



# Reset Faith: Community

Ideas for sharing the Reset Faith journey with others.

Transformation happens in community.  
Share the Reset Faith journey with friends,  
your small group, your tribe. Share a meal,  
speak honestly, pray together.  
Be changed together.

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Reset. **The end of poverty begins with today**

# Welcome

**We long to go back to normal. At the same time realising that what we once called normal wasn't good enough.**

**Now is the time to reset and it begins with our faith.**

Transformation happens in community. The Reset Faith journey is designed to be shared with friends; your small group; your tribe. Share a meal, speak honestly, pray together. Be changed together.

**Reset Faith Community provides tangible ideas for sharing the Reset Faith journey with others.**

Notes for leaders:

- These ideas build upon the Reset Faith Practices reflections and prayers series. Contact the Tearfund office 1800 244 986 to order printed copies of the Reset Faith cards for your group.
- This resource is designed to be adapted and used within a variety of group settings. Please use it to suit your groups needs and context.

## About Tearfund Australia

We're working in partnership with local Christian agencies to end poverty, challenge inequality and build sustainable communities. Following Jesus, we go where the need is greatest, acting with courage to tackle injustice so that all may experience fullness of life.



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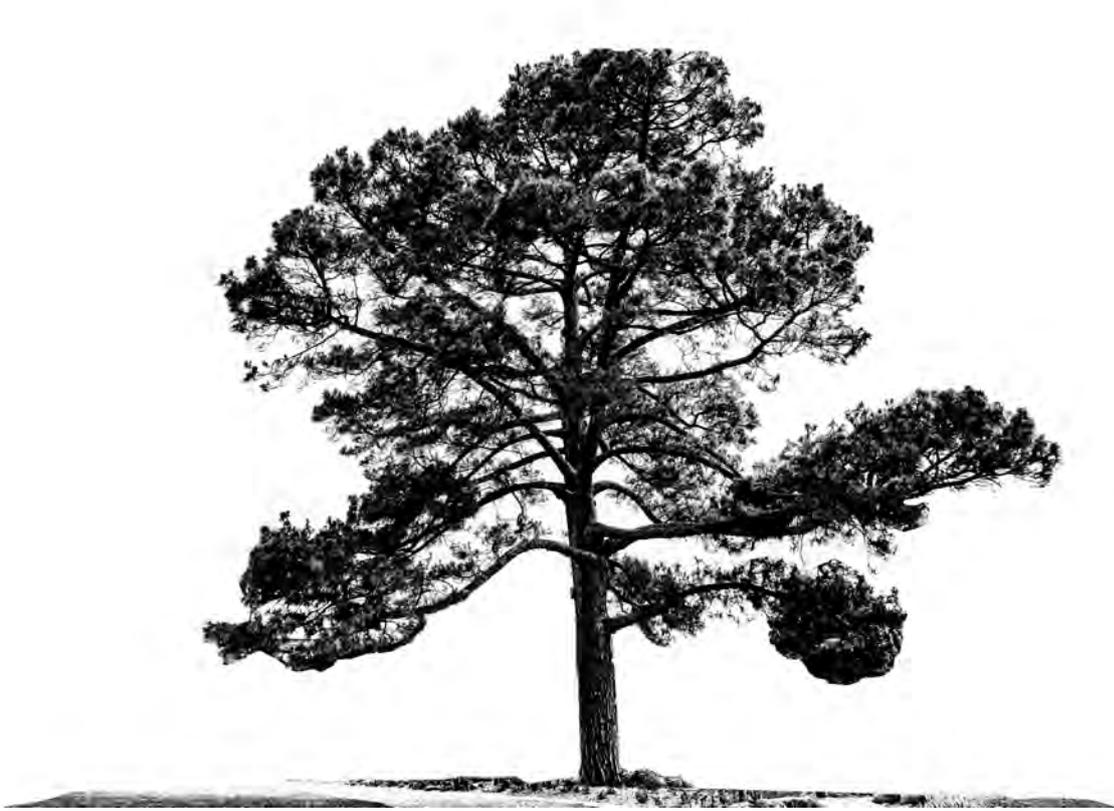
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**Reset.**

# 1. Origin

We begin by returning. To our formational story, to the posture of thankfulness, to worship.



## Begin with prayer

Gather together as a community in a comfortable setting (around a table, on the couch, on the floor of a living room, etc.). If you're up for it, and your setting is quiet, spend a few minutes in silence. Why silence? Because we live in a busy, noisy world, under the non-stop assault of digital distraction. In the midst of all the chaos, it's hard at times to hear one another, let alone the voice of God. As we gather together, we want to hear what the Father is saying to and through each of us, and respond in turn. A great way to do that is to begin with a moment of quiet.

