

STUDY GUIDE

FIVE SESSIONS

REBEKAH LYONS

RHYTHMS
of
RENEWAL

Trading Stress and Anxiety
for a Life of Peace and Purpose



ALSO BY REBEKAH LYONS

Freefall to Fly

You Are Free

(book, video curriculum, and study guide)

Rhythms of Renewal

(book, video curriculum)



STUDY GUIDE | FIVE SESSIONS

REBEKAH LYONS

WITH KEVIN AND SHERRY HARNEY

ZONDERVAN

Rhythms of Renewal Study Guide

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Requests for information should be addressed to:

Zondervan, 3900 Sparks Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

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HOPE ON THE HORIZON

Have you found yourself trapped in addiction? Feelings of unworthiness? Loneliness? Depression? Isolation? Consumerism? Rejection? Image management? If so, know this: God makes a way of escape. Rescue is ready and waiting, but so often, we are unwilling to take a closer look. We get lost in our loops, engage in the same habits over and over again expecting different results.

What do you do when anxiety hits, when it throbs in your ribs or steals your breath? When your words race and you try a desperate attempt to yawn and fill your lungs? What do you do when this is the norm of your everyday life? What do you do when relapse hits? Silence settles, distraction fades and you face panic, depression, or anxiety again? What do you do when you descend into anxiety after being panic-free for years?

These are the questions many of us are asking these days. According to the American Institute of Stress (“AIS”), 77 percent of the population experience physical symptoms associated with stress on a regular basis, 33 percent report living with extreme stress, and 48 percent indicate stress has a negative impact on their personal and professional lives.¹ The AIS estimates the aggregate cost to employers of stress-related healthcare expenses and missed work is \$300 billion annually.² What’s more, according to the National Alliance of Mental Illness (“NAMI”), 18 percent of American adults currently suffer from an anxiety disorder. Some estimate over 35 percent of the population will experience an anxiety disorder in their lifetime.³ The NAMI indicates nearly 7 percent of the population struggles with chronic depression.⁴

This is why this five-session study is so important. As a society, we are in the throes of a collective panic attack. We nurse anxiety-chasing careers, hunger for security, and strive to keep up. We’re afraid we’re not doing enough. We obsess over health, politics, and a host of other things we can’t control. That’s when fatigue takes over. Fear rises. Finally, despair prevails.

As long as there is darkness in this world, we'll be tempted to be anxious and fearful. But over and over Scripture tells us not to fear. Jesus said, with piercing clarity, "Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27).

The command not to fear is given over three-hundred times in the Bible (some say 365 times, once for every day of the year). In fact, it's a phrase used more than any other command in the Bible.

Here is the good news. With a little intentional effort, stress and anxiety can be traded for peace and purpose. It won't happen overnight, but it will happen. It might not be easy, but it can become your reality. That is what this five-session study is all about.

There are four biblical, God-given rhythms that help us replace fear with faith. They can teach us to nurture and sustain lasting mental health. These rhythms aren't complicated. Each can be expressed in one word: **Rest**, **Restore**, **Connect**, and **Create**. These rhythms take practice. Simple acts like fasting from media (Rest), exercising (Restore), sharing a laugh (Connect), or recovering an old talent (Create) can help us break the anxiety-inducing cycles of the world around us. They can bring balance to our otherwise hectic lives. They will help us cultivate the spiritual and mental space needed to allow God to bring us past fear and into freedom.

These four rhythms fit naturally into the flow of life. The first two—**Rest** and **Restore**—are "input rhythms," rhythms that allow the peace of Jesus to fill us. The latter two—**Connect** and **Create**—are "output rhythms," which pull us out of our own heads and connect us to the world around us.

My hope and prayer is that five or ten years from now you'll look back on your own season riddled with anxiety and see how God brought you to a place of health and peace through the rhythms of renewal outlined in this video-based Bible study. Please join me in praying that this journey of learning in a small community of people will transform your life and theirs.

A fellow traveler on the road to renewal,

Rebekah Lyons

OF NOTE

The study introduction and quotations interspersed throughout this study guide are excerpts from the book *Rhythms of Renewal* and the video curriculum of the same name by Rebekah Lyons. All other resources including the session introductions, small group questions, prayer direction, and between-sessions materials have been written by Kevin and Sherry Harney in collaboration with Rebekah Lyons.

