

ST·BK



# PATTERNS

*Growing together as disciples of Jesus*

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# PATTERNS

## **We all have patterns.**

Ways of thinking, behaving and feeling that structure our lives. These can be formed by time, experience, family, community, culture. Many of the influences are obvious. Some are more subtle. Together they shape our way of life.

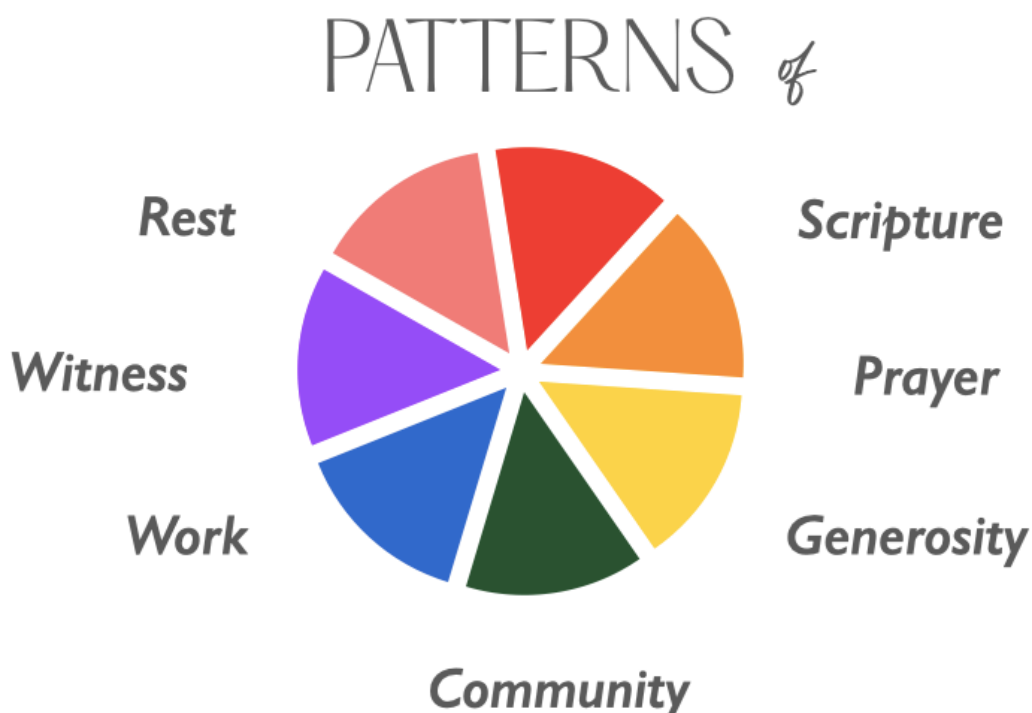
As Christians, we are called to shape our lives on the pattern of Jesus, to let him become our N°1 influence. We believe God is on a mission to make all things new and he has asked us to join in – to be his apprentices who are learning the way of Jesus. For this, we need to develop new patterns of living each day that help us to be with Jesus, become like him and do the things he did.

## **We need to learn the unforced rhythms of grace.**

These new rhythms do not come automatically – they are ‘spiritual disciplines’ that we actively choose to develop. Like a trellis helps a young plant grow in the right way, so these patterns help us grow as Christians.

The important thing is not what we do, but who we want to become.

**At STBK we have identified seven areas inspired by the practice of Jesus that can act as a pattern of life for us today.**



**Together we want to develop patterns of living each day that help us to be with Jesus, become like him and do the things he did.**

So in each area, we invite you to discern creatively what Jesus is calling you to do.

What new pattern can you put in place that will help you grow as a disciple of Jesus?

But in order to begin, we need to make space.

Our lives are too full, too busy.

Unless we slow down and open up, nothing will change.

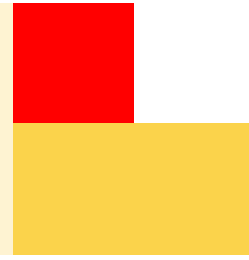
**Which is why we begin this journey with an invitation to make space for God.**



**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. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.**

Matthew 11:28-30 (The Message)

