

Excerpt from
*Refresh: a wellness devotional for
the whole Christian life.*

Rest

*Most of us find it difficult to rest.
There's always more to do, and our
culture expects us to never switch off.
But we all need rest. It is a blessing
that God calls us to welcome and enjoy.*

Rest #1

week beginning _____

In six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Exodus 20:11

Read: Exodus 20:8-11

The Israelites had been slaves in Egypt for over 200 years. Then God miraculously rescued them and brought them out into the desert. They had been surrounded by the Egyptian culture and religion, and they'd got used to it. They had forgotten how to follow their own God.

So God's first task once he had freed his people was to make them into a community of faith who would live his way. He had created them, and he knew what was best for them. He built into their new lifestyle a rhythm of work and rest, ending each week with a holy 'Sabbath'. On the Sabbath, all work would stop. The people would spend the whole day worshipping God, relaxing and enjoying time together.

As Christians, we are not commanded to keep the Sabbath in the same way as the Israelites (Colossians 2:16). But finding a balance between work and rest is still important. For some of us, setting aside one day each week for rest creates a healthy

routine. For others, taking smaller chunks of time during the week might work better.

However we choose to do it, the Bible encourages us to welcome rest as a generous gift from the God who loves us. He knows what we need, and he modelled this rhythm for us in the story of creation.

This week, think about how you balance work and rest, and try to make some changes if you need to.

- How can you build rest periods into your week?
- Which works better for you, a whole day off, or smaller chunks of rest time during the week?
- What are the challenges for you in keeping a healthy work/rest balance?

*In six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea,
and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day.
Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*

Exodus 20:11



Weekly Reflections

Good things

Hard things

General mood

How have I rested?

What help do I need?

What have I worried about?

Who can I ask for help?

What has calmed me down?

Eating



Sleep



Exercise



Prayer for next week

Rest #2

week beginning _____

*In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone,
LORD, make me dwell in safety.*

Psalm 4:8

Read: Psalm 4

David was on the run when he wrote Psalm 4. God had chosen him to be the next king of Israel, and Saul, the current king, was jealous and angry. Saul had sent soldiers to kill David, so his life was in great danger.

In our busy world it can be hard to make rest a priority. There always seems to be more to do. We might feel that if we stop for a moment, we'll lose control of all the balls we're trying to juggle. Maybe we're worried that without our constant input things won't get done, or at least not properly. Or perhaps we're fearful of the anxious thoughts that could take over our minds if we don't keep busy.

Whatever situation we're in, our bodies and minds do need regular rest to function well. David could have forced himself to stay awake in case his enemies attacked. Instead, he saw his need for sleep as an opportunity to remind himself of who was really in control. He trusted God to keep him safe while he slept.

Rest can be an act of faith in God. It's a way of declaring that it's him, not us, who keeps the world turning. And it's a regular chance to freely give up control and entrust our cares to him.

This week, try to see rest as a chance to freely give up control and entrust your cares to God.

- Are there any worries or fears that keep you from resting well?
- How do you feel about giving up control? Do you want to resist, or is it a relief?
- Does rest feel different when you look at it this way?

*In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone,
LORD, make me dwell in safety.*

Psalm 4:8



Weekly Reflections

Good things

Hard things

Main focus

How has it felt to rest?

What am I grateful for?

What have I done well?

Who can I thank?

What can I do better?

Eating



Sleep



Exercise



Prayer for next week

Rest #3

week beginning _____

[Jesus said to his disciples], ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’

Mark 6:31

Read: Mark 6:30-46

At every stage of life, there are demands on our time. Those demands don't always stop when we need to rest. So how do we carve out quality rest time in the midst of busyness, or even chaos?

Jesus's later life was full of constant pressure. Huge crowds followed him everywhere he went, eager to hear his teachings and receive healing. His disciples kept making mistakes and needing correction. And the religious leaders wanted him dead! But even in these busy and stressful times, Jesus carefully guarded his time alone. He knew he needed to recharge and refocus, especially with prayer and sleep.

Sometimes life does force us to be flexible. In this passage, Jesus put off resting so he could meet the needs of the crowd (v30-34). Even so, he took the next opportunity to go away by himself for some much-needed alone time (v45-46).

