

Training for Jesus Style Renovations

Start Renovating!

Welcome to The Renovation Project. Here are some helpful tips for starting your own renovations and practicing spiritual formation, and starting it with your own church leadership



Isaiah 43:19 Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

Whether you will be journeying with us for Sabbath or prayer or fasting All of the spiritual practices that we engage in are designed to walk you into the spiritual disciplines that come from the life of Jesus in order to help you adopt the overall lifestyle of Jesus himself.

What Jesus called the way and the early church called a rule of life, each one of these practices from the ways of Jesus are ancient. They go back thousands of years. They are time tested disciplines for spiritual life that have been used by millions of the followers of Jesus to hear the voice of the father, to be formed into the image of the Son, and to experience the love and power of God by the Spirit.

After many years of living in christianity, we are embarking on a journey of learning and practicing the ways of Jesus in a way that brings a total renovation to our walk on the Path of Jesus. We invite you to come along are here to serve as your guides to help you along the way but, you are the one walking out the journey and the people around you are your companions on the Path of Jesus, and of course Jesus is the one you are for following.

To that end, these practices are designed to be done with connection and interactive experience where you come together in small groups or community, listen to teachings from the Word, and then dialogue about it. But, it also includes spiritual exercises because we don't just talk about the Sabbath or prayer or fasting... We practice Sabbath, or prayer, or we fast, and then we come back together for the next session to reflect on your experience as a community.

We can't wait to see what Jesus does in you and in your community through this practice!

The Why, the What, the How.

Here a few thoughts to help you be successful about the why, the what, and the how we will practice and allow the renovation of Jesus in our lives.

The Why.

First off, the **why**? Jesus' invitation was not to convert to a new religion called Christianity... It was to become a disciple in what he called the kingdom of God. The word disciple is *Mathetes* in Greek and it literally means A learner or a student. But a lot of scholars argue that the best word we have in the English language to capture the full meaning of *Mathetes* is apprentice. Because discipleship or apprenticeship in Jesus' first century world wasn't just about

information but about formation. In the first century Galilee if you were an apprentice of a rabbi your life was organized around three basic goals.

1. To become like your Rabbi. Not just to know what he knows but to live how he lives, to imitate his life. You wanted to be him!
2. To do what the Rabbi did. You were apprenticing to become a Rabbi yourself and one day carry on his work. When you were done with your apprenticeship program he would turn to you and say something like... "Ok kid your practice is complete now go and make disciples". He had been renovated into a real Rabbi!

If you flip that model of discipleship around from the first century to the 21st... To be an apprentice of Jesus is to organize your entire life around the same three driving goals.

1. To be with Jesus. What the French monk brother Lawrence called the practice of the presence of God. What AW Tozer called constant conscious communion. And, what Jesus himself called abiding to live every moment awake and aware of God all around you.
2. To become like Jesus. To be formed in your inner woman or man into a person who is like your Rabbi. More than that... a person who is like God, a person who is pervaded by love.
3. To do what he did. Or better said, to do what Jesus would do if he were you whether you are a single itinerant teacher as Jesus was or, you are a young parent, a college student, a construction worker, or a civil engineer... to make your contribution to the world and to live out your full destiny in the kingdom of God.

This is **what** it means to **follow** Jesus or to apprentice under Jesus.

The What.

Now the **practices** are how we **apprentice** Jesus . What exactly are the practices of Jesus?

The practices also known as the spiritual disciplines are habits based on the lifestyle of Jesus that create time and space for us to access the presence and power of the father and in doing so, we become transformed/renovated by the spirit.

Think about it. What is a discipline? In general here's a standard definition. A discipline is any activity I can do by direct effort that will eventually enable me to do that which currently I cannot do by direct effort.

For example exercise is the primary metaphor used by the writer Paul in the New Testament. Let's say you want to pull your own weight. Do you sit down on the bench and just try really hard to pull the weight! No, that will not work! It's very dangerous. You could hurt yourself! But when we first try to pull our weight or develop a skill, why is it so hard? It's not that it's impossible. It is just that it's impossible for you or me in our current state so, what do we do? We start with a lower weight, a little at a time and if that's too much, we start with some light rows, and if that's too much we do it with the help of a friend then we gradually work out for longer periods of time with more sets and heavier weights. Eventually through practice you become the kind of person who has the capacity to pull your own weight not through *trying* really hard but through *training* really hard!

The practices are the spiritual formation, the exercise is the strength training they are a way to grow in the power to be transformed into a new kind of person.

Spiritual disciplines are way not just to exercise your own willpower but to open up your mind and body to a power that is far beyond you and that of God Himself. Practices like Sabbath, or silence, or simplicity, are good for us in the same way that mindfulness or exercise or green tea is good for us. But they don't actually transform us into people of love, they create time and space for God to transform us from the inside out. There's no official list of the practices of Jesus but at The Renovation Project, we group them into nine core practices that function as the building blocks for our rule of life.

