

Finding Rest

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Day One

I'm sure you've heard the phrase "*work-life balance*". When I hear it, I picture a seesaw, constantly trying to stay perfectly balanced. But if you've ever been on a seesaw, you know that's not easy. There are always ups and downs.

I'm not convinced that "balance" is the right goal. I think God calls us to something different—to healthy rhythms. Life has seasons. Some seasons are naturally busier than others, but how do we live out those seasons without always feeling exhausted, overwhelmed, and out of sync?

The truth is, you and I were never created to live at full throttle all the time. We were created to regularly rest. We were created to practice Sabbath. But what does that really mean? And what does it look like in our lives today?

Going back to the very beginning of Scripture, we see that God himself established the pattern. Genesis 2:3 says: *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.*

Think about that. God didn't rest because he was tired. He rested because he was establishing a rhythm for his creation. A rhythm you and I are meant to follow.

The Ten Commandments also references the Sabbath. Exodus 20 says: *Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work....* God points back to creation as the reason. Just as he worked for six days and rested on the seventh, he calls us to do the same.

Now, Sabbath certainly includes worship but notice that God also repeatedly emphasizes rest. He tells his people to stop working. To cease striving and to follow his example.

And perhaps even more importantly, I think we need to change our mindset. Instead of thinking, "*I have to take a day off*," what if we saw Sabbath as a weekly declaration that God is enough? It's a way of saying, "God, you're in control. The world keeps turning even when I stop working. I trust you to provide. I trust you with what didn't finish today."

Sabbath isn't primarily about following another rule. It's about nurturing our relationship with God. It's about trusting him enough to stop, worship, rest, and remember that he is the one who sustains our lives.

Day Two

Do you ever feel like you'll never get it all done? The to-do list just keeps growing, and there never seems to be enough time. I've certainly been there.

There have been seasons when I had so many responsibilities that I felt like I simply couldn't keep everything together. And when I finally slowed down, it wasn't because I had chosen to rest. It was because I was completely exhausted and had nothing left to give.

I want something different. I want healthier rhythms in my life. Rhythms that don't require me to pour out until I collapse. Maybe you can relate.

The interesting thing is I don't struggle because I dislike rest. In fact, I enjoy it. My struggle is that rest can feel irresponsible. My thoughts run to: "What if I fall behind? What if I don't get everything done? What if I disappoint someone or miss an opportunity?"

Yet Scripture invites us to rest not because our work is unimportant, but because God is faithful. Every time we intentionally pause, we make a declaration: my security doesn't come from my constant effort. It comes from the Lord God who never grows weary.

The challenge is our culture celebrates busyness. When someone asks, "How are you?" how often do you answer, "Oh, I'm good just super busy!" Sometimes busyness becomes a badge of honor. It makes us feel productive, needed, and even important.

But what is all that busyness doing to your soul? To your body? To your relationships?

In God's economy, busyness is never the goal. Faithfulness is. God cares far more about our relationship with him than about how many items are checked off the to do lists. Yes, he has given us meaningful work to do, but he has also commanded us to rest.

I remember a season of my life when I said yes to almost everything. I enjoy helping people, so saying yes came naturally. I'd volunteer to help, pick up an extra shift, make a meal for someone in need—good things, worthwhile things. But there was a cost.

As I looked honestly at my life, I realized that while I was caring well for everyone else, I was neglecting my own home and family. I liked being the person others could count on, but I wasn't paying attention to what it was costing the people closest to me—or even myself. That's when I realized I needed a new rhythm.

Now, instead of automatically saying yes, I pause. I pray. I look at my calendar. I ask whether this is really what God is asking of me in this season. Sometimes the answer is yes. Sometimes it's no. And that's okay.

Learning to rest isn't about becoming less productive. It's about trusting God enough to believe faithfulness is more important than constantly staying busy.

Day Three

Are you the kind of person who would rather do everything yourself than delegate or ask for help? I can be that way sometimes. It's not because I think I can do everything better than everyone else. Sometimes it's a control issue. Other times it simply feels like more work to explain the task, ask for help, and trust someone else to follow through.

As I've thought about that, I've realized I sometimes treat my relationship with God the same way. Without even realizing it, I start acting as though everything depends on me and my effort, my planning, my ability to keep checking things off the list. And before long, I'm exhausted because I'm striving in my own strength instead of depending on his.

As I've been learning to develop healthier rhythms that aren't centered only on work and productivity, God has been showing me something. I wasn't created to carry everything myself. More than anything, I need to trust him. I'm finite. He is not. I have limits. He doesn't.

One of my favorite passages is maybe a familiar one to you—Proverbs 3:5–6: *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.* Those verses raise some honest questions for me.

