

A Parent's Guide to

ORDINARY TIME

(OR GOSPEL-SHAPED LIVING)

axis

A Parent's Guide to **ORDINARY TIME**

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What in the world is ordinary time?

Do a Google search for “ordinary,” and you’ll find words like “commonplace, usual, normal, standard, typical, common, customary, habitual, everyday, regular, routine, day-to-day...no special or distinctive features.” But contrary to this meaning, Ordinary Time is not just a boring time of the year that we shouldn’t care about; it’s an important season in our liturgical year. Here the other seasons find their culmination. It’s not insignificant time lacking definition, but new, redeemed time defined by all Jesus has done—His birth, childhood, baptism, temptation, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension, and the sending of His Spirit—those events we specifically honor during the more exciting events on the Liturgical Calendar. The seasons are the story of God, and Ordinary Time is the story of the people of God (the Church) lived out in light of the gift of the Spirit we received at Pentecost.

The more we fully enter the other liturgical seasons (see our Parent’s Guides to [Advent](#), [Christmas](#), [Lent](#), and [Easter](#) for more on that!), the more refreshing it is when Ordinary Time arrives. If every day were a feast or fast, we would grow weary. And likewise, after 6 months of ordinary time, we are ready to welcome Advent again. Ordinary Time lasts from the day after Pentecost Sunday in May to the day before Advent begins in December.

Why is it called “ordinary”?

It stems from the word “[ordinal](#),” which means “counted” time, referring to the practice of counting the weeks from Pentecost until Advent. Yet our modern perception actually fits: We spend six months in ordinary time, and thus it very much encompasses the parts of life that are usual and normal. The real question is: *What is usual and normal* in the life of a Christian? We will seek to answer that throughout the course of this Parent Guide.

Ordinary doesn’t mean boring. We must resist thinking that because something is the same or routine or repetitive, it’s therefore “less than.” This probably means we have our heads down, trudging along, forgetting to look up and see that God meets us through this creation He has made, *through this everyday-ness of our lives*, and that when we pull back the veil, life infused with the life of Christ is anything but “ordinary.”

Jesus' life wasn't ordinary—aren't we supposed to live like Him?

We are! Think about the amount of time Jesus spent living out the events we commemorate during the liturgical seasons, compared to the time He spent in “ordinary time.” The liturgical seasons are the climax and center of the story, and ordinary time is every other part of it. But there is no story if you only have the climax. There were a whole lot of years between that first “Christmas” and “Easter,” and the majority of the years of Jesus' life—years when no one knew who He really was, years when He wasn't “doing ministry” in the same way He would later on—are given no specific mention in the Bible.

But why? Did those years matter? Could Jesus have just showed up on Palm Sunday and done what He *really* came to do? Instead, He was born as an ordinary baby to an ordinary family. He lived many years of life in anonymity and obscurity, in ordinary life, because *all* of His life mattered (and still matters). He forged the path of new life for us, not just by the cross, but in all of His days. Every step He took, every breath He breathed and meal He ate and word He said, every night He slept, every word He studied, every prayer He prayed, every temptation He resisted, every pain and sadness He felt—He walked all of it so that we could follow Him and partake in the new way He has prepared for us.

In her book [A Theology of the Ordinary](#), Julie Canlis writes, “When we focus exclusively on the cross, we think wrongly that Christ became human simply to get a job done. We do not understand that His *being human was part of our redemption*....The atonement does not establish God's love—it stems from it” (emphasis added).

Every moment Jesus spent on earth matters. And because all of His life matters, all of our lives matter, too. We are invited to live this ordinary life shaped by all that Jesus has done, to live every moment of life in a way that is shaped by the Gospel. Trappist monk Thomas Merton once said, “[Every moment and every event](#) of every man's life on earth plants something in his soul.” And if we think about it, most of life is spent doing ordinary things: washing the dishes, taking the kids to school, mowing the lawn, or cooking a meal. And yet, in these very ordinary times, miraculous things happen: “Our children grow up, our marriages and relationships grow older, our vision expands, and [our souls ripen](#).”

