

# T R E L L - S





# TRELLIS

## Spiritual Practice Resource

### INTRODUCTION

John D. Rockefeller was the first American billionaire, and at one point in time was the richest person on earth. During an interview, a reporter famously asked, “How much money is enough?” to which he replied, “Just a little bit more.” Ridiculous right? But the quote sparks some curiosity..

What if our view of God was like Rockefeller’s misguided view of money? What if enough of our awareness of Jesus’s presence and power in our lives was always “just a little bit more”? The concept of a Trellis and the conversations around it that will follow are an attempt to help anyone, regardless of where they find themselves in their discipleship to Jesus, go deeper and experience more of God in their lives.

## SESSION 1: WHAT DO YOU WANT?

The first question asked by Jesus in the Gospel of John (one of four biographies of the life and ministry of Jesus in the Bible) is a simple one: What do you want? (John 1:38). Jesus doesn't ask, What do you know? Or what do you believe? He knows what Proverbs 4:23 tells us: that everything we do flows from our heart.

Here's the deal: Our life always has an answer to the question "What do you want?". So before we go any further we need to start by stopping and evaluating our current lives. How do our lives answer this question?

### HEART CHECK

If you had to rate your hunger and desire for God in your life and the growth you are experiencing right now, what would it be? *(on a scale 1 to 10 scale below)*



1 (I want anything else but God; I don't want to grow)

10 (I want God more than anything else; I am in a season of abundant growth)

Wherever we find ourselves, a Trellis helps deepen our desire for God by helping the person and lifestyle of Jesus infiltrate every area of our life with abiding in Jesus as the central pursuit. We'll get to this "abiding" stuff later on, but first check out this quote...

“ If a vine doesn't have a trellis, it will die. And if your life with Jesus doesn't have some kind of structure to facilitate health and growth, it will wither away. Following Jesus has to make it onto your schedule and into your practices or it will simply never happen. Apprenticeship to Jesus will remain an idea, not a reality in your life.

- John Mark Comer, *Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*

Here's the problem: Most of us are too busy, too distracted, or too \_\_\_\_\_  
to follow Jesus and experience life with him.

## DISCUSS

- What did you write in the blank? Why?

## REFLECT

For different reasons, we often feel like experiencing life with Jesus and following him is something we "ought to" do, rather than something we "awe to" do. In other words, what we wrote in the blank is usually deeply connected to something we believe about God.

Here's a list of common lies that we often find ourselves believing about God. Which one of these connects most to the reason(s) you put in the blank space above?

1. God's love is conditional on my performance or behavior.
2. God exists to help me in hard times and to make me happy when I need Him.
3. God seems far away and doesn't care about my simple ordinary life.
4. God may love me, but He doesn't really like me.
5. God is great, but not to be fully trusted-He provides part of what I need, but not all that I need.

## READ & REFLECT

Read the passages below. Identify which one combats the lies above and, in your own words, write the truth of who God is from Scripture in the space below.

1. Ephesians 2:8-10
2. Matthew 16:24-26
3. Psalm 139:1-12
4. John 15:9-15
5. Psalm 23

Take some time to share and hear from the truths of who God is that these Scriptures reveal with the people you are walking through this booklet with.

Our life always has an answer to the question, “What do you want?” As we turn our attention to the rhythms of our lives, we must remember that how we live is built on what we believe about who God is. Our view of God shapes every aspect of our life.

## SESSION 2: UNWRITTEN TRELLIS

In Session one we established that our life always has an answer to the question “What do you want?” We all have rhythms, habits, and practices that we engage with daily, weekly, and monthly. Maybe we haven’t *thought* about them intentionally, but we still do them. We all have an “unwritten” Trellis - so let’s now write it out.

### Tips for writing out your “Unwritten Trellis”

- Start by thinking of the beginning and end of your days/weeks/months. Our most consistent habits are usually found there.
- If you are struggling to come up with things, look back at your “heart check” from session one. What things do you do that you were thinking of as you did that?

