

## It Matters Rest Matters

**Intro:** Tomorrow is Labor Day. It is a day set aside to honor the contribution of workers in the US. The first celebration was Sept 5, 1882. Oregon was the first state to pass a law recognizing Labor Day in 1887. Since most people have tomorrow off, I thought this would be a great time to talk about rest. (Wrapping up our series) WHY?

- We live in a culture that celebrates being busy. “How are you?” — “Busy!” We often measure our value by what we accomplish...how much we can get done. Even when our bodies stop, our minds keep running. Many people are exhausted physically, emotionally, spiritually, and relationally. Fatigue is simply a common experience in our culture. If we don’t say “busy” we often say – “Tired.”
- The problem is God never designed us to live without rhythms of rest. From the beginning of creation, God built rest into what He made.

*Genesis 2:2-3* Remember, God created everything in six days and rested on the seventh.

Why did God rest on the seventh day? He certainly wasn’t tired or exhausted from His creative work. No. He set an example for us to follow. He showed us a life rhythm.

If God established a rhythm of work and rest, we need to understand what He is teaching us. Rest is not a sign of weakness or laziness; it is a God-designed rhythm that restores us, reminds us, and reconnects us with God and others.

We have forgotten how to rest. Rest Matters

### 1. Rest is a gift from God

*Genesis 2:2-3* “On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested<sup>[a]</sup> from all his work. <sup>3</sup>And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.” (NLT)

- God rested—not because He was tired, but because He established a pattern for His creation. Rest is not something we earn after we have accomplished everything. It is something God gives us because He knows what we need.
- Rest is part of God's design, not an interruption to God's design. We are human beings not human doings. Rest reminds us to BE
- We often think: “I’ll rest when everything is finished.” But everything is never finished. There will always be another email, another project, another problem, another responsibility. Life will always have infinite responsibilities to accomplish.
- Therefore, don't wait until you are exhausted to rest. This is what I used to do. I would run full speed for so long until I hit the wall. I would be completely spent mentally, emotionally, spiritually and then I was pretty worthless relationally.
- I used to say things like; “I’ll rest when I’m dead” or “I’ll sleep when I’m dead.” But what I was actually doing was rejecting God’s gift of rest.

## 2. Rest requires trust in God

*Exodus 20:8-10 “Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. <sup>9</sup> You have six days each week for your ordinary work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God...” (NLT)*

- The Sabbath was an act of faith. When Israel stopped working, they were essentially saying: “God, I trust You to provide even when I am not producing.”
  - Let me explain some context why Israel had to trust God. They collected food every day in the form of manna. (Explain)
  - Therefore, the Sabbath was not only about rest, it was also an issue of trust in God’s provision. Therefore, if we can’t rest we are saying we don’t trust God. We trust ourselves more.
- That is difficult for us because we often connect our security to our productivity. We think:
  - If I work harder, I’ll be secure.
  - If I accomplish more, I’ll have value.
  - If I keep going, everything will be okay.

- But biblical rest says:

“God is my provider—not my productivity.” Rest is an act of surrender. When we rest, we acknowledge: “The world can keep turning without me.” God will take care of me. I put my trust in Him. Rest is an act of faith.

## 3. Rest restores what busyness drains

*Mark 6:31 “Then Jesus said, “Let’s go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile.” He said this because there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles didn’t even have time to eat.” (NLT) (explain context)*

- Notice that Jesus didn’t say: “Let’s work harder.” He said: “Come away...and rest.” Jesus understood human limitations. He understood the need for rest, stillness, quiet. He understood the need to put something back in when we’ve been giving out.
- We are not machines. We have physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual limits. Without rest:
  - We become irritable.
    - I know when I don’t rest, I lose my grace for others. I lose patience, I become short, my language can be sharper than it needs to be. Things just irritate me more. My go with the flow attitude disappears.
  - Our perspective becomes distorted.
    - Weariness distorts our reality. Fatigue creates a lens we begin interrupting life through. It clouds judgement – Just a lack of sleep impacts reasoning and complex thought processes. Rest is essential.
  - Our relationships suffer.

- Relationships require resources. If we are constantly depleted mentally and emotionally, we have nothing left to give the ones we love. Years ago, Lisa told me the church got the best of me and she and the kids got the leftovers.
- Our spiritual sensitivity decreases.
  - Weariness is going to impact our spiritual life as well. It's not going to matter how much you pray asking God for more strength. If you're refusing to rest, He's not going to give you more endurance so you can destroy yourself. It's tough to hear God when you're exhausted.
- Small problems become big problems.
  - As we distort reality, now small things we handled easily when rested become major issues. We blow them out of proportion.
- We become more vulnerable to temptation.
  - Just like fatigue can make you more prone to physical sickness, that same weariness lessens our resistance to temptation. You will always feel the pull of temptation more intensely when you are mentally, emotionally, physically tired.
- Rest creates space for restoration. Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is stop. If you're not resting, you cannot pray your way out of that.