How does the Gospel shape Ordinary Time?

In its essence, the Gospel is this: what **God**—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—has **done**, is **doing**, and **will do** for **us**, His people. It's easy to know this in our heads, but how often do we take the reins and live as if the burden is on us to save ourselves and the world? How often do we define ourselves and others based on what we can do, *not* on who we are or by what God has done *for* us? How often do we group and categorize people on the premises of so many things besides our true identity in Christ?

The truth is, before we could do anything for God, He extended His hand to us. In [*Liturgy of the Ordinary*](#), Tish Harrison Warren reminds us:

Before you can know it, before you doubt it, before you confess it, before you can sing it yourself, you are beloved by God, not by your own effort but because of what Christ has done on your behalf. . . . We are marked from our first waking moment by an identity that is given to us by grace: an identity that is deeper and more real than any other identity we will don that day.

How does the ordinary fit into the Christian life?

The beauty of the Christian life is that we aren't required to "do big things" for God. Because of the Gospel, our *doing* originates from a place of *being*. We can live from a posture of **rest** in an identity of **grace** with the **peace** of knowing it's not up to us; instead, we are invited to be part of God's redeeming and restoring work in this world, which we are powerless to do ourselves. We can't win the world for Christ—He's already won it.

It's from a place of seeing our finitude and powerlessness that we become prepared to do anything for God at all. And that "doing" may not *feel* extraordinary day in and day out. We don't need to search for something far out there beyond reach, something elusive that we must always be grasping and striving for, an unattainable perfection of a life we think we should be living for God. What God is calling us to is right in front of us. Again Tish Warren says:

Christ didn't redeem my life theoretically or abstractly—the life I dreamed of living or the life I think I ideally should be living. He knew I'd be in today as it is,

in my home where it stands, in my relationships with their specific beauty and brokenness, in my particular sins and struggles.

Biblically, there is no divide between “radical” and “ordinary” believers. We are all called to be willing to follow Christ in radical ways, to answer the call of the one who told us to deny ourselves and take up our cross. And yet we are also called to stability, to the daily grind of responsibility for those nearest us, to the challenge of a mundane, well-lived Christian life.

This physical world is shot through with glory, so “ordinary” doesn’t mean devoid of meaning. Drinking a cup of coffee, driving our kids to school, working the same job we did last year, chatting with our neighbors, taking care of aging parents, and cooking dinner are all part of God’s mission and purpose for us here. Annie Dillard [wrote](#), “How we spend our days is of course how we spend our lives.” But the tragedy is that most of us want to skip over the normal, daily routines because we fail to see the glory of God in the daily. ***These mundane tasks aren’t distractions from what we’re really made to do; they are what we’re made to do.*** If this sounds like drudgery, then we need to ask for fresh eyes to see all of life sacramentally and holy.

The [last chapter of Romans](#) is one of those “names” passages that’s often skipped over. But take a closer look. Was everyone remembered and commended for their extraordinary work for God? Some of them appear to be. But they’re also commended for their hard work, their faithfulness, their mothering, their jobs, their hospitality, their obedience, their friendship—and many are just greeted because they are who they are.

What are Ordinary Time’s components?

Time

How is it that we should spend this time we have been given? Time is that elusive gem we are always chasing down and hoping for more of, yet ironically we structure our lives so that we never have any to spare.

God created time, which means it’s for our good and not intended to be a burden. He created us for rhythm and order and structure. He put the lights in the sky. He separated light from darkness, day from night. He willed them to “serve as signs to mark **sacred times**, and days and years” ([Genesis 1](#), emphasis added). Ordinary time

is a good time to ask the question, “What is my (and my family’s) time—each hour and day and week—centered around?”