### WRITE IT

Take 10-15 minutes and write out your “unwritten” trellis. Write out all of the things (good and bad) that are consistent rhythms or habits for you. Scan this code for an example.





**DAILY**

**WEEKLY**

**MONTHLY**

## DISCUSS & REFLECT

- What are some of the feelings you had writing this out?
- How does this line up with the “heart check” you did from session one?
- If we were to ask your unwritten trellis, “What do you want?”, how would it respond? In other words, what is your life (not your lips) saying that you want?

Often, we find that there is a gap between *the life we were meant to live* and *the life that we are living*, what we *know*, and what we *do*. That’s okay! This is where God does his best work.

Before your next session, take 10-15 minutes to reflect and circle as many things as you’d like from your unwritten trellis that you want to consider removing in order to make more time for what’s most important – a life with God. Don’t worry, we’ll talk about that next time.

## SESSION 3: BRIDGING THE GAP

**A Trellis helps us bridge the gap between**

a reactive and  
haphazard approach



a proactive and  
intentional approach

**in our discipleship to Jesus**

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**A Trellis helps us bridge the gap between**

the life we're currently  
living *apart* from God



the life we want to  
live *with* God

**“** *Living into what we want in any area of our life requires some sort of intentional approach. Building a solid financial base, retirement planning, home improvements, career advancement, further education, losing weight or becoming more fit— all of these require a plan if we are to make any progress in achieving what we desire. The desire for a way of life that creates space for God's transforming work is no different. However, if we look closely at the way we live day to day, we may well notice that our approach to spiritual transformation is much more random and haphazard than our approach to finances, home improvements and weight loss! Many of us try to shove spiritual transformation into the nooks and crannies of a life that is already unmanageable, rather than being willing to arrange our life for what our heart most wants. We think that somehow we will fall into transformation by accident.* **”**

**- Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms***

## REFLECT

- With a desire for an “awe to” rather than an “ought to” mindset, write the truth about who God is that you reflected on from session one below.
  
- Now, write out the thing(s) you circled in Session 2 that you want to remove to create a more intentional space to follow Jesus and experience life with him.

## PRACTICE

Setting our gaze on Jesus, circle which one of Jesus’s four core practices might help you fall in love with Him more. If you’d prefer to write one in, there’s space for that as well.

**Scripture Before Phone:** Commit to reading a chapter of the gospel of John before you look at your phone (21 days, 21 chapters).

**Driving with Jesus:** Commit one of your drives during the day to spending time with Jesus intentionally in prayer talking to him, listening to worship music, or listening to him in silence.

**Sabbath:** Commit to a weekly sabbath where you stop and rest from work, worship God, and delight in His creation.

**First 30:** Commit to dedicating the first thirty minutes of your day after work, school, etc. to serve the people around you (family, friends, neighbors, teammates, etc.) and their needs.

**Other:**

For most of us, our lives feel too busy and full as it is. The prospect of adding anything - even a habit and lifestyle of Jesus - can feel overwhelming. So here's a "challenge by choice" to help us.

### STOP ONE, START ONE

Over the next three weeks, commit to eliminating at least one of the things you listed above to create margin for consistently engaging with the practice that you circled.

Studies show that it takes 2-3 weeks to turn new practices into habits. Give yourself some grace!

*You might be doing some of these practices already. If that's the case, great! Consider what it might look like to deepen that practice in your life.*

**P.S.** There's a Practices Cheat Sheet on page 16 with tips and resources!

## SESSION 4: ABIDING > ACTIVITY

Most Sunday mornings at TLC, we remind our serve teams, “You are not here to do *something*; you are here to be with *someone*.” This is true for our lives as well. God’s primary hope for our lives shines through in Jesus’s prayer in John 17 that “eternal life is to know God...and that we would be in him”. We want to be a church full of people who are committed to deep discipleship; not shallow servanthship. What’s the difference?

**Shallow Servanthship is about Activity** – doing *for* God. Its focus is on adding more information, modifying a behavior, or having an experience. The focus is usually on change and it often leads to discontent.

