

Endurance Requires Rest

Leader's Guide

Introduction and Overview

Most teenagers and adults feel stressed, overwhelmed, and pulled in a million different directions. Others struggle from FOMO or feeling like they “can't say no” when asked to help. In a world where we're told to just keep going or where we feel like we can't slow down, we as the Church have tangible and life-changing help to share through God's Word.

This Bible study breathes life into weary people by teaching the Biblical foundations of self-care as it relates to our Christian stewardship. God has actually created and designed us for rest. What we need to ask now is, “How can we rest well?” By the end of this study, participants will not only have a clear understanding of what rest is, the key factors that prevent rest, and how God's Word speaks into our need for rest. They will also walk away with a plan in place, rooted in God's truth, towards a life of endurance that comes when we rest well.

Session 1: Faith and Endurance

Session 2: Rest and Identity

Session 3: Yes and No

Session 4: Resting Well

Structure of the Leader's Guide

This leader's guide is meant to equip you in order to get the most of the Bible study itself. Here are the categories of content that you'll see in the guide:

Words in black: These are the actual questions and content from the participant handouts. Your page numbers will differ from the participant handouts, but you're all working with the same set of questions, verses, and commentary. What differs in the leader's guide is that instead of blank spaces below the questions, there are more words in red and italics.

Words in Red and Italics: This makes up the bulk of the leader's guide. It is red and in italics so that you can print it out either in color or black and white and still know which parts are the leader's guide additions. Some of this content is simply sample answers to the questions that are being asked. This doesn't mean that these are the only possible answers, but hopefully it gives you an idea as to what your conversation could be about. Other sections of the red

content are ideas of follow-up questions, tips, examples, or application points that don't appear on the participant handouts. Certain questions can go in a number of different ways, depending on your group needs, and the red words are an attempt to identify a few of those deeper discussions that may be worth having in your group. Sometimes there are questions that a certain group may not understand clearly, and hopefully the red words will help you be able to know what the purpose of that question or section is so that you can get to that same point by asking a different question or using an additional example. Use what is helpful to you, skip over that which isn't, but please read through it ahead of time so you have an idea of what's there and what could be helpful. Otherwise, you'll have 2-3 paragraphs of information that you're trying to read for the first time while your group only has 1-2 sentences.

Overviews: Each lesson has an "overview" section at the beginning section, which has a brief summary of the content of the lesson, contains the learning goals or outcomes that the lesson is trying to foster, and a list of key Bible passages used in that lesson. This overview is not in the participant handouts, just in your leader's guide. You don't need to teach anything from the overview, just be aware that it is there and try to keep especially those learning goals in mind as you go through the study.

Link for Optional Companion Videos: Each lesson contains a video link to a teaching section from the youth sectional "Endurance Requires Rest" at the 2025 LCMS Youth Gathering that this Bible study is a companion piece to. They can be used to introduce the study before the discussion, summarize it at the end, or reinforce or remind of key points after the study is done. Here's the link to the video playlist: [Endurance Requires Rest videos](#).

Suggested Times for Each Section: Next to each subheading, there is a time listed in parenthesis. This is a suggested amount of time for each section, to try and ensure that the whole study is completed in 45 minutes. If you have more time, you'll want to adjust those times accordingly and devote more time to discussion of key questions, but either way, the suggestions are meant to help you keep things moving rather than dwelling on one section too long and then having to hurry through others.

Note to Group Leaders

All of these leader's guide notes are there to help you facilitate learning and growth in God's Word. Speaking from experience here, be careful not to turn the study into a lecture instead of a discussion. What you don't want to happen is for a leader to ask the question, give the group 1-2 seconds to answer, and then jump into reading

the leader's guide to them. Anytime the leader dominates the conversation or launches into a large commentary after each group member's contribution, it shuts down the conversation.

Try to observe the 1/3rd Rule: No more than 1/3rd of the discussion time should be taken up by the leader talking. Give your group ample time to think of answers (10 seconds is recognized by educational researchers as appropriate wait time) and encourage contributions from everyone by having them write down answers to share with a partner or small group. Utilize polls or break-out rooms if you're doing the study virtually to help facilitate discussion that way. Use the information in this guide to help you lead, but make it your own by changing wording, asking your own questions, and using examples from your context. Keep the focus on helping the group to discover these truths for themselves rather than quickly giving all the answers to them.

