

Free sample of:

Rest for the Weary

A 21-Day Devotional to Find Rest for Your Soul

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(Note: Days 2, 6, and 11 are included in this sample.)

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Come to Me, all of 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.

-Matthew 11:28-29

Day 2

All of you, take up My yoke and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

-Matthew 11:29

In this scripture, Jesus pinpoints the importance of gentleness and humility. Today, we'll look at the role of gentleness as it pertains to rest followed by exploring humility tomorrow.

I can't keep track of the number of Christians I know who strive to be gentle with others but are terribly harsh with themselves. They may not act outwardly harsh toward themselves, but inwardly, there's an incessant voice saying, *You're not doing enough, You're not good enough, or You're so stupid and everyone knows it.* Personally, my inner voices used to say things like, *You're weird in a bad way, You're subhuman and everyone sees it, and You're unlovable.*

It's not without cause that we speak to ourselves in these ways. You may have been raised in a household that never discussed the fact that emotions and thoughts come in all flavors, and while none of them are necessarily bad, they're also not to be latched onto or acted upon. Having a passing thought of *I'm so stupid* isn't necessarily harmful. But it can lead to dark places if it isn't immediately followed up with an internal dialogue that sounds like, *Wait a minute. I'm capable of identifying my challenges without calling myself names.*

It could also be that your upbringing was outrightly dysfunctional. There may have been an overly controlling parent or an addicted parent. In such situations, life revolves around the compulsive desires and actions of that parent rather than around showing love and teaching children the life skills needed to not only support themselves financially, but also to create healthy relationships. Of course, if your parents had known these things, they would have transmitted them. Our aim here is not to blame them but to acknowledge that there's a reason why you're so harsh with yourself. Most of the time, the way we treat ourselves in our own heads is the way we were treated by our parents or caregivers.

In addition to upbringing, there's society at large. Society may have given you an image of what a man or woman is supposed to do, be, or look like to be considered valuable. When you don't perceive yourself as matching that image, you criticize yourself.

Then there's the Father of Lies, who will seek to exaggerate any inkling of harsh self-talk in your mind. If you think, *I'm so weird*, he will quickly jump in and add to that thought. "Yes, you are weird, and everyone knows it. Your friends know it. In fact, they're only hanging out with you because they pity you." If you believe these follow-up thoughts, Satan will add even more. He might say, "Since you're so weird, you'll always be lonely in life." When you believe that thought, he then adds, "Really, life sucks. It's just pure pain. What's the point?" You can see how harsh self-talk can lead to dark places very quickly if you're not careful.

Gentleness is the key. What would a gentle person who loves your soul say when you experience the thought, *I'm so weird*? They would immediately respond, "No, you just had a single moment in time that felt a little embarrassing. Everyone has those moments. It's not who you are as a whole, it was just a passing moment."

From time to time, I'll think about something I said in a social situation while driving home. *I'm so embarrassed I said that*, I might think. Or, *They probably think I'm an idiot*. But that's where it ends. I feel a little embarrassed, I wish I had said or

done something differently, and that's the end of it. I can rest because I accept the little bit of embarrassment. It's merely a temporary feeling, and there's no requirement that I need to engage in a shame spiral. Don't let a bit of embarrassment become the end of the world. Satan loves when you do that. Life can be far more restful when you accept embarrassment and feel it consciously for a few minutes. It's just a passing wave of emotion. It becomes a shame spiral when you make it mean something's wrong with you. When it comes to avoiding shame spirals, keep it simple: If you said something you're embarrassed about but it wasn't hurtful or harmful to another person, allow yourself to feel the embarrassment without adding a negative story to it. If what you said was harmful, apologize to that person, also without adding any additional thoughts to it. That's how you avoid a shame spiral. Shame spirals only happen when you add a storyline to the initial embarrassment.

If you want to experience rest, you must practice being gentle on yourself. A gentle person is honest without being harsh or mean. Treat yourself with both self-honesty *and* kindness. *Yes*, you said an embarrassing thing. *No*, you don't have to create a terrible story about it in your head.

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When Ron told me it was okay to put my feet up and relax, I tried it out that day. For the first few seconds, I thought, *Wow, this is pretty cool*. I had never tried relaxing purely for the joy of it. Within 30 seconds, I was thinking, *Wait, this can't be right. I'm just being lazy. I'm looking for any excuse not to be productive*. I believed those thoughts, so my next thoughts were, *I'd better think about the things I need to get done. There's so much, after all, so I really need to stop just sitting here*.

