

Rhythms of Grace

“Unforced rhythms of grace” is like a lesson for walking in time with what God is calling us to do. We’re going to look at this phrase. We’ll see that God’s unforced rhythms of grace are really about us obeying God, following God and finding our place, doing the things that God asks us to and that come naturally to us. So let’s first break down the three words to see what they mean.

Matthew 11.28-30

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

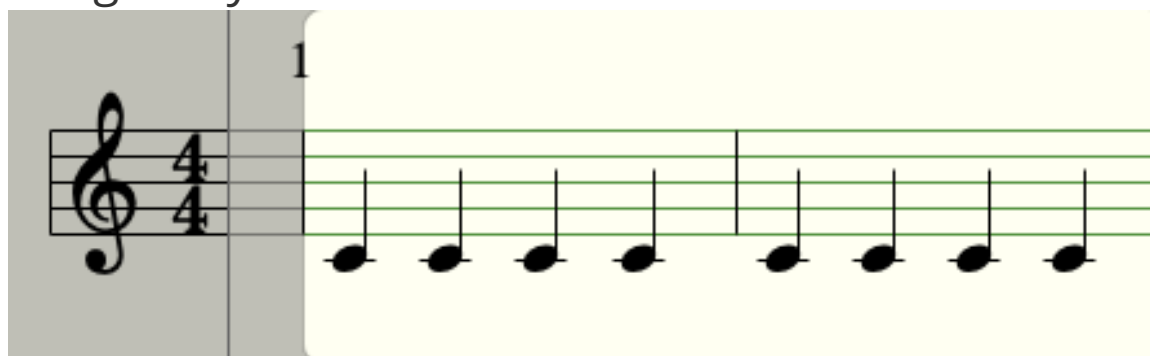
(The Message)

- ‘Unforced’ means it’s easy and no-one is making us do it
- Rhythm is like a repeated musical pattern
- Grace is what God does for us that we don’t deserve.

Meaning of rhythm from [Wikipedia](#):

Rhythm – regular recurring motion, symmetry” and generally means a “movement marked by the regulated succession of strong and weak elements, or of opposite or different conditions. In the performance arts, rhythm is the timing of events on a human scale; of musical sounds and silences that occur over time, of the steps of a dance, or the meter of spoken language and poetry. In some performing arts, such as hip hop music, the rhythmic delivery of the lyrics is one of the most important elements of the style.

I’ve got rhythm...



OK, so imagine that you’re listening to a dance music song. Think about how the ‘kick’ beat (the ‘boom’, ‘boom’, ‘boom’, ‘boom’ drum sound) which is pretty regular, usually repetitive and might be the kind of thing you’d nod your head to, or dance to.

In the image of music, you see the representation of eight 'beats', all the same length and all in time. This is a rhythm.

So as an example, this is the start of one of my trance music tracks. At around 18 seconds, the beat kicks in and in a way, sets the rhythm and timing for the song. The music shown in the image above would be 8 of the 'kick' beats in my track.

Direct Link – <https://youtu.be/zRwt-Xpwjn0>

I'm just waiting here until the time is right
To re-state my purpose, of the meaning of my life
God he first called me, out of darkness into light
Just like fruit, he planted me and made me ripe
This is why I write, bringing truth from all the hype
And the meaningless veneer that makes life so trite
Words that are Biblical, to make your vision bright
Like a lamp on a hill, I'm beaming rays that will en-light

God's Rhythm

When we 'walk with God' (so when we are a Christian following what God says), he has a rhythm which we can get in step with.

Imagine someone walking along (left, right, left, right) and we copy what they are doing – so when they walk forward with their left leg, we do.

Or imagine an army marching band where they are all in step and marching together (I remember doing this!) Now imagine you join in with the march – you'd have to march in time and in step. So being part of God's family is like walking with others and following God's steps as he leads us – he's like the band master!

But also in a marching band, everyone has a different instrument to play – or a better way to look at it is that not everyone plays the same instrument. So what 'instrument' has God called you to 'play'? What things has God called you to do – what makes you come alive? What are you good at? What are you passionate about? Walking in God's grace and rhythm is about doing your part.

In any band and in any music, each instrument has its own place and you have to play the right music at the right time in the right way. This is another picture of what it's like to live in God's unforced rhythm of grace. We don't just pay our part, we work with others and compliment each other (not like saying 'you're great' to others, but working together as a team).

We also know that in music, not every instrument plays at the same time and sometimes there are 'rests' in music. So we should do our bit in the right way, with others and at the right time. In the music (below) we learn that the squiggly things are 'rests' so this is when the music pauses. There are times when we need to pause, rest, stop and get ready for what God has next!



This sounds hard work but really it's about doing and being what God made you to do and be!

Symphony

In Matthew 18.19-20 the Bible talks about being in agreement with other people when we pray, saying that where 2 or 3 get together, God is with them (it doesn't have to be just two or three!!)

The word used for 'agreement' is the Greek word 'sumphoneo' which is where we get our word 'symphony' from. (The second half of the Bible, called 'The New Testament' was written in Greek). So in a sense God's power is displayed best when we play our part in the symphony and in agreement with all the other parts.

These are all pictures of what it's like when we live out a life of unforced rhythms of grace. Just as a piece of music or a poem or a dancer has a natural rhythm, this is what it's like when we're in God's rhythms for our life – it's effortless and easy. Yes we work hard and improve but when we get stressed it often means we're tired or we're doing things God hasn't asked us to do. Finding your God-rhythm is finding your place.

John Calvin said this: "The whole world is a theatre for the display of God's goodness, wisdom, justice and power, but the church is the orchestra."

But remember God isn't legalistic – he doesn't demand you do this and that or else – he's not a dictator! Instead this is a rhythm of grace...

With God we can actually make a choice to get in step with God the conductor. He's the music maestro who sets the tune, the rhythm and all the other elements. God has given us our part and yet we can in a sense choose how well we play, how loud we play, if we play at all. But things work best and we find our rest when we move with God's rhythm. This works best for us personally and for the whole church and world around us.

When we're out of time or not joining in, we don't work well. So it's time to get in time and let God's rhythm match to your rhyme...