[My Prayer For You](#)

Blessings to you on your "endurance requires rest" journey! My prayer is that as a leader, you would be blessed also through this study. I pray that you would see your own rest as a part of your God-given stewardship. I pray that at the crossroads of your life, you would look not at the road, but at the cross which is where you'll find the true rest that is needed to endure!

-Brandon Metcalf, series author

Endurance Requires Rest

Leader's Guide

Session 1- Faith and Endurance

Overview

Summary: If a goal of life is to endure, to keep going, how exactly can we achieve that? And perhaps more importantly, what does our faith have to do with that? This session dives into the two common misguided answers that we give to that question, and redirects towards the Biblical answer of God's gift of rest.

Learning Goals: That participants will...

- Identify personal and societal systems of overcommitment and burnout
- Know that faith is not merely inspirational words, but an invitation to true rest
- Trust that God's invitation to rest is a good gift from Him

Key passages: John 15:1-5 and Matthew 11:28

Optional Video Link

Session 1 : <https://youtu.be/goMqEjuXYZA> (19 minutes)

These teaching videos are sections from the youth sectional "Endurance Requires Rest" at the 2025 LCMS Youth Gathering that this Bible study is a companion piece to. They can be used to introduce the study before the discussion, summarize it at the end, or reinforce or remind of key points after the study is done.

Lesson Plan

Introduction (15 minutes)

- "The average American teenager is overcommitted, stressed, and burned out." What are your reactions to this statement? Is it true for you?

Give everyone a chance to either answer verbally or with a show of hands how they initially react to the statement (agree or disagree). Have a discussion about it, and then move into personal reflection. Consider having them write down their personal answer first, and then move to sharing either with a neighbor or in a small group to help multiply the engagement before moving back to sharing with the whole group.

In field testing, this was universally agreed to and generated good discussion.

- How true do you think that statement is for kids and adults today, not just for teenagers?

You can follow a similar format from the previous question. The purpose of this follow-up question is to see that this is not something unique to the teenage years. These systems of "un-rest" so to speak are impacting our children and likely their parents too. This would be a great chance for adult leaders to appropriately share the ways they see overcommitment and burnout in their own lives and among their peers.

Crossroads (5 minutes)

Life is lived oftentimes at the crossroads between decisions.

- What are some of the large and small decisions or options you have in front of you on a daily basis?

The crossroads serves as the guiding visual for the whole series. You'll want to make sure everyone knows what that looks like in real life and how we encounter this on a moment-by-moment basis. The companion videos show one example of a crossroads picture.

For the question itself, give everyone 60 seconds to see how many of these day-to-day decisions they have in front of them.

Example list: should I eat toast or cereal for breakfast, should I take honors or regular math class, which colleges should I apply for, can I afford to skip this reading for class so I can get some sleep, which of the million shows available should I watch tonight, or maybe I should listen to a podcast, scroll social media, or play my favorite game (and each of those come with their own set of crossroads).

You don't really need to analyze much of the lists, but have everyone share one crossroads from their list to help generate further thoughts.

- Do all these options and opportunities actually end up making us happier and more fulfilled?

This is where the group will critically analyze their lists. It would seem like having all these choices would make us happy, but the truth is that so often, they don't.

Psychologist Barry Schwartz in his now famous TED talk and book "The Paradox of Choice" argues that the abundance of choices actually makes us less happy. When we make a choice at the crossroads, what do we spend most of our time doing? Looking down the path(s) we didn't choose and wondering if that would have been better! So it takes longer for us to choose,

and when we do go down a path, we end up more dissatisfied with the choice that we did make.

Without even referencing that study, your group will likely come to those same conclusions from their own experience.

If our goal is to endure, to keep going, then the question becomes, "How?" It seems like the deck may be stacked against us. So let's dive into the connection between faith and endurance.

