

## PROVING YOURSELF Part 1: A Time to Rest

It's no secret to most of here that I wasn't doing very well about 7 months ago. So much so, that I needed a Sabbatical (my first one, and the first staff person in this church). Truthfully, though, and what may not be as well known amongst us here, I've had 2 burnouts prior to my Sabbatical (spread out over about 10 years). Burnout is a slow-going process. It sneaks up on you because you've become so distracted and busy to notice yourself getting burnt out.

Sometimes other people notice it. Maybe they see something is a little off, but they dismiss it because we're really good at disguising things to look like being busy for the Lord. Because to be honest, that's exactly what I was doing! Doing the Father's Business. I busied myself within ministry, connecting with people, answering text messages and phone calls, having meals with people, preaching, teaching, writing...and the list goes on. I would also include marriage and kids into that mix because I believe that pouring into your marriage and children is very much being about the Lord's business. It also includes careers and occupations that wouldn't be labeled as "clergy work." It's all being busy for the Lord and it's good work!

However, I was exhausted.

I kept going because it's really where my heart thrives. I love doing ministry and being busy for the Lord.

Let's just pause here for a moment and let me ask this question: Does any of this sound bad? Being busy for the Lord is what we're supposed to do, right? It's what we're taught, it's what we're told, it's what we read. To a degree, this is true! However, being about the Lord's business should not become more important than being with the Lord.

Did you hear that? Let me word it this way: \_\_\_\_\_ **with the Lord comes before**  
\_\_\_\_\_ **for the Lord.**

This is where I believe we get our priorities mixed up. It's what I was doing and I'm still learning to get right. But please don't get discouraged or outraged by me saying this, because doing for the Lord and being with the Lord should go hand in hand. They're complimentary! Don't do one without the other — in fact, not only do our bodies tell us we can't (when we get burnouts), the important thing is we shouldn't (to avoid burnouts).

What's the difference between the two? Easy. I can tell and force my body to keep going until my body literally gives up. This includes physically, mentally, and emotionally, by the way. God doesn't want us to get burnt out. He wants us to rest within Him so that He can fill us up to continue to do His work.

That's what we're focusing on today: to rest within the Father so that He can fill us up so that we might continue His good work AND to withstand the harder days when the "heat gets turned up."

If you have your Bibles (physical or on the app) I want to encourage us to open up to Exodus 18:13-24. We're going to read about one of my favorite people in the Old Testament because he's full of excuses — just like me.

Small insert here: The reason why I want us to actually open up our Bibles is so we can read it for ourselves. God's Word is true and divine and I don't want you to take my word for it; I want you to read it for yourselves. But we'll have the scripture on the screens too :)

While you find the passage, let me give just a little background and refresher to us. Moses has a really amazing testimony. Again, I encourage you to read the story of Moses for yourself. In a nutshell, Moses was chosen by God to deliver the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Moses gave a lot of excuses as to why he isn't the best choice to do this task, but in the end he obeyed what God asked him to do. In turn, Moses was a part of several incredible miracles that thousands of people got to witness.

Fast forward to today's text. The Israelites are now free and doing a lot of complaining about their new and free living conditions (hot, not water/food, tired from walking, etc.). They had a lot of learning to do — but so did Moses.

Moses was now leading several thousands of people and trying his best to give them the best God-given advice and leadership he could give. He was continuing to do what God had asked him to do. It all sounds wonderful and exactly what Moses was supposed to be doing.

Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, came to visit his family in the wilderness (where they were camped) to hear about all that God had done in their lives and to see how they were doing. Jethro gave praise to the miracles of God and watched as Moses lead the people. Let's read:

**13** The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. **14** When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?"

**15** Moses answered him, "Because the people come to me to seek God's will. **16** Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and instructions."

**17** Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. **18** You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. **19** Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and

may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. **20** Teach them his decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave...**24** Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said.

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Guess what Moses did next? He went to Mount Sinai to be with God. You can read about it a couple chapters after our text. It's also when we get The 10 Commandments. I believe God used Jethro in that moment to refocus Moses. I believe God still uses people in our lives to help refocus us back onto God. People who recognize when we're not okay or we're on our way to an unhealthy lifestyle. It also reminds us that bringing people to God is not just a "pastor" thing; it's a Church (big "C," universal Church, body of believers) thing. To share the Father's business amongst us all — we all have a part and purpose within the Church. But it all starts with coming to God and seeking Him in all things. It's called resting in the Father.