The beauty of the Christian calendar is that it gives us an alternative to the story we are being told daily, the one that values work above all else, with our TV shows as the pinnacle of our day, and sports and patriotism anchoring our year. And while sports, entertainment, and the countries we belong to are good, these narratives aren’t big enough, and they shouldn’t be our center. They keep our worlds small and cause us to forget about the bigger reality we live in. The liturgical calendar, including Ordinary Time, centers our time, and thus our lives, around the Kingdom of God.

Because Christ has purchased our freedom, we are no longer bound to the old cycles of time that the ancient Hebrews had to follow. In light of that, how do we use all of our time well? Have we filled our schedules (and especially our kids’ schedules) so full of activities and stimulation that we are too busy for the *really* important parts of life? Are the “ordinary,” everyday things too “basic” for us and our children? It is in these routine moments in life that God generally speaks. He rarely shouts to us through the storm, but if given the space, we can hear Him gently whisper to us in the daily.

Worship

What’s the most important spiritual discipline in the life of a Christian? Ask your teens and see what their answer is. Most of us grew up thinking that, hands-down, a personal quiet time was paramount. But the New Testament church and most of church history would beg to differ. They would say that corporate worship was the center and crux of spiritual life and formation, not reading your Bible by yourself (which was, in fact, impossible for the majority of the history of the Church since books are a modern luxury).

During Ordinary Time, without the specific practices and traditions of seasons like Christmas, there’s instead an emphasis on Sunday worship. Why is that important? In his book [Ancient-Future Time](#), Robert Webber fittingly connects our worship each Sunday morning to the past, present, and future, saying that we “remember God’s saving action in history; experience God’s renewing presence; and anticipate the consummation of God’s work in the new heavens and new earth.” Worship is more than just fellowship or teaching or singing—there’s a deeper story being told (or, at least, there should be) that we need to pay attention to. Worship immerses us in this story, and we reenact it each week, as we remember what God has done, experience what He is doing right

now, and hope for what He is going to do.

Worship roots us in the story of God's Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. In so doing, our worship becomes overtly political. It may well be the most public, civic statement you make each week by declaring that Jesus is Lord and the rulers of this world are not. Worship whisks us out of our false narratives into the reality we're part of, the one that's most true and real, reminding us of what we so easily forget.

We humans are drawn to novel, new, emotional, shocking, and dramatic experiences, but worship is more like eating, like nourishing our souls. We eat three times a day. We go back to the kitchen again and again. Most of the time, it's just another meal. Sometimes, it can be memorable, but mostly we eat because we *need* to. A spiritual appetite isn't cultivated in the big emotional moments of life; it's in returning to these seemingly basic (but formative) habits of worship and prayer, fellowship and rest, into which we enter again and again in expectancy that the Spirit will meet and work in us.

So it may seem simple, but—go to church. It's where our week begins and our stories are centered. This is the lens through which we endeavor to see our Monday-through-Saturday lives. The Church is far from perfect, but she is Christ's beloved, and she is where we find our home and family on this side of eternity. Church comes with its messiness, complicated relationships, and frustrations, but it's worth it.

Rest and Sabbath

In [Isaiah 30](#), the Lord says, "In quietness is your strength, in repentance and rest is your salvation." But the people who received these words wanted nothing to do with it. We aren't so different than them—we westerners (especially US Americans) operate at break-neck speed. The idea of Sabbath is almost foreign to us in many seasons of life. But Sabbath isn't just an Old Testament Jewish law, it's not something we need just because the world is broken; it was built into unspoiled creation from the beginning.

Our Sabbath is a reflection of God's rest after He created the world. But He didn't stop just so He could do nothing; He rested so He could delight in what He had made, and He desires the same for us. Sabbath isn't about laziness and vegging out, it's about delight. It isn't a burden, but it does require something of us.