Where Does Faith Fit In With Endurance? (20 minutes)

Option 1: Inspiration

- In what ways do we reduce our faith to mere inspirational words or phrases?
In the video, an example of Isaiah 40:30-31 and cross country is shared. There are numerous other examples. We will take our favorite verse and put it on a t-shirt, thinking it only has to do with us winning the game. We will put Bible verses on a sign in our house with no context. We'll reduce worship to simply making us feel better, rather than receiving God's life-changing gifts. We will assume that we don't need to go to church whenever we're busy and life is going well, since God just wants us to keep going and to be happy.
- "For many Christians, the Bible exists to inspire them to do more, try harder, and be better." What are the shortcomings of this mindset of faith?
There are a number of reasons why this is a dangerous mindset. It's not that our faith can never inspire us, but rather that that can't be all that it does. The problem with this mindset is it puts us and our works at the center of our faith rather than Christ and His completed work for us.
God is not on the sideline cheering us on to run the race of life on our own. He's at the foot of a cross saying, "It is finished!"

Option 2: Sideline

The temptation to reduce our faith to mere inspiration is a common one. Perhaps even more common is to disconnect our faith from endurance altogether. In this case, our faith gets squeezed out whenever we're busy, relegated to only something that fits in our life when it's convenient.

- What are some ways that we set our faith aside when we're busy, stressed, or overwhelmed?
We oftentimes won't be bold enough to admit it, but the truth is that we so often do this. We will wait until after the season, concert or show is over to go back to church. When the kids get older, we'll get back to worship. Once

finals are over, I'll come back to youth group. We go into this with the best of intentions, convinced that we'll come back to worship, reconnect with God's people, or restart our prayer life once things slow down. And too often that doesn't happen as we've planned. That's what the next question dives into.

- Read John 15:1-5. What are the problems that arise when we set our faith to the side until after life slows back down?

The companion video shares the analogy of a VHS tape that can be incredibly helpful here. A VHS tape will start playing wherever it left off, even if it hasn't been played in 15 years. We treat our faith like this. But Jesus in John 15 says, "Apart from me, you can do nothing". We are not meant to sideline our faith and think our lives won't change. Our enemy will try and convince us that we don't need our faith, worship is optional, or that it would be weird if we went back now after such a long time away.

Solution: Rest

At the Crossroads of life, instead of looking at the road, look at the cross. There we find what we actually need to endure: Rest. Endurance requires rest.

Read Matthew 11:28.

- What do you notice here about Jesus' invitation to rest?

There's so much that is packed into this wonderful invitation of Jesus. Don't rush answering this question. Have the group reflect on this one on their own, writing down some thoughts, and then talking with a neighbor, before finally bringing it back to whole group.

First, He says to "come to me". It's a personal invitation. Rest is not a system of behaviors or a location, but rather the person and the work of your Savior, Jesus Christ. We will connect this pretty strongly to the blessing of the Divine Service in session 4, but don't hesitate to make those connections now too! This is one of the reasons why worship matters! God's gifts give us rest, and that's what He promises to do when we gather for worship.

Secondly, He says, "I will give you rest". Rest is a gift of God. Why does God give us gifts? Out of His abundance of love for us, yes. But also because we need them. Rest is a gift from God, given to you because you need to rest.

It's easy to hear the invitation to rest and to ignore it or write it off as wishful thinking. But what's at stake in each of these areas if you don't rest:

This reflection is focused on the cost when we don't rest. There is something at stake here, and it is helpful to name that rather than quickly move past it.

Health- *Our health suffers when we don't rest. A lack of rest or sleep are very dangerous to us, as it carrying a constant load of stress. We oftentimes will end up sick when we continue to push ourselves past our limits.*

Relationships- *Whether we want to admit it or not, when we're stressed and stretched beyond our limits, who do we tend to take it out on? Those that we love the most. We will use up all of our patience and energy with other people and have none left for our family or close friends.*

Witness- *When we're overwhelmed, we become so focused on our own problems that we will overlook all kind of opportunities around us to serve others in the name of Jesus. There's a great example of this in a Princeton Theological Seminary research study involving seminarians who were put in a hurried or relaxed state and then walked past someone who needed help. Only 10% of those who were hurried for time stopped to help the person in need, in need as opposed to 63% of those in an unhurried condition. You can learn more about that research study here: [Take Time to Be a Good Samaritan / SPARQ](#).*

Key: Rest like your future depends on it...because it does.

Because of what we just looked at in term of what is at stake, this is an encouragement to take this gift of rest seriously. It can have a tremendously positive impact on our lives when we rest well, hence God's gift of the Third Commandment for Sabbath rest.

