

MONDAY 7/15/24

Genesis 2:1

The creation narrative in Genesis 1-2 tells us a number of things about the created order God established. What becomes evident as we finish the account of the first week is that there is a pattern to life in God's creation. That pattern is evidenced in the rhythm of work and rest that God knit into the fabric of creation.

Both work and rest play an integral role in the beginning of life, as well as in our daily lives. Work and rest are good and life-giving practices to all creation. Let's start by examining work.

Genesis 1 shows us God's creative energy being applied to His work. At the end of each day, God reflects on His work and calls it good. Work is indeed a good thing. God created us to work. We were made to be productive. When Adam and Eve were placed within the garden God had made for them, they were given instructions to both enjoy the garden and to work in it. There's an underlying notion there that we are meant to enjoy our work. The curse on Adam from the Fall wasn't that he had to work. He was already working. The curse was that the work would now be much more difficult.

I want to be clear about what we see here in Genesis 1: work is not the enemy. Work is a critical component of God's design for His creation. That being said, we can overwork ourselves to the point that what was intended to be a blessing becomes a curse. The reason work becomes a curse to us is that we do not abide by the rhythm God laid out for His creation by resting from our work.

I wonder--Do you have a healthy rhythm of rest and work in your life? If we want to thrive in God's created order, then we must discover the rhythm He placed within creation involving both rest and work.

Prayer: *"God, help me discover a life-giving rhythm of work and rest in my life. Amen."*

TUESDAY 7/16/24

Genesis 2:2

Here we see that creation was finished in six days, but on the seventh day, God rested from His work. This leads to the obvious question: why did God rest? Was He tired? I believe God rested in order to establish a healthy pattern for His creation. He was modeling healthy behavior for us and tipping us off to the reality that rest is a natural part of the rhythm of the world.

By resting from His work, God shows us that rest is built into the framework of creation. Rest isn't optional or something we can escape. Sure, we can evade it for a while, but eventually, it catches up to us. The creation narrative reveals that we were created to work and rest.

What's interesting here is that the animals and humanity were created on day six, and on the seventh day, all creation rested. So our first full day of existence was a day of rest. Author Mike Breen says that this implies that God intended for us to work from a place of rest rather than rest from our work.

I think it's fair to say that Americans value work over rest. It's not that we don't like rest; it's just that we don't get enough because we've got too much work to do. So we go about our lives working

until we are all but forced to stop. We introduce rest only after we have worked ourselves to the bone.

The idea put forth here is that rest is our healthy center. When we are faithful to God's rhythm of working from a rested place, we have more energy to put into the work to which we have been called. We are better in the work that we do. We are more focused and more likely to be fruitful. How would working from a place of rest impact your life?

Prayer: *"Lord, may I have the courage to follow the pattern of living You laid out for me. Amen."*

WEDNESDAY 7/17/24

Genesis 2:3-4

Genesis 2:3 tells us that God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. "Holy" means "set apart", as in this day was set apart from the other days. This means it is unique in its purpose from the other days of the week. The first six days of the week were reserved for work and productivity, but the seventh was a day reserved for rest. This tells us that rest is important, but it also tells us that we must be intentional about resting.

I can imagine more than one person reading the WayPoints this week is having an internal argument with me about how and where to cram more rest into their lives. While I cannot answer that question for everyone, I do know that our world will not encourage us to rest. Our culture throws more things at us than we can handle, and yet we try to do just that. We must begin to prioritize rest in our lives, as we will not be able to function in a healthy way apart from it. A lack of rest affects far more than just our work performance, but all of our relationships, including our relationship with God.

The amazing thing about rest is that it restores us physically, mentally and spiritually. Rest, in a way, re-creates us. That's where we get the word "recreation" from. Play and rest have a way of making us new again.

This leads us to a discussion on what rest entails. We often imagine rest as sleeping in and being lazy, which is a form of rest, but there are other forms of rest. It helps to identify whether you are an introvert or extrovert. Introverts may rest by reading alone in a quiet place or by taking a walk by themselves. Extroverts recharge by spending time with friends. We are all unique as far as which activities allow us the opportunity to be re-created. The point is for you to identify what activities place you back in the healthy center of rest, then begin to work them into your routine.

Prayer: *"Holy Spirit, would you re-create my soul as I seek opportunities to rest? Amen."*

THURSDAY 7/18/24

Exodus 20:8-10

The fourth commandment had to do with Israel's keeping the Sabbath Day. The Sabbath Day was the seventh day of the week, the day of rest modeled for us by God Himself. "Sabbath" means "to rest, to cease, or to keep." The idea of the command to keep the Sabbath Day was that it was a day reserved for the Lord. It was a day to remember and a day to worship.

What is fascinating about this command is that in it, God both structures time and makes it holy. God sets a provision before us so that we will practice slowing down, which is quite a feat in a hurried

world such as ours. God's ordaining rest into our routine is a protective measure for you. God is trying to guard you by moving you toward a life-giving practice.