How do we Sabbath? This is a question for you to answer with your own family, in light of the family culture you are creating. Invite your teenagers into this conversation. How can you delight in what God has given your family? In nature? In the people who

surround you? In the people who live in this world with you? In good music and films and books? In sleep? In God Himself? We must stop believing that we won't get enough done if we don't keep going constantly. Our Father says, "Be still and know that I am God" ([Psalm 46](#)). He said this with the backdrop of the earth giving way, of uproars and the fall of kingdoms. We must make a habit of weekly rest, not just when things are comfortable and everything is checked off our lists.

Julie Canlis (author of *A Theology of the Ordinary*) and her husband Matt spent 13 years in Scotland, learning a different speed of life as they pastored a small, extremely rural parish. They learned how to "slow down to catch up with God" and live life at the speed of relationship. Please take time to sit down with your teens and watch [the 30-minute video](#) they created at the end of their time in Scotland.

Is your family living at "Godspeed"? If not, what's preventing you? Is it something you desire? Be willing to ask those questions. We realize that we live in the western world, and we can't pretend that we don't; we can't isolate ourselves. So there are things we simply must do (e.g. we can't single handedly change the modern 9-5 work week). But we can analyze the time we do have power over and figure out what works for our families for carving out time for rest and Sabbath. Be forewarned! It won't be easy to do because it is so countercultural. But it, too, is worth it. (For a more robust discussion of Sabbath and rest, check out our [Parent's Guide to Sabbath & Rest](#), written by Julie Canlis!)

Leisure

This may be surprising, but we weren't made to work from sunup to sundown every day of the week. A healthy life will have a balance of work and leisure. Notably, the Greek word for [leisure](#) eventually became the English word "school." So yes, leisure is fun and rest and relaxation, but it's also learning and contemplation and delight.

Leisure is *not* an unnecessary luxury; it's essential to the health of our bodies and souls. Simply having weekends and vacations doesn't guarantee that we will actually partake in leisure. So it's important that we also build leisure into our "Ordinary Time." And there's a huge difference between leisure and idleness.

German philosopher Josef Pieper [explains](#):

Leisure is a form of that stillness that is necessary preparation for accepting reality; only the person who is still can hear, and whoever is not still, cannot hear.

Such stillness is not mere soundlessness or a dead muteness; it means, rather, that the soul's power, as real, of responding to the real . . . has not yet descended into words. Leisure is the disposition of perceptive understanding, of contemplative beholding, and immersion—in the real.

He continues:

Leisure is not justified . . . in keeping the functionary human. . . . and this means that the human being does not disappear into the parceled-out world of his limited work-a-day function, but instead remains capable of taking in the world as a whole, and thereby to realize himself as a being who is oriented toward the whole of existence.

So where leisure involves learning, stillness, and work that fulfills us, idleness simply involves constant consumption, entertainment, and even distraction. Where leisure leads to a deeper understanding and enjoyment of our humanity and world, idleness keeps us living on the surface, distracting us from ever confronting ourselves and our questions.

So as you consider how your family spends free time, ask yourself: Do we pursue things that are mind- and soul-numbing? Is our leisure merely functioning as an anesthetic to the rest of life? If every day ends with a Netflix binge, are we being formed into the people we want to be? Have we become like our idols, unable to really taste and see and smell ([Psalm 115](#))? What can we pursue that doesn't distract us but allows us to experience life more fully?

Tish Harrison Warren writes in [Liturgy of the Ordinary](#):

Our addiction to stimulation, input, and entertainment empties us out and makes us boring—unable to embrace the ordinary wonders of life in Christ. . . . When we gaze at the richness of the gospel and the church and find them dull and uninteresting, it's actually we who have been hollowed out. . . . The demand for more and more and ever more—can turn a healthy pleasure into an addiction. We become insatiable. Our ability to enjoy something is diminished to the extent that it becomes a false god.