# MAKING SPACE FOR GOD



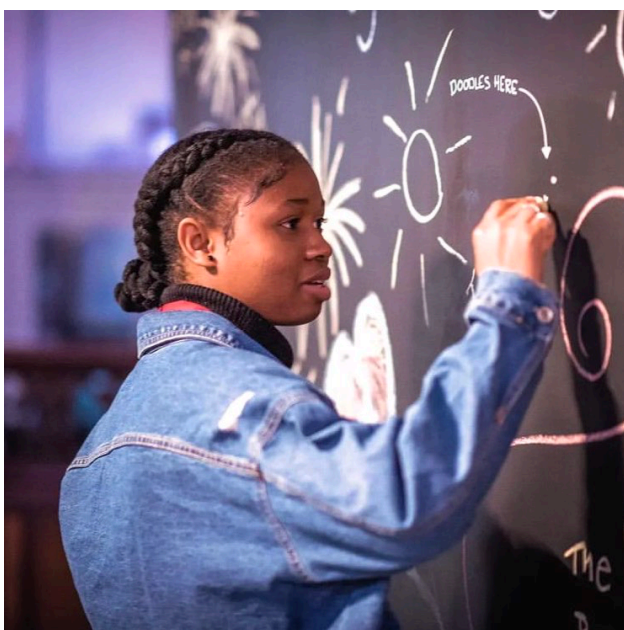
Matthew 11:28-30

**Jesus knows about the pressures of life.** In his day there were no iPhones or video calls, but he understood that it is in our human nature to get busy. Circumstances arise regularly that put us under pressure. Sometimes the pressure comes from our own religious attitudes or expectations that become burdens when challenged by the reality of everyday existence.

Jesus was not immune to these pressures.

From the outset we see crowds swirling around him. The needs of people were immense. And yet he always knew how to say no, to open up space to receive from his Heavenly Father. For him, this was not a luxury, it was essential.

It was from this place of connection that he could minister to the crowds with the Father's compassion and care.



**When Jesus invites us to “Come to me all who are burdened and heavy laden”, he is not telling us off. He is inviting us to unload in his presence. To make space to receive God’s presence and power.**

**Jesus invites us to open up a ‘God space’ that will bring everything else into line.**



In God's space we can breathe again deeply. We can be renewed for the day's tasks. We can discern when to say no and when to say yes. We have space to love and live.

**Eugene Peterson translates Jesus' invitation beautifully:  
"Come to me... learn from me the unforced rhythms of grace".**

How might we make space for these rhythms of grace today? How can we cut out some of the background noise so we can hear God's voice? How might we simplify our lives so that there is space to learn and develop this Jesus pattern?

### **Some ideas to get us thinking**

- Take time to breathe!
- Why not find a way of turning to God when your alarm rings first thing in the morning? What could work for you? A worship song? A Bible verse? Time to breathe in and thank God for his goodness.
- What do you fill your time with when you are not doing other things? How about deciding to switch your phone off and make space for God instead?
- Decide on a time each day to *inconvenience yourself* by stopping and making space for God – set your alarm each day for this time so you don't forget!
- Use your daily commute to listen to a Christian podcast and/or pray.
- How about a moment each day when you do nothing! No screens, no music, no information, just space. It is possible to be alone with God in the middle of the crowd!
- Go for a walk and receive the presence of God.
- Think ahead: plan in time to be alone with God (could be an hour, or a day, or a week!)
- For families, how about planning for your child(ren) to go on a Christian camp during the holidays?

**What new pattern might Jesus be calling me to try out?**

Matthew 4.1-11

**It is fascinating that Jesus begins his ministry by going into the desert for 40 days!**

He is alone, but this is not wasted time. By praying and fasting Jesus is deliberately creating space for God where he can focus, receive the Father's love and the Spirit's power. But it is not easy. We read that towards the end, Jesus was hungry (that's not a surprise!) but that it was precisely at this point that the devil came and tempted him.

**At this point, Jesus knew how to draw on the greatest resource of all – Scripture.**

From his earliest years Jesus developed rhythms of Bible reading and study that were common practice amongst devout Jews of his time. It was because his life was soaked in Scripture that he was able to use it as a spiritual weapon in prayer. Each time he was tempted, Jesus knew to reply, "It is written..."

**Man shall not live on bread alone,  
but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.**

In fact, the Scriptures were central to the whole of Jesus' life and ministry. It was because Jesus knew the Scriptures so well that he was able to draw on their rich imagery in his parables and fulfil them in his teaching and ministry.

As time went on, Christians would understand that Jesus himself is "the Word of God" (John 1.1).

**It is as we soak ourselves in the Bible that we get to know Jesus better and learn how he calls us to live.**



In today's culture where there are so many distractions, how can we develop healthy patterns of Bible reading that will be life giving to us?

