

HISTORY

In December of 2005 a group of people who met through the Jesus Dojo began meeting for a retreat once a month to explore starting an intentional community dedicated to pursuing a common way of life inspired by the example and teachings of Jesus. For six months we casually experimented with various rhythms and practices and in May of 2006 twenty-two of us committed to a list of six general vows based on the teachings of Jesus: community, simplicity, service, creativity, obedience and prayer.

We wanted to take a step together toward fleshing out what these vows might mean for us—essentially promising to explore the meaning of this commitment over the next year. Over time a core of people began work on fleshing out how we could be more concrete in our commitments to God and each another—and the following is a summary of what we have found to be the most helpful practices from our experiments over the past year, since the first Dojo segment began in October of 2005.

A NAME: SEVEN

For a while we were calling what we were doing “common life” and some of us have spent hours brainstorming different names and approaches to a name for the community of people who are exploring vows together. We looked over the six vows and realized that the intent of all of them is to LOVE—God and people. If we added love, that would make seven vows. There were seven days of creation and there are seven days in a week and we seek the way of Jesus seven days a week through the seven vows we make. (As an added curiosity, many of us live in or near a principle city that is 7 by 7 square miles.)

We decided that it might be better to use a name that requires some explanation, because a lot of our attempts at a name that fully explained things was cumbersome or had the wrong connotations. So we are proposing SEVEN as a name to describe the activities and gatherings of our community.

WAYS TO BE INVOLVED IN SEVEN:

There are a variety of ways to be apart of the SEVEN experiment:

FRIEND. A **FRIEND** of **SEVEN** is welcome at any of our weekly public gatherings (Sunday’s group meeting, Thursday’s hospitality meal, and other random happenings). **FRIENDS** are invited to explore any of the rhythms associated with our vows. **FRIENDS** can visit a Jesus Dojo cohort once as a guest, (provided the cohort is notified in advance). After an interview with an advocate, a **FRIEND** may choose to join the next Jesus Dojo cohort.

APPRENTICE. After going through one Jesus Dojo segment a **FRIEND** may wish to become an **APPRENTICE** to more fully explore the rhythms and commitments of **SEVEN**. An **APPRENTICE** makes a formal commitment to meet with an advocate once a month and is invited to participate in **SEVEN** retreats and prayer times. After participating in a Jesus Dojo cohort for at least six months **APPRENTICES** are invited to go through a discernment process with the current members of **SEVEN** to take **VOWS**.

MEMBER. A **MEMBER** of SEVEN makes a year-long commitment to live by our SEVEN VOWS, participates in the weekly rhythms of the SEVEN, and contributes financially. A **MEMBER** is committed to serving, offering hospitality and supporting the initiatives of ReIMAGINE as a center for spiritual formation. Together the **MEMBERS** of SEVEN are involved in making decisions about the functioning of SEVEN, help with discernment and create new initiatives.

ADVOCATES: SEVEN is led by a group of **ADVOCATES:** MEMBERS who fully embrace the values and mission of SEVEN, demonstrate competency in their life management and have adequate time and resources to contribute. **ADVOCATES** serve as **MENTORS**, take primary responsibility for various dimensions of our life together and represent SEVEN publicly. **ADVOCATES** meet weekly for planning and go on a quarterly retreat.

WEEKLY RHYTHMS:

SUNDAY:	Seven Gathering 5-7 P.M. (including soup)
MONDAY:	Men's transparency group
TUESDAY:	Advocates Meeting (1:30-4 P.M.) Jesus Dojo Cohort (6:30-9 PM)
WEDNESDAY:	
THURSDAY:	Hospitality night (with rotating open house)
FRIDAY:	Morning prayer—2 nd and 4th Fridays (6-8 A.M.)
SATURDAY:	Recommended Day of Sabbath

ON VOWS/COMMITMENTS

A vow is a solemn promise made, before God and people, to take or refrain from a specific action. A vow expresses sentiment and intention, but also a commitment to a tangible action. (Paul of Tarsus, for instance once made a vow and did not cut his hair until his commitment was completed). Below are some examples of precedents for vows from the Judeo-Christian scriptures:

