

# Reclaiming the Ordinary: Simple Rhythms for a Meaningful Life.

## Part 1: Finding God in the Ordinary: The Path to True Joy

Ecclesiastes 2:22-25

**Summary:** God invites us to slow down, savor the ordinary, and find true contentment in Him instead of chasing busyness and burnout.

### Main Ideas:

Our lives move so fast that the ordinary feels exhausting, not extraordinary.

Our ordinary, busy lives are keeping us from enjoying true life.

God is inviting us to find deep meaning in the everyday... not escape from it.

Reclaiming the ordinary starts with accepting reality.

Meaning isn't found in escaping the ordinary, but by savoring it.

The secret to contentment is gratitude.

Enjoying God and his gifts puts us on the path to reclaiming the ordinary.

**Invitation:** Every day, invite God into your ordinary by thanking him for and savoring the simple gifts he's given you.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Would you describe your current life as more rhythmic or more chaotic? Why?
2. What kinds of things do you tend to say "yes" to that often leave you feeling drained?
3. Reread Ecclesiastes 2:22-25. What thoughts, questions, and/or ideas does this passage spur in you?
4. What's one small, ordinary gift from God you could start purposely savoring today?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

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### Transcript:

**ME:** Have you ever come back from vacation and felt like you needed another vacation to make up for how tired you feel after your vacation?

- We just had two weeks "off" (I took a little over a week), but I sat down to work and was not feeling it.

Why did we take the break?

- Because, honestly, we were tired.
- Too few people carrying too much.
- It wasn't a healthy pace

So, we're building breaks into our rhythm as a community, making rest and healthy rhythms a way of life that we're modeling for all of us.

And there's more we can do to create a sustainable/healthy rhythm as a community.

**WE:** But your turn. What's you have rhythms, yearly, weekly, daily, or maybe you're more like me...

You're thinking... "Rhythms? That sounds nice... but my reality is chaos... I always hope it will slow down 'next week,' but that week never comes.

We want to enjoy life, discover our purpose, bring meaning to the lives around us...

But Our lives move so fast that the ordinary feels exhausting, not extraordinary.

- We long for meaning, but our calendars only bring exhaustion

The funny thing is... most of our exhaustion is self-inflicted.

- We say YES to too much, even good things

And suddenly our calendars are running our lives... not us.

- We become slaves to our own never-ending busyness.
- It's like running on a treadmill... lots of energy, but never moving forward... and it's not even fun.

Every hour is filled, but something's missing. You're not living, you're just surviving.

If we don't change something, we'll spend the rest of our lives stressed out, burned out, and overwhelmed.

Might be saying to yourself... "Jon, that's just modern life."

- But is it really? Or have we just learned to settle for exhaustion as normal?

Our ordinary, busy lives are keeping us from enjoying true life.

Here's the thing... God never created us for frantic living.

- He designed us for rhythms... work, rest, joy, meaning.

So, as we start another school year, now is a great time to re-examine what our everyday lives are creating.

B/c in the traditional Church calendary are in the middle of what is called Ordinary time.

- Everything between the big holidays Easter and Christmas.
- It's where most of our lives happen... not in the highlight moments, but in the normal, everyday routines.
- That's where God loves to meet us.

That's why we're calling this new series 'Reclaiming the Ordinary.'

- Because God is inviting us to find deep meaning in the everyday... not escape from it.

We'll discover (together... I'm still learning) how to create healthy rhythms that keep us from burning out... even when circumstances out of our control try to drag us into chaos.

What's interesting is we think this hectic, busy life is a new modern American culture/society problem... but really, it's older than we might expect.

There's a memoir from around 950 BC (3000 yrs ago)...

- Traditionally believed to have been written by the 3rd king of Israel... King Solomon... The wisest man in the world
- I feels like it could have been written about our lives today...
- Tell me if this sounds familiar.

**GOD: V. 22-23** *So what do people get in this life for all their hard work and anxiety? Their days of labor are filled with pain and grief; even at night their minds cannot rest. It is all meaningless.*

Could've written this yesterday...

- Work hard to make ends meet, even make a difference... and wake up in the middle of the night worried about making ends meet and if you're even doing it right, let alone making a difference.

If the wisest man in history called this cycle of work and worry 'meaningless,' what are we supposed to do?

The first step is doing what Solomon did...

He begins with honesty. He doesn't pretend life will get better if you just try harder or find the right formula.

- He says, "Accept that life can be really, really hard, painful, and unfair.
- Progress doesn't guarantee peace, and chasing more just burns us out.
- There's never enough achievement to fill the emptiness.

We can either try to avoid reality, ignore it, wear ourselves out trying to overcome it... but as Solomon says, it's all meaningless.