If you'll allow me, I'd like to focus on 3 of them today.

### **RESTING IN THE FATHER IN THESE WAYS:**

#### **1. Physically**

- Like I said, when Moses went to God on Mount Sinai, we in turn received The 10 Commandments. One of the commandments is to "Honor the Sabbath and keep it holy."

- God even teaches us the importance of rest in creation when He rested on the 7th day. Not because He needed rest, but He taught us by example. Sabbath is one of the commandments I break often (probably every week). It's hard for me to rest and it honestly takes conscious effort to not do something.

- During my Sabbatical, I went to counseling with one of my most trusted advisors since college. He said something that has really stuck with me, "Don't just do something, sit there." You heard it right. It means this: Don't just do something to do something. Sometimes the best thing you can do for the Lord is to sit and be still with Him. It is not one person's job (or even a handful of people) to do all the work. Collectively, it's *OURS*.

- We learned that from Moses' story of how he was handling things was not good. He would exhaust himself by doing all the things. It's important to raise up the next generation and be a part of the process to get the Lord's work done. It requires "all hands on deck" as the Church.

- But let's get back to the physical rest. It is important and genetically created within us to have rest. Take one day a week to rest your body as much as possible. You might say, "Yeah, that's not going to happen for me and my schedule. You don't know my life and all the things I have to do." You're right! I don't know it all, but God does. If you can't devote a full day, devote a few hours. If you can't give a few hours, can you do at least one? If you can't do one hour, maybe it's time to reevaluate all that's on your plate.

- Part of our physical rest is resting with God. **If we're \_\_\_\_\_, we're simply too busy.** So what does physical rest look like for you? Taking a nap? Binge watching your favorite show? Going out for a nice meal? Going to bed early? Whatever the Lord puts upon your heart as a good form of physical rest — do that!

## 2. Mentally/Emotionally

- Inside 2 Story. Anxiety glitch.
- The devil is really good at distracting us. I would say it's probably one of his most successful tactics to keep us away from keeping our eyes on Jesus. He also tricks us into thinking we have the power of control.
- We see this happen when Peter walks on the water with Jesus (Matthew 14:22-33). Peter stepped out of the boat with his eyes fixed on Jesus. He begins to walk on the water, just like Jesus. As soon as Peter gets distracted by his surroundings and realities, he takes his eyes off Jesus and begins to sink.
- What I find really interesting about this story is that Peter was literally with Jesus pretty much 24/7, every day, for at least 3 years. Even while Peter was learning and literally being with Jesus, it didn't make him immune to hardships, stumbles, or failures (we learn more about Peter's failures in later chapters).
- Why do I note this? Because I also want us to give ourselves grace where it's needed. We are still humans who make mistakes. We aren't perfect and our flesh is sinful. We could have every good intention, doing everything "the right way," and still not get it right. It goes back to the beginning of our time today: **We don't have to prove ourselves \_\_\_\_\_, because there's nothing we could do to make ourselves worthy. Only \_\_\_\_\_ can do that.**
- But let's get back to our main focus which is keeping our eyes on Jesus regardless of the distractions that come our way. There will be heartaches, temptations, and we get caught in the crossfires from other people's choices. It's how we respond and react when those times come that matters — keeping our eyes on Jesus.
- So how do we rest mentally and emotionally? This is probably the hardest one for me personally. I'm guilty of going down the rabbit hole with fears, anxieties, and emotions that are triggered by the past and especially fear of the future. Usually it revolves around sickness. It's my fleshy-human side that can take over quickly.
- May of 2023 (specifically Memorial Day) our lives took a huge shift that would domino effect for the next 7 months. In those 7 months, we had four 9-11 calls and ambulance rides along with overnight hospital stays and lots of medication.
- My mind was on overdrive with worry and anxiety. It's a natural response to trauma and I know there are several trauma stories here amongst us here today. I couldn't think of anything else besides what happened and what could possibly be coming our way.
- Did I ever lose my faith in Jesus because of these? No. In fact, after our car crash in December 2023, our faith was strengthened. However, I was trying to gain control over an uncontrollable situation. There was nothing I could do to prevent or

make the situation different. There are things out of our control and it's how we respond to them that matters.

