

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message

October 18, 2026 ***"What Can I Do? Take care of your soul"***

I Intro.

Hope you're enjoying October and thank you for staying connected with us. There's a lot going on at NCC and you'll want to keep up with everything that's happening. Stay connected through our social media to keep up with everything that's going on. This is our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey. We don't want you to miss out on anything. We consider you part of our community. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are fully committed to our virtual attendees. We are your church family. If there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know.

II Recap.

We're in the second Sunday of our series: ***"What can I do?"*** I want it to connect with what you may be feeling and thinking about our world and just life in general. I know when you see and hear everything that's going on around you, it's so easy to lose heart and just give up. Feels like the world's problems are too big, there are so many, and there seems to be new and different problems and issues everyday.

We watch the news, hear things, read stuff, and ask; ***"What can I do?"*** This question isn't always only the vastness of the problems. It often is how tiny, powerless we feel against everything going on in the world. Not only do we feel small and insignificant, and overwhelmed. We don't have any control, power, or authority to even make a dent in all of the problems we see around us.

So, the title of this series: ***"What can I do?"*** is for when you feel powerless. Like you can't make any difference in your little world, let alone the whole world. You want to have hope. You believe in the power of action. But you don't know what those things you can do are. And even if you have a few ideas, you don't know where to begin. Let us help you discover a few things you can do. The first week, we talked about; ***"Being willing to get dirty"***. Meeting people where they are. Last week it was: ***"Grow compassion."*** How to expand our ability to enter into other people's suffering without judgment. Today our challenge is to ***"Take care of our soul"***.

III Sunday.

When Janet and I lived in Knoxville, we lived between two fantastic older couples. The Mintons and Lones. John Minton on one side would come home from getting his haircut, after meeting the other old guys at Hardees, and pull back into his driveway at 7:00 am. Bill Lones on the other side would invite me over because he made RC planes and boats. I went several times to watch him 'play' with them. But, both of these older men had this habit that I used to poke fun of. When they had fairly big yardwork projects they would stretch it over several days. I never said this to them. But, I was in my 30's cocky, and ignorant. I would push cut my yard, split firewood, trim the bushes, and clean out the gutters all in the same day. **Remember those days?**

Last summer I was trimming a tree, in 90+ degree heat, in the middle of the day, in full sun. And I found myself getting lightheaded and dizzy. Janet, because she's smart, caring, and knows how stupid I can be, came out to check on me. And I was seconds away from passing out. I wasn't 30 anymore. At that moment I realized just how wise John Minton and Bill Lones were. Now I spread bigger jobs over several days or even several weekends. But it took me pushing myself past my limits to realize the importance of monitoring and taking care of myself.

This is more than 'self-care'. This is intentionally setting aside time, big or little blocks, to care for your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual self. What we're calling; *"Taking care of your soul"*.

Let's start off with some probing questions just to get you thinking.

Have you ever pushed yourself beyond your limits? What were you doing?

How did you feel when you realized AFTER THE FACT, you had gone beyond your limit?

What are some signs that YOU are at the end of your limits? And it can be mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually? And...Do you listen to those signs?

We're talking about the danger of running on empty. This is about not having anything in place to help us know, sense, when we are getting to the end of whatever pool, reservoir of stuff, we need to keep going. We have to admit this: Making a difference is exhausting. Your mental, emotional, physical, spiritual tank is not infinite or self-filling. You have to be very aware of when you're getting close to empty. In our series of helping you answer the question: *"What can I do?"*, we want to let you know, give you permission, while you're doing those things you can do to make a difference. To have an impact on the world. You need to have some very specific and tangible ways to make sure you're taking care of yourself while you're saving the world.

Another short, to the point passage. The truth for our topic for today will jump out at you.

Mark 6:30-32. *The apostles returned to Jesus from their ministry tour and told him all they had done and taught. Then Jesus said, "Let's go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile."* He said this because there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles didn't even have time to eat. So they left by boat for a quiet place, where they could be alone.

We all know how to care for our soul. But we're often not good at doing it. In the account of this event, Jesus had just heard about the death of John the Baptist. And his disciples had just returned from being sent out to proclaim the good news. They had been busy just...lifing. Jesus was teaching them an important practice. When we want to make a difference in the world, have an impact, we have to learn to take care of ourselves too.

This work is about Sabbath. But not just THE Sabbath. It's about what I'm calling; Sabbathing. Sabbath is the permission, space, God gave us to intentionally, actively slow down. Sabbath wasn't just an arbitrary law God threw in just to control our lives. Sabbath (Sabbathing) was a gift, a reminder, a truth about how our mind, emotions, heart, and spiritual health works. Sometimes it's the day to day things that drain us as much as the big dramatic things. Think about your daily life. The routine stuff.; your job, chores around the house, meals, groceries, bills, fixing broken things, responsibilities (kids, parents, etc). Also think about the big things that pop up out of nowhere. Family crisis, something important in your house breaks, medical issues. All of these little day to day things, and also the big out of nowhere things all take their toll on our soul.

Sabbathing is learning to love empty spaces. Sabbathing is dedicating yourself to learning how to live in an intentionally created space. And not to fill every empty space with something. And we seem to hate empty spaces. If there's a blank spot on a wall in our house, we have to hang something there. If our world is too quiet, we have to fill it with sound. (people who blast music at the beach because they can't be alone with their inner world). If there's a 15 minute dead spot in our life, we have to fill it with something. In the waiting room of a doctor's office I freaked everyone out by just setting my phone down and staring into space like a psycho. Apparently that's now how we're supposed to wait. This essential work of sabbathing is not only not doing things occasionally, but actually creating moments of nurturing our soul. And not feeling bad, or freaking out, about not being busy.