#### **4. Rest is more than sleep**

*Psalms 46:10 — "Be still, and know that I am God!..."*

- Biblical rest involves more than physical recovery. This is the easiest one to recover from. The others are harder. They take more intentionality.
- Everyone basically has four fuel tanks. These 4 tanks literally fuel or empower our lives. Life takes resources out of each tank. Rest allows us to put resources back in.
- The four tanks are: Physical – Mental – Emotional - Spiritual
- Physical rest
    - Taking care of the body God gave you. This includes sleep – nutrition - exercise
  - Mental rest
    - Stepping away from constant information, decisions, and stimulation. Our minds get exhausted by the constant information. What does mental rest look like to you?
    - For me it is reading – nothing ministry related – explain
    - Nature
  - Emotional rest
    - Allowing your soul to breathe instead of constantly carrying everyone else's burdens. Where do you get away from the constant demands on your emotions – your heart –
    - Where do you tend to the needs of your own heart?

- For me I find this in solitude – explain – nature slows my heart and mind down.
- Core relationships – people I can be completely transparent with.
- Spiritual rest

- Being still before God and remembering who He is. Jesus said:

*Matthew 11:28-29 “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”*

- For me this is in times of solitude...and once again nature. God’s creation reminds me of who He is. Not preparing a lesson for others – it’s not studying God’s word. I do this for a living. Spiritual rest for me is not studying more. It’s knowing I’m enough doing nothing. Just hanging out with God is enough.

## **5. Rest is not being lazy**

*Ps. 127:2 “It is useless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night, anxiously working for food to eat; for God gives rest to his loved ones.” (NLT)*

- Some people resist rest because they think resting means being irresponsible. But Scripture does not condemn rest. It condemns idleness. There is a difference between: Idleness: refusing to do what God has called you to do.
- Rest: intentionally stopping so you can continue faithfully doing what God has called you to do. Rest actually allows me to do more for God not less.
- Rest isn't quitting. Rest is preparation for continued faithfulness. Even Jesus withdrew from the crowds. Even Jesus slept. Even Jesus took time away. If Jesus made room for rest, we should too.
- I had to stop calling rest lazy. In fact, Lisa called me out on this a number of years ago. Explain. Is it a relaxing day or a lazy day?
- Rest is therefore an act of obedience.

## **6. Rest is part of a healthy life rhythm**

*Ecclesiastes 3:1 “For everything there is a season,...”*

God created rhythms: Work and rest, Giving and receiving. Speaking and listening. Activity and stillness. Serving and being refreshed.

- The goal isn't to eliminate work. The goal is to eliminate a lifestyle where work has no boundaries. This is what destroys us.
- Consider establishing three rhythms – Three boundaries for work and rest.
- Daily:
  - Take time each day to slow down, be still, pray, reflect, calm your mind and heart.
  - Maybe it is early morning for some. (This is best for me – explain) For others it may be in the evenings. Find a time and try to stick to it. This way you develop a new habit of daily rest. Even 10-15 minutes will have an impact.
  - This is also more than your “devotion time” with God. Sometimes even our bible reading can become another task we need to accomplish. Practice being still. It is a lost skill set. Our culture is afraid of quietness and stillness. Try to be aware of God being with you.

- Weekly:
  - Have a period of intentional rest from normal work and responsibilities. We all have days off from our normal work. What most of us do is work for the next two days at home getting the projects done. I'm not sure God would call this rest.
  - Do you have times weekly where you are not productive? Almost sounds sinful, doesn't it? See how deep rooted this thinking is.
  - What are you doing to pour back into the tanks that were depleted that week? It could be a hobby – it could be time with your spouse having fun – it could be another relational connection – What things put back into you emotionally – mentally – spiritually?
  - As important as being together is on Sundays, it may not fill all the tanks. Be a student of yourself. Learn what specific things replenish each tank.
- Seasonally:
  - Take extended time away for renewal—vacations, retreats, or simply getting away. I cannot overemphasize the importance of these times.
  - Put them on the calendar first. This is what Lisa and I do. We plan around these breaks. We've learned over the years when we need extended times to recharge. We have seasonal rhythms. When we ignore them, we don't do well. I've learned the hard way.
  - Some people do stay-cations. For some this simply means you take vacation time from work so you can work full time at home.
  - Life is short and we have limited time and opportunity with the people we love. You're never going to get to the end of your life and wish you worked more. You will regret not taking time to be human and embrace the gift of life God gave you.
  - Therefore, make memories not just money. What I've discovered is that great memories restore. This is why these times go on the calendar first.

### **Final Thought:**

If you never stop, you may eventually stop functioning—but if you learn to rest in God, you can continue faithfully for the long haul.

Ask yourself:

Where am I refusing to rest?

What am I afraid will happen if I stop?

Am I trusting God enough to rest?

What rhythm of rest does God want me to establish?

### **Prayer:**