A rule of life is a schedule and a set of practices and relational rhythms that center our life around following Jesus. The nine practices that make up our rule of life for the modern era are... Sabbath, solitude, prayer, fasting, scripture, simplicity, generosity, hospitality, and community. All nine of these spiritual disciplines are a means to an end, For example, the end goal of Sabbath is not to say I practice Sabbath, it's to become a person who is marked by an inner spirit of restfulness who is calm, kind, grounded in your own body and at ease, not in a hurry but present to each moment grateful and living in the goodness of God.

In other words a person who is like Jesus the ultimate name of all the practices is to become a person who is pervaded by love. The practices are our part in our spiritual formation. Jesus our Rabbi and Lord has a part, and we have a part. Ancient Disciples called this synergy. working not for God but with God.

It was Saint Augustine who said in the fourth century “without Him we cannot but without us He will not”. We can't save ourselves and transform ourselves into people of love. We need to be saved and be transformed by God into people of love. But we can... Take a day to rest, we can begin our morning in quiet prayer, we can read scripture, we can live in community, we can open up not just our homes but our lives to the poor, and become family together around the table. And through the practices we can set our whole life before God and let God do the deep work. To be very clear with the practices , we are not earning the love of God, we're not earning anything! We are giving our heart and body more fully to Jesus who already gave himself to us in love. That is the Gospel and the discipleship of Jesus.

The practices do require effort but as Dallas Willard used to say... “Grace isn't opposed to effort it's opposed to earning”. But speaking of effort, just like learning any new skill how to play the piano, or speak French, or golf, learning how to Sabbath, or pray, or read scripture, will also require practice to master and a bit of instruction is very helpful! To that and **the how** here's five tips to keep in mind as you begin your practice.

The How.

First off, start small. Start where you are, not where you feel you should be because, Jesus has yet to bless anyone other than where they actually are!

If you have young kids don't start with an hour of daily prayer in the morning start with 5 or 10 minutes or, if that's too much recite Psalm 23 on your pillow before you climb out of your bed to get your little one's out of the crib. Start with what the behavioral psychologist's call **tiny habits**. Small, easily attainable, fun steps, with a quick reward. In our zeal, it's easy to overreach and try to live like a monk on day one. The Anglican priest - Margaret Gunther calls this first week of Lent Syndrome and it is a strategy doomed to fail! Don't be afraid to ask yourself... How do I enjoy God? And start there.

Secondly subtraction not addition. Dallas Willard once called hurry the great enemy of spiritual life and said you must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life. The reality is most of us are just too busy to enjoy God. As you begin your practice, we are not calling you to add this practice onto your already over busy, maxed out life. We're not calling you to do more but to do less, to clear your life not clutter it! So, if you're going to add this new practice into your day or week, the first task is to audit your life and cut out a few habits from your regular routine. Examples... Netflix, Social Media, that side project, whatever it is for you. Less is more when your goal is to walk in and with Jesus. That's called the easy yolk.

Third you get out what you put in. This is true of pretty much anything in life and it's especially true of the practices. The more you give yourself to Jesus through each practice, the more you will experience deep inner healing and transformation. The more you just kind of dabble with it, the less impact it will have.

Now, anything is better than nothing as I said earlier, "start where are you are not where you feel you should be." But, at the same time the more you give yourself to practice while you journey on the Path of Jesus and the more space you open up for God to change you. He will bring renovation to your life!

Fourth remember! Anything new, from backing crêpes, to toll painting, to riding a bike, that there is a process that follows a big wave or curve. Some times you are lower in the curves and other times at the top of your game. There are times where you will get worse before you get better!

There have been many time in life and even ministry where In order to go forward I had to go backwards and relearn all over again and it was terrible! I grew up riding motocross bikes and dual sport motorcycles. The things I was proficient at in the dirt now came hard when I advanced into riding motorcycle's that were higher performance and heavier off-hwy and in the dirt. I was clumsy and much slower, I lacked confidence and there were some things that I just could not even do anymore. I felt as if I had gotten worse and then eventually with practice and a lot of patience, I got much better. In the same way you may enjoy your day off, but when you attempt to say that you may feel anxious or or fidgety or you may love to drink your coffee in the quiet of the morning, but when you attempt solitude or prayer you may feel just weird. Just stay with it! Resist the urge to judge or critique or overthink it. Questions will come into your mind like am I doing a good job or not, do I like this, do I dislike this, is it working? None of those questions are very helpful. When they come up just gently set them aside and take a deep breath. Be patient with yourself and the process. follow the waves and curves down and then up.

There is no formation without repetition!

Finally, there is no formation without repetition. formation into a person of love, is not a one session process. Formation is slow, deep, and at times boring work. In the moment, you often don't feel like the practices are doing all that much but they are! God is at work in you an through them they have a cumulative effect, they add up overtime like compound interest. The disciplines are the spiritual equivalent of Mr. Miyagi in the karate kid... In the moment you just feel like you're waxing Mr. Miyagi's car or nailing the gazebo but actually you're becoming a karate master. In the moment you just feel like you're reading your Bible in the morning or going to church or practicing generosity but actually you're becoming more like Jesus.

This is a tough pill to swallow in our culture of instant gratification. But there is great joy to be found in repetition... If we can learn to slow down and delight in the present moment.

May your life be unhurried and matched to the pace of Jesus our rabbi and may you do the kinds of things He did and live in the goodness of the kingdom of God.