When you take time to rest, you must handle your harsh thoughts with immediate gentleness. If you don't, they'll completely derail your period of rest. If harsh thoughts are fire, gentleness is the water that stops the fire from spreading.

When you have the thought, *I'm so lazy*, immediately say, *I'm actually doing something my soul needs. While external accomplishments like running errands and working definitely matter in life, so too does caring for my soul*.

Try This:

It's difficult to experience rest if you believe your critical inner voices and follow where they lead. What are the self-criticisms most likely to come up for you when trying to rest?

When these criticisms arise, what gentle response will you utilize?

Day 6

Cast all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you.

-1 Peter 5:7

In the world's eyes, you can rest only once your ducks are in a row. Of course, the ducks never line up. Even if you think your life is perfectly arranged, something inevitably happens to prove that you can't count on everything remaining as it is.

For many of us, it's a great loss to realize that resting in Christ means giving up on having everything exactly how we want it. We so badly—painfully badly—want to control the events of our lives. Because of this, we find it hard to stop trying to line everything up as we see fit.

Resting in the world is not paradoxical; it's perfectly logical. Once your workday is over, you're allowed to rest. Or, once the kids are in bed and the chores are done, you're allowed to rest. Resting in Christ isn't that way. Resting in Christ is a lovely paradox.

You're not exactly where you want to be in your career? You can still rest in Him. You're unsure how to resolve a relationship issue? You can rest in Him before it's solved. You're worried about your child? Do everything in your power, but once you've done all you can, rest in Christ. Those examples were major issues, but this principle applies to smaller matters as well.

Yesterday, I wanted to complete two passages for this book. Things came up the night before and yesterday morning that needed to be addressed, so I was tired and not as focused. Tiredly, I completed one passage. My noisy mind did not like this. It wanted to push me to complete two. Yet, I knew I was weary and needed rest. I put the completion of this book into God's hands and rested. The former athlete in me didn't like this. I yelled at myself in my head, saying, *You have to stick to the program. You can't just skip out whenever you want!* Despite the harsh inner voice, I knew I needed the rest, so I took it. Examples of other smaller issues might include grocery shopping tomorrow instead of today, visiting someone next week instead of this week, and allowing yourself to work at a sustainable pace rather than a burnout pace.

We have a decision to make: Will we live according to the world's ways, or will we live in Christ's way?

The world says everything has to be lined up before we can rest. Christ's way says we can rest now, and there's no need for everything to meet our definition of "complete" or "put-together." Do you see that either way requires a sacrifice? If you choose the world's way, you're sacrificing rest indefinitely because the ducks never stay in a row for more than a second. There's always some problem to handle. With Christ's way, you're sacrificing control. To rest, you have to cast control and results onto God, knowing He'll handle the situation in whatever way He sees most fitting.

Giving up control isn't easy for many of us, so lots of Christians utilize only the parts of their faith that give them seemingly more control, like taking on the proper belief systems and policing others' beliefs. Telling someone their beliefs don't quite align with Biblical standards can be a way of avoiding the fact that God is in control, not us. Casting your anxieties onto Christ, however, is about voluntarily releasing control. It's not always appealing at the outset, but giving up control and casting your worries onto Him is the only way to experience peaceful rest.

Try This:

Which will you choose today?

1. Sacrificing rest so you can maintain a sense of controlling all areas of your life,

or,

2. Giving up control so you can experience rest?

The next time you notice yourself worrying about something, ask yourself, *What, specifically, am I trying to control in this situation?* Once you identify what you're trying to control, cast it onto Christ, because He cares about you. Tip: Sometimes, we think we're trying to control an outer situation. However, upon looking closer, you might find that you're trying to control your emotions. Rather than squarely address the emotions, you're trying to make the situation such that it won't elicit unpleasant emotions. It's important to be crystal clear with ourselves about what it is we're trying to get out of, or avoid, by controlling outer situations.

Day 11

The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.

-Exodus 14:14

There are times when we are called to take action. Other times, we are called to let God do something we cannot ourselves imagine, fathom, organize, or even begin to understand. Today's scripture comes just before the parting of the Red Sea. It's remarkable to consider that the wisdom offered in God's word just before one of the most memorable miracles of the Old Testament, if not *the* most memorable, is to just be still.

