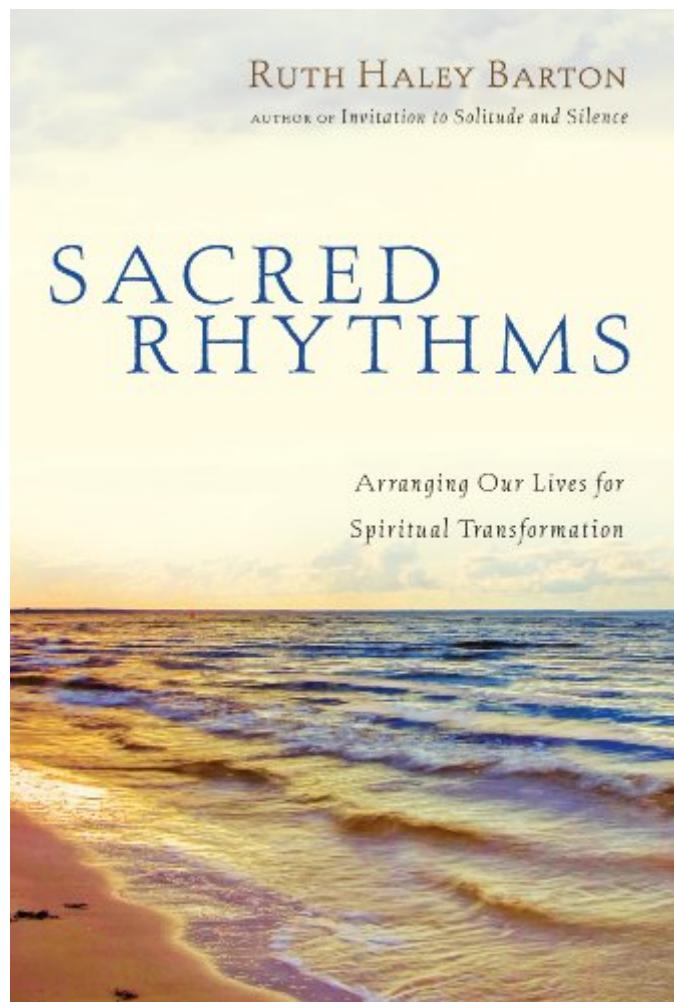


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Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives For Spiritual Transformation (Transforming Resources)



Synopsis

Winner of a 2006 Logos Book Award! Do you long for a deep, fundamental change in your life with God? Do you desire a greater intimacy with God? Do you wonder how you might truly live your life as God created you to live it? Spiritual disciplines are activities that open us to God's transforming love and the changes that only God can bring about in our lives. Picking up on the monastic tradition of creating a "rule of life" that allows for regular space for the practice of the spiritual disciplines, this book takes you more deeply into understanding seven key disciplines along with practical ideas for weaving them into everyday life. Each chapter includes exercises to help you begin the practices--individually and in a group context. The final chapter puts it all together in a way that will help you arrange your life for spiritual transformation. The choice to establish your own sacred rhythm is the most important choice you can make with your life.

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Customer Reviews

I borrowed a copy of Sacred Rhythms from the Pauline Bookstore sale shelf where I work (and live). I loved Barton's voice; her gentle style. The book itself is a kind of handbook on Christian spirituality:

prayer, discernment, creating a spiritual "rule of life" (and even the examen of consciousness!). All very solid, very real-life oriented and very readable. But what was particularly interesting to me (a Catholic sister/nun) is how Barton, who was brought up in the Baptist tradition, makes this traditionally Catholic spirituality so approachable for non-Catholics, to whom the language may be much less familiar. Her writing is not so focused on a Protestant audience that a Catholic would be distracted or unable to relate. It's just a good, solid and balanced treatment of key issues in our life with God. Barton deserves kudos for her treatment of the Sabbath in our Christian life, and her helpful explanation of how to create a "rule of life" that sets our life on course in a way that coincides with our life with God, not setting "prayer life" and "real life" on parallel tracks.

I have to confess that I'm just getting over a horrible "Been There, Read That" attitude when it comes to books about spiritual growth. That's why it came as a delightful surprise when (a) I couldn't put this book down, (b) I read several chapters again and again and used them to spur journal/prayer entries, and (c) I'm going to take it with me on my next overnight silent retreat. I especially enjoyed the reflections on discernment and self-examination. Thank you, IVP and Ruth Haley Barton, for this gem of a book. (Note: I got the book at our public library, but have since purchased it as a gift for my sister and just ordered Barton's other book from IVP on solitude).

Ruth Haley Barton presents a clear and compelling description of the spiritual disciplines of solitude, lectio divina, centering/breath prayer, Ignatian examen (of consciousness and conscience), discernment, sabbath-keeping, and the Benedictine "rule of life." She opens the book with an invitation to explore the deep longings of your soul and name your desires before Christ. And she offers a wonderful chapter on the spirituality of learning to live in and care for our physical bodies. It was a powerful and life-changing book for me -- particularly the chapters on solitude, honoring the body, and sabbath-keeping. Barton has a gentle heart and a gracious approach to the disciplines that is so inviting. This book was my part of my devotions for the last few weeks and I find that I will miss Barton's voice and vision and the possibilities that they have stirred in my soul. I recommend this book highly to anyone who is struggling with exhaustion or burn-out and wanting permission to dream of rest.

Not a bad book. I enjoyed some chapters more than others - I think my favorite was the Sabbath chapter. I do think we're in a culture of go-go-go, and it was good to be reminded that it's important to take time for ourselves. To take a nap, take a walk, do what you want to do on your Sabbath. No

errands, no busyness - just time for yourself and your family. My main problem with her was that she applied a lot of her experience to everything, as though each person's life will be similar to hers. Sometimes it overrode the message of the chapter, and made me want to skim ahead. Still a decent book, though. Highly recommend the chapter on the Sabbath, as well as the one on honoring the body.

The subtitle of the book sums up the aim for readers - how to arrange our lives around the goal of spiritual transformation, and why this is a worthy pursuit. Barton's style is very conversational and straight-forward. It covers some deep material in a very clear and encouraging way. She starts off describing a bit of her own spiritual journey and longing for spiritual transformation. We're not alone in finding that spiritual disciplines (or any activity) done for the wrong reasons can take us in the opposite direction we seek, further away from God and discouraged. Yet there is another way, seeking the presence of God and opening ourselves to His work in our lives that can truly transform us. Barton covers seven vital spiritual disciplines and for each describes a fresh way to engage. For example, for scripture reading she describes an ancient practice of devotional reading (lectio divina) that is quite different from your average quiet time. Other disciplines include solitude, prayer, honoring the body, self-examination, discernment, and honoring the Sabbath. The author also points out the downside of not engaging in these practices. It is easy in our busy schedules to avoid solitude and Sabbath rest, but it is to our detriment. The final chapter is a highlight of the book. She discusses a "rule of life" (as it is classically known), which she terms 'cultivating rhythms for spiritual transformation. This addresses the practical question of how to put these things in practice, how to make them a natural and inviting part of your life. The appendices provide some very helpful additional material. There are notes on how to take this journey with other people, lead a small group exploring these disciplines, and how to choose spiritual disciplines that fit our needs. These together help us focus our efforts better, and there is definitely great encouragement and support in practicing these disciplines and discussing them with others on the journey.

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