



DOCTOR'S ORDERS

RECUPERATING FROM LIFE'S INJURIES

WEEK 1 – GET SOME REST

CHECK-IN

How are you? Where have you seen God working in your life in the last week? And... August begins this week. Which means, summer is drawing to a close. Review the last two months, what's your favorite memory? Did you get a vacation in? Maybe you hit that concert you've been waiting all year for? Or, was summer just like every other season, just hotter? Ready, go!

OPENING PRAYER

Compassionate Father, give us the wisdom to take the time to rest in you, and renew our spirits when we do.

INTRODUCTION

Pastor Mike: Well, as many of you know, my summer was dominated by a surgery, one that came with the lengthiest recovery I've ever undergone. And in that recovery period, I learned a lot about myself. When you have that much time with you, you get to know you pretty well. But it also exposed a lot about myself that I didn't really want to

admit. I learned that I look really funny with a half-shaved stomach... like, couldn't you just shave it all, guys? I learned I actually like hospital jell-o. I know, I might have a problem. But there were also more serious things I learned about myself. Like, I'm not a good patient... cuz I'm not patient. Also, I learned I must have a bad memory, cuz people kept saying, "don't you remember what the doctor said?" (And it came with a tone. You know the one.) But it was that last one that got me thinking. A lot of the things I was struggling with are things that we all struggle with throughout our lives... and not just when we're recovering from surgery. They are things we mess up when we're recovering from struggle in life. And so, a sermon series started to formulate in my brain... just as I needed to heed the doctor's orders for my recovery to go well, there are some "Doctor's Orders" that God gives us that will help us when we are recovering from the injuries of life.

Set-up Question: Without violating any HIPAA laws or making anyone uncomfortable, what's the longest you've had to recover from something? How was the recovery period? What made it easy or difficult?

SCRIPTURE

As I was thinking about the stuff I was discovering about myself, it all really boiled down to three categories... categories that coincided with specific orders I was given to aid my recuperation. And the first order, the primary, overarching instruction, above anything else sounded like this. "Mike, for the first 4 weeks, you have to take it easy.

You need to sleep. You need to not do much. No working, do you need a doctor's note to get off work?" Nope, got that covered. "Okay, good... no yard work, no working around the house. Nada. You have to let your body heal. You need to...

1. GET SOME REST

My doctors knew, if I was going to heal, I needed rest. I was one organ down, with 3 minor incisions and one major one. My body had gone through major trauma. It needed an extended period of doing nothing, of resting, in order to recuperate. Here's the thing... our souls operate the same way. When we've gone through a shock to our mental, emotional, spiritual system... our souls need time to recover, too. But that's not my instruction, that's not even my doctor's instruction. That's the Great Physician's instruction. See, we find something very interesting in one of the most famous scriptures in the Bible...

Read Psalm 23, verses 1 through 3.

This might be the mostly widely read passage in the entire Bible. I've preached on it numerous times. But, we usually focus on the verses after this part... about how God walks with us through the trials. Which is great, but the author sneaks something into verse 2 here that will help us in the aftermath, after we get out of the valley.

Question 1: This is likely a scripture you're familiar with. What comes up when you hear this passage? Has it been a comforting thing? Is it overdone and has lost it's meaning? Discuss.

REFLECTION

So, what do we do *after* we've walked through the valley. What do we do when we're *recovering* from the spiritual injury? You've just gone through something difficult, something traumatic. You're tired and weary and worn out from the struggle... beat up, bruised, and broken. You're not *in it* anymore, but you're exhausted from the fight... what now? Look at verse 2... what does it say?

¹ The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

² He *makes me* lie down in green pastures,

Notice, it doesn't say, "he offers me the spot to lie down if I want to." It doesn't say, "he has reserved a camping spot near the quiet waters if I'm in a camping mood." It says he *makes me* lie down after the journey through the dark valley. God commands us to rest.

Question 2: How are you at taking the time to rest? Are you a person who always has to be on the go? Or are you a master relaxer, able to shut the world out and chill at the drop of a hat? How has either approach affected your life?

After my surgery, if I wasn't "commanded" to rest, I doubt I would have. As soon as I could do what I wanted, I'd have been out doing it. We tend to operate the same way when it comes to the emotional and spiritual injuries we suffer in life, the valleys we walk through. We fight God's suggestion to lie down in green pastures and rest. We keep plugging along the trail like nothing happened until we fall

headlong into the next valley and then wonder why we're so exhausted. But God knows better. God knows what our spirits need when we are hurting. And so, if we are truly following The Great Shepherd, listening to His voice and following His commands, one of those commands is to slow down and rest when we are hurting. What dark valley have you just come out of? What spiritual wound or trauma have you endured? Maybe it's the loss of a loved one or a relationship? Maybe it's a trying time in your life with family or friends? Maybe it's sadness or depression. Maybe it's pain you've been dealing with for a long time. God promised to walk with you *through it*... but God also commands you to rest *from it*. (That's a good line, go back and read that again.) You cannot heal unless you take the time to heal. Allow yourself the time to rest from your spiritual valleys.

Question 3: Let's do a little self-reflection here. Have you just come out of a spiritual valley, some hurt or struggle that has left your spirit exhausted? If so, keep that in mind. If not, remember back to a time when you were. If you're comfortable doing so, share with the group what that experience is/was like, and then imagine what resting and healing from it might look like.

CLOSING

What I want to close with today, is the result. After I got out of the hospital, because I was given this doctor's order, (and y'all had things nailed down here,) I figured, let's give it a shot. The weather was

unseasonably beautiful for June in Illinois. So, I would hobble my gimpy butt out to my rocking chair on the porch or the loungers on the back patio and sit and read me some Nicholas Sparks. (Dreamland, if you haven't ready, solid, would recommend.) It was great... I took full advantage. I didn't do it all right, I admit. I did too much too soon, (which I'll talk about in the coming weeks.) But thanks to you incredible humans doing the things here, and following doctor's orders back there, I was able to rest and recuperate, and now I feel great. And, when I do nothing, it's cuz I choose to.

When it comes to our spiritual wounds... if we follow THE Doctor's Orders to rest, to lie down in the green pastures and recuperate beside the quiet waters... What's the result? Look at verse 3... "He refreshes my soul." We experience healing, we experience being renewed... we experience a refreshed soul. Anybody feel like they need a refreshed soul today? Sounds pretty good, doesn't it? And how do we get there? By following doctor's orders and resting. We'll talk about *how* exactly to do that in the coming weeks, but today, if you're recuperating from some injury of life, some spiritual wound or emotional trauma, God has some very particular doctor's orders. And the first is what we read here, tucked in to the most famous of verses in the Bible, God commands us to rest... to lie down... because only then can you soul heal and be refreshed.

**Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations
and close in prayer.**