*Have somebody lead a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to guide your time together.*

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# A starting point

*Have someone read out the reflection from this week's Reset Faith Series by Pastor Don Hayward.*

Don is a Noongar man and Pastor of the Aboriginal Berean Community Church in Adelaide. Here he shares about the importance of reconnecting to land and country in grounding us in times of upheaval and change.

*Adam was created from the dust. When he was formed, God breathed life into him. So I've always believed that for Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people there was something important about returning to land, connecting with the soil, the dust. A lot of non-Aboriginal people that I've talked to know this connection, they may not see it the same way we see it as Aboriginal people, yet when they go to the sea or they go to a lake or the hills, there's something spiritual that they sense as well.*

*There is a peace or calmness about the land and the way that it makes us feel. Just listening to the birds and things you don't normally hear... There's something about the land that I don't think it's just important for us as Aboriginal people. I think it's important for everyone. We've got to look after the land. For me personally, the best thing I can do as a sabbath practice is to get out of the city. When I go to the ocean and I sit somewhere, that's where I could be at home.*

- As you begin this series on Reset Faith together, take time to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land where you gather - the First Peoples of Australia. Each of us meets on land that was never ceded or given over, but was in fact stolen. Any 'resetting' we do, needs to acknowledge this as the starting point of our shared history in this country.
- Don Hayward describes the ocean as a place where he feels at "home". Share with one another places in creation that are like going home. What is it about those places?

## Watch + Discuss

[Watch as Matt Darvas from Micah Australia shares about his own journey of engaging with stories of "origin" in these tumultuous times.](#)

- Matt shares about the things that he worries about. Share with the group about what this past year has raised for each of you.
- Matt goes on to share about how God has met him in this time of worry and uncertainty. Invite the group to reflect and share their own experiences of how God has "met" them during this past year.

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# Practice

Psalm 24 reminds us that “*The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it*”. This first Reset Faith practice is to “Delight in God’s Creation”. To make space to come before God, in creation, breathing in everything that is beautiful and sustains life.

As a group, commit to making time this week to be in creation. You may want to go someplace as a group, or simply encourage each other to find time and space to sit in creation.

- Take some time each to discuss your ideas and plans

Here are some questions to invite those in the group to reflect on. Ensure that each member of the group has a copy of the Reset Faith cards with the reflection and prayer for Week 1 – Origin.

- Allow the beauty of God’s creation to hold and sustain you.
- Allow the enormity of God’s origin and unfolding story to surround you.
- Take time to give thanks to God for all that sustains and holds us.

## Further reading

- *Saying yes to life*, Ruth Valerio
- *The very good Gospel*, Lisa Sharon Harper

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# 2. Undone

The grief of this moment surrounds us. We cannot run from it. We lament. We slow down.



## Recap on last time

Last time we reflected on the importance of returning to our origin stories: our history, God's creation and God's faithfulness. The practice was to create space to "be in creation". Invite the group to share their experiences and reflections from this first week.

- Where did they go in creation?
- How did they find this time?
- What, if anything, did they experience God saying to them?

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# A starting point

In sharing on the theme of “Undone”, Jon Cornford, writes;

*Many of us like to say that our hope is in Christ, but rarely is that actually true. The reality is that our hope often resides in a whole host of more tangible things that we rarely acknowledge: our health, our own capacity, our education, our middle class empowerment, our money, key relationships, a well-functioning government, a cohesive society, an ordered environment.*

*What happens when you strip away one of these things? What happens when you suddenly strip away a few at a time? The evidence of our churches is that all too often it precipitates a crisis of faith. It appears that the unwritten contract many of us have with God is that, if we are faithful, if we attend church, study our Bibles, campaign for justice and live sustainably, then all should go well with us. It is almost the opposite assumption of the early Christians.*

- Does this resonate with you and the faith community you are part of?
- How, if at all, have you seen this playing out over the past year?

## Watch + Discuss

[Watch this short video from Jon Cornford as he discusses the need for Christians to be “undone” and what that can open up.](#)

- Jon speaks about the first of the Beatitudes “Blessed are the poor in spirit”, as the place we need to return to, again and again. What do you make of that idea? Jon goes on to suggest that “*It is not until we come to the end of our own path, that the way of the Kingdom is fully opened up to us*”. Again, take time to discuss this as a group.
- Finally Jon argues that “*part of the blessing of being undone is the possibility of a new clarity of sight... that when we are undone, we are able to see more clearly what really matters*”. Discuss.

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# Practice - Be Still

## Read aloud

Invite a member of the group to read out Psalm 46 and then have a moment of silence to follow. After this time of silence take some time to discuss:

- Ask the group what strikes them about this passage?
- How or what relates to our times today?
- What is God saying to us/them in this reading?

