

The Rhythm of Life



Finding Deep

Rest in Our Labor

Lesson 4: Gentle and Lowly

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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.
(Matthew 11:28-30)

We can be diligent in getting enough sleep and prioritizing regularly taking a day off work. And in doing those things, we can still live a life that is not characterized by the deep rest of soul that Jesus is promising in Matthew 11:28-30.

I. Rest is _____.

The Lord is my shepherd. He makes me lie down . . . He leads to quiet waters. . . He restores my soul. (Psalm 23)

“We need rest, and God means to give us rest. He leads us out of anxious striving and into havens of stillness.

Rest is a gift from the Creator to his creatures.

Because the shepherd is so strong, so capable, so attentive to our needs, we don't have to be. We can rest in the confidence of his care for us. Because all things hold together in him – even when it doesn't seem that way – we can let go. He can tend to all the things we can't get to.” (Henderson)

II. Rest is the outcome of _____ to Jesus and _____ from Him.

Whoever comes to me shall never hunger and never thirst. . . Come to me and drink. (John 6:35, 7:37)

“In the end, a life well lived is not the outcome of some sort of calendar calculus. It isn’t arrived at by just the right additions and subtractions to our daily schedule. Even the disciplines of rest – Sabbath, sleep, retreat – bring but a modicum of rest, and that short-lived. The tranquility, the soul rest, for which we long ultimately lies deeper than time, with the Author of time. Only as we yield our lives to him and allow him to order our days will our lives take the shape they are meant to have, and we enter into his rest. Tranquility comes on the other side of relinquishment, not accomplishment.”

(Henderson)

We learn relinquishment as we _____ to Jesus and _____ from Him. Tranquility comes on the other side of _____.

Practice saying to yourself, “_____ will be OK. I need my soul cared for. I need time with Jesus.”

III. The lessons of discipleship that lead to rest

A. _____ (meekness, humility)

Though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly.
(Psalm 138:6)

I dwell in a high and holy place and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly. (Isaiah 57:15)

Jesus is our example of lowliness: Made himself nothing, a servant, humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death. (Phil. 2:5-8)

Lowliness is the way we view ourselves before God and others and the way we view what happens to and around us.

“We approach life as though it were ours to order and sustain each day, acting like creators rather than creatures. Feeling a great weight always to be doing, we resent our limits and constantly try to push past them. We act as though our time and energy were infinite, and – in defiance of who we are as human beings – we try to do it all. Because after all, it’s all up to me. Isn’t that what Col. 1:17 says? ‘In me all things hold together’?” (Henderson)

Lowliness saves us from the arrogance of believing that we can _____.

B. Gentleness

Lowliness refers to an attitude of heart; gentleness is about how we act and speak toward others.

Gentleness is the _____ of lowliness. As my heart is lowly before God, my attitude, words, and actions will be gentle toward others.

Walk worthy of your calling with all humility and gentleness. (Eph. 4:1-2)

I . . . entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ . . . (II Cor. 10:1)

1. Gentle in _____

A gentle tongue is a tree of life. (Prov. 15:4)

2. Gentle in _____,
especially the hard ones

If anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual restore him in a spirit of gentleness.

(Gal. 6:1)

Speak evil of no one, avoid quarreling, be gentle, show perfect courtesy toward all people.

(Titus 2:3)

3. Gentle in _____

I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter.

(Jer. 11:19)

Make a defense with gentleness and respect.

(I Peter 3:15)

IV. The resulting rest

O Lord, my heart is not lifted up;

My eyes are not raised too high;

I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me.

I have calmed and quieted my soul,

Like a weaned child with its mother;

Like a weaned child is my soul within me.

O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. (Psalm 131)

We can build physical rest into our lives,
but quietness of soul ultimately comes from a
relationship of deep trust in God and is learned
through pursuing Christ.

What disturbs our soul rest?

1. Working to earn God's favor.

Rest in lowliness – You can't possibly earn God's favor! Jesus earned it for you. There's nothing for you to do except come to Jesus in faith.

2. Resisting and fighting against the God-ordained burdens and trials in our lives.

Rest in lowliness – Submit, accept it all from God's wise and loving hand, trust His work in your life and the lives of those around you.

3. Trying to be God and control and fix everything and everyone around us. (Believing it's all up to me.)

Rest in lowliness – Let God be God.

