

Stop wiggling

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Our 3 years old grandson Elias hates to take a nap like many other toddlers at their age. He doesn't want to miss anything. So he comes up with every possible excuse not to sleep even though he yawns continually until he finally surrenders himself to the nap he is supposed to take 30 minutes ago. For me, you don't have to ask me twice about taking a nap. If I had time to take a nap, before you finish the sentence of "Take a nap," I'd be out.

We all need to rest physically to recuperate our strength. A good night's sleep is a very much needed blessing to all of us. OK, that's the physical side. But what about our spiritual side? Do we need rest for that, too? Thousand times, yes. Spiritual rest doesn't mean that we check out spiritually and think nothing and have a zen moment like buddhist monks do. That's not spiritual rest which the Bible talks about, rather it is a spiritual lala land moment from the pit of hell. If you empty your mind, satan will fill it with his deceitful garbage.

Whether it is a natural disaster, job loss, financial crisis, or health problems, it doesn't take a whole lot to rattle people's emotional and spiritual cages. If you have any doubt, look at the stock market. It takes a roller coaster ride depending on who says what each moment.

I even see many born-again Christians running wild just like unbelievers as if the end of the world finally has arrived when they face personal difficulties. Although chaos may surround us externally, God doesn't want us to become chaotic on the inside, because He has everything under His control and He wants us to stop wiggling.

A. WHAT DOES "REST" MEAN TO YOU?

According to Dictionary.com, it defines rest as the following:

"relief or freedom, especially from anything that wearies, troubles, or disturbs."

Away from the dictionary definition, you would think of the word "rest" as "ceasing from work – relaxing, slowing down, unwinding, and sleeping. However, there's another definition of rest – the definition that God is implying when He gives us this command.

When our Lord says, "Be still and know that I am God" or "I will give you rest", He's saying, "be placed and positioned" in Him – in His promises, in His faithfulness, and in His truth. That's because He alone can give you a hope that truly anchors your soul.

Then, someone is bound to ask, "How do I actually rest in Him? It's so hard to do, I don't know how." Yes, it's hard because it's the opposite of what our culture teaches us – which is to stress out and do something now, not later. And, it's the opposite of our natural tendencies – which is to worry and be consumed with fear.

Speaking of worry and fear, I need to repeat what I taught at our Midweek Service last Thursday night. Worry is assuming responsibility that is beyond our control and capability.

Matthew 6:25-34 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at

the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 28 So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; 29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Did you notice that Jesus went on about worry quite a bit here. Wonder why He did that? Because He knew that we tend to worry a lot, am I right? He promises to us that He will take care of what we need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

You need to remember, there's no message of peace or assurance in the world because it cannot give what it does not have. Obviously money, fame, and power cannot give them the peace and rest they desperately need. That's why so many Hollywood celebrities and politicians turn to alcohol, drugs, and sex. They cannot find the peace of God, because they don't have the peace with God.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

The only way to truly have a rest is to know Jesus Christ and allow His promises to overpower everything and everyone else.

B. 3 STEPS TO FIND REST IN A RESTLESS WORLD

1st Step: Need to have a devotional life

Resting in God's promises ain't a one-time response. It's an actual way of thinking which begins with reading God's Word daily. Please don't you dare tell me that you don't have time to read the Bible daily. If you have time to watch TV, read newspaper, get on Facebook or Instagram or Twitter, you DO have plenty of time to read the Bible.

Why do we need to read the Bible? Because once you know God's character from His Word, and the personal relationship you have with Him, then you can begin to trust Him. You don't trust someone you don't know, so it must begin there.

Please note one thing here: Resting in God's promise is not something you get overnight. It can happen, but it requires spiritual discipline and cultivation in a steady walk with Christ. There is no particular time period when you are going to know that you are there. Some get there quicker, others slower, depending on YOUR willingness to trust God's faithfulness.

In other words, individual spiritual maturity level depends on how much we trust in the Lord and His promises, not how long we have been saved.

2nd Step: Remember what God has already done

It seems that many of us only remember when the Lord said, "No" to our prayers and didn't answer our prayer requests the way we asked Him to do. Though we said, "Your will be done," many of us hope to have our will over His, as if we know better than Him. Do we?