Now invite another member of the group to read out Kim Beales' reflection from Week Two of the Reset Faith series:

*From my home I can see Kunanyi, the mountain overlooking Hobart, with the river beneath it. The beauty of the mountain lifts me daily. This enduring mountain reaches back into ancient times and makes our own short lives seem fleeting in comparison. With all the tumult of 2020 I kept returning to Psalm 46 with its evocative imagery. There too we find a mountain, a city, a river, and the uproar of nations. Over the last year, I've felt that Psalm 46 was a kairos passage, in which God was speaking to the world. Yet in the psalm, the startling image we're invited to consider is that of the constant and enduring mountain crashing into the sea. This is a psalm for when the world is falling apart. The hope is that even if the earth gives way, or the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, there is one who is even more constant, whom we can trust as our refuge and our strength.*

As we explore this theme of being undone, we do so remembering that Jesus calms storms, cancels debts, forgives sin, and brings hope, reconciliation and transformation. This becomes the pattern by which we too are to live. To a world in much turmoil, God continues to say, "Be still, and know that I am God".

## Plan

The second Reset Faith practice is to be still. In Psalm 46 God invites us to be still and know God. Kim shares that "One of the ways that helps me pray and process is to journal. I find it helpful to read a passage and then to take time to write my own reflections and prayers". Taking this idea we encourage you this week to:

- Find a place where you can be still before God.
- Read again Psalm 46.
- Take some time to write your reflections:
- What themes stand out to you in the passage?
- What are some of the things you have sensed God saying to you in this time of reflection?
- How does God bring you hope in this psalm?

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## Listen + Pray

Finally, as a way of wrapping up the time today, we are going to listen to a song and pray together. During lockdown in Tasmania, Kim Beales wrote the song, “So, be still”, reflecting on Psalm 46. Kim shares that the song “Was a way of responding to all that was happening around us. I also wanted to give others a song to sing. It’s both personal, and for the nations.”

*As a group, take some time now to listen to Kim’s song and then invite some quiet and time for personal reflection.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZSD2XRI7UM>

Finally, give thanks for your time together as a group and pray for the week ahead as you continue on the Reset Faith journey.

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# 3. Empty

Stripped back, we are aware of our dependence, our need. We turn again.



## Recap on last time

Two sessions in, it is a good time to stop and reflect on how everyone is going.

- What, from the themes and discussions of last week, have you been reflecting on?
- How did people go with this last theme's practice or with making space to reflect and journal?
- What, if any, practices are you keen to keep growing in?

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# Pray

As you now gather to reflect on a new theme, take some time first to stop and pray for each other. Give thanks that God has brought you all together again to this place, and invite the Holy Spirit to guide the thinking and conversations you are all about to engage in. As we gather together, we want to hear what God is saying to and through each of us, and respond in turn.

## A starting point – The crises of our times

This week we are thinking about how we respond to the enormity of what the world is going through. The crises of 2020 revealed and compounded the brokenness in our world that, in “normal times”, often remains hidden. A world with greater inequality than ever; a climate crisis that is devastating poor communities; and, for the first time in decades, the number of people living in poverty on the rise.

*Invite a group member to read Tearfund’s brief analysis of this situation in which the twin crises of COVID and Climate are impacting the world’s most vulnerable:*

**[Read: 'A Better Normal'](#)**

*Make space now to discuss this article.*

- Are you surprised by these figures and the unfolding impacts on the world’s most vulnerable people?
- What if anything do you find most alarming?
- Do you believe that the situation(s) are long term or can this be turned around quickly?
- You may like to close this time of discussion in prayer before moving on to the next section.

## Read - Breathe in and Breathe Out

Have someone in the group read out Amanda Vivers’ reflection on the theme of Empty – Breathe in and breathe out (see *Appendix 2*, below). Amanda Vivers is the Narrative Lead at Compassion and an author on creativity, faith, and the power of your stories. The co-founder of Kinwomen, a radio program that starts conversations that matter.

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## Discuss

Both Amanda and Alison Sampson (see *Appendix 1*, below), in their reflections on the theme of Empty, speak about the need to fast: whether it be from ever present urgency of the digital world, or the need to fast from that which distracts and prevents us from being fully reliant on Jesus as critical for our faith. The importance here of fasting is, as Amanda describes, “reminding myself of what it feels like to hunger and thirst, the awkward response to discomfort.”

What, if any, practices of fasting and engaging with the discomfort of the world; of reminding ourselves that God is in control, have members of the group engaged with previously?

Amanda shares that these spiritual disciplines are “the exhale that my body needs, just like the rhythm of swimming laps in my community pool. As I empty myself of the expectations of others and focus on Christ, I remember his ultimate sacrifice in the way he surrendered all.” Invite the group to share their own thoughts on this.

Finally Amanda shares (reflecting on Philippians 2:1-4) that the greatest act of abandonment was the way in which Christ emptied himself on the cross.