“The fundamental sin in Scripture is self-reliance. The Biblical word for it is *pride*. The fundamental virtue in Scripture is God-dependence. The Biblical word for it is *humility*. . . Scripture upends so many of the self-evident truths on which we fashion our lives. It turns out that the pride of an adult, which comes of feeling sure it is all up to us (and that we are fully up to the task), breeds anxious, childish scrambling. The humility of a child who knows that it is all beyond him, is the far more mature response and unleashes peace and freedom.” (Henderson)

4. Trying to be God and finish everything.

Rest in lowliness – Accept your finiteness. Trust God for the unfinished things in your life.

God alone gets to declare across all time: It is finished!

“We are prone to believe that rest should come only after everything is finished. . . But there is a rest we can enjoy even while much remains to be done. Until the Lord returns, all completions are only provisional completions anyway. This side of the grave, we will only ever experience things being partway done.”
(Henderson)

5. Trying to be perfect like God.

Rest in lowliness – Acknowledge that only God is perfect. Stop trying to be what only God can be!

“Perfectionism is slow death by self.” (Ann Voskamp)

6. Trying to know the future, living in worry and anxiety.

Rest in lowliness – Acknowledge that you aren't as smart as God and then trust Him to be all wise, all loving, all powerful, all faithful, all good in every possible circumstance of your life.

“There is a busyness that comes of much outward activity. For that, there is a rest grounded in stopping, in ceasing activity. . . But there is also an inner busyness, a distracted churning of mind that keeps us never still, regardless of how quiet we are outwardly. For that, there is soul rest that comes from not decreasing activity but from increasing trust. This is the sort of inner rest . . . in Psalm 116:7, ‘Return to your rest, my soul, for the Lord has been good to you.’ [The shepherd] makes the sheep’s problems his own. Which means the sheep don’t have the problem any more. Now the sheep has a new problem: Will he trust the shepherd, or will he worry and fret and be anxious?” (Henderson)

7. Trying to earn the approval of others. Working to find your identity and value in what you do or accomplish.

Rest in lowliness – The only approval that matters is God’s. In Christ you are fully accepted! Your most important identity is as a beloved child of God.

“What peace, what rest can be ours when we are anchored to something more substantive than our never-ending effort and activity.” (Henderson)

8. Living a self-focused life. (Believing it's all about me.)

Rest in lowliness – Seeing yourself as small allows you to turn your focus away from yourself onto loving and serving God and others.

9. Living in conflict with others because we lack gentleness.

Rest in lowliness – Realizing your own sinfulness allows you to treat others with the kindness and mercy you have received from God.

“There can be a simplicity to life in the midst of all the complexity. Stay humble. Trust Him. Listen to Him. Just follow Jesus. Love Him. No matter what else, you've got to anchor right there: I'm just a forgiven follower of Jesus.

You have to be experts at the deep breath spiritually. Life will scream chaos at you. You have to be able to deeply exhale and say, 'Jesus, who are You? Who am I in You? OK. That's right. That's who I am.'

'No power of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck me from His hand. 'Til He returns or calls me home, here in the power and death and love of Christ I'll stand.' I am His and He is mine. I am bought with the precious blood of Christ. That's who you are.”
(Tim Lovegrove from the sermon “Jesus' Care for His Female Followers” May 13, 2018. Available on youtube.)

Truths to preach to ourselves daily:

1. Today, I am a child of God, mercifully born again, destined to an eternal inheritance in Christ. This is my fundamental identity in this world now and in eternity.
2. Today, God is the source and sustainer of my life. I have nothing that I have not received from Him. It is God who enables me to live and breathe and work and rest.
3. Today, I am not God. I cannot actually control anything. I cannot be perfect. I do not know everything. I cannot fix everything. I cannot be more than one place at one time. I cannot finish everything. I do not have endless energy. I am radically limited in what I am able to do by my physical, mental, and emotional limitations.
4. Today, God is God, and He will be God to me all day. He is powerfully, intentionally, mercifully, graciously, lovingly in charge of my life and the lives of everyone around me. I can and should work and rest, make plans, set goals, and seek to manage and live my life well, but it is God who is in control of what actually happens to me moment by moment.
5. Ultimately, my life will be measured by two relationships:
How well do I know and love God?
How well have I loved people?

Application Questions

1. What changes do you need to make in your life to make coming to Jesus and learning from Him the most important thing you do every day?

2. On a day-to-day basis, what most disturbs the tranquility of your soul?

How can learning lowliness and gentleness from Jesus help you guard the restfulness of your soul?

Of the many books I read in preparation for this study, the most beneficial was *Tranquility* by David W. Henderson.