SESSION

1

LIVING
in
RHYTHM

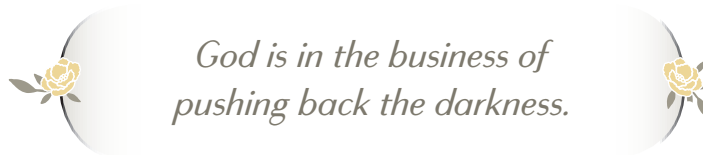
We all face moments, weeks, months, or even years when anxiety and panic come crashing into our lives. Thankfully, God has provided simple rhythms to help us navigate these times and come through with greater health, peace, and even joy.

INTRODUCTION

Group leader, read the introduction to the group before showing the video for this session.

Lin was always an energetic, passionate, joyful girl. All through grade school she made friends easily, excelled in her classes, and even had time for sports and fun activities. At the core of her life was a deep and authentic love for Jesus and for the people in her life. You might say that things just came easily for Lin.

That is why her parents were surprised and confused when her transition to high school was so difficult. Fear seemed to move into her heart overnight and confidence evaporated. Where she had been peaceful, anxiety took hold. Within a few weeks this was impacting her physical well-being, her sleep patterns, and the condition of her skin. In addition, her relationships changed as she pulled into herself and began avoiding friends.



Lin and her parents talked and prayed about all she was experiencing. There did not seem to be any major event that caused these problems. It just all descended unannounced and uninvited. Lin's parents assured her that God was with her and Jesus was ready and able to help her through this confusing and painful time.

Cynthia had been married for more than a decade and loved being a wife, mom, and using her many gifts to serve others. She had always struggled with anxiety, worry, and fears. She had learned to press down these feelings, hold them back, stay busy, and manage them. She figured this was just the way life worked. Her

mom, in a number of honest conversations, had told Cynthia that the women in their family “all dealt with this kind of thing.” So, she pressed on, tried not to complain, and lived with her pain.

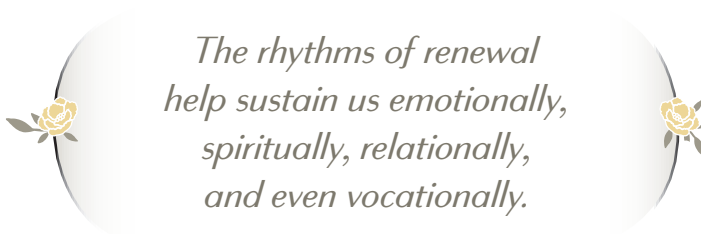
Then, the dam broke. Over the course of a busy and intense December, with lots of family responsibilities, infrequent sunshine, and stress over finances, Cynthia realized she could not hold back the fears and anxiety. Like a wave, for the first time, all these feelings came to the surface and it was almost paralyzing. All she could do was look up and cry out to Jesus, “Help me, I can’t handle my own life.”

TALK ABOUT IT

What are some of the things in our world that are causing anxiety and worry in the hearts of people?

or

Tell about a person you love and care about who knows Jesus but has still dealt with anxiety. How did their anxiety impact their life and those around them?



TEACHING NOTES VIDEO SESSION 1

As you watch the teaching segment for this session, use the following outline to record anything that stands out to you.

Concepts modeled in Scripture . . . Rest, Restore, Connect, Create

Rest

Restore

Connect

Create

Input Rhythms . . . Fill me, Lord

Output Rhythms . . . Use me, Lord

God Created with Rhythm . . . Evening, morning, and another day

Genesis 1

From the beginning God followed a pattern of rhythm: Day and night, land and sea, earth and sky, sun and moon, light and dark.

Examples of Rhythm

1 Corinthians 10:13

The Example of Jesus . . . A life of rhythm

Luke 5:15–16

Luke 6:12–16

Connect . . . The one whom Jesus loved, Lazarus

Parables . . . The Sower, Prodigal Son

*When we follow God's
rhythm, it leads to
more rhythm.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

- 1 Tell about a time when anxiety, worry, or fear came crashing into your life uninvited and unexpected. How did this impact your life?
- 2 How does rhythm bring peace and calm in a world that can feel out of control and haphazard? Tell about one rhythm (of any kind) in your life that gives birth to peace and calm.



