

August 31, 2006

## Encouragement for Today

### “Make Rest, Not War”

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**Key Verse:** “...Get away with me and you’ll recover your life . I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.” Matthew 11:27-28 (MSG)

### Devotion:

Once again I had bitten off more than I could chew. Now I was staying up late and rushing through my days with a high level of near-constant stress trying to get it all done . *Well, its only for a short season*, I reasoned, but I was ignoring my own need for rest.

Without rest, author and minister Wayne Muller writes, "we make war on our own bodies, pushing them beyond their limits; war on our children, because we cannot find enough time to be with them when they are hurt and afraid and need our company; war on our spirit, because we are too preoccupied to listen to the quiet voice that seeks to nourish and refresh."

Rest is a spiritual disciple. It’s something we must make room for. Yet we work so hard to make room for everything but rest. Then we wind up exhausted, irritable, and too often filled with regret. We mistakenly think we’re being excellent and efficient with our multi-tasking and our scheduled-down-to-the-minute days, but we are finite beings and we can only do so many things at a time *well*. Muller explains, “If we take on too much, we end up knocking things over and then spend our time cleaning up messes."

Everything God made runs in rhythms and cycles. The ocean, the solar system, the seasons, time, music, and the beating heart are just a few examples. Listen a moment to your own rhythm: Inhale... exhale. Thump-thump. Thump-thump goes your chest. Inhale... exhale. The fact is we were designed by our Creator to live in a rhythm – a pattern of alternating periods of work and rest just as He illustrated in the work of creation followed by a day of rest. Jesus urges us in today’s key verse to tune into Him and learn how to live this way. He offers us the unforced rhythms of grace God designed us for.

So why do we fight rest? Certainly our culture pushes us to accomplish more and more with our days . However, part of our problem stems from an inaccurate view of rest. All too often we view it solely as sleep, deciding as long as we get 8 hours of shut-eye, we can stay as busy as we want day-in and day-out. Soon we grow weary, even if we’re sleeping well, and begin “living for the weekend” or counting the days until our next vacation.

Once the weekend or vacation arrives, we confuse rest with leisure activity. We try to force a whole bunch of relaxing fun into a short period of time, assuming it will restore us. We cram our time for rest with shopping, playing, socializing, recreation, attending cultural events and so forth. Not that these aren't good ways to spend our time, or that they can't have some therapeutic, rejuvenating effect - they just aren't going to provide real rest.

Rest is not just sleep, not just relaxation, not just a fun time, but a deep sense of hope and peace that will only abide in us to the degree that we abide in Christ and the grace He provides. Rest is not just punching out the time-clock and putting up your feet, it is resting in the fact that grace covers you, that mercy and protection are extended to you, and that your days are numbered and ordered of the Lord. That's not something we typically find remembrance of while napping or knitting, but while tuning out the world long enough to plug into God's amazing perspective.

How can we make for ourselves rest and not war?

- By understanding we are made to live with regular rhythms of rest.
- By remembering who God is – He's mercy, He's grace, He's love, He's provision, and He's faithful consistency.
- By becoming less rat-race focused and more eternity-minded.
- By building into our days, regular periods of restful communion with God where we can hit the "reset button" and align with Him.

As we do so, we'll remain more mindful about what is truly important. As a result, we become a lot less likely to bite off more than we can chew—or the heads of those around us!

**My Prayer for Today:**

Dear Lord, I want to walk with You, watch You, and learn Your unforced rhythms of grace. Show me the way to take a real rest. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

**Application Steps:**

Make room for rest in your day today.

Go alone outside – maybe on the back porch or on walk through the woods or park – and spend time with God. Ask Him to show you the rhythm He wants your life to have. Ask Him to show you rest.

**Reflection Points:**

Do you fight against your need for rest? Why?

Do you find yourself craving rest and rarely experiencing it?

Have you limited the scope of rest to just sleep, or recreation?

What can you say “no” to in order to make room for rest?

**Power Verses:**

Deuteronomy 33:12, “Let the beloved of the Lord rest secure in Him, for He shields him all day long, and the one the Lord loves rests between His shoulders.” (NIV)

Isaiah 40:28-31, “The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths will grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall. But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” (NIV)

Jeremiah 6:16, “So now the Lord says, “Stop right where you are! Look for the old, godly way, and walk in it. Travel its path, and you will find rest for your souls.” (NLT)

**Additional Resources:**

*Breathe* by Keri Wyatt Kent

[http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources\\_breathe.htm](http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_breathe.htm)

*Women Who Do Too Much* by Patricia Sprinkle

[http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources\\_doTooMuch.htm](http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_doTooMuch.htm)

*A Woman's Secret to a Balanced Life* by TerKeurst and Jaynes

[http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources\\_secretBalanced.htm](http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_secretBalanced.htm)