### **Some practical ideas**

- Commit to a daily quiet time (reading of the Bible and prayer) - find the best time and place for you.
- Why not start using the *Bible in One Year* app?
- Try out the *Lectio 365* app which offers a simple rhythm of daily reflection on the Bible inspired by the tradition of *Lectio Divina*.
- Take time to explore the *Bible Project* online ([bibleproject.com](http://bibleproject.com))
- Try using the *You Version* app for the Bible on your phone, but also for reading plans, verse for day, podcasts.
- Why not choose a *Bible for Everyone* commentary by Tom Wright. Amazing, practical reflections divided into daily sections.
- Try *Every Day with Jesus* Bible reading notes (a passage for each day, printed or online)
- Develop the habit of memorising Scripture
- Finish each day by reading an extract of a devotional book
- Read a Christian book someone else has recommended

### My response

**How has God the Father expressed his love to me through Scripture?**

**What one practice might Jesus be inviting me to adopt in this area to help me grow as his disciple?**

**I take time to ask the Holy Spirit to empower me in this area now.**

# PRAYER

## Pattern 2

Luke 11.1-13

**Jesus' disciples were deeply impacted by Jesus personal practice of prayer.**

We read that he regularly got up early to pray to his Heavenly Father. He joined in the formal rhythms of Jewish prayer. But on occasions his prayer was spontaneous as he responded to situations with simple cries of pain or praise.

On one occasion, inspired by Jesus' practice, his disciples asked him to teach them to pray. He responded by inviting them also to turn to God as their Father.

Down the ages and across the world, the Lord's prayer has become for Christians both a prayer to recite together and a pattern to develop. Praise, thanksgiving, lament, confession, intercession, spiritual warfare, rejoicing... everything is here.

But more than forms and traditions, prayer for Jesus is an affair of the heart, the place of freedom and love in the Father's presence.

**In our busy world, finding time and rhythms to pray is not easy. And yet, for us as disciples of Jesus, developing strong patterns of personal prayer is a key to spiritual growth.**

**It is also a wonderful adventure into the love of God for his world, for his people, for you and me!**



## Some practical ideas

- For those who like structure and liturgy, trying using the *Daily Prayer* app or the simplified *Time to Pray* app
- Use the Psalms as a springboard for creative prayer. They are wonderful for helping when we do not know how to pray.
- Try and establish a daily prayer rhythm starting with the form that comes most naturally to you (praise, confession, lament, intercession, adoration; liturgical/spontaneous; individual/group) and then broaden out to include approaches of prayer you are less familiar with. It's really refreshing!
- At the end of the day use the *Examen* pattern of prayer to review the day and praise God for his faithfulness (the *Lectio 365* app offers a structure for this).
- Give time to listen regularly to worship music
- Explore the practice of fasting with prayer. This can be organised (at a particular time) or in response to a particular need
- Join a prayer triplet
- Join in with STBK online prayer (8am Morning Prayer, French connect prayer – see the STBK website for details)
- Come to an in-person church prayer meeting (see the news sheet)
- Begin a prayer journal and note what God is saying to you in prayer

## My response

**How has God the Father expressed his love to me through prayer?**

**What one practice might Jesus be inviting me to adopt in this area to help me grow as his disciple?**

**I take time to ask the Holy Spirit to empower me in this area now.**

# GENEROSITY

## Pattern 3

Matthew 6.19-34

**Jesus was constantly giving to others** – time, attention, teaching, kingdom power, compassion. He gave dignity to outcasts and hope to those in despair. In fact, he summed up the very essence of his ministry in terms of gift.

**God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3.16).**

This is a remarkable insight into the heart of God and it sets a pattern for our lives as Jesus' disciples. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus calls his followers to seek first the Kingdom and all the rest will be added. It's an invitation to **live simply and generously**, knowing that everything we have comes from God.

We are called to store up treasures not on earth, but in heaven. This involves dethroning those gods that seek to seduce and control us. Jesus personalises the god of money ("Mammon") – perhaps recognising its demonic power in our lives. That is certainly true today where our culture is dedicated to consumerism and personal pleasure. But Jesus is clear: we cannot serve two masters; we dethrone Mammon by giving things away.



**Living simply and generously is the key to freedom and an important spiritual discipline.**

Generosity starts with money, but extends to hospitality, encouragement, giving time and attention, caring for God's creation. Generosity is the overflow of a heart that knows it is deeply loved and forgiven by God, as was beautifully demonstrated when a woman poured expensive perfume on Jesus' feet (Luke 7.36-50).



**Do you have a regular practice of giving?** How might you develop healthy patterns in this area?

### **Some practical ideas**

- Simplify your life: Develop the habit of giving away something you own on a regular basis.
- Develop gratitude: Thank God for what he has given before asking him for what you do not yet have.
- When did you last review your rhythm of financial giving? Take time regularly to ask God how you can be more generous with your money and material possessions. How about setting up a bank standing order?
- Spontaneous generosity – Why not carry a small amount of cash with you to give away to those in need you may encounter during the day.
- Hospitality - invite someone for a meal each month.
- Start a habit that reflects God's care for creation, for example reduce food wastage, use recycle bins, go on regular walks, travel regularly by bike, purchase sustainable products...
- Develop the habit of phoning/seeing/texting someone just to encourage them!