**Deep Discipleship is about Abiding** – being *with* God. Its focus is on deepening our life with and in Christ. The focus is usually on Jesus, change is the result and it often leads to delight-joy and peace regardless of circumstance.

### REFLECT

Reflect on your challenge by choice:

- Has your adopted practice felt more like doing for God, or being with God? Abiding or Activity? Why?
- Are there any changes you could make to help this practice be a source of abiding rather than activity?

Sometimes when people engage with the concept of a Trellis, they can feel overwhelmed, tired, and frustrated by the gap mentioned in Session 3. Many struggle to figure out how to make living a meaningful life with God work from day to day. Hear these words:

“ Let me tell you what is overwhelming:  
a default, normal, unexamined American  
life. That is completely overwhelming. It’s so  
much to take on, and we all do it simply by not doing  
anything else instead. ”

- Justin Whitmel Earley, *The Common Rule*

‘Not doing anything else instead’ is a lot easier said than done. Unless we are proactive and intentional, the status quo is what we will slip into. A Trellis is a framework to help us be proactive and intentional about our discipleship to Jesus. It is a flexible and freeing tool that helps us sustainably live life with God, and experience real transformation, and the joy and peace that comes along with it.

All so that when our lives are asked the question, “What do you want?” the answer that would shine through would be a one-word answer, a name: Jesus.

# PRACTICE CHEAT SHEET

Here are some tips to help you have a successful experience with the four practices outlined in Session 3:

## **Scripture Before Phone**

- Tip: Don't bring your phone into your bedroom at night! Charge it somewhere else so it's not tempting to look at first-thing.
- Resource: Loop Method (see next page)
- Resource: The Bible Project's Gospel of John overview video

## **Driving with Jesus**

- Tip: Plan ahead each day and pick a drive that you're going to use for your time with Jesus.
- Resource: Download the Lectio 365 app and use their daily guided prayer while driving.

## **Sabbath**

- Tip: Arrange a start and end time and write out a basic schedule for your day that would help you to stop, rest, delight and worship God.
- Resource: Begin your Sabbath period by praying this Sabbath Prayer (scan the code to view!)

## **First 30:**

- Tip: Take a minute before you "clock out" of your daily responsibilities and ask God to give you a heart to serve others. Ask for a "get to" mindset, rather than a "got to" mindset.
- Resource: The greatest resource for this practice is the people around you. Listen to their life and ask them what their needs are and the best ways that you can serve them.



## REVIEW

### DID I DO IT?

What did you do?  
How did it go?  
Record your progress?

## READ

### WHAT DO I SEE?

Read the passage twice,  
focusing on the obvious:  
people, places, ideas, repetition?  
Record what you see.

## RESPOND

### WHAT WILL YOU DO?

Before you meet with God again,  
plan a measurable way you will  
respond to what God has revealed to  
you. Record your response.

## REFLECT

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

What is God teaching you in this  
passage? Use your observations and  
prayer to reflect on this. Record  
your reflections.



THE LOCAL CHURCH

## **PRAYER TO WELCOME THE SABBATH**

Lord of Creation,  
create in us a new rhythm of life composed of hours that sustain rather than stress, of days that deliver rather than destroy, of time that tickles rather than tackles.

Lord of Liberation,  
by the rhythm of your truth, set us free from the bondage and baggage that break us, from the Pharaohs and fellows who fail us, from the plans and pursuits that prey upon us.

Lord of Resurrection,  
may we be raised into the rhythm of your new life, dead to deceitful calendars, dead to fleeting friend requests, dead to the empty peace of our accomplishments.

To our packed-full planners, we bid, "Peace!"  
To our over-caffeinated consciences, we say, "Cease!"  
To our suffocating selves, Lord, grant release.

Drowning in a sea of deadlines and death chimes, we rest in you, our lifeline.

By your ever-restful grace, allow us to enter your Sabbath rest as your Sabbath rest enters into us.

In the name of our Creator, our Liberator,  
our Resurrection and Life,  
we pray.  
Amen.



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