off, and a perfect model to follow in God himself.

CONFESSION – How does this passage show me my need, my sin, and / or my brokenness?

- I too often doubt God's good character. This is seen in my inability to joyfully relinquish control of my life to Him.
- I neglect the order of work and rest that God has established for his people. While I take "days off," my mind and heart are anxious and working overtime.
- Deep rest of the soul is an anomaly. Too often I look to counterfeit sources of comfort for soul satisfaction.
- I often care more about resting only my body than experiencing the holistic rest of "body and soul" offered in the gospel.

THANKSGIVING – How does this passage reveal that Jesus is the ultimate answer to my sin, longings and need? How can I thank Him?

- Thank you that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. The Lord created this day to bless and serve us, not that we might bless and serve it. (Mark 2:27)

- Jesus embodies the principal of Sabbath, in fact, he references himself as "Lord of the Sabbath" in the gospels (Mark 2, Matthew 12). This means true rest of the soul is experienced by faith in Jesus alone!
- Jesus has completed the work that matters most, the work of satisfying a Holy God through his perfect life and substitutionary death.
- Celebrate that God completes what He begins. He finished the work of creation and then rested. He's completed the work of redemption, and now you can rest too. God always finishes what he starts (Phil. 1:6).

SUPPLICATION – How, specifically, can I ask the Spirit to transform my life?

- Change me from the inside, O Lord. I rest in all the wrong things. Help me to rest in you and your great love for me.
- Teach me to worship from the heart, because I want to, because you've proven yourself so generous and faithful.
- Help me to identify and root out the oppressive habits, sinful patterns, and damaging routines that separate me from you and the blessings you offer.
- Provide friendship, community, and accountability in the process of change.

Pray as a group. After discussing each of the four A.C.T.S questions in your group, pray together through each of the 4 categories one at a time. Addressing God in prayer in response to His Word is how the text becomes "living and active", sinking into our hearts and transforming our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit.

HELPFUL NOTES

1. ***God never asks anything of us that He hasn't already asked of himself.*** From the beginning of the Bible, God models what he expects from us. God works. We work. God rests. We rest. In the New Testament, Jesus obeys the Father. We're to obey the Father. Jesus lives for others. We're to live for others. Seeing this pattern helps to establish deeper trust between God and us. He's not a tyrant ruling from afar. God is in the trenches with us.
2. ***"Blessing."*** The word is used 3x in the latter part of Genesis 1 and early part of Genesis 2. Old Testament scholar Bruce Waltke writes, "Because of God's blessing, the natural world is teeming with life...This word means to be filled with the potency of life, overcoming fear and death. God blesses the creatures to be procreative, in spite of death."
3. ***"Sabbath."*** Sabbath is a profound theological idea with deep implications for life and practice. It is a day, yes. But more profoundly it is a "new state of affairs," symbolized by a day of rest sanctified and set aside from all others, revealing to us the promise of a new heavens and new earth where rest will be the eternal state of the soul as it experiences perfect relationship with God once again. Jesus is the fountain and foundation of that experience in the here and now. His Spirit comes to reside in us, providing that "blessing" of Sabbath and soul satisfaction that is first illumined in the Garden of Eden.