

Finding Balance in Daily Rest Habits

Presented by Lauren Stibgen

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Day One

Why do we desire rest? What are the benefits of rest? And what do you consider rest? Is it physical? Mental? Or is it both. The years seem to roll by quickly, and with a new calendar comes new intentions that can often sputter out just as quickly as they came to mind. I want to consider rest, and how critical it is to this elusive work-life balance we often strive for.

We desire rest because it is how God created us—in his image—Imago Dei. Our God is a working God. We see this intentionality in scripture from the beginning. God gave us the first look at rest on the seventh day of creation after he had made everything—the heavens and earth and all created things.

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done (Genesis 2: 1-3).

Not only is rest one of the ways we are like God in his image but rest itself is holy.

Holy. How is this word defined? Dedicated and consecrated to God, sacred, devoted to the service of God, morally and spiritually excellent.

From this, we learn in rest we: dedicate ourselves to God, serve him in our rest, and display excellence both morally and spiritually! This makes me want to rest!

Although I know the ultimate model of this rest is truly the commanded Sabbath, making small habit changes each and every day can help bring you one step closer to learning how to find this seemingly elusive rest. After all, the benefits to you both physically and mentally are significant.

Leadership articles for work are wrought with commentary about rest. In fact, one Forbes business article states, “Rest is a fundamental part of success...” Benefits include improved mental health, boosted creativity, increased productivity, well-being, reduced stress, improved mood, and strengthened relationships.

I know God is in the business of all these things! He wants us to be healthy. He wants us to create like he did and does, and he most definitely wants our relationships with those closest to us to be strong. Even if business tells us rest will bring success, our God says, remember, you are made in my image. Seek my ways, for they are best.

Day Two

Are you a doom scroller? Did you know all those apps on your phone are uniquely created to keep you scrolling and passing time? If we are honest, we start with one silly animal video or even a news clip and then watch and watch.

Before we know it, an hour has passed. And what do we have to show for the scroll? Perhaps it has taken your mind off a hectic day, but has it done more harm than good? Has the viewing caused you to avoid things you should have done? Or maybe it raised your stress levels because you viewed something on social media that hurt your feelings.

I am all for a funny video, but often, the great access to digital distractions keeps us from true rest. Research tells us people spend on average about two hours and twenty-five minutes consuming social media per day. This consumption can ultimately take away from rest if we allow it. But what if that device can help you with practices of rest or help bring you closer in relationship with God?

With the advent of apps, there are many which focus on prayer, Bible verses, and quiet time in God's word. You may even be listening to this as a replay on your favorite digital platform, or you may tune in to our Zoom Bible Studies or our Walking Worthy podcast. All of this can be worthy time spent that draws you closer into relationship with God and the body of Christ.

If we go back to thinking about rest as holy, we can better frame our digital time. Are the things you are engaging with helping you dedicate yourself to God, serving him in your rest and displaying excellence both morally and spiritually? The well-named doom scroll is not doing any of these things. I would not consider it holy. But perhaps some of the other actions noted above are. Engaging with faith-based content can be good, until it causes you stress or takes away rest.

Your device has some tools which can help you to both plan and limit your time spent consuming media—faith based or not. Applying time limits on your favorite apps can be one way to increase your rest daily, limiting the temptation of the scroll. You can even set a passcode so you are not tempted to click "ignore" when your time is up. I know people who hold each other's passcodes for accountability.

Aside from time limits, I also use my phone to remind me to take small moments of quiet reflection during the day or to remind me to pray during the day when I get too busy. It has helped me take more restful time out. I also love peaceful worship music. For example, I love to listen to music and write at the same time. As I prepare to talk to our audience, my phone is playing a constant stream of lovely music in the background.

As you can see, a device can both be a help and a hinderance to rest. Ask yourself if the rest you are getting from being on your device is holy and pleasing to God! This is one measure you will not forget! Building good digital habits can help you get closer to Sabbath rest.

Day Three

We know rest is an important part of our wellbeing and balance. Rest is a command; it is holy, and it improves most everything God cares about for you from your physical and mental health to relationships! So, how are you finding rest in sleep?

A quick Google search defines sleep as "a condition of body and mind that typically recurs for several hours each night, in which the eyes are closed, muscles are relaxed, and the activity of the brain is altered."

Sleep is something God created our human bodies to do, and, while we know God rested on the seventh day, we also know God is all present, all knowing, and all mighty! One would say God is always on the job, and he is always on the job so we can depend on him—even for sleep. Jesus was the ultimate example of how important it is to sleep and wholeheartedly depend on God.

In Mark 4:37-38 we can picture this. A small boat being tossed to and fro in the waves with its passengers clinging to the sides, and there is Jesus, asleep on a cushion!

