

How We Grow: Implementing the Spiritual Disciplines

Week 9 - Rest

May 12, 2024

I. Sharing Time

- A. How was your experience practicing the discipline of service this week? As you practiced throughout the week, did you notice or experience anything surprising, challenging, comforting, confusing, helpful, or encouraging? Invite your class to share with the people beside them, and then open it up for sharing with the class at large.

II. Teaching Time (*Teaching Video provided*)

- A. Teaching Narrative: We live in a fast-paced world. In his book *Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, John Mark Comer tells the story of an interview between John Ortberg and his mentor Dallas Willard. Ortberg called up Willard and asked him, “What do I need to do to become the me I want to be?” There was a long pause on Willard’s end, and then he says, “You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life...There is nothing else. Hurry is the greatest enemy of spiritual life in our day. You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life.”¹ When we add to our crazy schedules the way our minds become absorbed with screen time, we are hurry sick. Hurry is the greatest threat to our life with God. I love the way Comer emphasizes this: “Hurry kills relationships. Love takes time; hurry doesn’t have it. It kills joy, gratitude, appreciation; people in a rush don’t have time to enter the goodness of the moment. It kills wisdom; wisdom is born in the quiet, the slow. Wisdom has its own pace. It makes you wait for it...Hurry kills all that we hold dear: spirituality, health, marriage, family, thoughtful work, creativity, generosity. Hurry is a sociopathic predator loose in our society.”² And there is only one antidote to the hurry sickness in our lives...our spiritual discipline for this week—rest.

Over the years, Matthew 11:28–30 has become one of my favorite passages. Here’s the passage from the Message translation: “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.” This passage has always been really attractive

¹ John Mark Comer, *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook, 2019), 19–

² Comer, 52–53.

me! I hear this verse and I think, "Yes! This is what I want! This is what I need! I AM tired... worn out! I long for rest! I'm over the heavy burdens!" We want this life that Jesus promises.

But sometimes we miss the point of Jesus' invitation here. We want this life, but are we willing to adopt the lifestyle behind it? The reality is that the life Jesus describes here is the fruit of a lifestyle Jesus invites us to participate in. Jesus says, "Come to me. Get away with me. That's how you'll recover your life. Walk with me. Watch me. Learn my rhythms. Learn my lifestyle." Instead we find ourselves in this tug-of-war between two conflicting worlds—the life Jesus invites us to and the life that is expected of us by the world. A hurried life leads to stress, chaos, burnout, little to no sense of the presence of God, and distraction. Life in the Spirit leads to peace, rest, joy, abundance, and freedom. That's what this series has been all about. What habits can we build into our day-to-day life that can help us stay connected to the source of all life?

And rest is foundational to the abundant life! Sabbath is a gift from God to us. Abraham Heschel writes, "Sabbath is the most precious gift humankind has received from the treasure house of God." In the first century world, Sabbath was a controversial topic that the teachers of the law used to entrap Jesus, but Jesus reminded his followers, ""The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." They needed Sabbath then, and today, we need Sabbath more than ever. Our hearts, minds, and bodies are desperately craving rest because it is in that rest we are able to encounter the Lord.

B. Here's an initial question to discuss as a class: What does "rest" look like for you?

III. Discussion Time (*Questions Provided by Jason*)

- A. The author Adele Calhoun writes: "Rest can be a spiritual act -- a truly human act of submission to and dependence on God who watches over all things as we rest." How can rest be a "spiritual act?"
- B. Read Genesis 2:1-3. What can we take away from the picture of God resting from His work on the seventh day? What are the implications of this for us?
- C. In the sermon, Jason noted a recent study claiming that Americans average fewer than six hours of sleep per night. According to another study, the average American uses less than half of his / her PTO (paid time off) from work. What do you make of these statistics? Is it fair to say that rest is something that eludes many of us? In your opinion, why are we so resistant to rest?
- D. Psalm 62:1 says, "Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him." What does it mean for our souls to find rest in God? How is this linked to the idea of "salvation" in the same verse?

- E. Augustine said our souls are restless until they find rest in God. Do you agree? In what ways do you see restlessness manifesting in people's lives today?
- F. Read Matthew 11:28. How have you personally experienced this promise from Jesus?
- G. Spend some time talking about the Old Testament principle of Sabbath. Sabbath was given as a gift to people coming out of slavery. As slaves, the Israelites were valued by their masters solely on the basis of their production (making bricks for the empire). What does it say about God that He gives the Israelites a command to rest? How does this tie in with Genesis 2:1-3? How does this tie in with the image of God?
- H. NT scholar Archibald Hunter writes: "People in a hurry never have time for recovery. Their minds have little time to meditate and pray so that problems can be put in perspective. In short, people in our age are showing signs of physiological disintegration because we are living at a pace that is too fast for our bodies." What do you make of this statement? Are we really living at a pace that is too fast for our bodies?
- I. Read Psalm 73. What stands out to you about this psalm? How does time in the sanctuary (v17) change the author's perspective? Does time in the sanctuary with the Lord lead to a similar transformation for us?
- J. Close with some prayer time together.

IV. Invitation for the Week (***Invitation Video provided***): This week, we want to encourage you to plan a twenty-four-hour day of rest for yourself and for your family. The night before your Sabbath, spend time praying for rest and inviting the Lord into the day ahead. Consider pursuing things that will nourish you. Worship, listen to music, get coffee with your best friend, spend time with your spouse, take a walk, nap, eat delicious food, go fishing, be in nature, read, do your nails, watch the sun rise or sunset, make a fire, sing, go on a picnic, take a hike, play a game, or call a friend or family member who lives far away. Take your time, being intentional to waste time with God and with people you love. You might also consider saying no to some of these activities: phone, social media, the internet, TV and entertainment, shopping, social obligations, sports, weekend work, chores, errands, and people. Listen to the Spirit to discern what you need on this day of rest, and enjoy!