Our souls need to revel in familiar and repetitive simplicities of life. Young children are always saying “again, again” to the ordinary delights of this creation. Do we say, “Look, there's another sunrise! I can't wait for the next one!”? Or are we always looking for the

novel, bigger, better, new, exciting? Are stillness and silence, solitude and contemplation a part of our lives? Are we old enough to read [fairy tales](#) again?

Leisure is also about beauty. Beauty beckons for us to behold it, but it also requires something of us. True beauty confronts us with our own lack, so we hide our faces and retreat to our addictions. We settle for less-beautiful forms, and practicality becomes the measure of our time. The Gospel gets intellectualized and reduced to facts. We must let ourselves behold the *beauty* of the Gospel.

On one hand, we are gluttons for cheap pleasure; on the other, we're too practical to take the time to enjoy and invest in **true** beauty.

[This article](#) argues that “leisure is the seedbed of the creative impulse, absolutely necessary for making art and doubly so for enjoying it.” In fact, there’s no shortage of articles on the internet about the importance of boredom, particularly for creativity. But it’s also how we really begin to enjoy the simple joys of life. Unstructured downtime helps us to be present to what’s right in front of us. Let your kids be bored. Prioritize this down time, or else it won’t happen.

Without leisure, burnout is inevitable. But when leisure has a healthy place in our lives, the delight we experience refreshes us so that we can enjoy our work and pour ourselves into it in a healthy way.

Work

When we think of joining God in His mission in this world, we probably think of church ministry, evangelism, and missions, *not* of engineering, teaching, banking, and other “secular” jobs. But this is an unnecessary distinction. Kingdom work is doing what God made us to do and being who He made us to be: both pastor and park ranger, mother and father, neighbor and friend, gardener and golfer. Whenever we steward, create, bring order and flourishing, beautify, teach, relate, restore, construct, and nurture (and that list is by no means exhaustive), we are participating in the work of God.

God brought order from chaos, formed that which was formless, and invited us to be sub-creators with Him. There are no such things as “secular” and “sacred” work: You can be called to be a missionary or a farmer, and neither is less holy or less spiritual. Additionally, a job isn’t holy *solely because of its evangelistic potential*. It’s holy when it’s done unto the Lord and when it reflects His image and imprint on our lives. Canlis asks, “If God is the Lord of all creation, can there be a realm where He is not working toward

its redemption?” (*A Theology of the Ordinary*).

Vocation goes beyond the jobs we hold and the roles we play; it more speaks to *who we are*. Who has God made each of us to be? What do we bring to each of our roles and tasks? Roles change in different seasons of life, locations, and opportunities. Sometimes they very much line up with our vocational callings, and sometimes they aren’t what we want to be doing at all. The beauty of vocation is that we aren’t limited by circumstances—we can always bring who we are to what we do.

We often talk about future career paths with our teens, but what about vocation? How are we inspiring and leading our kids to define and discover their vocation? How are we affirming in them who we see God making them into? Don’t just tell them anything is possible and they can do whatever they want—help them identify what that might *actually* look like, without limiting it to their future job. Push back against a never-ending quest for the perfect career. Instead of beginning the conversation with college degrees or jobs, begin with who God made them to be wherever they are and whatever they’re doing, *even and especially right now*.

Love

All of this is great, but it can’t be *all* about ourselves and our families. In light of the Gospel and God’s mission in this world, how do we love our neighbors? How do we orient our lives around the common good? To answer this, we must ask, “Who is my neighbor?” This conversation is politically charged at the moment, and we don’t need to go into that, but love for neighbor is key to the Gospel. Think of the person who is outside of your circle, who, for reason of their ethnicity, sexual preference, or religion, isn’t part of the story as you see it. *They are your neighbor*, whether you’re comfortable with that or not. Jesus continually confronted the people of His day to broaden their definition of neighbor to include the outsider.