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

## Practice – Fasting

There are a number of ways the group might like to explore the idea of fasting. Alison Sampson has suggested the idea of a Tech Sabbath: a time during the week when you turn off all devices and sit in the quiet and wonder:

- What do I need to let go of?
- In what ways do my devices “ill me”?
- And as you wonder, be open to new possibilities and to the current of freedom and joy: for these are the hallmarks of the Holy Spirit.
- Pay attention only to your own household, your own relationships, your own backyard, and to God’s quiet voice within you.

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Alternatively, those in the group may well choose another item to fast from; food, entertainment etc. The point of the fasting is not the fasting itself, however it is what the desire and awareness stemming from the fasting opens up. Equally important in this process is the need for prayer and reflection.

## Pray

Invite a member of the group to read out this prayer by Alison Sampson:

*Grounded God,  
you emptied yourself,  
taking the form of a slave  
and humbling yourself even unto death.  
Empty us of our pride,  
strip us of our self-importance,  
and recall us to our limits.  
Reconcile our circles of concern  
with our circles of influence,  
that we may stop loudly panicking  
and start quietly working  
towards your new creation  
of reconciliation, justice and peace.  
For we cannot solve everything;  
but you resolve all things;  
and it is not in grand gestures  
but in humble service  
that you are made known.  
In the name of Christ, we pray:  
Amen.*

## Further reading

*Celebration of Discipline. The path to spiritual growth.* - Richard Foster

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# 4. Reset

Before the cross, we are forgiven. We reset our lives to be people of love and service.



## A starting point

In this last year, we've been reminded how fragile life is, how deeply connected we are and how much we depend on each other. We've seen the brokenness in our world that in "normal times" often remains hidden.

- Share your experiences of the past year with others in the group.
- What have you been most struck by?
- What have you become more aware of?

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# Read

Invite a member of the group to read out Leviticus 25.

## Background

*Invite a member of the group to share this background on Jubilee.*

The Jubilee year (Leviticus 25) – occurring after every seventh Sabbath year, thus, every 50 years – is an economic, cultural, environmental and communal reset, when the land and people rest, and all those who are in slavery are set free to return to their communities. The Jubilee laws are essentially concerned with social relationship, economic security, stability and the wellbeing of the community. They seek to ensure that people live in ways that reflect good relationships with God, with each other, and with creation.

Jubilee was the reset button through which the damage and outworkings of sin would be systematically reworked as God reminded the people that, ultimately, all things belonged to God. This once-in-a-generation reset offered the opportunity for new beginnings for families, for communities and the land. Jubilee demanded more than the generosity or charity of the Israelites; it was the way in which society was to be repaired.

The Jubilee reset returns us to the primacy of relationship in God's order of life lived well. All those in slavery are set free to return to their homes. It is a time for both the people and the land they lived on to rest and to be restored. While work is good, and an essential part of God's mandate for humans in creation, rest is also essential. As Walter Brueggemann writes, "the well-being of creation does not depend on endless work... we are creatures made in the image of the resting God."

- Invite members of the group to share their own knowledge and understanding of Jubilee theology.

For further reading share this link with those in the group - [Jubilee in the Bible - a Tearfund introduction](#).

## Discuss

Based on the theology of Jubilee, Tearfund believes that now is the time to reset. That, while we long to go back to normal, we soon begin to realise that what we once called normal wasn't good enough. Not good enough for the world's most vulnerable people, not good enough for our relationships with one another, not good enough for our relationship and care for creation and certainly not good enough in our walk with God.

In reflecting on the theology and teaching of Jubilee:

- What strikes you about how this applies to our global community today?
- How too does this teaching speak to you and your relationship with Jesus?

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# Practice

## Invite a member of the group to read Luke 4:16-21.

Often called Jesus' manifesto or mission statement, this passage reveals Jesus, at the beginning of his ministry, announcing that he is the one foretold by Isaiah. The one who will bring God's release from oppression and bring God's Jubilee restoration in our relationships with God, ourselves, creation, and each other. Here, Jesus is identifying himself as the Messiah and the fulfillment of Jubilee. Jubilee and atonement are essentially linked in Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Both Jubilee and atonement are about restoration: reuniting things that have been torn apart.

The passage ends with Jesus saying "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." From this point on Luke's gospel and his account of the early church in the book of Acts reveals first Jesus, and then the church, seeking to fulfill this mission statement. Seeking to embody and teach; Good News to the poor, to embody and teach recovery of sight to the blind; to embody and teach release to the prisoners; and to embody and teach freedom for all who are captive.

- Over the course of this coming week (or month), invite members of the group to re-read this passage from Luke's gospel, to use this passage as a meditation.
- Where is God leading you on your journey to live more fully into this mission?
- What areas of your life is God inviting you to reset?

# Pray

As a group, take time together to pray for one another and God's invitation to reset our lives. Close by praying together this prayer from the Reset Faith series by Lizzi Milani:

*The world is changing and here I am in the middle of it. Lord, I surrender to the reset. I choose to rest in the fluidity of God's grace. I know that I am safe there, even though I feel unsure. Thoughts and feelings interrupt, reminding me that things haven't turned out the way I had planned... I choose to resist. Lord, may you again have your way, that I might be and do what you created me for: to flow and change and become.*

*Amen*

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# 5. Connect

Re-connect with others, distant no longer, we are weaving new practices of hospitality and service.