God created rhythm.



- 3 *Group leader, look up and read aloud the following passage or invite a volunteer to do so:*
1 Corinthians 10:13.

Temptations, stress, hard times, and anxiety are part of life. They can throw us out of rhythm. Tell about a time when you got out of rhythm due to a stressful or difficult situation. What did it take to get your rhythm back and find peace again?

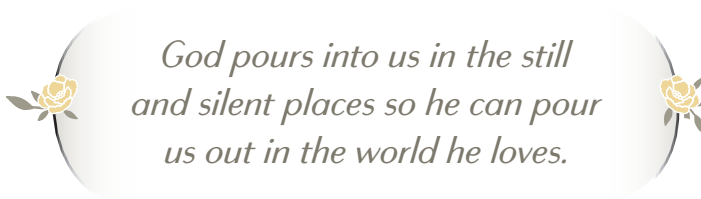


*When we face anxiety
and stress, these are not
shocking exceptions, they
are just part of life.*



- 4 *Group leader, look up and read aloud the following passages or invite a volunteer to do so:*
Luke 6:12–13 and **Exodus 20:8–11.**

Why do you think God takes rest and refreshment so seriously? What is one step you can take to make regular rest a consistent part of your life?



*God pours into us in the still
and silent places so he can pour
us out in the world he loves.*

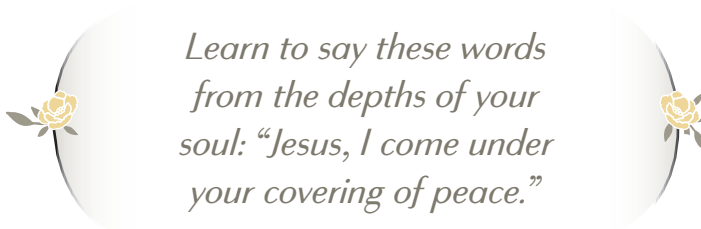
5 Group leader, look up and read the following passage or invite a volunteer to do so:

1 Corinthians 6:19–20.

It is easy to become overextended and forget to care for our bodies. Why do you think God is concerned that we are careful to restore our bodies and tend to our physical health? What is one step you could take toward physical restoration in your life?

6 We live in a radically connected world where many people feel less connected than ever. How did Jesus reveal the importance of connecting when he walked on this earth? What can you do to connect in more regular and meaningful ways with the people God places in your life?

7 God spoke and all things came into existence. Jesus spoke with creativity and unleashed fresh vision and heavenly truth. What are ways we can be more creative with our words, our time, and our God-given abilities?



*Learn to say these words
from the depths of your
soul: “Jesus, I come under
your covering of peace.”*

CLOSING PRAYER

Spend time in your group praying together. The group leader may pray over the group or ask for volunteers. Below are some suggested prayer prompts:

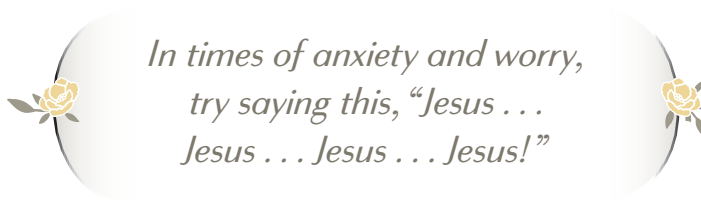
- ➔ Thank God for calling you to rest, being an example of rest, and making rest part of the rhythm of life.

- ➔ Ask God to give you discipline to follow his rhythm of restoration as you seek to honor him with how you care for your body.

- ➔ Invite the Holy Spirit to take you to deeper places of connecting with the people God has placed in your life.

- ➔ Ask Jesus to unleash the creative potential he has placed in you in fresh, new, beautiful ways.