Try reading or listening to [The Hiding Place](#) by Corrie ten Boom together as a family. Consider the sacrifice of the ten Booms, look at the way they opened their home and their very lives. Be willing to ask hard questions of your own family. Is how you’re living right now preparing you to choose what they did, choosing others over self, modeling Jesus’ sacrificial love to those who “don’t make the cut” or who are different?

Grief

We live in the act of God’s story that’s between redemption and final restoration. We

desire our stories to only be full of the good things. We want the world to be as it should be. And this is good. But the prince of this world has not been banished forever, and creation still bears the weight of the curse, so inevitably life will also be marked by sorrow and grief. Jesus wept for the world, and He also grieved the pain He was about to endure. We can allow sorrow and grief and anguish to be a part of our lives without feeling like we are living outside of God’s joy for us. We press on as Jesus did for the joy set before us.

We hope that work and sabbath, leisure and love are “ordinary” parts of our lives—that they happen regularly, that they mark our days. However, if you read all of this and think, “Oh great, here are more ways I’m failing, here’s another list of things I need to do better. I’ll never be able to live a Gospel-shaped life,” you’re right. But that is the beauty of the Gospel: We can’t do this ourselves. It’s only because of what God has done that we can live in the freedom of this new way of life. And that’s really what it is—freedom. Our sinful natures want to resist and say this is the hard way, but the deeper reality is that life in light of the Gospel is how it’s supposed to be.

How do I help my teens see the ordinary from this perspective?

Perhaps no one desires the extraordinary more than teenagers. The last thing they want is a life that is “ordinary” (thanks, Instagram). Teens aren’t naturally inclined to and often haven’t reached a place of maturity where they can appreciate the ordinary, simple, mundane parts of life. Childhood is full of enchantment and imagination, and disenchantment often naturally sets in during the teenage years as we encounter some of the harsh realities of life. The hope is that we will reach a stage of “re-enchantment,” when our imaginations will once again be engaged and we can appreciate stories and fairy tales once again. [“It’s only what we learn](#) while doing what seems to be basically routine that really counts: how to endure, how to produce, how to make life rich at its most mundane moments.”

Childhood and young adulthood doesn’t feel ordinary. It’s always changing. You’re always looking forward to the next birthday, the next grade in school, the next, the next, the next. Always looking for the bigger and better. Help your teens slow down

and encourage them to enjoy what's right now. We don't want them to be averse to things like starting families and "settling down" because they think they always need to be seeking something new and different or bigger and better. **And we can only encourage this in them when we model it ourselves, when we ourselves aren't constantly pursuing the bigger and better.** Prepare your teens for ordinary life, and show them that it is good. But give them time. You were their age once, too.

What are some other habits for a gospel-shaped life?

- 1. Spiritual disciplines** keep us awake to what God is doing, and root us in the story of which we're a part. We mentioned reading the Bible, which, of course, is a wonderful habit to cultivate. A personal, individual quiet time is great, and so is reading the Bible with a group. The Institute for Bible Reading has a great [blog series](#) on how to engage with the Bible and why it's important to do so in community. Check out their website for more ideas on [how to read the Bible](#) in context and in community with your church or even as a family. And check out our [Parent's Guide to the Bible](#). It's been mentioned in other parent guides, but the Daily Office is a great way to pray as a family in a way that's rooted in Scripture. Check out this [Daily Office podcast](#) by the Trinity Mission, and try listening to it in the car together. (Their website has [more ideas](#) on how to engage with their podcast, even out-loud.)
- 2. Fellowship and hospitality** easily get pushed aside by our busy schedules, but don't underestimate their importance. Try designating one night a week to invite people over for dinner, even if it just means ordering pizza!
- 3. Pick a theme** for Ordinary Time as a family. In the ordinary everyday, what makes your family your family? It doesn't have to be hyper-spiritual. Or pick one really ordinary thing to be intentional in: eating well, sleeping, spending money, leisure, praying, worshiping at church, Sabbath...
4. Develop a **family mission statement** and/or a **Rule of Life**, which is a "well-thought-out, general description of how you want to live your life to the glory of Jesus Christ." [This guide](#) is perhaps a little more intense than necessary, but it's a good starting point and offers some great ideas. This might be a great tool to offer

to teens to complete on their own. Complete your own as well and then come back together and share what everyone has come up with.