## Recap + Pray to begin

To begin this week's time together start by doing a recap of the first 4 weeks. Make sure everyone has time to share. Some ideas may include:

- Give thanks for what God has shown you over the past month. Take time to name some of the gifts, big and small.
- Invite the group to be aware of difficult and challenging questions that have arisen. Is there an invitation that is being put before you?
- Finally have a time of prayer together, giving thanks to God for the journey you have shared so far and asking the Holy Spirit to continue to guide you together.

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# A starting point

This week we are thinking about building connections with others, especially those who have been isolated and “disconnected” over the course of this past year. We will be focusing on the practice of hospitality as a way of building connection.

- To begin, share experiences of receiving hospitality positively. It could be when you travelled, or in a community setting.
- What was it about that time that made it so memorable?
- How has the impact of COVID 19 changed the way you have connected with others over the past year?

[Watch – Jon Owen from the Wayside Chapel in Sydney shares about the power of the Christian practice of hospitality.](#)

## Background

Hospitality is at the heart of God’s character and has been a core discipleship practice of Christians over the course of the last 2000 years. Christian hospitality is about consciously and practically making room for others, especially those on the margins: the “lost”, “the stranger”, the “other”. However, as Christine Pohl argues,

*For many people today, understandings of hospitality have been reduced to ideas for entertaining family and friends and to the services of the hotel and restaurant industry. As a result, even Christians miss the significance of hospitality and view it as a mildly pleasant activity if sufficient time is available.*

The Bible is rich with accounts of hospitality and with encouragement towards its practice. Whether we open to the story of Abraham, Sarah and the angels (Genesis 18) or to the account of the widow and Zarephath and Elijah (1 Kings 17), through Jesus’ life and ministry (eg. Matt 25:35 or Luke 14:12-14), we find hospitality at the centre and then of course in Hebrews 13:2 which reminds us that when we practice hospitality, we may be “entertaining angels”.

## Practice – Re-Connect

As Jon Owen shares, one of the big impacts of COVID-19 was to disconnect us from one another. Whether that be family, friends and certainly from “strangers”. Disconnection and isolation have become more entrenched for many as a result.

So this week's Reset Faith practice is to make plans to share a meal with others. Christian hospitality is about consciously and practically making room for others, especially those on the margins: the lost, the stranger, those who are not like us.

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## **Watch**

[For inspiration, watch this video from Micah Australia's Beck Wilesmith as she shares about the way Micah has sought to engage our political leaders with the message "Plenty to Share".](#)

Beck goes on to challenge us powerfully to think about whether we are building community and connection or "social cliques" in the way we live our lives.

## **Plan**

As a group discuss what this practice might look like, either in your own homes, as a group or in your churches. We encourage you to be creative.

- For some of us that might be inviting a wide range of people over for a meal, maybe some we know well and others we don't.
- Maybe restrictions won't allow larger gatherings or perhaps hosting people isn't a possibility, so what about going out for a meal, or dropping some food over to someone who maybe needs some practical love and support.

## **Pray**

Finish by taking time to pray for one another in the group. Give thanks again for the way God has been speaking to you during the past month. You may like to close your time together by having someone pray this prayer written by Beck Wilesmith:

*Dear Lord Jesus,*

*Help me to build genuine connection in my life, to build community and not just a clique. I ask for the wisdom this year to be intentional in relationships. To slow down and reach out to others. Give me eyes to see those in my world who need you; who need your love and compassion. Let me respond graciously to disruptions, to see them as an opportunity from you to bring hope to someone. May I extend my table this year and live graciously and generously to others.*

*Amen.*

## **Further reading**

- *The Gospel comes with a house key* - Rosaria Butterfield
- *God is Stranger* - Krish Kandiah
- *Making Room: recovering hospitality as a Christian Tradition* - Christine Pohl
- *A Meal with Jesus* - Tim Chester

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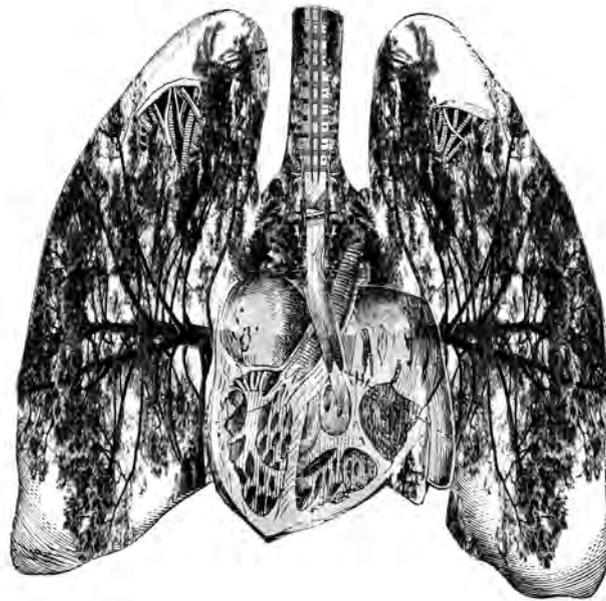
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# 6. Steward

We are restoring all that is broken. Seeking health, holy, hale, whole, wholeness.