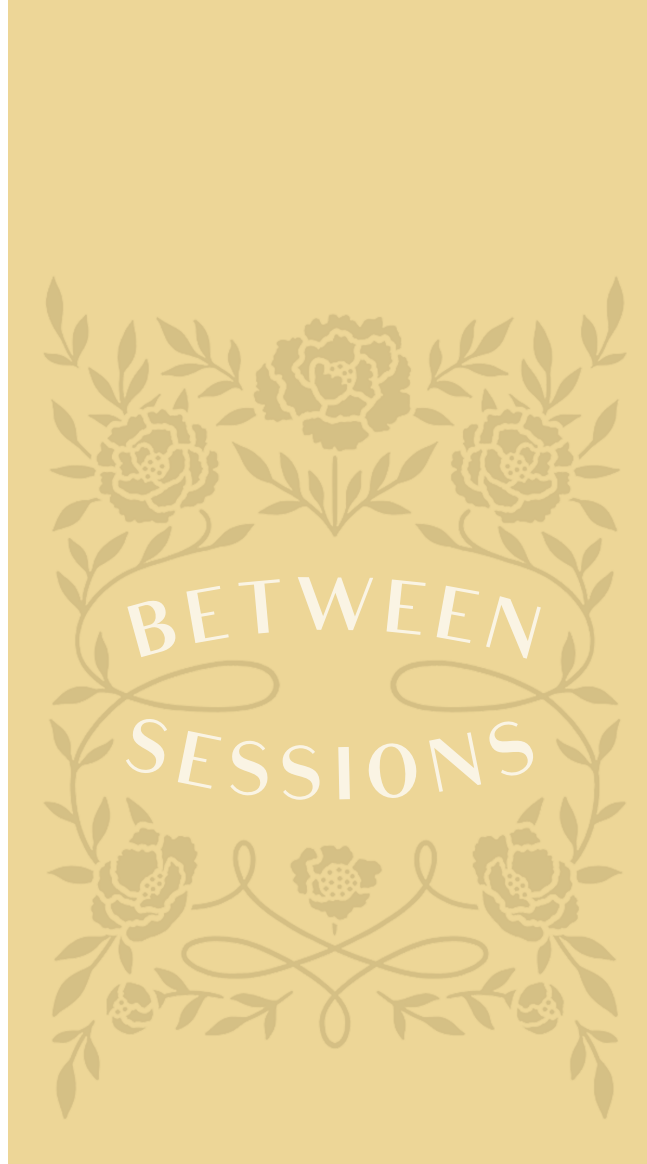
- ➔ Pray for the members of your group to step fully and joyfully into these rhythms over the coming weeks as you meet together.



WRAP-UP

Group leader, read the following wrap-up as you close your group.

What a joy to learn about how God created the whole universe with rhythm built into the very fabric of our world and lives. Let's all do our best to make time, before we meet again, to engage in some of the exercises provided here in our study guide. Also, as we prepare for the next time we gather, seek to notice how well you rest, or what keeps you from resting.



*Make time in three days of the coming week to go deeper into **Rhythms of Renewal** by using the resources provided here in your study guide. If you take your time to do these exercises slowly and reflectively each day, it should take about 20–30 minutes.*

PERSONAL STUDY



Session 1

LIVING IN RHYTHM

Day 1

Memory Verse

Take time to begin learning and meditating on this week's memory verse. Reflect on how God created with a rhythm of creativity and celebration of the goodness of what he made.

*God saw all that he had made, and it was
very good. And there was evening, and
there was morning—the sixth day.*

(Genesis 1:31)

Let Wisdom Speak

Take time to make a list of three to five people whose spiritual lives you respect and appreciate. These are not perfect people, but they have a deep, rich, authentic relationship with Jesus. They find rest and spiritual strength in their Savior.

Names:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Write down three or four things about these people that you have noticed in terms of how they find rest in their faith, how they connect to Jesus, and spiritual life-patterns they engage in:

➔ _____

➔ _____

➔ _____

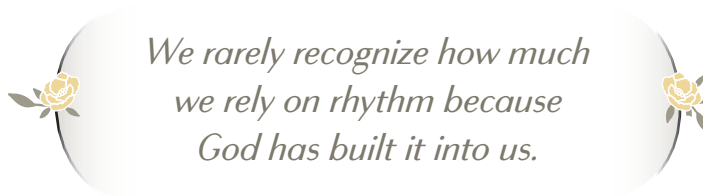
➔ _____

If you are able to, contact a couple of these people and ask them if they will share their personal patterns, spiritual habits, their rhythms of renewal that help them find rest and strength through Jesus. Write down what you learn in the space on the next page:

Finally, set one personal goal for a rhythm of rest that you can establish in your life and practice in the coming thirty days. Ask at least one trusted Christian friend to pray for you, keep you accountable, and cheer you on for the coming month.

