

Daily Devotional: For when your burden is heavy.

Day 1: Presence

Scripture: Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28

Jesus is inviting you to rest in him. Read this verse out loud. Remind yourself that it is an invitation to you. That when you are weary, Jesus wants you to rest in him.

Prayer:

Are you willing to go to Jesus for him to give you rest? Tell him-and tell him why you need it. Imagine you're talking to your best friend-what would you say to them after a hard day? Be honest-if it's what you're feeling-tell him. If you feel like you shouldn't say it or feel it, say it anyway. If you're going to go to him, you have to go to him with all of you-not just the parts you think he'll like.

Today, just focus on going to Jesus with your troubles, and pray for him to be with you through them.

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Day 2: Guidance

Scripture: Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light." Matthew 11:29-30

Often, we want God to answer our prayers like magic. We ask for peace and poof! It exists... But that's not how life works-often, in order for God to give us the things we're asking for, there are things in our lives that need to change. Read the verse again-what does he say? "Learn from me... and you will find rest for your souls". So as we go to prayer today, let's begin to learn from him.

Prayer:

Begin where we left off yesterday-in God's presence. Today, we want to begin to be taught by him. Tell him that, and think about it for a minute. Make sure you are in a headspace where you are ready to learn-even if you don't like the lesson.

Here's the question: "Jesus, is there something in my life that needs to change before you can bring me the peace I'm searching for?"

And now, perhaps the most important part of prayer: you listen. Clear your mind and give him time to speak to you. Is there a specific area of your life that keeps coming to mind? As you reflect on the different areas of your life, does that feeling of being overwhelmed begin to seem more clearly linked to one area over the others?

You may not have an answer immediately-after spending some time in quiet, dedicated prayer, feel free to go about the rest of your day. Over the next 24 hours, keep that question in your mind, and continue listening. Sometimes God speaks directly to us in our prayer times. Sometimes he speaks to us through our conversations with others, and sometimes it's something else entirely.

If you hear something clearly, just take time to process for now and be confident you're hearing correctly. Today we're not trying to fix anything, so don't worry about that for now-today we're just asking God what area of our life needs *something* to change.

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Day Three: Focus/Clarity

Scripture: One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish."

"Master," Simon replied, "we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again." And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking.

When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm such a sinful man." For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed.

Jesus replied to Simon, “Don’t be afraid! From now on you’ll be fishing for people!” And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus. Luke 5:1-11

In this passage, Jesus calls his first disciples to follow him. At the end of the story, they leave *everything* and follow him.

Prayer: Today, we’ll begin to seek where God is leading us to bring change in our lives in the areas we prayed about yesterday. The first thing we’re going to pray about is this: is there an area of our life that we need to leave behind? Maybe it’s the extra activity we signed our kids up for or perhaps the overtime at work we keep volunteering for. Ask God if the issue in your life right now is that you’re doing something that needs to go.

If this feels like where God is leading you, maybe take some time to read through more of the gospel story. Remind yourself of all the amazing things the disciples got to experience *because they left everything behind*.

If you clearly see something in your life that needs to go—take a deep breath and take your time. Sometimes this change will be easy, and other times it won’t be easy, or simple. Take the next day to pray about what it looks like to change. Is it possible to stop immediately or not? If stopping immediately would be harmful to others, prayerfully consider what timeline and plan moving forward is best.

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Day Four: Attitudes

Scripture: After saying these things, Jesus crossed the Kidron Valley with his disciples and entered a grove of olive trees. Judas, the betrayer, knew this place, because Jesus had often gone there with his disciples. The leading priests and Pharisees had given Judas a contingent of Roman soldiers and Temple guards to accompany him. Now with blazing torches, lanterns, and weapons, they arrived at the olive grove.

Jesus fully realized all that was going to happen to him, so he stepped forward to meet them. “Who are you looking for?” he asked.

“Jesus the Nazarene,” they replied.

“I am he,” Jesus said. (Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.) As Jesus said “I am he,” they all drew back and fell to the ground! Once more he asked them, “Who are you looking for?”

And again they replied, “Jesus the Nazarene.”

“I told you that I am he,” Jesus said. “And since I am the one you want, let these others go.” He did this to fulfill his own statement: “I did not lose a single one of those you have given me.”

Then Simon Peter drew a sword and slashed off the right ear of Malchus, the high priest’s slave. But Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword back into its sheath. Shall I not drink from the cup of suffering the Father has given me?” John 18:1-11

At the end of this story, Peter jumps forward to defend Jesus, cutting off the ear of the high priest’s servant. Peter was in the right place, but was doing the wrong thing-in particular, taking matters into his own hands.

Prayer: Is there an area in your life where you’re in the right place, but acting out of your own instincts, desires, or plans? Pray that your way of approaching these situations is in line with God’s plan. Keep in mind: repentance is more than simply apologizing for error or intentional rebellion. It is a turning away from what we have been doing and turning to God and his plan.

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Day Five:

Choose one or more of the following passages where Paul discusses how God empowered him

to endure hardships, trials and tribulations:

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

2 Corinthians 4:7-10

2 Corinthians 1:8-10

Philippians 4:11-13

2 Timothy 4:16-17

Romans 8:35-39

First of all, if you’ve made it this far-great job! It is no easy thing to surrender before God. Here’s the thing-sometimes...you’re exactly where you’re meant to be, doing

exactly what you're meant to do...God has just placed you somewhere that you don't have the strength for on your own.

You might be wondering why we waited until day five to pray for strength. Here's the simple answer: if you are in a situation that you can't handle that *is* God's will-he will give you the strength to stand firm. If, however, we find ourselves in a situation that we can't handle that is *outside* of God's will, why would we expect him to give us strength?

For more reading and an example of this, look at the downfall of Saul in 1 Samuel 28 & 31.

Prayer: Continue to reflect on the epistles listed above as you ask God to strengthen you. Consider calling a trusted Christian friend and ask them to join you in praying for strength in your current situation.

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Day Six:

Scripture: Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."
Matthew 11: 28-30

Today, we return to our original scripture. As you read it now, five days later, how do you feel? Has your perspective changed at all? How is your reaction to these verses different than it was previously? If you feel more at rest, thank God for what he has done and look for opportunities to share the testimony of what he has done with others.

Prayer:

If you're still struggling-that's okay, too. Maybe it's time to partner with someone else to continue to pray. Reach out to a pastor or other trusted spiritual leader in your life and set up a time to get together and continue to work through your situation.

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