
A PRACTICE AUDIT

DESIRING THE KINGDOM THROUGH PRACTICE

WEEK 02

Are there habits and practices that we acquire without knowing it? Are there ritual forces in our culture that we perhaps naively immerse ourselves in—and are thus formed by—that, when we consider them more closely, are pointed at some ultimate end? Are there mundane routines that we participate in that, if we are attentive, function as formative practices aimed at a particular vision of the good life?

To get at this requires quite a bit of patient reflection and analysis, both introspective and communal. Consider taking some time this week to engage in a bit of self-inventory—a “practices audit”—perhaps journaling about it. Then talk about these issues with friends. Use the following questions as prompts:

This Practice Audit is courtesy of James Smith in his book “Desiring the Kingdom.”

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- What are some of the most significant habits and practices that really shape your actions and attitude—what you think and what you do?
 - What does your time look like? What practices are you regularly immersed in each week? How much time is spent doing different sorts of activities?
 - What do you think are the most important ritual forces in your life? And if you were honest with yourself, are these positive (forming you into the kind of person who embodies the kingdom of God) or negative (forming you into someone whose values and desires are antithetical to that kingdom, oriented toward another kingdom)?
 - What do you think are some of the most potent practices in our culture? Or, if you have kids, what are the cultural forces that you don't want your children shaped by? What are the ritual forces that you do want to shape their desires? And why on both counts?

- If you step back and reflect on them, are there some habits and practices that you might have originally thought were neutral, but upon further reflection, you see them as more significant?
 - Are there any practices of Jesus (or spiritual disciplines) that are habitual in your life? Which ones? What kind of impact do you think they have had on your character and identity?
 - How do you feel having worked through this list? Bring it to God in prayer and ask that his Holy Spirit continue to grab a hold of your heart and orient it towards him.
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