Final thoughts

Our lives can be ordinary while still being extremely important and meaningful and significant. Ordinary doesn't mean apathetic or lack of care; it means practicing the presence of God at all times and in all ways. "[He is with us](#) in our kitchens, at our tables, with our visitors, and on our farms." And because He is with us always, nothing really is ordinary after all.

Related Axis Resources

- [The Culture Translator](#), a **free** weekly email that offers biblical insight on all things teen-related
- [A Parent's Guide to Lent](#)
- [A Parent's Guide to Holy Week & Easter](#)
- [A Parent's Guide to Advent](#)
- [A Parent's Guide to the 12 Days of Christmas](#)
- [A Parent's Guide to the Bible](#)
- [A Parent's Guide to Sabbath & Rest](#)
- [Prayer Video Kit](#)
- [Bible Video Kit](#)
- Check out [axis.org](#) for even more resources!
- If you'd like access to all of our digital resources, both current and yet to come, for one low yearly or monthly fee, check out the [All Axis Pass!](#)

Additional Resources

- [*Liturgy of the Ordinary*](#) by Tish Harrison Warren
- [*Every Moment Holy*](#), a book of prayers and liturgies for daily, ordinary life
- [*Theology of the Ordinary*](#) by Julie Canlis
- [*The Practice of the Presence of God*](#) by Brother Lawrence
- [Social Self-Care](#) podcast series

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Recap

- “Ordinary” Time is the space between Pentecost and Advent, a total of six months every year.
- Ordinary doesn’t mean boring! It comes from the word “ordinal,” meaning “counted.” It’s about practicing the presence of God in all times and in all ways.
- As important as Christmas, Easter, and other exciting events are, what we do with our normal, ordinary, everyday lives matters too.
- While doing radical things for Christ is good, it’s equally important that we do the mundane, ordinary tasks for Him as well. These mundane tasks aren’t distractions from what we’re made to do; they are what we’re made to do.
- Ordinary Time’s components are: Time (what is my family’s time centered around?); Worship; Rest and Sabbath (how can we delight in what God has given us?); Leisure (what can we pursue that allows us to experience life more fully?); Work/Vocation (who has God made each of us to be?); Love (how do we orient our lives around the common good?); and Grief.
- Teens often desire the extraordinary and are often told that only extraordinary lives matter. Help them to slow down, enjoy what’s right now, and see God’s grace in all things, big and small.
- Teens need us to model a life of devotion. We also need to stop pursuing bigger, better, more extraordinary in our own lives. It doesn’t mean we can’t work toward big things. It just means that that can’t be what gives us meaning and identity.
- Spiritual disciplines, fellowship, and hospitality can also help us in our pursuit of gospel-shaped lives.

Hint: Screen shot or print this page to refer back to later!

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Discussion Questions

- When you picture your life in the future, what does it look like? Would you be disappointed if you turned out to be something plain, like a secretary or a banker? Why or why not?
- What do you think it means to live every moment for Christ?
- Do you think you would feel like a failure if you never led large numbers of people to Christ or something equally big? Why or why not?
- What do you think matters more to God, to accomplish something epic or to take out the trash without complaining? Why?
- Why do you think Jesus came to earth and spent most of His life doing things that weren't significant enough to be recorded in the Bible? Why didn't He just come down as a man to immediately do ministry then die on a cross?
- How do you view normal, everyday life? Is it something to get through so that you can make it to the big events? Why or why not?
- Why do you think it matters how we orient our time?
- Do you think it would get tiring to have Christmas or Thanksgiving or your birthday all year round? Why do you think that is?

Hint: Screen shot or print this page to refer back to later!