Do I really trust him in every area of my life? Or am I quietly depending on my own abilities, my own plans, my own resources? Do I truly believe he will lead me? That he has good purposes for today and for my future?

Notice what the passage doesn't say. It doesn't tell me to figure everything out or make every path straight myself. It simply says to trust him and submit to him. That's incredibly freeing. When I humble myself before God, remember his promises, and surrender my plans to him, I don't have to carry the weight of being in control. I can rest in him. He already knows my limitations. He never expected me to do everything or carry every burden on my own.

So how do we live this out? It's one day at a time. Really, one moment at a time. It's choosing to seek him throughout the day instead of relying only on ourselves. And it's choosing to set aside one day each week to stop striving. To let go of the unfinished work. To trust him with everything waiting for us next week.

Sabbath rest becomes an act of trust.

It's where our minds, emotions, and bodies are refreshed. It's where we stop toiling long enough to remember that God is still at work, even when we aren't.

Day Four

How do we live our lives walking worthy of Christ and not spend our day constantly exhausted? I've been looking at how God created us to rest. And, as always, Jesus is our best example.

Jesus was constantly in demand. Crowds followed him. His disciples needed him. Sick and hurting people came to him. The Pharisees watched and challenged him. And yet, Jesus made time to rest.

Luke 5:16 says, *But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.* Around this time, Jesus was healing people, and the news about him was spreading quickly. Crowds were coming to him to be healed of their diseases. Yet, right in the middle of all that demand and attention, Jesus withdrew to a lonely place and prayed. He wasn't driven by the desire to be popular, needed, or in demand. The kind of recognition that can so easily become a driving force in our lives wasn't his priority. His priority was doing the Father's will and that began with getting away from the crowds and spending time alone with God.

Sometimes I think we're afraid to be alone. We need constant busyness or noise. Maybe you and I are simply so accustomed to it that we don't even notice it anymore. But we need quiet. Our souls need time alone with God. Psalm 46:10 says, *Be still, and know that I am God.* God calls us to himself to be still and simply be with him.

Jesus also needed physical rest. John 4:6 says, *Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.* Jesus was tired, so he sat down and rested. He allowed the other disciples to go into town to get the supplies they needed while he stayed behind. And while he rested, he had an amazing conversation with the woman who came to the well. Jesus

didn't neglect his physical needs. He rested. And he trusted others to take care of what needed to be done.

I recently had the opportunity to get away and rest for a few days at a lake house. I noticed this saying that was on a plaque in the home: "Time wasted at the lake is time well spent."

I take it to mean that rest and not doing your ordinary life of work—getting out of your daily routine and relaxing and enjoying time at the lake is not wasted. That rest is important. That this time is valuable. I would argue that we also need to "waste time" with God. Not because our time is actually wasted, but because sometimes the most productive thing we can do is simply rest in him. I think the plaque could read "Time wasted with God is time well spent!"

Day Five

Sometimes it feels like I'm living for a break—for that time when I can finally get away, rest, and come back refreshed and energized. And there's certainly a place for getting away and resting. But I've realized it can't be my only plan. I need to learn how to be refreshed in the middle of everyday life, rather than always looking ahead to the next vacation or weekend. I don't want to spend my life, as our culture sometimes puts it, "living for the weekend."

God gave us a rhythm of rest. He set apart the seventh day as a day of rest because he knows you and I need it. We need weekly rest, not just vacation rest when we leave town. And yet, it can be surprisingly easy to ignore this rhythm.

I've been talking about how busyness and our tendency to say "yes" to everything can spill over into our rest. And sometimes our unwillingness to stop or our failure to trust God with what needs to get done can keep us from truly resting.

But I believe it is important and shouldn't be ignored, especially since it is God's Word. Putting this into practice will take some intentionality. It's not simply about time management, although, in a way, it is. We have to actually make space for rest and protect that time. And that isn't always easy.

Resting doesn't have to be on Sunday. I realize that doesn't work for everyone. What I do want to emphasize is the importance of intentionally setting aside 24 hours each week to rest. I think there's also freedom in how we practically do this. Maybe, for you, your Sabbath begins around Thursday evening and continues through Friday evening. Maybe you mark that time as different by not running errands. Perhaps you make a special meal you enjoy, take a long walk, spend time with a friend, or do something you wouldn't normally make time for during the week.

And, of course, it should include time with God. Time to simply rest and be with him rather than always doing. Read his Word, but don't rush through it. Meditate on what you're reading. Read a good book. Take your time. Don't let yourself be ruled by the clock.

I encourage you to prayerfully ask God how you can build regular Sabbath rest into your life the way he intentionally designed it for us. God designed us to work from a place of rest, not to work so hard that we find ourselves exhausted and needing rest.

Walking worthy of Christ sometimes means knowing when to stop, be still, and simply rest with him.