Is this a picture of your life right now? How much is your boat being tossed to and fro, and is it disrupting the most important rest, sleep? Lack of sleep can deeply hurt your immune system, your emotions, your ability to think and do good work, and it can even lead to increased depression and anxiety! If God created us for good works which he prepared beforehand (Ephesians 2:10), I would surely say he also created us for sleep! Without this we cannot do his good work!

In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves (Psalm 127:2).

There are countless readings you can do on good sleep hygiene. I have the pleasure of knowing a functional medicine doctor, Dr. Stacie Stephenson, who talks about the need for preparing your sleep space on a regular basis. Making small changes to your space can make all the difference in winding down for the night. She suggests: a cool, dark space. Make sure you eliminate blue light. You should also try to not engage with your phone or any media (like tv) an hour before bedtime. Taking a warm bath or enjoying an herbal tea can also help you wind down. Don't be overly ambitious with all these changes at once. Pick one or two small habit changes you can implement.

Day Four

Solitude is the state of being alone or being removed from the hustle and bustle of a day. As we consider daily rest that can help us with work-life balance, I was intrigued by solitude. Simply, this isn't something I do well, but I know it is a habit that can help draw me closer to God.

I know we say we want alone time, especially in the hurried pace of each day and competing priorities, but do we really like solitude? How do we quiet our minds when we do find this time? What could this look like?

We can look to our best model of rest once again: Jesus. First, when did Jesus find solitude and where? From Scripture, we know Jesus would often rise up in the morning while it was still dark to head to desolate places like a mountaintop to be in solitude. He knew doing this before the hustle of the day started would mean less interruption. He also knew it wasn't a matter of just rolling out of bed or resting quietly in bed to find this space. He physically went somewhere else.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went to a solitary place... (Mark 1:35).

Yesterday, we talked about the importance of sleep, so maybe rising early isn't something you feel you can do yet! Getting your sleep habits in order can get you into the holy rest habit of rising early like Jesus to find solitude! If you live somewhere where the weather is good so you can be in nature, that's amazing! But, for many of us who balance work and children, the solitary place may look a little different. Just like you work on small changes to your sleep habits, how can you adjust in small ways to find solitude in your home space? Is there a nook, or a corner or a comfy chair calling to you?

Why did Jesus seek solitude, and what did he do when he was truly alone? He considered important matters and prayed to God. It is also how he dealt with the heavy emotions like the loss of a dear friend or the stress of the multitudes seeking him in need.

Does this sound like you? I know as a Christian working woman you have many important matters to consider. You have stress from the day and quite often, you experience things which trouble your soul. If you are not finding moments of holy rest in solitude, how can you commune with the Lord to help discern important decisions or simply tell him your feelings?

Can you set that alarm even 15 minutes earlier tomorrow? Let rest be your motivation!

Day Five

Does finding rest in community sound counterintuitive? We have talked about some very individual ways to engage in rest the last few days. After all, sleep and solitude don't really match up with connection and community! They do help prepare you, however, to find rest in this very special way.

We find connection in community. We can also find that Jesus calls us to be in community with him! I have learned having other faithful believers in my midst helps me see how Jesus is my one place for rest. Community connection is a beautiful give and take of carrying each other's joys and burdens as we are told in Romans 12:15, and it is a reminder of what Jesus tells us in scripture:

Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28).

Jesus doesn't tell us to be alone. He tells us to come to him for rest. Even in the other rest habits of sleep and solitude, we know we are truly never alone.

As all of us are called to be Christ's ambassadors, one of the ways we can do this is by considering the simple words *come to me*. How are you opening yourself up to the rest habit of being in community? Are you in a small group at church? Do you have a Bible study that you participate in? Maybe you are part of one of our ministry offerings here at The Christian Working Woman.

The most important part of being part of any community is being consistent. You cannot reap the benefits of having someone rejoice with you or weep with you if you do not connect consistently. This is one of the things Jesus was so good at. He was always on the ready!

And think of all the ways we see him in community with his disciples. They attended a wedding together, they dined together, they celebrated important holidays together, they traveled together. Each and every opportunity was a chance for the disciples to get to know the heart of Jesus more and more.

We have focused on small daily habits that can help us find more rest. I know being in community like the disciples isn't a realistic daily habit most of us can employ, but what about even one person? Do you have a connection in faith that can help you see Jesus?

Is it sending an encouraging text to let someone know you are praying for something specific? Perhaps you can bring this person a meal during a stressful season. Even a greeting card can go a long way in making a person feel loved.

After all, the greatest commandment is love. In great love, there is great rest.