This is not to imply that our eternal life is dependent on our quality of rest. That of course, is secure in Christ Jesus. But there are certainly consequences of rest or lack thereof that are worth considering. So often, we just think, "Well, if I don't do all of these activities, then I will miss out." Perhaps we need to think, "What happens if I do say yes? What will I miss out on if I don't live within my God-given limits?"

Reflection (5 minutes)

Reflecting on your current season of life, how would you rate yourself regarding your rest?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Burned out					Sustainable endurance
Barely holding on					Resting well

This gives an opportunity for personal reflection, for everyone (leaders included) to get an honest snapshot as to where you are currently in your rest journey. Everyone should circle a number between 1 and 6, with one being "burned out/barely holding

on" and 6 being "sustainable endurance/resting well". Notice that there's no, "life is perfect" option. The goal is to have sustainable endurance, centered in rest, rather than life without any difficulties.

- What is at stake for you if you don't rest well going forward?

This another self-reflection opportunity, to see what negative outcomes could happen if you continue at an unsustainable pace. The goal here is not fear-mongering or worst case scenarios, but honest feedback on the wisdom of continuing down our world's "rest is optional" path versus Jesus' "rest is essential" path.

Give everyone a few minutes to write down their answers to these reflection questions, and then depending on time and the trust you have already built in your group, consider having either everyone or at least some volunteers share their reflections. This type of vulnerability needs to be encouraged and supported because it can be a big step towards demonstrating the importance of God's teaching on rest and lay a great foundation for the rest of the study.

Conclusion

Normally we think that endurance requires pushing forward or completely ignoring our limits. But what your Savior offers you is a sustainable endurance that is built on rest. At the crossroads of your life, look not to the road, but to the Cross. Next time we'll look at the connection between rest and identity, namely why we sometimes feel guilty for taking a break and how God invites us to rest in our identity in Christ.

Concluding Prayer Suggestion- Breath Prayer

Take prayer requests and consider using Matthew 11:28 as a closing prayer for your group. To make it a breath prayer, do the following:

- Say "come to me, Jesus says" and breathe in slowly over 2-3 seconds
- Hold your breath for 3-5 seconds
- Say "and I will give you rest" and breathe out slowly over 2-3 seconds.
- This breath prayer can be repeated in between prayer requests or petitions.

Endurance Requires Rest

Leader's Guide

Session 2- Rest and Identity

Overview

Summary: The first main roadblock to a life of resting well is that we tend to find our identity in what we do. In that type of a system, when we rest, we lose our identity and meaning. This session focuses on our Biblical identity as limited creatures of God, but with limitless value.

Learning Goals: That participants will...

- Recognize their God-given limits
- Rest in their God-given value rather than trying to earn it through works
- Craft a one-sentence summary of their true identity in Christ that they can use as a regular reminder throughout their life

Key passages: Genesis 1-2 and 1 Peter 2:9-10

Optional Video Link

Session 2 : <https://youtu.be/BqUEyaB5Ab4> (15 minutes)

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Lesson Plan

Introduction (5 minutes)

- "One of the reasons we don't rest is because we feel guilty for taking a break." What are your reactions to this statement?

You can set this up as a thumbs up/thumbs down type of activity. Thumbs up if you agree, down if you disagree. Focus in this question also on examples of when this happens. When are times that we feel guilty for taking a break?

Note that not everyone will feel this way at all times, but hopefully everyone can understand how this is a common idea.

- What are some of the reasons we may feel guilty or wrong for resting?

Here the discussion shifts from the when and how into the why. Give youth some time to try and reflect on why they feel guilty for resting and then have them write down their answers. Pair them up with a partner or in a small group to talk things out before coming back to the large group.

Discussions may go in a number of ways, but common reasons could include:

- We feel like we're being lazy if we rest when there's work to be done*
- Other people are working so hard and it seems like we can't*
- We want to be the most productive with our time always*
- Others praise us when we accomplish a lot, not when we do nothing*

Throughout the rest of this series, we're going to look at three main problems that get in the way of us finding true rest. We'll start with the common mistake of finding our identity in what we do rather than who we are.

Problem 1: We seek our value and affirmation in what we do (10 minutes)

- How do we tend to answer questions like "who are you" or "what are you going to be when you grow up"?

Get a few examples from the group. We tend to answer this question with either "I don't know" or with some example of what we're going to do. "I don't know" is a problematic answer because we don't want to send our youth out into the world trying to find who they are. The more common answers of "teacher", "athlete", or "nurse" connect our identity with our vocation.