We all need some specific help with growing the ability to Sabbathing well.

From this passage, what we know about establishing a rhythm to life that has cleared out spaces for Sabbathing, what are things we can do?

I know you have felt the intensity and heat of someone who was working from exhaustion, an unwell soul. Here are some things we can build into our life to help us do Sabbathing well.

1. Have early warning signs, canary in the coal mine metrics, that let you know you're getting close to your limits. You ought to be sensitive to all of your internal elements that you can know, or at least have a suspicion, when you're not in a great space. Grow the sensitivity, and have people who know you tell you when they see the signs. I have Temporal Lobe Epilepsy. When I first started having seizures they caught me off guard. I didn't know what they felt like coming on. Then I began to look for things that would happen right before I would have a seizure that gave me a few seconds warning. Develop a list of behaviors, something that changes within you, that lets you know when you're reaching your limit. Becoming short-tempered, skim-listening, impatience, hurried pace, forgetting things, are possibilities..

2. Have planned unchangeable Sabbathing moments. You will not just randomly drift into an empty space, to use for a Sabbathing moment. Sundays are a working day for me. So, I have to create other Sabbathing moments. If you can't do a full day, many of us can't, you need to carve out two or three moments a week where you can fill the buckets in your life. Physical, mental, emotional, spiritual. I'll hit these again later. Treat these Sabbathing moments like the most important appointments in your life. Like a hair appointment, your workout, spending time with one of your relatives. There's nothing selfish saying "*no*" when someone wants to intrude on your Sabbathing time. Obviously, if it's an emergency take care of that. But don't let the unimportant push out the important. Think about the number of people Jesus didn't heal, minister to, help, when he went off by himself. You must be ruthless and relentless in protecting Sabbathing moments.

3. Have people in your life who will check in on you. We are not good at self-regulation. If you don't have a Janet, get you one. You just can't have mine. You need people in your life, you've given permission to speak freely, to ask "*How are you doing...REALLY?*" And you need to have relationships that will allow or force you to be honest. Someone who will say: "*Hey, I've noticed some changes in you.*" This is what small groups are good for. We all need others to see for us what we cannot see for ourselves.

4. Have 'filling habits' that feed the different areas of who you are. You can increase your ability to handle different things in your life. This doesn't mean you don't need Sabbathing. You will always need to do that. 'Filling habits' increases your endurance in each one of these areas. When you operate at a higher level, you'll know when you're getting closer to empty. You will feel that distance between health and unhealth.

A life hack truth. The less you stretch any specific area of who you are, the closer your normal is to empty. You won't have the capacity to handle the small and big things in life. And the less you'll be able to tell when you get to empty. Because you don't fill that specific reservoir, you always feel somewhat empty.

1. Physically- regularly do things that push you to increase your heart rate and breathing several times a week. It can be any type of increased movement. Even odd jobs around your home that make you move around. Jesus walked everywhere, which gave him a stronger physical presence. If you don't stretch your physical self, you'll leak energy. This refills your endurance reservoir.

2. Mentally- set aside a regular time to read fiction and non-fiction. The mental equivalent of pushing you to expand your world and your mental capacity. We ALL need to be exposed to LONG FORM presentations of new ideas and ways of seeing the world. If you don't broaden your mind, then you just become shallow and irrelevant. I know that sounds harsh...but it's true. This refills your 'body of knowledge' reservoir.

3. Emotionally- have safe outlets to vent built up emotions. You need to have a group of people around you, who can normalize anything you're going through. Who will allow you to vent and spew. And then help you dust off and move on. Small groups are good for this. If you don't take care of your emotional health you can become a ticking timebomb of unprocessed harmful emotions. This refills your sacrificial giving reservoir.

4. Spiritually- create times of corporate worship and personal worship, to experience transcendence, awe, and wonder in the presence of God. Just living in our world drains our spiritual tank. And if we don't fill that tank, we can become mean and self-righteous. From this scripture passage, and all through the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus, we see him needing to slip away by himself to spend some time with his father. If you don't fill this you can slide into pride or resentment. This refills your power and humility reservoir. Reinforces you can do important things. Because it comes from God.

IV Challenge.

In order to answer the question; ***"What can I do?"*** You have to be able to answer the question; ***"How will I know when I can't?"*** This is a big truth you've probably heard before.

We don't rest from our work. We work from our rest.

If you rest from your work, you risk the threat of not being aware of when you need to rest. Sheer inertia will keep you moving even when you're empty and should stop. But...if you work from your rest, you know what your starting point is. You know all the elements of your resting rates. Heart rate, BP, anxiety level, felt stress, etc. When you know your resting rates, you know when they become dangerously elevated.

Want to change the world? Want to make a difference?

Want to know the best way to have an impact on the world around you?

Take very good care of your soul. Do all the things to make sure you're living out of your strengths and not on sheer inertia. Taking care of your soul is important work. Doing things that strengthen and give rest to all of the elements of who you are. Leaning into the voice of the Holy Spirit. You'll have a lot more capacity to do the things you want to do. You'll be willing to get dirty. You'll be able to grow compassion. You will do these things well. And you'll be able to have a bigger impact on the world around you. And grow your ability to thrive.