God also makes time holy. Holiness, as we have looked at early this week, means to be, "set apart" or "sacred." I think we understand something about how sacred time is for us. How valuable is time? Imagine how much you would pay just for another day with a loved one who has passed away.

As much as we value money in our culture, I think time is even more sacred to us, and yet it seems to go by so quickly. I believe part of God's provision in the Sabbath is to make sure we make the most of our time. He wants us to understand how valuable it is so that we will be diligent about spending it wisely. I hope you're wrestling with how to keep sacred time in your routine.

Prayer: *"Jesus, help me to see how sacred time is that I might spend it wisely. Amen."*

FRIDAY 7/19/24

John 15:5-6

So welcome back to John 15! We're taking another look at John 15 from a slightly different angle than we did two weeks ago. Today, we're going to focus on the process that a vine goes through in order to produce fruit. This is important because this process is similar to the process we endure as we are led to greater fruitfulness in our lives.

In the same way that God has ordained a rhythm of life for us, so He has created a rhythm of life for a vine. When a vine is planted, it tries to bear fruit, but for the first three years, its branches are pruned back until the vine is mature enough to sustain fruit production. Now, vines do exist to produce fruit, but that doesn't mean that they produce fruit year-round. After their fruit is harvested, vines have their branches pruned back so that they can enter a period of rest. This is an intentional time for them to recharge. If the vines do not rest for a season, they will die off.

These are cautionary words for us. So often we try to produce, produce, and produce some more. We hold off on rest even when we know we need it because we have more to do. This is unhealthy and will eventually lead to unfruitfulness in our lives.

God invites us to be fruitful, much like the vine. In fact, He takes us through the same process. We work to produce fruit for the Kingdom of God, and yet when the fruit is ready to be harvested, God prunes back our branches. This pruning leads us to a time to learn and rest. In this season, we abide in Jesus, where we are strengthened in our relationship with Him. This period of rest leads to a time for growth, and the growth will eventually lead to us bearing more fruit for the Kingdom. After we bear fruit, we are once again pruned back. Author Mike Breen envisions this pattern as a semi-circle with a pendulum swinging back and forth between rest and fruitfulness (look at the visual under Sunday's devotion). Jesus is the One who constantly walks us back and forth between one and the other so that we can bear fruit for His Father.

Prayer: *"Christ, guide me toward whatever I need so that I can bear fruit for You. Amen."*

SATURDAY 7/20/24

Mark 6:30-32

Jesus had just sent the disciples out to go serve. They left Jesus' care then went to minister to the communities around them. When they came back, they were both thrilled and exhausted. They celebrated with Jesus all the amazing things that had happened--the fruit that was born for God's Kingdom. They were so excited about what had occurred that I imagine a part of them wanted to go right back out into the communities again, but Jesus urges restraint. He tells them to go to a secluded place to rest.

Throughout the gospels, Jesus models the rhythm of rest and fruitfulness. He shows us that there is a time to be poured into and a time to pour out. Even though Jesus had a relatively short ministry on Earth, he was intentional about living in rhythm with the pattern of rest and fruitfulness evidenced in creation.

In Mark's gospel, we find that on many occasions, Jesus retreats on His own for personal prayer and time with His Father. This was how Jesus personally recharged. He found His rest in being in close fellowship with God. The daily practice of prayer, scripture study, and other spiritual disciplines are a way for our souls to find rest in God, which is the ultimate rest we need.

Prayer: *"Lord, meet me in the various ways I draw near to You so I will find rest in You. Amen."*

SUNDAY 7/21/24

John 15:9-11

Jumping back into John 15, Jesus calls on His disciples to abide in His love. Abiding is a way of resting in the Lord. Abiding is about remaining as one with someone. By abiding in Jesus' love, we are being encouraged to find rest in our identity in Him. We can have peace in our relationship with Him because of who He is and how He loves us.

The abiding Jesus is talking about here in verses 9-11 is different from the passages before it in that Jesus is calling us to abide in order to nurture our relationship. Having a healthy relationship with Jesus centers us. It is in this relationship that we have confidence in who we are because of what He has done on our behalf. It is only when we are centered in this reality that we are then able to fulfill our mission.

Oftentimes we are tempted to neglect our relationship with Jesus in order to get to what we believe He is calling us to do. This is a false start. The Bible always grounds our relationship in Christ first. It is then and only then that we are sent out to do what He has called us to do.

If you work apart from being filled by the Lord, you will eventually run out of something to give. If we rest in Jesus' love, we will continually be filled up. If we are filled up, then we are able to have something to share with the world around us.

Jesus tells the disciples to focus on resting in His love for Him. He tells them to remember who they are to Him and what He commanded them to do. If they do these things, then their joy will be full. Jesus' message to them is a message to us.

Today, I want you to find rest in Jesus' love for you. As you draw near to Him, may He supply you with grace that will abound both in and outside of your life. Then you will know the joy of the Lord.

Prayer: *"Jesus, I want to find rest in Your love for me. You love me, not because I am good, but because You are good. I choose to rest in Your goodness and so serve You with all I have. Amen."*

