

Putting It All Together

I've made an executive decision to completely change the topic of tonight's study. I had planned to talk about how it's hard to find rest when you are feeling guilty or you have regrets. I was going to talk about the need for confession and repentance in those circumstances. But that felt like a heavy topic, and I didn't want to end on that note. I wanted to end on a high note. So, what we're going to do tonight is just review everything that we've talked about. And then, I want to put everything together. We've talked about these different ways to find rest, but I want to show how they work together, and how you can use them on daily basis in conjunction with each other to find the rest that you need.

Our Need for Rest

As we've talked about from the very beginning of the study, we need rest. Just as our bodies need physical rest our souls need spiritual rest. That's the way God created us. We see that in the rhythms of rest that God instituted in creation.

Do you remember some of the rhythms of rest that God instituted?

Day followed by night, the seasons, six days of work followed by a day of rest...those are all rhythms in our lives that help us to take the time to rest. We learned how important this concept of Sabbath rest is for us. We talked about how we're created for rest and we're commanded to rest, but we've corrupted that rest. We don't take time regularly to rest, or we try to find rest in the wrong ways. However, Sabbath rest is beneficial for us, as it's meant to be a time of rest, remembrance, and refreshment. We should find that weekly as take a day to attend church and focus on worshipping God. I know personally, though, I need that rest on a more regular basis, like every day.

Often, we try to find the rest that we so desperately need in all the wrong places. *What are some wrong ways that we try to find rest?*

I know for myself, when I'm tired and stressed, I think that a hot bath, reading a novel, or watching my favorite TV show will help me to rest. And those things may work temporarily. However, they won't give me the spiritual rest that my soul craves. That kind of rest only comes from Jesus, who says, "Come to me and I will give you rest." Spiritual rest is a gift from Jesus. It's a by-product, if you will, of spending time with Him. So, the bulk of our Bible study has been spent in talking about ways that we can spend time with Jesus. All of the things that we talked about are tools to lead us to Christ, or to point us to Christ.

Finding Rest through Scripture Reading

First, we looked at Scripture reading as a cure for spiritual hunger. We discussed some ways that we try to fill the hunger or void in our lives, such as through wisdom, work, or worldly pleasure, but all of those things are vanity. The only way to satisfy our hunger is through Christ.

We also talked about how every passage of Scripture should lead us to Christ. We don't just read the Bible to get a word of encouragement for the day, or to get a list of dos and don'ts to help us be better Christians. It's all about Jesus. I gave you a chart with some shortcuts to finding Christ in each passage, as well as a couple of lists of Scripture passages that point to Christ.

Would anyone like to share an example of how they have found rest in Christ through reading their Bible? Or maybe a particular passage that has pointed you to Christ?

Finding Rest through Meditation

Next, we talked about meditation as a cure for distraction. Christian meditation simply means filling your mind with thoughts of God and His truth. We're actually commanded to meditate in the Bible. We're told to meditate "day and night." We see that those who do meditate will be prosperous and successful, although this success may not look like what the world defines as success.

We may find it hard to meditate on God's Word, but we think about those things that we like, that we delight in. When we learn to see the beauty of God's Word, we'll find it much easier to meditate on it, and we looked at a list of things that make the Bible beautiful. We also talked about how meditation provides the constant nourishment that our souls need. Also, as we meditate on God's Word, we will find that it changes us from the inside out.

Does anyone remember some specific ways to meditate that we discussed?

As you read your Bible, you choose something that stands out to you about the person or work of Christ. Then you just think about it...what it means, what the implications are, how it affects your life. It may lead to other thoughts about Jesus, or other Bible verses, or a maybe a song.

Has anyone incorporated meditation into your day? If so, has it made a difference for you?

Finding Rest through Prayer

Then, we discussed prayer as a cure for worry. We're all prone to worry, imagining all the things that could go wrong or all the bad things that could happen. When we find ourselves worrying, we should turn our worries into prayers. As with Scripture reading and meditation, we should use prayer to help us draw closer to Christ. We can do that by making sure that our prayers are more spiritual in nature than physical. It's not wrong to pray for our own or someone else's physical needs. But we are called to be spiritually minded. We're told in Colossians to set our minds on things above, not on things below. We're told in Matthew to seek first God's kingdom and righteousness, and the physical needs would be given to us. We're also told in Matthew to store up for ourselves treasure in heaven, not on earth, because, where our treasure is, there our heart will be also.

Our prayers are going to reflect what we think about and what's important to us. So, if we're thinking spiritually, if we're more concerned about spiritual matters than physical, then that will be reflected in our prayers. We'll just naturally begin to pray more for our own spiritual well-being or for the spiritual needs of others than the physical needs, although we certainly may pray for those as well.

How have you found yourself praying for your own spiritual needs or for the spiritual needs of others lately?

Finding Rest through Worship

Last time we met, we talked about worship as a cure for depression or anxiety in the midst of difficult times. We talked about how worship takes our minds off of our problems, and puts our focus on Christ. When we do that, our problems, though still difficult and painful, may not seem quite so hard.

Worship is just acknowledging that God is worthy of our praise and honor. It's focusing on who God is and what He has done, and responding to Him an appropriate way.

Does anyone remember the eight ways to worship God that we talked about? What ways have you found yourself worshipping lately?

Putting the Pieces Together

We've looked at these different pieces of the puzzle, or different tools that we can use, to spend time with Christ. Again, the point of all of these things is to help us draw near to Jesus, our true source of rest. How can we put these pieces together on a daily basis, or at least frequently, to help us find rest? I want to walk us through what that might look like.

First, Scripture reading. Reading the Bible is the foundation for all of these other things. What we read should provide thoughts to meditate on. It should lead us to think about spiritual needs that we should pray about. Reading the Bible should also reveal God or Jesus to us in a way that leads to worship. So, we need to start with Scripture reading. Ideally, we should do this early in our day, so we have the whole rest of the day to meditate, pray, and worship based on what we've read.

Let's look at a passage of Scripture and talk about how we can use this passage throughout our day. Let's say you sit down with your daily reading plan, and your passage for the day is Ruth 4:1-10.

Thinking about the chart I gave you, is this passage talking about God or about a person? A person, Boaz

Which of the shortcuts on the chart best describes this person...a hero, villain, sinner, or sufferer? Boaz is the hero, and Ruth and Naomi could be seen as sufferers

How are Ruth and Naomi sufferers? What did Boaz do that makes him the hero? Ruth and Naomi are poor and have no one to provide for them. They can't care for themselves, and they need someone to help them. Boaz chooses to rescue them from their poverty, saving their lives and taking Ruth as His bride.

How is the suffering of Ruth and Naomi similar to ours, and how did Christ experience, endure, or redeem this suffering? Like Ruth, Christ left His home to live in a "foreign land," Jesus promises spiritual riches and a home in heaven to those who are poor and homeless; He will care for those who can't care for themselves.

How does Jesus exceed Boaz's words, actions, or virtues? Just as Boaz redeemed Ruth and made her his bride, Jesus redeems us from our poverty and sin and He makes us His bride. Boaz chose Ruth because of his love for her. Christ loved us and chose us as well.

What from this passage stands out to you as something that you would like to mediate on further?

What spiritual matters does this passage lead you to pray about?

In what ways does this passage inspire you to worship God?