"Sacrifice thank offerings to God,
fulfill your vows to the Most High,

and call upon me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver you, and you will honor me." (Psalm 50: 14-15)

"From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly;
before those who fear you [a] will I fulfill my vows." (Psalm 22:25)

"For you have heard my vows, O God;
you have given me the heritage of those who fear your name... Then will I ever sing
praise to your name
and fulfill my vows day after day." (Psalm 61:5,8)

"Simply **let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No';** anything beyond this comes from the evil one." (Matthew 5: 37)

Through common vows we make our intentions to follow the ways of Jesus concrete and tangible. When a group of people make promises together they are able to support and encourage one another in their resolutions. We see making common vows as an earnest attempt to obey Jesus in the details and direction of our daily lives. The vows are an improvisational experiment. At the end of one year we will ask ourselves, "Which of the practices we adopted together were helpful?" and "Which practices should we keep and which should we stop?" So by making temporary vows together we hope to learn, over time, what are most helpful to seeking to love God and people in the way of Jesus.

THE VOWS OF SEVEN

We seek to love the creator and creation
By following the way of Jesus
And helping others discover life in the way

We commit ourselves to pursuing a way of life that is fueled by the Spirit and characterized by love. To do this we pursue these seven rhythms:

Service Simplicity Creativity Community Prayer Obedience Love

Service:

1. We account for and leverage our time to serve others through evaluating our commitments and developing a written schedule we share with one another that reflects our most important priorities.
2. We give priority in our schedules to seeking the presence of God with orphans and widows and people who are hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, lonely or in prison.
3. We seek to do work that provides income and fulfills our true vocation with dignity and in ways that promote equality, sustainability and justice.

Simplicity

1. We keep careful account of our personal finances and live budget that reflects sustainability and intentional conscientious priorities, and we share our income and expense budgets with one another in a yearly members meeting.
2. We give away 10% of our income; (5% to the common work of SEVEN and 5% to the charities of our choice).
3. We seek to live lives that are focused, content, sustainable, and generous. As a general principle we are mindful not accumulate possessions and, once a year, (on the day after thanksgiving) we collectively take an inventory of our belongings and evaluate what to keep, share, sell or give away.

Creativity

1. We cultivate divine imagination by reading the scriptures daily with our family or household.

2. We seek to find God in all of creation and our humanity through intentional and reflective interactions with nature and cultural artifacts.
3. We create cultural artifacts (recipes, poems, paintings, songs, stories, etc) and share them with each other once a month leaving a trail for others to discover and learn from. (The fourth Sunday evening of each month)

Prayer

1. We begin and end the day with 15 minutes of prayer.
2. We take an annual three-day silent retreat.
3. We participate in cooperative morning-prayer the second and fourth Fridays of every month.

Community

1. We are active in Jesus dojo cohort exercises.
2. We participate regularly in Sunday night SEVEN gatherings.
3. We practice hospitality on a weekly basis (Thursdays suggested) with neighbors, coworkers, travelers and strangers on a weekly basis.

Obedience

1. We keep our vows.
2. We meet with a trusted mentor at least once a month to talk about personal growth. (either someone within or another local person.)
3. We seek community discernment on major life decisions (ie. change of vocation, marriage, relocation, personal crisis, etc) through a listening meeting (scheduled for the 4th Sunday of the month).

Love

1. We seek to meet one another's needs.
2. We seek to be reconciled one with another and with all people.
3. We seek unity, cooperation and goodwill with all groups and people locally and globally seeking God in the way of Jesus.

What is the relationship between ReIMAGINE, Seven and The Jesus Dojo?

SEVEN is a community dedicated to inhabiting and teaching the way of Jesus through common priorities, practices and an intentional rhythms of life. Together we work as advocates for holistic and integrative Christian spirituality through the initiatives of ReIMAGINE.

ReIMAGINE! is a center for spiritual formation in San Francisco that sponsors community development projects, city-based learning experiences, and **The Jesus Dojo**, a year-long intensive formation process inspired by the life and teachings of Jesus. **ReIMAGINE!** also creates resources, and provides teaching and consulting to leaders and groups regionally and nationally. **ReIMAGINE!** is a non-profit organization governed by a local board of directors and funded through individual donors, churches, honorariums and program fees.