

Daily Devotional, August 26, 2021 Rest, (Even for the Weary)

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)

Jesus provides rest to those who are weary and burdened, and His life inspires the importance of it. Rest recharges our spiritual “batteries” and restores God’s profound peace. When Jesus needed rest, He withdrew from the people, retreated from daily activities, and took a temporary break from the demands of His ministry in order to be intimately connected to the presence of God. Needless to say, the best way to learn the value of rest is from Jesus’ life.

Currently, the COVID-19 pandemic is beginning to turn many lives upside down again. Public health actions, such as social distancing and masking up again, is causing some people to feel isolated once again. Others are worrying about personal health as well as the health of loved ones. Many are still experiencing anxiety over financial issues created by the pandemic. Some parents are working from home while wrestling with how and where their children should learn. Because people are experiencing isolation, anxiety, and worry, mental health experts are committed to providing self-care strategies; however, there is always a need for a “sabbath.”

In Wayne Muller’s Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal and Delight in Our Busy Lives, he makes clear, “Sabbath is more than the absence of work; it is not just a day off when we catch up on television or errands. It is the presence of something that arises when we consecrate a period of time to listen to what is most deeply beautiful, nourishing, or true. It is time consecrated with our attention, our mindfulness, honoring those quiet forces of grace or spirit that sustain and heal us.” In brief, sabbath provides time to consecrate, to meditate, to pray, and to listen.

These past few weeks, Laura and I retreated to the mountains of Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia, and found rest in the stillness and serenity of nature, which healed my body, mind, and spirit. Those experiences were my sabbath; it was a settlement of my soul like a jar of river water that has sat long enough for the sediments to settle and the water to become clear. My sabbath experience connected my spirit with the sacred rhythm of God.

There are ways to rest — ways to experience a “sabbath.” You can journal, light a candle, take a nature walk, or a bike ride, or a hike in the woods —activities that allow the body, mind, and spirit to revitalize and to recharge. Rest is essential because it can restore health, improve thinking, and invigorate the soul. There is rest in prayer and in a few mindful breaths.

Prayer: God of hope, I want to stand strong in Your truth and not be swept away by my emotions. Fill me with all joy and peace and faith so that I will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thank you that You have sent Your Holy Spirit to be my Comforter and Helper. Amen