



REJOICING FROM A PLACE OF REST

Think of a time when you felt really, really tired. The alarm went off in the morning, and although your mind was instantly filled with dozens of things you needed to do, all you wanted was to sleep the rest of the day. But more sleep didn't shake the feeling. The tiredness went deeper. It seemed to reach your soul - draining your motivation. Or your mind - making it hard to focus.

Maybe you feel some version of this now. It's so common for those in ministry.

From this place, it is nearly impossible to rejoice. It's much easier to feel frustrated and complain. It can even feel like we've lost the passion we once had for God - lost our first love (Revelation 2:4).

And that's completely normal. The Bible makes it clear that rest is essential. In fact, when God gave the law to the Israelites, rest made it into the top ten, right up there with 'don't murder' and 'don't steal' (Exodus 20:8-11). We were created to rest daily through sleep and weekly through Sabbath.

In many cultures, rest is not valued. Instead, it's associated with weakness, lack of ambition, self-indulgence, or laziness. Not things we want to sign up for! But God says that it's His gift to the ones He loves - a gift we need to accept in order to thrive (Psalm 127:2).

Jesus modeled this for us. After a season of intense ministry, He invited His disciples to come away and rest (Mark 6:31). He also regularly stepped away from the crowds to be alone with God (Luke 5:16). And He valued unrushed time around meals with His friends and followers (Luke 7:36, Matthew 26:20, John 21:12).

Even God rested after creating the world. He stopped His work, looked at what He had made, and rejoiced (Genesis 1:31).

There are many cultural pressures to stay busy. But we too need moments when we can step away from our work and reflect on all that God has done. We need times when we come before God and allow Him to refresh our souls and spirits. We need downtime with friends and family to laugh and relax. And we need sleep to restore our bodies.

In summary, God:

- Created** us to need rest,
- Commands** us to rest,
- Gives** us rest as a gift, and
- Models** rest in His own life and ministry.

And we are our best selves when we make rest a regular part of our lives.



Reflection

AUGUST

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1. How is rest viewed in your culture or background?

What barriers (internal and external) do you face to being able to rest?

How does Psalm 127:2 challenge these cultural beliefs and your own challenges to rest?

2. The yearly Week of Prayer and monthly Day of Prayer offer an opportunity to withdraw and pray like Jesus did. (What other job gives you a week to spend in God's presence?!) Reflect on these times.

Were you able to switch off fully and be present with God during the recent Week of Prayer?

If not, what distracted you?

What can you do to make the Day of Prayer each month more restful and restorative?

3. Read Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 8:15-16 and 1 John 3:1.

How might grasping our identity in Christ influence our habits of rest?

4. Read Mark 1:35 and Luke 5:16.

As discussed above, Jesus had a slower pace of ministry than what we might expect from someone with such an important mission. Why do you think Jesus withdrew regularly to be with God even though He was the Son of God?

What can we learn from this about how to balance rest and ministry?

5. Read Matthew 11:28-30. What an amazing offer from Jesus!

What do you think it means in your context?

6. Isaiah 30:15 says, 'In repentance and rest is your salvation. In quietness and trust is your strength.'

How does this verse contrast with commonly held views of what strength is and how to earn salvation?

What does this verse teach us about God's way of doing things?

7. What are barriers to having a weekly Sabbath? What can we do to better take a day off