### My response

**In what ways has God the Father expressed his generous love to me?**

**What one practice might Jesus be inviting me to adopt in this area to help me grow as his disciple?**

**I take time to ask the Holy Spirit to empower me in this area now.**

# COMMUNITY

## Pattern 4

John 13.1-17

### **It is striking that Jesus did not choose to do his ministry alone.**

He surrounded himself with disciples. This was not simply because rabbis at the time always had disciples (much like professors today have students). It was because through his ministry Jesus was completing the salvation story of God's people. He chose 12 disciples to echo the 12 tribes of Israel. But then went much further than by inviting the most unlikely people (outcasts, strangers, women, tax collectors) to become his apprentices.

Jesus was building a new people that would ultimately extend to you and me, and they were called to demonstrate God's love by their love for each other.

**Being a disciple of Jesus brings us into community.** And it is in the local community of the church that we grow in faith and help others to do so too.

In our individualistic age, we need to develop patterns of discipleship that honour our brothers and sisters in Christ. The pandemic recently showed us that new forms of community are possible. But it also reminded us that we need proximity and that love cannot remain at a distance. We have to come close. And it is hard to come closer than washing someone's feet.

### **This is the pattern of love that Jesus gave us.**

At STBK we want to learn community through Sunday services, but also through small groups. We are launching a new pattern called "Table groups" that we encourage everyone to try! This is where relationships can be formed, love learned, gifts exercised.



## Some practical ideas

- Commit to coming to church each Sunday (on time!)
- Arrive early for church, ready to meet others.
- Pray before coming to church, asking God to give you words of knowledge or encouragement for others.
- Regularly develop the habit of introducing yourself to someone you don't know.
- Offer to provide food for a church lunch.
- Join a table group.
- Start a new table group.
- Join a ministry team in line with your personality and gifting (host team, welcome, prayer, wildlife, music, production...).
- Begin putting money aside for the church weekend in March 2023, either for yourself/family or to help others.

## My response

**In what ways has God the Father expressed his love to me through community?**

**What one practice might Jesus be inviting me to adopt in this area to help me grow as his disciple?**

**I take time to ask the Holy Spirit to empower me in this area now.**



## Pattern 5

John 4.21-38

### **Very often work is for us a burden and a routine.**

This is in line with the picture we get in Genesis where the first humans were banished to a life of hard toil and labour. However, this was not God's intention. In the garden, Adam and Eve's work mirrored that of God. They were called to be fruitful and productive, expressing God's dynamic creativity, his joyful delight.

### **For Jesus, work was not a burden but a wonderful calling.**

Jesus knew about work and his ministry was no doubt physically and emotionally tiring. But he knew he was doing the will of God. And he understood that his work had deeper meaning than the gestures and actions alone. Jesus' work was kingdom work – whether healing an ill person or discussing as a guest at table.

**My food is to do the will of him who sent me  
and to finish his work.**

Jesus drew regularly on the theme of work to illustrate his parables. It was an invitation for his disciples to reimagine their lives and their daily work as a picture of God's work in the world. We too are to see work as a calling from God. Even the mundane moments can be inhabited by his presence.

Whether our activity is paid or voluntary, it is God who calls us. We are part of God's new creation and our work finds its meaning within this greater picture.

**Whether teaching pupils or moving  
boxes, volunteering in a charity or  
creating a spreadsheet, we can do it all  
to the glory of God.**

**We can ask him to help us to be fruitful  
where we are and a source of kingdom  
blessing to those around.**



## Some practical ideas

- Develop a habit of asking God each day to be a co-worker with you, especially when your work is a burden or mundane.
- Pray that God will provide others that can be a support to you – either in your workplace or at church
- Start praying regularly for work colleagues
- Ask God to identify colleagues you can encourage and serve
- How can you adjust your time to have more healthy working rhythms?
- How can you invest more in people at work?
- How can you practice the presence of God at work?
- What could kingdom fruitfulness look like in your place of work?
- How can your regular activity become a means of God's blessing to others?
- What volunteer work could you begin that would bless others?