My rhythm for spiritual rest and refreshment:

Who I have asked to pray for me and encourage me:



Day 2

Memory Verse

Continue learning and meditating on this week's memory verse. Reflect on the rhythm of a normal day with morning and evening.

*God saw all that he had made, and it was
very good. And there was evening, and
there was morning—the sixth day.*

(Genesis 1:31)

Rhythm of Restoration

Take time to pray about one restorative habit you can develop in the coming thirty days that will propel you forward in physical health and refreshment. It can be a time of stretching, daily exercise, refraining from certain foods, a commitment to getting to bed at a certain time, not snacking after a set time in the evening, or some other practice. The key is identifying something that you can do daily and that is attainable.

My practice for the coming thirty days:

Make a commitment to pair this time with prayer, listening to worship music, being quiet, or interacting with a Christian you love and respect.

Observations:

In times of darkness and worry, God will stand alongside you and give you everything you need.

Memory Verse

Solidify your memory verse by meditating on the words, speaking them out loud, and thinking of the goodness of God's creation.

*God saw all that he had made, and it was
very good. And there was evening, and
there was morning—the sixth day.*

(Genesis 1:31)

Learning from the Creativity of Jesus

In Matthew 13, Jesus tells a series of stories called parables. In each one we see the creativity of our Savior and discover how he weds together truth and memorable stories. Take time to read three of these stories, noting the truth contained in the parable and the creative way Jesus reveals this truth.

STORY 1: *The Parable of the Weeds* (Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43)

The truth I learn from this story:

What I learn about the creativity of Jesus:

How this story can impact my life as I follow Jesus:

STORY 2: *The Parable of Hidden Treasure* (Matthew 13:44–46)

The truth I learn from this story:

What I learn about the creativity of Jesus:

How this story can impact my life as I follow Jesus:

STORY 3: *The Parable of the Net* (Matthew 13:47–52)

The truth I learn from this story:

What I learn about the creativity of Jesus:

How this story can impact my life as I follow Jesus:

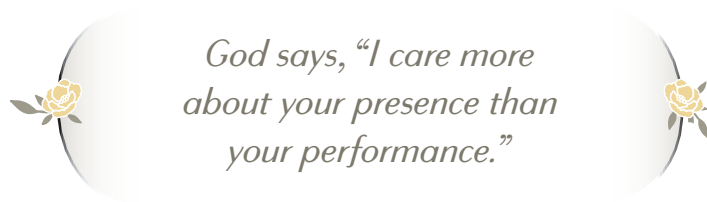
Journal

Use the space provided below to write some reflections on the following topics:

- ➔ What steps can I take to make meaningful and consistent rest part of a normal week?

- ➔ What is getting in the way of my developing life-patterns that lead to physical restoration, and how can I remove these barriers?

- ➔ What is one joy-giving, life-giving, creative pursuit that I used to engage in but do not anymore? How might I make this more a part of my life in the coming months?



Recommended Reading

As you reflect on what God is teaching you through this session, you may want to read the introduction to *Rhythms of Renewal*.



RHYTHMS of RENEWAL

by REBEKAH LYONS

Rhythms of Renewal is your guide to daily rescue and a way forward into the peace your soul longs for.

As a society, we are in the throes of a collective panic attack. Anxiety and loneliness are on the rise, with 77% of our population experiencing physical symptoms of stress on a regular basis. We feel pressure chasing careers, security, and keeping up. We worry about health, politics, and many other complexities we can't control. Eventually we find our minds spinning, trying to cope or manage a low hum of anxiety, unlike ever before.

But it doesn't have to stay this way.

Rebekah draws from her own battle with depression and anxiety and shares a pathway to establish four life-giving rhythms of **rest, restore, connect, and create** that quiet inner chaos and make room for a flourishing life.

LEARN MORE