

2. An occasional vacation is not enough to renew our lives, what renewing, restful activities or practices can you put in place on a daily, weekly, or seasonal basis?
3. Renewal is a life-long process, not a one-time event. What have you learned about yourself that can be helpful when you are depleted? What cues let you know that you need of a time of renewal?

Closing Question & Discerning Your Next Practice

(10-15 minutes)

Explore how the chapter themes can make a difference in your life by considering these questions:

- In your current life, what is draining or depletes your energy? Are there ways to release or re-think those activities/relationships?
- What faith practice would you like to try in the coming week or two? See pages 116-117 and 130-132 for ideas from this session's chapters in the book.

Before ending... Thank you for taking part in this small group!

- What do you want to remember from our time together? In addition to the book, was there something said in the group that you'd like to hold on to and remember?
- What essential questions or themes do you want to continue to reflect on? Who is someone that you would like to continue to talk with about these themes across time?

Closing Prayer

(2-3 minutes)

Holy Spirit, you are the way we experience God's creative energy for renewal. Thank you for this time we have shared. Help us to release whatever drains our energy. Help us to release our striving. Open our hearts and minds and lives to be filled by you, the wellspring of God's energy. Give us grace to receive what you offer as you renew our lives and bless us to be a blessing in the world. Amen.

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Renew Your Life

Session 4: Chapter 7 and Chapter 8

The Energy of Fruitful Work
The Energy of Rest



Opening Questions

(10 minutes)

Introduce yourself and share your responses to one or more of these questions:

1. When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? Are there any similarities with your life today?
2. If you had an extra day this week, how would you spend it?
3. Did you try one or more of the faith practices? If so, how did it go? What are you discovering about yourself or about God?

Group Prayer Practice

(10 minutes)

Spend a few minutes in quiet as a group. With a calm, meditative voice, the leader will use these instructions to guide the group in this practice:

- Sit in a way where you feel held by your chair as God holds you in life. Close your eyes, if that is helpful.
- Inhale deeply through your nose and exhale slowly through your mouth. Focus on your breath as it slows.
- If there are thoughts or responsibilities that are distracting you, set them aside or release them for this time. Focus on simply being present in this moment. After some silence, I will give you some prompts for reflection in the continuing quiet.

Allow for a minute or two of quiet before continuing:

- As you think about the past day or week, what did you experience that was life-giving? *Pause for time to reflect.*
- As you think about the past day or week, what has been energy depleting for you? *Pause for time to reflect.*
- Now, imagine yourself being held in the expansive energies of God's love.

Breathe deeply of God's presence and peace and conclude by saying Amen.

Scripture Text

(2-3 minutes)

Matthew 11:28-30 (The Message)

"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."

Reading Recap

(2-3 minutes)

Having been created in God's image, humankind received God's blessing and the command to be fruitful and multiply. Traditionally this command has been connected to the capacity to procreate and populate the earth. To bear fruit and multiply can also mean that we are meant to reproduce God's goodness and blessing in our lives for the sake of the world. Fruitful work in the workplace, neighborhood, community and at home always leans outward in love. Fruitful work manifests itself in specific acts of love wherever we find ourselves. The energy of fruitful work also gives us an inner motivation that spurs us on, even in challenging times.

The rhythm of work and rest is written into God's order of creation (Genesis 2:1-3). In ancient Israel, a day was set aside to honor the God who gave life and the ability to work and produce, a day to participate in God's life by stopping, like God did on the seventh day, and enjoying the fruits of work. The sabbath invites us to trust that God will provide, that the world does not depend on constant work to continue and that our ultimate worth does not come through achievements but through God's grace and love. To live a sabbath life we must struggle with the tension of living in a culture that puts its trust in busyness as a badge of honor rather than restoration as a building block for our humanity; puts its confidence in our ability to produce rather than God's desire to provide for us; pins its hopes on striving for achievement of greatness rather than soaking in God's affirmation of grace.

Essential Life Questions

(5 minutes)

Read through the essential life questions. Pause for a few minutes of silent reflection on the questions. You may also write a few notes responding to the questions below.

- What in my life brings me joy?

- What role does money play in my identity, relationships, use of time and way of life?
- What does renewing rest look like for me?
- What might I intentionally do to renew my body, mind and spirit?

Questions for Discussion & Individual Reflection

(40 minutes)

Start with these 3 questions, adding in other questions to supplement

- What struck you about the opening stories? How do these stories connect with yours?
- What concepts in the chapters were life-giving for you to think about or integrate into your life?
- What concepts or stories were difficult or challenging for you to think about or integrate into your life?

The Energy of Fruitful Work

1. Make a list of the things that bring you joy or fill you with a deep sense of satisfaction. Which ones are you doing now? Which would you like to be doing more often? Is there anything you'd like to do but something (fear, anxiety...) holds you back?
2. Look back at pages 109-111. What "fruits of fruitful work" do you experience now in your home, workplace, volunteer site or another place? Which are missing? Is there one of the "fruits of fruitful work" that you'd like to nurture?
3. What messages did you receive about money growing up and how have those messages influenced your life today?
4. How do the stories of Jesus and your faith influence the role of money in your life? What are some ways to connect your life as a follower of Jesus with how you use your resources?

The Energy of Rest

1. Renewing rest takes different forms for each person. When have you experienced the renewing power of rest? What did you notice about your body, mind, and spirit following this time?