Remember and acknowledge all those things and times God was faithful to us in the past and how God came through. This is the reason why I highly recommend you to have a prayer journal that you can write your prayer requests with dates on one side of the journal. Then you write God's answers on the other side with dates. The prayer journal will jog your memory how faithful our God is to us when doubt or fear arises and we can't manage to see which way to turn to.

This is exactly what David did when he was a servant in Saul's kingdom in 1 Samuel 17. David pulled out his 5 smooth stones of remembrance of God's faithfulness from the brook nearby when he defeated Goliath with one of them.

1 Samuel 17:37 Moreover David said, "The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."

Was David scared when he saw 9 feet tall Goliath and heard his booming voice across the valley? ABSOLUTELY NOT! When David was facing a giant, but in reality, the Philistine giant midget was facing the gigantic God of the universe. Because young David trusted his God, he could face the giant without fear and ran to him with a slingshot in his hand.

We all face giants in our lives from time to time. They, especially three of them, tend to stand in the way to our entrance to God's rest. They are presumption, panic, and pride.

We become presumptuous when we feel that we've got things all figured out, when we think that we can second-guess the Lord and how He should resolve our problems.

We become panicked when we feel we're not going to make it, or the Lord is not doing things the way we want Him to do. Then, we see ourselves as grasshoppers and our problems as giants like the ancient Israelis did.

We become prideful when we feel we can handle life's problems without the Lord's help, when we look to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps instead of relying on His help.

To slay those giants, grab the slingshot of faith and fill it with three smooth stones of these: Resist presumption; Refuse to panic, and release your pride. And let them rip. The way to God's rest will open.

3rd Step: Self-check to see what exactly it is we are carrying

Matthew 11:28-30 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 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. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Ask yourself this question: "Is the burden I am carrying right now light or heavy?" After that, I want you to ask yourself another question: "Was this burden that I have from myself or from the Lord?"

Sometimes we have to wonder if we are gluttons for punishment. We pile up burdens that are not necessary for us to carry. Because His burden, according to these 3 verses we just read, is light and His yoke is easy, not heavy.

Refusing to let go of what we cannot do anything about is nothing more than pride. Our God can handle our problems whole lot better than we can possibly imagine in His way, in His time. I like what the late British preacher Charles Spurgeon said, "Self-sufficiency is satan's net where he catches men like poor silly fish, and destroys them."

It is much wiser, much simpler, and much easier to trust, obey, and rest in the Lord who knows our unknown future.

When we are burdened, when we are overwhelmed, we need to come to Jesus. There really is nowhere else to go. Jesus did not say that when you are burdened or overwhelmed, you should go to counseling. Nor did He say you should just go read a book, or even go to church or go hear a sermon – although these things are good. Ultimately, the answer is to go to Jesus in prayer.

Jesus' invitation simply was, "Come to Me" – not "Come to My teachings," although it could include that. Nor did He say, "After you make changes in your life, then come to Me." It simply was, "Come to Me."

Psalm 61:2 From the ends of the earth, I cry to you for help when my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the towering rock of safety.

Yet modern culture would say something different. It would say, "Well, if you can, just get that promotion. If you can, just get that house. If you can, just take that vacation. Then you will find rest." Materialism would say, "Build it up, and you will find rest." Pleasure mania would say, "Live it up, and you will find rest." Religion would say, "Keep it up, and you will find rest."

But Jesus says, "Come to Me, and you will find rest." It is not so much that we need words – we need the Living Word. When we are under pressure, we need Jesus.

C. RESTING IS NOT BECOMING LAZY

"Resting in God" does NOT mean becoming lazy. It means that we trust our Lord for who He is, what He promised, and how He fulfills His promises. Because of His faithfulness, we become obedient to the Lord in spite of the difficult looking circumstances. Thus we can have a simple formula: Rest=Trust=Obedience.

The opposite of this is: Self-reliance=Distrust in God=Rebellion against Him

D. APPLICATION

Stop wiggling with your own strength and ideas, rather rest in the Lord and trust His faithfulness and promises.