Of course, in this situation, stillness meant stillness of spirit, not necessarily physical stillness, as the Lord instructed Moses to break camp and head toward the sea. Another translation of today's scripture reads, "The Lord Himself will fight for you. Just stay calm," which indicates that this is about inner stillness, not outer stillness.

When imagining myself as an Israelite being told to "just stay calm," my mind responds with a loud *NO*. I'd want to say to Moses, "Stay calm? Do you not see what's unfolding here? We have to do *something else* other than move toward the sea, where we'll surely be trapped by Pharaoh's soldiers." But sometimes God does things my mind can't fathom.

When I was 23, I read a one-sentence write-up on Facebook that spoke highly of the book *Wild at Heart*. The title stood out to me, but I didn't think much of it at the time. A few weeks later, I was in a bookstore and noticed a single copy of it on the shelf. I thought, *Why not?* and bought it. I ended up reading half the book that night and the rest the following day. It explained why I was the way I was and softened my heart, thus opening me to inner healing. Within a short period of time, I met two mentors, made new friends who were also on the inner healing journey, and attended multiple transformational retreats. I would have met my second mentor a year sooner, but I put off reaching out to him. Through this inner healing journey, I became a therapist and an author. Before that, I was working as a personal trainer and had little hope for a meaningful life, though I longed for more. I couldn't have planned any of it — only God could have organized my life in such a way.

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It's also fruitful to imagine these circumstances from Moses' perspective. Think of it: God tells you to lead everyone to the edge of the sea and then hold up your staff. It's one thing to receive a crazy-sounding private message from God that involves only yourself. It's completely different to receive a crazy-sounding message from God and then tell everyone else they're supposed to believe you. If I were Moses, I'd be thinking, *Seriously? Maybe I'll come up with a more realistic plan and tell everyone to do that instead . . . something that doesn't make me seem totally nuts.*

The lesson here is that the more we can walk by faith instead of by sight, the more open we are to God's work in our lives. When we walk by faith instead of sight, our grip on the reins is loose because we don't know which way to turn. We're along for the ride while God directs the path. I've heard several stories of ministers who sensed God was telling them to move and plant a church in a different state, and they did. Or, there's the story of John Mark Comer who sensed God was telling him to ease off of his pastoral duties in his large, growing church to slow down and focus more on writing. His book, *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, has transformed the outlook of millions by encouraging them to rest more. That book was the confirmation I needed to trust my own internal inklings about the Sabbath. I now fully embrace rest on Sundays,

unlike before when I'd rest a little and do chores and errands a little (or a lot). As best I can, I arrange for full rest mode on Sundays, and that means no trips to Home Depot and no "getting caught up" with cleaning, work, emails, or anything else. I feel at peace pushing myself to get more done during the week knowing I'll fully rest on Sunday. On all days of the week, if I can't get something done without being in a state of hurry for most of the day, I'm at peace putting it off until the next day or even the following week if necessary. I used to treat things like emergencies that really weren't emergencies.

Moments or seasons of not knowing what God is doing or how He's going to do it can be frightening. However, keep in mind it's only scary if you believe the only possibilities are those your mind can conceive. To the world, uncertainty means worry and anxiety, which is the opposite of rest. To Christ's family, not knowing can be a period of happy waiting, because we know He can orchestrate things our minds cannot imagine. Let yourself rest, trusting that He sees far more possibilities than you can. You cannot see beyond the horizon, but He sees all.

Try This:

Recall a time when you were stressed out. What was going on? Looking back, how would you have handled it differently if you had considered that God sees all possibilities?

Currently, what's stressing you out? Are you endlessly turning the situation over in your mind, searching for the perfect solution but not finding it? Are you willing to let go and rest, knowing that God sees possibilities your mind can't come up with?

Rest for the Weary is available on Amazon.

- [Paperback](#)
- [Kindle](#)

Reader Reviews for *Rest for the Weary*:

I've struggled so much in the past when it comes on to anxiety and this devotional has been a steering wheel for me.
-Customer Review

His Spirit lead teaching, from personal and professional experience, is vulnerable and raw, which encourages us to "go there" too.
-Customer Review

After reading this I can happily say that I am much more restful in my mind and peaceful in my heart!
-Customer Review

Truly a restorative experience. *Rest for the Weary* allowed me to rest on God's word and glean wisdom and peace.
-Customer Review