- Do we allow our emotions to take over? Our worries and anxieties don't take away from the situation, but rather add heartache and self-destruction.

- *(Psalm 55:22) "Cast your burdens on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved."*

- *(Matthew 6:34) "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself."*

- So.....talk with Jesus about your cares, fears, insecurities, emotions, etc.

Remember that He is the one who's in control. Not our emotions. Does that mean we won't have concerns, worries, anxiety, anger, doubt, etc.? Of course not. We're created to be emotional beings, but it's Who we turn to when those times come that matter.

- Emotional rest can look like journaling, deep and specific prayer time with Jesus, milestone markers (Ebenezer). A lot of this goes hand in hand with our spiritual rest and health.

- I don't know about you, but I like to think a lot. I mean....a lot. I wouldn't say it's only a female thing or a "mom" thing, but I do know everyone is not the same, including how our minds work. If you're like me, I like to think I think about everything all at once and at the same time. Reality states, it's impossible to think about the same thing at the same time. We might have rapid fire thoughts that start with prepping lunches for the next day and quickly shift to getting the car an oil change (true story).

- **There's power in the \_\_\_\_\_**. Pausing your physical self, your speech, your actions, and especially your thoughts. Redirect our minds on to the One who is our anchor in a whirlwind of emotions.

- Last note: don't be afraid to express yourself to Jesus. He already knows and it's in your benefit to share it with Him. When we turn to the One who can actually do something about our concerns, that's when things start to happen. I'm a huge advocate to mental health; it's just as important as physical health. Take care of your mental health and rest knowing that Jesus has it under control.

### **3. Spiritually/Salvation**

- Spiritual rest has a lot to do with rejuvenation. Often times, some might think that going to church every Sunday is rest or practicing Sabbath. For me, and if I could speak for those who work in a church setting, Sundays are not a day of rest. Sabbath does not have to be on a "Sunday." To be honest, Sabbath has been added to our weekly checklist because that's what we do on Sundays. Maybe it has become habitual or even a ritual. Rather than a true spiritual reset and rejuvenation for our soul.

- No only is coming to church geared for growing in our relationship with Jesus, it's mainly for gathering together as a body of believers to strengthen our relationship with each other and with God.

- Rest for our soul looks like this (\*raise hands\*). It's a surrender to His will in your life. It's resting in the fact that Jesus died for your sins and He has paid the price. It's resting in the knowledge that Christ loves you now, He loved you then, and He'll continue to love you forever. How often does this truth get dulled, buried, foggy, or even forgotten in our busy schedules...even being busy at church?

- (Psalm 51:12) *“Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.”*

- What is a “willing spirit”?

- Its root word *nāḏīb* (naw-deeb) — which means voluntary, spontaneous, at the ready.”

- It means, let us have a spirit that is on the ready, willing to do what the Lord asks of us. It’s an inclined ear to hear what the Lord has to say. Do we have an inclined spirit that is upward facing towards the Lord? (\*gesture leaning upward\*)

- To rest spiritually is to reevaluate where your spirit is currently. To not busy our spirits with fluffy routines, but to allow ourselves to sit in the Spirit of God and allow Him to stir something inside of us that will bubble up.

- When was the last time we inclined our spirit to hear God? That is rest for our souls. To stop doing the spiritual routines and allow His to speak rather than us speaking to Him.

- Even in our prayer life, how often do we speak to Him in our requests and even in our praises. Or we “pray-tell”...telling the Lord what we want Him to do rather than asking Him what He wants to do. To allow His Will to be spoken over you. Spiritual rest is sitting in that moment with Jesus.

Ending focus verse: (Matthew 11:28-30) *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*

The hard part about resting is the resting. The not doing, and just being. It’s finding time to rest knowing you need it. It’s recognizing you don’t have control over everything. It’s realizing there’s nothing you could do to earn the love, grace, mercy, and salvation of Jesus. You don’t have to prove yourself to Him. He accepts and receives you with open arms. In whatever state you’re in — it’s time to rest in Him.

## **CLOSING**

Now that we’ve taken time to rest, next week we’re going to talk about how to rise. Because it’s not all just about rest, it’s about what to do once we’ve rested...it’s time to rise.