## Last time

Connection was the theme and hospitality the practice last time. Take some time as a group to reflect on how you have sought to reflect and practice this since you last met.

- What did you find life-giving?
- What, if anything, did you find difficult or uncomfortable?
- Where did you see signs of God during this time?
- What have you learnt?

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# Pray

Begin this time together in prayer. This week we will be reflecting on our role as stewards of God's amazing creation. During your time of prayer, begin by giving thanks for all the beautiful places you have visited or enjoy. Also take time to pray for one another and invite the Holy Spirit to be with you all again in this time of reflection and discussion.

## A starting point – Glimpses

During the height of COVID lockdowns across the world, images flooded in of rarely seen glimpses of the Himalayas from the Indian border. Similarly, in Venice, pictures of dolphins swimming in a deserted Grand Canal also pointed to much of creation resting from the normal pace of civilisation.

In our Reset Faith series, Kuki Rokhum from Tearfund's Indian partner EFICOR shared this reflection on her experience during this time from her home in Delhi.

*Here in Delhi, every year, at this time of year especially, we have terrible pollution. You can't even see outside sometimes.*

*But at the beginning of COVID, the world stopped everything: the crazy mad human activity came to a standstill. And because human activity stopped to a great extent, the earth rested; the air became cleaner. And so, here in Delhi: clear skies, beautiful birds, green trees – and I'm seeing birds that I've never ever seen before in my life – a purple sunbird sitting on a branch and then the grey Indian hornbill is sitting on another branch as well. We don't see that regularly, but we saw all of that during the lockdown. Creation was like: "Whof ... finally, we can breath." In some ways COVID was like an enforced jubilee, in which people had no choice but to stop activity and to be generous. I thought, this is jubilee, and perhaps it is possible. Perhaps it is possible.*

## Discussion

Take some time to reflect on what in creation changed during times of lockdown or throughout the COVID period. For some this might not be much, for others it may be that you began to notice and see so much more wildlife in your own community or backyard than you had seen before.

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# Background

Kuki goes on to say that “As people start to look for and work towards a ‘new normal’, my biggest question is: what is normal? Pre-COVID times normal? I don't think so. You look at the number of species that have gone extinct. The forests that have been decimated: is that the normal that we are going to go back to? I don't think so. We need to go back to a normal that God would approve of, where not only human beings, but the whole of creation flourishes. And that is so important, because human beings cannot flourish or thrive without the rest of creation.

At EFICOR, the relief and development organisation I am part of, we've done a lot of creation care workshops, challenging people and saying: “This is very much part of what God wants us to do. He created it. He has given us a mandate, as human beings: a mandate of stewardship, of preparing for creation.” And sometimes it's very difficult to say, “Okay, what steps do I take?”.”

**One of the areas that we've been able to challenge people on is waste.**

## Practice – No time to Waste

Waste wasn't part of God's plan. Yet we know that plastic pollution scars landscapes, fills our oceans and harms the health of the world's poorest people. This week's Reset Faith practice considers how we live with less waste as we seek to be better stewards of God's creation.

- To begin, read [Tearfund's report](#) on the impact of plastic pollution on the world's most vulnerable people.
- Second, what about closer to home? Do a plastic waste audit of your place – [Plastic Free July has some great resources](#).
- Finally imagine what a world with less waste looks like beyond your home: your workplace, church, sporting club... what piece of action can you take that connects to rebuilding a better, less wasteful, world?

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# Prayer

*Restorer God,*

*We long for a new normal. A new and better normal, where all creation flourishes. Where the skies are clear, the rivers flow cleanly and the birds of the air can be seen again.*

*We confess that we have constantly fallen short of our own hopes and dreams in stewarding what you have entrusted to us.*

*Forgive in us what has gone wrong. Restore in us what is wasted. Reveal in us what is good. Turn us back to you, and your ways and nourish us with better food than we could ever buy.*

*Amen*

## Further Reading

- *Waste not: Making a big difference by throwing away less* - Erin Rhoads

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# 7. Rest

**Sabbath. We return again, with renewed faith. Sabbath is a shared work.**



## Time to recap

This is our final session in the Reset Faith Series. Today we will reflect on the theme of Rest and unpack what it means for us in our economy and society today. However, before we get to the theme of Rest, take time to reflect on the previous theme of Steward.