Our need for rest increases when the physical, mental or emotional demands on us are high. At those times it's even more important to recognise the signs that we need a break.

Life doesn't always go according to plan. There are times when a task can't wait, or someone needs us right away. But like Jesus, we must be determined and creative in finding ways to carve out the breathing space we need.

This week, try to notice the signs that you need a break, and find creative ways to meet that need.

- What are the biggest demands on your time and energy right now?
- What are some of the signs that warn you when you need a break?
- How can you guard your rest time? Can you schedule it, or do you need to be flexible?

[Jesus said to his disciples], 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'

Mark 6:31



Weekly Reflections

Good things

Hard things

General mood

How have I found creative ways to rest?

What do I need to talk about?

How have I blessed others?

Who can I talk with?

How have others blessed me?

Eating



Sleep



Exercise



Prayer for next week

Rest #4

week beginning _____

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened,
and I will give you rest.*

Matthew 11:28

Read: Matthew 11:25-30

Followers of Jesus are not promised an easy time. On almost every page of the Bible we read about people whose lives were anything but quiet and peaceful. Some were given big jobs to do. Others had to deal with difficult people and situations. Many suffered great pain and loss.

What Jesus offers us is not a quiet, peaceful life, but a quiet, peaceful soul. That's a kind of rest that doesn't depend on our circumstances. It comes from spending time with him, slowing down and being still in his presence.

A soul at rest knows that we have been saved by grace, not by our own effort (Ephesians 2:8-9). A soul at rest knows that we can rely on God's strength to do all he asks us to do (Philippians 4:13). A soul at rest knows that nothing can separate us from God's love for us (Romans 8:38-39).

If anything in life is weighing us down or wearing us out, Jesus encourages us to bring it to him. Each day we can choose to release the worries that aren't ours to carry. Each day we can let him take the weight of the heavy burdens

that we've struggled with for so long. As we rest in his gentle presence, he refreshes us with strength and energy for the work he's given us to do.

This week,
bring your
burdens
to Jesus.

- What burdens are you carrying? Do they come from your circumstances, or from others' expectations, or your own?
- Which burdens can you let go of completely? Which ones do you need Jesus's strength to bear?
- Which Bible verses give peace and rest to your soul?

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened,
and I will give you rest.*

Matthew 11:28



Weekly Reflections

Good things

Hard things

Main focus

What has refreshed my soul?

What am I proud of?

How have I spoken to myself?

Who can I celebrate with?

What has encouraged me?

Eating



Sleep



Exercise



Prayer for next week

Rest Reflections

3-word summary

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-

Verse to remember

What have I found challenging?

What have I found rewarding?

Favourite insight

What will I carry forward?

Rest prayer

Rest Optional Extra Bible Passages

Rest #1

- **Genesis 1:1 – 2:3**
God creates the world and rests on the seventh day
- **Leviticus 25:1-22**
Laws about rest for people, animals and the earth

Rest #3

- **Psalms 121**
God does not get tired or sleep, and he is always watching over us
- **Luke 12:22-34**
Encouragement to trust God with all things

Rest #2

- **Job 38:4-21**
God's power compared to ours – he is in control
- **Psalms 23**
Resting in God's faithful care

Rest #4

- **Isaiah 55:1-7**
Encouragement to rest in God's presence
- **Hebrews 3:7 – 4:16**
We must strive to enter God's rest

Rest Further Resources

- **Book:** *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry: how to stay emotionally healthy and spiritually alive in the chaos of the modern world* by John Mark Comer
Written in a conversational tone, with wise principles for slowing down and making room for God in busy lives.
- **Music:** *Still* (volume 1) by Rivers and Robots
A relaxing hour of instrumental worship, including new arrangements of familiar songs. Each volume in the Still series is by a different artist, with their own musical style.
- **Colouring Book:** *Images of Grace* by Jacqui Grace
Each page centres around a Bible verse, charmingly illustrated with a scene from everyday life. The *Images of . . .* series is lovely – an easy way to rest and memorise encouraging verses at the same time!

Your Notes

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24 23 22 21 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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www.malcolmdown.co.uk
Registered Office: Welwyn Garden City, England

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-915046-02-4

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Cover design by Esther Kotecha
Art direction by Sarah Grace

Printed in the UK