## My response

**In what ways has God the Father expressed his love to me through my work?**

**What one practice might Jesus be inviting me to adopt in this area to help me grow as his disciple?**

**I take time to ask the Holy Spirit to empower me in this area now.**

# WITNESS

## Pattern 6

Luke 10.1-11

### **Jesus actively involved his disciples in his mission to the world.**

Although they felt inadequate and it was much easier for them to watch Jesus proclaim the Kingdom of God and heal the sick, Jesus kept pushing the disciples out of their comfort zone. They were to be his witnesses, ambassadors, apostles.

It could be easy for us too to imagine that God only works through the designated apostles who had been with Jesus. Or maybe today through especially gifted and anointed leaders.

But in our passage, Jesus sends out 72 disciples into the harvest field. Like the 12, they are sent out to proclaim the kingdom and be agents of God's peace. This is the role of a disciple. To learn as an apprentice to continue the master's work. Jesus' great commission to his disciples echoes this: they are to make disciples everywhere who will continue the work... (Matt 28.18-20).

It's why Luke is not content with writing a gospel account of Jesus' life. He has to continue with the next instalment – the Acts of the Apostles, which begins, 'In my first book, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and teach...' (Acts 1.1)

### **Jesus continues his kingdom mission through his disciples – and that means us!**

We also are called to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth, beginning with... where we are!

We too are sent out by Jesus to proclaim the kingdom, share our faith, make disciples, bind up the broken hearted, heal the sick, work for justice, bring good news to the poor.





## Some practical ideas

- Commit to praying for someone regularly.
- Initiate a mentor relationship with someone (reading the Bible regularly, or having regular coffee to encourage them in their Christian walk).
- Serving the poor: Begin a regular involvement with *Nightshelter*, a local ministry to the poor/vulnerable/needy, other...
- Find out about *International Justice Mission* or similar charity and pray for/give regularly to them.
- Join with someone else to walk and pray regularly round your neighbourhood/
- Pray regularly for non-Christian friends and invite them to *Alpha* (it's never too late!).
- Pray for opportunities to regularly share your faith.
- Offer to pray for and with others in need.
- Oh and... have you joined a table group yet???

## My response

**In what ways has God the Father used someone else to express his love for me?**

**What one practice might Jesus be inviting me to adopt in this area to help me grow as his disciple?**

**I take time to ask the Holy Spirit to empower me in this area now.**

# REST



## Pattern 7

Matthew 11.28-30

### **And so we come full circle.**

We began with Jesus' invitation to come to him and rest. And now here we are again! Because his invitation is not only a starting point – an opportunity to create space for God. It is also a necessary rhythm in our lives.

**The 4<sup>th</sup> of the 10 commandments is a command to remember the Sabbath day and to keep it holy.** In Exodus, this sends us back to the account of creation. God himself rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day – and so we step back, get perspective and celebrate. In Deuteronomy, we are reminded that we were once slaves and that God is our deliverer. Taking time to rest reminds us of the freedom that we have been given by God. We are not slaves to a system. We are free. Our lives find their meaning as we take time to worship God.

Throughout Scripture, the rhythm of Sabbath rest marks out the people of God. In the New Testament, we discover that in Jesus, our calling is not only to take one day a week to rest. It is to live daily in the rest that Jesus brings. In him we can enjoy the presence of our creator in harmony and without fear. In him we can receive the Holy Spirit who brings life and renews our strength every day.

**So rest is to be for us a spiritual home.** As Jesus' disciples, we are to learn the 'unforced rhythms of grace' that draw us back to God, invite us to receive his life afresh, and open us up to the power of his Spirit at work in and through us.

Regular rhythms of rest are essential not only to our physical well-being, but to our ability to shine the light and love of God's new creation wherever we go.

**We can start with rest on Sunday, but need to learn to walk in that rest on Monday as well!**

## Some practical ideas

- What is my weekly day of sabbath rest? How can I develop a distinctive rhythm of rest and celebration/worship on that day?
- What do I need to stop so that I can practice regular rest?
- How can I introduce sabbath rest into the rhythm of my family life? For parents with young children, is there a creative rhythm for rest I can create - even if it's just 30 minutes?
- For those who are married, how can I help my partner to have time for regular rest?
- Develop the habit of pausing at the end of the day to review and give thanks to God for signs of his presence
- How do I rest? What pattern can enable me to recharge my emotional, physical, mental batteries?
- How might I make space for contemplation and wonder?
- Go regularly for a walk/run/bike ride/bus ride and pray!
- Take special time each week to read a Christian biography/the Bible or just have a coffee and pray

## My response

**In what ways has God the Father express his love for me through rest?**

**What one practice might Jesus be inviting me to adopt in this area to help me grow as his disciple?**

**I take time to ask the Holy Spirit to empower me in this area now.**

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*Growing together as disciples of Jesus*



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