- What, if anything, have individuals/the group learnt since this last session?
- Take some time to discuss through your learnings and identify what, if anything, you are each going to continue to commit to do in seeking to reduce waste.

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## To Begin – reflection on Psalm 23

- Have someone in the group read through Psalm 23
- Then leave some time for quiet – 2-5 minutes
- Again, have someone read through Psalm 23
- Invite members of the group to share any words or thoughts they believe God is placing before them at this time.

## Read + Discuss

Have someone in the group read this reflection from Kim Hammond, pastor at City Life.

Psalm 23 says: “He makes us lie down in green pastures ...”. Why does it say he “makes us”? Because sometimes rest is forced upon us. In 2014, while living in America, I was diagnosed with leukemia. I had just written a book which I was meant to be touring with, speaking at all these churches across the country. Instead, I was given a forced rest. This forced rest led me to reorient my whole life. Everything comes into perspective when you get sick. It was a stripping back, a realisation: “It doesn’t matter about the book, it doesn't matter about speaking. What matters is you and God, and you and your family.” That changed everything for me. By the grace of God, I have been given this second chance. So now to live in a way that doesn’t squander it, to have a fruitful life, a fully alive life.

- Kim speaks about “forced rest”, through having a serious, life threatening illness. Invite the group to reflect on this idea of “forced rest”.
- Is the idea of forced rest something those in the group have experienced?
- Whether our rest is forced or whether we actively work at making space to rest, share with those in the group
- Where and how has God met you in times of rest (forced or not) during your life?

# Practice

Rest, like a good holiday, doesn't happen without good preparation. In the ancient Near East, the day before the Sabbath was called the "Day of Preparation". That was a weekly time to get ready to rest! This week's (and an ongoing) challenge is to plan some time to rest... Below are some ideas:

- Could be a whole day, could be a few hours. The important thing is that it is rest, and that your rest doesn't require others to work.
- Alternatively, the rest could be about tending to, or resting in, a good relationship with God, with yourself, with someone you love or with creation.
- Building on that idea, one possibility is preparing by doing a relationship inventory to for your Sabbath and choosing a relationship to rest in/cultivate/give thanks for on your day of rest. [Download the Relationship Inventory Worksheet.](#)
- Remember. During your Sabbath, you don't take a day off from God. You worship! Worship puts life into perspective. If you're too busy for God, you're just too busy.

## Closing in Prayer

Take time to give thanks for your time going through the Reset Faith Series. Pray for one another, for how God has led you and what the Spirit has enabled you all to see anew. Finally pray for this next season, that the practices and ideas discussed here would find fertile soil in each of your lives.

## Further Reading

- *Sabbath as resistance* - Walter Brueggemann
- *Subversive Sabbath. The surprising power of rest in a non stop world* - A.J. Swoboda
- *Keeping the Sabbath wholly* - Marva J. Dawn

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# Appendix 1

## Alison Sampson – *Empty*

If 2020 taught us anything, it is that we are not in control. Fires burn; viruses spread; demagogues parade their power. And while there are things we can do to mitigate these effects (climate action; handwashing, shutdown and face masks; political protest), we cannot control the outcomes or the effects on our lives. Some of us spent 2020 glued to our phones, constantly updating newsfeeds and analysing statistics; others of us chose bigger screens, bingewatching endless series on Netflix; most of us did a bit of both.

We were caught between two lies. First, that we are masters of our own destiny and should be able to do something, fix something, change something radically and quickly through our own efforts. We receive constant messaging that we must be amazing and effective: but the world is so big, and events so overwhelming, that bringing about real change feels impossible. So we scroll through newsfeeds and worry ourselves sick, but end up doing nothing.

The second lie is that we have no real power and we may as well give up. So we escape by scrolling through different screens, and again we end up doing nothing.

The truth sits between these lies; and the truth is that, through Christ, God has already brought about healing and reconciliation, and we are already living in a new creation. We don't have to bring it about ourselves. We just need to participate in what God has already done and continues to do through Christ. And as people made new in Christ, we are Christ's ambassadors; we are empowered to proclaim the good news that God has reconciled all things to Godself.

As long as we try to fix things or bring about change through our own efforts, we will be exhausted. As long as we think things are our responsibility, we will be constantly sucking in information we cannot use, or avoiding our responsibility on Netflix; fatigue and depression are inevitable. But when we give up the illusion that we have the power to change things, and when we instead invite God to take over and guide our lives, then everything changes. We may find ourselves heading in unexpected directions; we may find ourselves doing things we never anticipated: but, if God is in charge, we will certainly discover that our powers are more than equal to our tasks. Even better, we will be relieved of the sense of either overwhelming responsibility or hopeless passivity: because our confidence is in Christ alone.

