

The Good Life: Rest

Discussion Notes: Sunday July 27th 2014

This week Joanne spoke on rest.

Some of us truly struggle with stopping and simply being, especially stopping to be in the presence of God.

Joanne looked at rest from a Biblical standpoint. Rest is not just physical; when Scripture talks of rest and what God ordained for us, it is also referring to emotional and spiritual rest. Rest is a state of mind as well as a state of our body.

We have a hectic pace of life and people wear busyness as a badge of honour. We have become human doings rather than human beings.

How can the gospel, this good news speak to our busy culture and our crazy lives today?

Jesus calls us to rest – in him. He came so that we could have life and have it to the fullest.

He says. 28 *“Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 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.” Matt 11: 28-29*

The original audience had external pressures: Religious law imposed on them by their leaders, Roman rule, high taxes etc. Our pressures tend to be more internal; we live in a very materialistic, achieving focused culture; the pressure is on to constantly climb the ladder of “success” and with it acquire more and more possessions to prove that we are making it.

“Because the culture we breathe and work in rushes against rest. It equates our worth with production and wealth and fame. The more we work toward those goals, the more society assigns us worth.” From - Everything: What You Give and What You Gain to Become Like Jesus by Mary E. DeMuth

Why are we here? What is our purpose? This is the big question in our culture today.

The answer: to know and enjoy God.

We were created primarily to relate. We are fashioned in the image of God and he is a relational being!

We are first introduced to rest in Genesis:

So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. 2 On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. 3 And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation. Genesis 2: 1-3

God rested to set us an example; to give us permission to rest from work! To demonstrate work/life balance. God intended for us to work, work is good; hard work and ambition are admirable but not if they come at the expense of rest.

Rest is vital because it helps to prevent us from falling into the danger of being defined by what we do rather than by who we are.

This pattern of work/life balance was reiterated when God made a covenant with the Children of Israel.

10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. Exodus 20:10

God had freed them from slavery and wanted to teach them a new way to live. So he commanded them to rest on the seventh day. They needed the rest physically but they also needed it emotionally and spiritually. This day gave them opportunity to connect fully with Him and with each other.

Joanne challenged us, if we never stop, if we are always on the go, are we getting true community? Are we honestly getting to know God & others as deeply as we could be?

If we are too busy to simply sit and spend time at his feet, we are missing out.

In his book "The Rest of God" Mark Buchanan states that what we've really lost is:

" – the rest God bestows and with it, that part of himself we can only know through stillness."

God has given us the commandment to rest every seventh days as a gift. His permission to stop and be refreshed, body, mind and spirit.

Jesus came to restore everything to its original state as God created it in the beginning; to bring healing to a broken world. When he says “Come unto me all you who are heavy laden and I will give you rest,” he means complete rest - physical, mental and spiritual. How does he do that?

Physically:

God is our provider. Jesus says in Matthew 6:

25 “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are?

In Philippians Paul assures his readers:

¹⁹ And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.

God knows our needs and we can trust in him. This assurance allows us to rest from our paid work. What an incredible gift he has given us!

Mentally/Emotionally:

Jesus asks us to come to him with everything that we are carrying; hurts, fears, disappointments, concerns, and worries.

Peter writes:

Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you 1 Peter 5:7

And in Philippians 4 Paul tells us:

6 Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. 7 Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

God is interested even in our smallest concerns. He wants to help; he wants to carry the burden. By giving everything to God we can find rest mentally and emotionally. This rest can be found every day in every moment.

“Every time we turn to Christ in faith it is like a moment of Sabbath, a little foretaste of eternal rest and glory. The gift of that moment lies not in what we do but what we receive. It is the holy time set aside to receive the greatest gift of God ever has to give, which is himself, in his own beloved Son.”

— Phillip Cary, Good News for Anxious Christians: Ten Practical Things You Don't Have to Do

Spiritually:

God commanded the Sabbath day of rest so that the people could have time and space to connect with him and with others. They were told this day of rest was to be dedicated to the Lord. He was to be a central focus.

Practising Sabbath is a great way to start building true rest into our lives. We must not look at this commandment as a rule to follow; but as God intended us to: as a precious gift. He knows what we need physically, emotionally and spiritually and offers us the security to enable us to rest fully in him. He wants us to finish the race and finish it strong!

Joanne used the illustration of her half marathon training running ten and ones (run for ten minutes walk for one minute).

God created six and ones to give us the good life!

The Sabbath day of rest is a foreshadowing of what heaven will be like; it's practise for spending an eternity with him! It is engaging in the future hope we have.

Application:

Imagine how we could impact our culture if we truly celebrated Sabbath rest as God intended

Questions to get you started:

1. Need to be honest about where God places in our life; is he first?
2. Need to examine why we do what we do
3. Need to ask, is there room for change?
4. If there is start small – begin to incorporate times to rest, moments in a day to stop and simply be.

Be patient with yourself, experiment with what works for you. There is no right or wrong way to rest in God's presence!

If you want to dig deeper into this subject we recommend the book "The Rest of God" by Mark Buchanan.

Read Psalm 23 and allow the words to penetrate; take time to meditate on it. It is a beautiful psalm and speaks peace and calmness into our hearts!