

Taking Time to Rest

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 2:3)

Scripture: Genesis 1:31–2:4a

Song: “God So Loved”

When I was a kid, nap time was still a daily part of school for little ones. As adults, we don’t often have or make time for naps, yet research shows napping improves alertness, mood, memory, and performance. In fact, in many Mediterranean countries, daily naps or breaks are part of their culture.

In Western culture, we tend to overvalue work and resist resting, yet God Himself, who never grows weary (Isaiah 40:28), chose to rest—for an entire day—after completing His creation. The Hebrew word used here for rest is *shabbath*, meaning “to cease, desist, or rest.” God stopped working. He took a day off! He then took it a step further and called it *holy*, which emphasizes how important it is to set apart a day of rest.

If God Himself rested, how much more do we require it? We are bombarded by noise and busyness, and our bodies need to unplug from that regularly. We need time to be still, rest our minds, and soak in God’s presence so He can refill and restore us. How might you incorporate more rest in your life?

Father, help me make rest a priority. Show me how You would have me spend that time, so that I might be restored to continue doing the work of Your Kingdom. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

February 9–15. **Jenifer Regennitter** lives in Illinois. She is an author and lover of antiques and classic film.

Sabbath Rest

There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. (Hebrews 4:9–10)

Scripture: Hebrews 4:1–11

Song: “The Love of God”

I was recently watching an old episode of *The Donna Reed Show* in which the two children, Jeff and Mary, come to believe that they have pushed their parents too far and that their parents no longer love them. The children decide to be “extra good” to win back their parents’ love.

Sometimes people worry about whether or not they are staying in God’s good graces. *I messed up; am I still saved?* God offers a specific type of Sabbath-rest for believers. It is a different from physical or emotional rest. This is the rest we find when we trust that our belief in Jesus secures our eternal future. We don’t have to attain salvation through the things we do (our “works”). We don’t have to strive to be good enough. We have confidence that through Jesus, our salvation is assured.

Imagine how God loves us—so much that He would sacrifice His Son so we can spend eternity with Him. It is a love so wide, long, high, and deep (Ephesians 3:18) that it envelops us. His love is the safest place for us to allow ourselves to trust—to rest—in His promise.

Father, thank You for loving me so much, for making a way for me to be with You for all eternity. Help me to rest and trust in Your unfailing love. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

He Satisfies Our Needs

The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. (Isaiah 58:11)

Scripture: Isaiah 58:8–14

Song: “Fill My Cup, Lord”

I recently discovered some kind of vine that had found its way through a hole or crack in the foundation of my house and into my basement. Certain plants seem to have a will to survive that causes them to spring up in places that don't make sense—like through cracks in the pavement.

Life's challenges can sometimes wear us out. We may feel dry, tired, and weak. God promises that He will satisfy our needs and give us strength to keep going. He can make us flourish in circumstances where we should be failing. He knows where to guide us so that we have access to exactly what we need to get through. He knows how to place the right people and resources in our life to fill us up when we need it.

The key is to focus on God's ability and not our own, on His faithfulness and not our circumstances. When we are tired and dry, He promises to fill us up and give us the strength we need. He doesn't condemn us for being tired but offers us living water to quench and refresh us.

Father, You know all my needs. I bring them to You now and thank You for meeting them in Your way and timing. Thank You for Your presence that waters my soul and fills me up. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

A Heart Change

“If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’[a] you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”
(Matthew 12:7–8)

Scripture: Matthew 12:1–13

Song: “Change My Heart, O God”

As a therapist, I’ve noticed that many people struggle with rigid, black-or-white thinking. This kind of thinking leads to criticism of self and others because it pushes a narrative that there is only one right way to do things, one perfect standard to meet, and everything else is failure.

This kind of thinking can sneak into our spiritual life as well, causing us to be focused on the “rules” of Christianity. We may cling tightly to our church’s traditions and get upset when changes are made because “we’ve always done it this way.” We may view other Christians critically because they believe or practice their faith differently, and we subconsciously pat ourselves on the back for doing things the “right” way. The Pharisees struggled with this, and Jesus tried to help them see that following rules is not what pleases God, but rather showing mercy to others.

How might God want to expand your heart today? Spending time with God and learning about Jesus is the best way to cause a heart change that reveals itself in how merciful, compassionate, gracious, and loving we are toward others.

Father, thank You for being a God whose mercies are new every morning. Please show me where You would have me show more mercy and grace to others. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Right on Time

Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. (Matthew 28:9)

Scripture: Matthew 28:1–10

Song: “He Leadeth Me”

Once when I was in college, I was driving to my apartment from work when I got a flat tire. This was a small town and mostly safe, but being a young woman alone with no knowledge of how to change a tire was stressful, nonetheless. Suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, a man on a bicycle appeared and stopped to help me put on my spare tire. It was the help I needed right on time.

In this passage, the two Marys and the disciples are in one of the darkest times of their lives. Their beloved teacher and leader has been executed, and they are grieving and confused. Suddenly, an angel appears with the message that Jesus is not there but has risen. Then just as suddenly, Jesus Himself shows up to confirm what the angel has said. In the midst of difficulty and despair, Jesus meets them with hope and encouragement.

Even in the darkest moments of our lives, God is faithful to meet us. He understands all our pain, weariness, and confusion, and He meets us there to lift us up and renew our hope. Make a list of times God met you right on time with just what you needed. Use it as a reminder of God’s love and faithfulness to build your faith when you’re struggling.

Father, thank You for Your perfect timing, and for meeting me where and when I need it on my journey. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Setting Apart Time

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.” (Exodus 20:8)

Scripture: Exodus 20:1, 8–11

Song: “Refiner’s Fire”

If you live in a mid-century or older home, you may have a room at the front of your house that would have been used as the “formal” living room. This was a space that was only used when company came over, and it was not to be played or eaten in for any reason. It was set apart for special occasions.

The word *holy* in this Scripture means “set apart.” God instructs His people to keep the Sabbath holy, or set apart, by resting and not laboring. What else might we do to set that day apart? How might we be impacted if we dedicated time to worship God on our own, to spend time in nature appreciating His creation, or to bless others in some way? God places special importance on setting the Sabbath apart because He knows that in our intimate time with Him we are filled, renewed, and restored. He knows that set-apart time with Him enables us to hear His direction more clearly. He cannot sustain us if we are not setting apart time to connect intimately with Him.

Let us also not forget that God seeks this time simply because He loves spending time with us! Our creator loves connecting with His creation. He loves being with us, providing for us, and ministering to us to give us strength for our journey.

Father, thank You for being a God who loves connecting with Your people. Help me to set apart more time with You to connect intimately and to honor You. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Putting Differences Aside

If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.
(Romans 14:8)

Scripture: Romans 14:4–8

Song: “Let There Be Peace on Earth”

A few years ago, a picture of a dress went viral online, and a debate ensued about whether the dress was gray or blue. People argued vigorously on either side of the debate, sure that how they saw it was the correct way.

In this passage of Romans, Paul is admonishing the church to stop arguing about unimportant issues, like what they eat or what day they set apart. He emphasizes that what is important is that we practice our convictions in a way that honors God, remembering that whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. Paul’s point is that we should accept each other even when we don’t agree. We are called to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9), and one way to produce peace is by respecting our differences. When our desire to honor others is more important than our desire to be right, we become instruments of peace. How desperately our world needs peacemakers right now!

Ask God to show you anyone you have not accepted because of a difference of opinion. Seek reconciliation if possible and agree to put your differences aside so you can focus on the work of building God’s Kingdom.

Father, forgive me for having a hard heart. Help me to put aside differences and to love others unconditionally. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.