

SESSION 03

Availability



Overview

Jesus lived a remarkably interruptible life. More than 30 stories in the Gospel of Mark alone hinge on Jesus' ability to see an interruption as an invitation. And these are just the stories that were recorded from his life. We can never know just how many people received Jesus' loving attention and service in these unplanned moments.

This way of being in the world is about more than our personality — whether we consider ourselves more planned or spontaneous. It's about practicing radical availability — to consider that seemingly annoying distractions in life may actually be holy disruptions.

Some of the most beautiful opportunities for service pass us by unknowingly in the ordinary movements of our days, while our attention is fixed on our plans rather than the people God loves right in front of us. The invitation, by God's grace, is for us to become the kinds of people who increasingly see the needs around us and stop to serve them.

That, like the Good Samaritan in Jesus' famous parable, we might be those who choose not to walk by on the other side but to cross over in compassion.

Reflection Questions

When instructed, circle up in triads (smaller groups of 3-5 people) and discuss the following questions:

- 01 Without sharing what you did for this week's exercise, describe your experience. What emotions came up for you before or during it?
- 02 In what ways did you experience personal resistance or confrontation during the exercise?
- 03 What was the same or different for you in your experience of this week's exercise compared to the previous week? Why do you think that is?
- 04 What invitation do you sense from God for how you are to view hiddenness or incorporate it going forward from this Practice?

Teaching

Key Scripture

Matthew 22v37-39

Session Summary

- Jesus taught and modeled living an interruptible life that turned strangers into neighbors.
- Jesus invites us to adopt two postures as we follow him:
 - 01 Intentionality** — the practice of purposefully ordering our lives around God and his way.
 - 02 Interruptibility** — the capacity to see a need and stop to meet it.
- We may find one of these postures more natural than the other, though both are vital in our apprenticeship to Jesus.
- The Kingdom comes when we serve others like Jesus — both in big and small ways, and in intentional and spontaneous acts — done with great love.
- If shame is a disconnecter between us and God, and us and each other; confession is the great reconnector.

Teaching Notes

As you watch Session 03 together, feel free to use this page to take notes.

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Discussion Questions

Now it's time for a conversation about the teaching. Pause the video for a few minutes to discuss in small groups:

- 01 Which people or issues do you notice cause you to experience “from-the-gut compassion”?
- 02 On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not interruptible and 10 being very interruptible, where would you place yourself today? What reflections do you have on the number you gave?
- 03 What might be some reasons you find yourself “passing by on the other side” of certain needs around you?
- 04 The invitation here is not to try to meet every need around us. With that in mind, what need(s) do you feel compelled to begin “crossing to the other side” to meet?

[illegible]

Closing Prayer

End your time together by praying this liturgy:

Jesus Christ, come to us
in holy surprise and interruption;
Come to us in the least and
the looked over.

Give us your eyes to see,
your compassion to stop,
and your courage to serve.

Amen.



Exercise

One unplanned act of service

This week, we invite you to do one unplanned act of service. To embrace an interruption and respond with service instead of impatience or annoyance.

You might consider beginning each day by inviting the Spirit's holy interruptions into your day, or pray the Examen each evening, reviewing the day with God and asking the Spirit to highlight the holy interruptions you engaged or missed.

This at least means going a bit slower through your week, and keeping your eyes open for interruptions that may just be God-initiated. And if no noticeable interruption comes, then just go wherever you see a need, and meet that need.

Reach Exercise

Do an audit of your schedule and cut at least one thing out

For most of us, becoming more interruptible begins with creating more room to be interrupted in the first place.

Look over your weekly schedule, make a list of all your commitments, and ask yourself if you have enough margin in your life to be available for both intentionality and interruptibility. If the answer is no (and it's highly likely it will be), then find at least one thing to step away from to create space to respond to holy interruptions.

- 01 Take a moment to write down all your commitments in a given week. This should include things like household responsibilities, social engagements, leisure activities, and daily habits.

IN COMMUNITY — LEARN

- 02 Looking at your commitments, ask yourself: Do I have enough time and space to be intentionally present and interruptible for needs that come up?
- 03 Choose at least one commitment or activity that you intend to remove this week by crossing it out in the above box. This may be something you intend to remove from your weekly rhythm going forward, or just for this week as an offering of space to God.
- 04 Take some time to reflect. When and how will you make this change? How much time does removing this commitment give back to you? How do you feel about making this adjustment?

- 05 Finish your time in prayer. Invite God to fill this time with opportunities to love and serve people in both planned and spontaneous ways.



Practice Reflection

Before your next time together with the group for Session 04, take five to ten minutes to journal out your answers to the following three questions:

- 01 What emotions did I experience when paying attention to the needs around me?

- 02 What resistance did I encounter to being interrupted this week?

- 03 What might God be speaking to me through these interruptions?

Note: As you write, be as specific as possible. While bullet points are just fine, if you write it out in narrative form, your brain will be able to process your insights in a more lasting way.

Reflection Notes

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Keep Growing (Optional)

The following resources were created to enhance your experience of this Practice, but they are entirely optional.

Read

The Active Life by Parker Palmer (Chapters 05–06)

Listen

Rule of Life Podcast on Service (Episode 03)

Continue the discussion

If you would like to slow down this four-week Practice to give your community more time to sit in each week's teaching and spiritual exercise, you can pause and meet for an optional conversation in the Appendix.