- What does all of that get you? Nothing but stressful days and sleepless nights.

We can exhaust ourselves trying to change what will never be changed (keep hoping we win the lottery)... or we can accept it... Life is hard.

Reclaiming the ordinary starts with accepting reality.

But then what?

- Do we just power through or just give up?

There's got to be more... How do we make this hard, ordinary life into something worth living?

Well, usually we try to fix our exhaustion by numbing the ache...

- Another vacation, a new toy, endless entertainment.
- We waste our days dreaming of retirement
- But none of it ever satisfies.

We just hope we'll get there someday when "things finally slow down."

But Solomon shows us something so simple and profound that, if we choose to put into practice, it will change everything for us...

- After all of his searching, he realized something...

**Verse 24a** *So I decided there is nothing better than to enjoy food and drink and to find satisfaction in work.*

Meaning isn't found in escaping the ordinary, but by savoring it.

It isn't about doing more or escaping; it's about discovering true meaning in what's already there

- Right in the middle of our daily routines.

Choosing to slow down and enjoy what we do have.

It's Contentment.

- If we can't find joy in the everyday ordinary parts of life... if we can't be content with the simple things, nothing else will give us purpose, meaning, fulfillment, joy.

So we should just eat, drink, and be merry? Well, Yes, that phrase actually comes from a later section of Ecclesiastes.

But there's more to it.

- Solomon isn't telling us just to become selfish, lazy gluttons trying to stuff our fat faces and drink ourselves silly.
- That leads to its own problems, and we all know it.

Solomon gives us the secret to truly finding satisfaction in our ordinary lives...

**V. 24b-25** *Then I realized that these pleasures are from the hand of God. For who can eat or enjoy anything apart from him?*

Solomon realizes contentment isn't settling, and it's not just about slowing down,

- It's about seeing the ordinary as a gift from God.
- The secret to contentment is gratitude.

Solomon doesn't just say 'enjoy life.' He says, 'Apart from God, who can really enjoy anything?'

Without the Giver, the gifts lose their meaning. We end up chasing experiences, but missing true joy.

- Missing the meaning, the love, the Person behind the gifts

Instead of living for the next escape, we reclaim real joy by seeing each day as a gift from God.

- The difference between empty hustle and meaningful routine is not the routine itself... it's whether or not God is in it.

Every day and every life has something in it we can be thankful for.

Look, if there really is a God who created us... he is a God who loves to give good gifts and wants us to enjoy what he's given us.

- Did he have to invent taste buds? Delicious smells? The amazing colors throughout nature and the ability to see them... Don't get me started on Fermentation?
- He didn't have to create these things, but he did and millions of other amazing things b/c he loves us and wants us to enjoy the life he's given us.

Jesus himself said... I have come so people can have life... life that is full and abundant.

- Not by earning it.
- Not by filling every hour with activity
- But by accepting and enjoying the fact that we are already known, loved, and enjoyed.

Because of Jesus, we can stop proving ourselves.

He died to set us free... from sin, from shame, from the never-ending cycle of trying to earn worth.

He rose so we could enjoy God and his gifts, every day, even the hardest ones.

- We can rest and enjoy what we already have.

The core of following Jesus isn't following a bunch of religious dos and don'ts...

- It's about knowing the God who wants us to experience him and his love in every part of our lives... even, and especially, in the ordinary.

**YOU:** So what does this actually look like when we get home tonight... or go to work/school tomorrow?

- How do we actually practice this?
- Start small.

Whether you're exploring Jesus or have been following him for 50 years...

Every day, invite God into your ordinary by thanking him for and savoring the simple gifts he's given you.

Maybe it's praying over your coffee in the morning, or pausing to really taste and thank God for dinner.

- Maybe it's taking thirty seconds at the end of the day to list three things you noticed God's goodness in.
- Contentment will grow from these daily moments of gratitude.

The goal isn't finding some way to change our circumstances, but to change our perspective...

- From seeing the ordinary as a grind... to seeing each day as a gift from God.

**WE:** Imagine what life would be like if instead of rushing from one thing to the next always hoping for a never-coming "someday," you found joy and contentment in the midst of your ordinary?

What if every colorful leaf this fall, every sip of your PSL, every laugh was a reminder that you are known, loved, and enjoyed, and you are here for a reason?

What could happen if our church became known for enjoying the simple and taking time to thank God?

- What would that say to our stressed-out world?

- Imagine your neighbors/coworkers/family saying... “You always seem so peaceful and content... what’s your secret?”

That is the life Jesus is inviting all of us to discover, enjoy, and share... together.

Enjoying God and his gifts puts us on the path to reclaiming the ordinary.

As closing music fades out... Practice and Pause for 10 seconds. Tell God what you are grateful for.