-- Continued --

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The first step towards letting God set the agenda is relinquishing the illusion of control, and this means rejecting the urgent need to be across everything. If God's in control, we don't need to know everything, and we certainly don't need to know everything about events which are well outside our circle of influence. For example, Trump's behaviour after the US election has been gripping. But ultimately, he's nothing more than a clanging gong clamouring for attention, diverting our time and energy from the small good work of the kingdom unfolding around us.

What, then, would it be like to turn off the news and entertainment industry? To say, I know nothing about what is happening in a foreign election or an international argument over tariffs and trade; nor can I tell you the plot of every Marvel movie: but I have sat in the quiet and prayed. And as I asked God to set my priorities, I saw the family down the street who could use some soup; and the acre of community greenspace which needs rehabilitation and a garden; and the face of a local MP who is undecided on an issue which is important to our church—and in freedom I decided to act.

In this spirit, I invite you to take a weekly tech Sabbath: to turn off all devices and sit in the quiet with me, and wonder: What do I need to let go of? What are God's priorities? What is God calling me to now? And as you wonder, be open to new possibilities and to the current of freedom and joy: for these are the hallmarks of the Holy Spirit.



**Author:** *Rev. Alison Sampson is the pastor to Sanctuary, a new faith community with Baptist connections which gathers on the lands of the Eastern Maar nation in South West Victoria.*

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## Appendix 2

### Amanda Viviers – *Empty*

#### **Breathe in and breathe out – emptying oneself**

Over summer, my son decided he wanted to join a swimming team. It was an unusual request that we spent time reflecting on as a family. When we realised that it was a great choice of sport for his school year, we did all the things needed to sign him up.

Suddenly we were all spending a lot of time sitting alongside our local pool. As I watched the families, week in and week out, gather around this community space, I decided to dive in the deep end and train myself.

I am not naturally a sporty kind of person, so this new beginning meant much physical resistance. Swimming up and down the soft aqua lanes showed me many things about discipline. It allowed me the solitude needed to find a focus for the coming season.

The simplicity of breathing showed me the power of emptying oneself and resetting our focus.

Breathe in and breathe out. Arms, moving, heart beating.

Breathe in and breathe out. Follow the line along the bottom of the pool.

Breathe in and breathe out. Kick my legs, don't stop moving.

This practice reminded me of the power of small things to bring significant change into our spiritual disciples and life. As I swam under the water, the clarity of what I was focusing on became evident.

What became apparent was how important the art of exhaling is, in comparison to inhaling, yet I believe we often focus a lot on the latter.

We thrive when we have the same exhale in our spiritual lives as in our physical ones. Without the practice of spiritual disciplines to release that which we are holding, we cannot make space and room for the new.

-- *Continued* --

The year 2020 was a clarifying year of exhale for my family. It became more apparent what we needed to let go of, even more than what we added into our family culture – the art of emptying oneself. Our popular culture tells us that we need to do more and be more, but our Christian faith implores us to surrender in humility and to empty ourselves of selfish ambition.

Paul, in the letter to the Corinthians, asked the community to consider what is old and needs to go. This is resetting our faith. This is the importance of emptying oneself. We cannot lean into the promise of the new without releasing what no longer belongs.

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! — 2 Corinthians 5:17*

It is our nature often in our humanity to seek out the new. We want the refreshing moments of God's presence; to see the answers to prayer, and seeking out solutions for the coming season. However, without the exhale of the old, it is difficult to find the space for the new.

How do we empty ourselves to press reset on our faith?

A reset of my faith often looks like coming back to the simple things in my everyday spiritual walk with Jesus to seek out the surrender of what no longer belongs.

The way that I do this regularly is through moments of solitude, allowing God's voice to be louder than the crowd. Also, times across the year when I take the time to fast, reminding myself of what it feels like to hunger and thirst, the awkward response to discomfort. And a reminder of the importance of rest and the beauty of the sabbath, by turning off social media and being intentionally silent.

These spiritual disciplines are the exhale that my body needs, just like the rhythm of swimming laps in my community pool. As I empty myself of the expectations of others and focus on Christ, I remember his ultimate sacrifice in the way he surrendered all.

The greatest act of abandonment was the way with which Christ emptied himself on the cross of Calvary, extending a bridge of redemption, with a final breath out\*. This sacrifice was so that we could breathe in the promise of a future with Him eternally.

What is your discipline of emptying yourself in this season?

Is there one way you can quiet your mind and soul to find your focus?

It is essential, in a world that is so focused on the external things, that we take time to press reset on the internal. We cannot make space for the new unless we empty ourselves first of that which no longer belongs.

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*\* Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

— Philippians 2: 1-4

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**Author:** Amanda Viviers is the Narrative Lead at Compassion and [author of 12 books](#) on creativity, faith, and the power of your stories. The co-founder of [Kinwomen](#), a radio program that starts conversations that matter. Wife of Charl and Mum of Maximus and Liberty, she loves to help people find their voice.

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