

## How We Grow: Implementing the Spiritual Disciplines

Week 9 - Rest

May 12, 2024

Additional Teaching Notes

From the very beginning, God knew that we needed rest. Genesis 2:3 tells us that after God had created for six days, he took a rest on the seventh. Later, God called the Israelites to be His chosen nation, His people, and He gave them what we now call the ten commandments. At the heart of one of these commands was rest: Remember the Sabbath, and keep it holy.

For God's people, this command was there for many reasons. It was so they could set aside a day to worship. But it wasn't just for worship. It was also a day for them not to work. It was a day to rest. It was a day to refocus. It was a day to step back from the busyness of the daily grind and take a breather.

In our world today, especially in the American culture, we don't seem to value rest the same way that God originally intended. We tend to work as much as humanly possible, and then, when we have a day off, we fill it with all sorts of other tasks and responsibilities.

In fact, we've made our lives so busy, that it doesn't really make sense to stop and rest. We have too many responsibilities, too many appointments, too many extracurricular hobbies and tasks that fill up our day.

But even Jesus, who, being fully God, came to this earth to live in human form, needed rest. Look at this passage from John 4:

*"Jacob's well was there, and Jesus tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon." John 4:6*

One of the greatest things we can see in Jesus that proves he was fully human while also being fully God while here on earth is that he got tired, and needed rest.

In this particular situation, Jesus was walking through Samaria to get from Judea to Galilee. No matter who you are, after exerting yourself for a while, your body will inevitably become tired. Here, Jesus needed to sit down, rest, and get some water.

Unfortunately, none of us are excluded from the need to rest. None of us have unlimited physical capacity. Rest restores us, not just physically, but also mentally as well.

In this situation, the rest paid off in ways more than just recovery time. It also gave Jesus an opportunity to talk with the Samaritan woman, who in turn took the saving message of Jesus to the entirety of her village.

## OTHER WAYS JESUS DEMONSTRATED REST

In Mark 4, after a long day of teaching, he took his disciples and left the crowd behind (vs 36). Having to spend every day teaching and being surrounded by crowds surely had a taxing effect on not only Jesus, but also his disciples. Sometimes, setting boundaries helps force us into rest that we need. When Jesus got into the boat, the crowds could not follow. It is completely acceptable to put boundaries up so people know you need to rest and recharge.

Another example of withdrawing from others to rest is found in Mark 6. In verse 30, the apostles gather around Jesus and talk about all they had done that day, but the people kept coming for more. So in verse 31, Jesus tells them "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

In the verses that follow, we see that the crowd sees them get on the boat and runs ahead to be there when they land. This time alone with his friends in the boat helped them all to prepare for the massive encounter that followed when they fed over 5000 people. Jesus knew they needed some rest before that moment.

In Mark 1:35, we read of one of the occasions when Jesus got up early in the morning and went off on his own to a solitary place to pray. The sun had not even risen yet, but Jesus took time to withdraw before the hustle and bustle of the day began to have spiritual rest time alone with His Father.

Sometimes rest can be achieved by being productive. In Mark 6:46, Jesus leaves his disciples and goes off by himself again to pray. Even though Jesus did not go off to sleep or nap, he went off on his own to re-energize his mind and reconnect with His Father.

In fact, Jesus does this a lot - Luke 5:16 tells us that he often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. This implies that Jesus knew how important this time was for him. He did this often, probably daily, withdrawing from crowds and spending time with God. This is important because he didn't wait until he was burned out to approach God and spend restful time with him, instead, doing this often kept him burning out.

Jesus not only demonstrates rest, but he also provides rest.

Jesus said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30)

It's not always easy to find rest. It's not always easy to find time to rest. Rest isn't always convenient. We have things that need to be done, things that need to be accomplished, tasks that need to be achieved.

We are typically given a day or two off each week from work, from school, from the daily grind we all go through. But how many of us actually take our days off and use them to rest? Instead, we fill those days with more things - travel, activities, ball games, commitments, and so on.

There's a reason why one of the ten commandments was to remember the Sabbath day and to keep it holy. God knew we needed time to rest, just like He did after creating the universe.

Jesus can provide rest like none other by allowing us to lay our burdens down at His feet so in turn HE can carry them for us.

While it is indeed difficult to find a complete day to rest as was prescribed to God's people in the Old Testament, we need to find a way to incorporate rest into our life.

We do this by being intentional in disconnecting from the hustle and bustle of the world around us. We do this by reconnecting with God on a regular basis. We do this by finding rest in Him. We do this by casting our cares and burdens and struggles on Him.

Other things you can do to find rest on a regular basis:

1. Schedule rest. Put it on your calendar, set aside time each day, each week, each month for scheduled rest. Otherwise, you may find yourself neglecting rest. And rest is not just done from 10pm to 6am while you are sleeping. Active rest is very important for your mental and physical and spiritual being. Designate a day, or at least portions of several days, to rest. Plan it out. Schedule it. Don't stray from it.

2. Make sure you set some boundaries for what you will and will not do while at rest. Answering work emails while you're relaxing in the recliner is not rest. It is work.
3. Plan your rest. What is it that provides you real, meaningful rest? What are some things that refresh you and your soul?
4. Don't be afraid to tell others you are resting. Resting is not just for the sick, the elderly, Kindergarten student napping - no, it is for all of us. Put your phone on "do not disturb" and set an automatic message to reply that you are spending time in rest and that you will get back to them later.
5. Spend extra time on other days to do chores. Get chores done as needed instead of stacking them up for your day off. Cook extra food one night so you have intentional leftovers for another evening.
6. While at rest - make sure you're doing something that distracts you from the worries and problems of the week. Take a walk, sit in your backyard with a journal, grab lunch with someone you love, play games with your children.
7. Finally - "waste time" with God. Do nothing but sit and rest with God. Connect through scripture reading, with silence and meditation.