Notice that we're not really answering the question. We're being asked, "Who are you?" (identity) and we're answering it with what we do (vocation). The next two questions will identify some of the problems with this mentality.

- When things aren't going well, what problems are revealed about finding your identity in your vocations (what you do)?

When your identity is in what you do and things aren't going well, everything comes crashing down. This could be due to a bad grade, conflict in a relationship, injury in your sport, family issues, or any number of other things. But if my life was "I am a football player" and now I'm not a contributing member of the team, I'm now lost because I no longer know who I am.

The real problem behind this is that Satan and the sinful world will try and offer any number of answers to "who are you" and we as the Church shouldn't like any of those answers! The search for identity will get people into all kinds of trouble.

- Even when things are going well, how do major life transitions reveal further issues with finding your identity in what you do?

It's not just when things go badly, but this foundation will crumble even with good things. Help your youth to play out the scenario that is shared in the video for this session: Let's say you get everything you want on your resume before graduation. You have the best grades, greatest references, and are successful in your activities. Colleges are begging for you to come there! But what happens when you get there? No one knows how awesome you were in high school. And even worse, they don't seem to care. If your identity is in what you do, what do you have to do now? Start all over, try and rebuild your identity and yet this time it's even more difficult to get noticed.

This happens not just at graduation, but at other major events like retirement if our identity is in what we do. It is a foundation that is built on sand that will eventually crumble.

God's Gift of Rest: Remember Who You Are (20 minutes)

At the crossroads of life, instead of looking at the road, we fix our eyes on the cross. For there you find your true identity, and knowing your identity is the gateway into true rest. So who are you?

You are limited...

- What are some of the examples of limits that you have?

This may not be the place most of us would jump to when looking at our identity, but it is essential for the understanding of rest.

Examples of limits include: only 24 hours in a day, can only be in one place at a time, only so much energy, can only produce a certain amount each day, need sleep, need nourishment, can only pour into so many relationships at a time, etc.

You may want to follow up asking, "How do you feel about these limits?" Oftentimes, we feel like limits are a bad thing. "You can't tell me what I can or can't do!" So we try and push against these limits, live outside of them, and we end up burned out. It's better to recognize our limits and to be faithful with what we have been given.

- Looking at Genesis 1-2, where do we see these limits reflected?
Adam and Eve also have 24 hours in day, have limited knowledge, can only be in one place at a time, etc. They are created perfectly, and yet still have limits. This helps us to realize that we are limited too.
- Adam and Eve have been created to caretaker or steward God's creation. Who does that include?
This is a bit of a leading question but is a very important point. God's creation includes Adam and Eve.

- How does this lay a foundation for a Biblical idea of rest?

Here's where we unpack the significance of the previous statement. Resting well is a part of our God-given stewardship as we care for God's creation. God created us with limits- He knows we can't do everything, nor does He expect us to. Instead, we are called to be faithful with what we can do, within those limits, and to put everything into His limitless hands.

Now, we can't stop here with our identity. Because we're not just limited, there's more to the story.

You are limited...but with limitless value

When we focus on the cross, rather than the road, we find our true identity: valued, loved child of God.

- What do Genesis 1:27, Isaiah 49:15-16, and Galatians 3:26-27 say about your value?

The short answer is that you have infinite value in Christ. Genesis 1 talks about humanity being created in the image of God, Isaiah 49 points to God never forgetting us and writing our names on His hand, and Galatians 3 shows our adoption into God's very family through the waters of baptism. None of those are based on what you've done, produced, or earned. They are given to you. You are just as valuable when you rest as when you are running around accomplishing things!

- How does this help us address the "chip on the shoulder" mentality of proving to others or to yourself that "you really are somebody"?

This is so common, where we try and prove to someone or everyone that we matter. When we live with this chip on our shoulder, it becomes so hard to slow down, to stop, or to rest. But you don't have to prove that voice wrong, to show that you are someone. God already has! What freeing news this is!

- Read 1 Peter 2:9-10. How are we invited to rest in the Biblical answer to "who are you going to be"?

This is a foundational passage for the intersection between identity and vocation. Peter is very specific here on identity (who you are): you are chosen, you belong to God. He is very general on the topic of vocation (what you do): proclaim His praises. He doesn't tell you where to do that or even how. Specific on identity, general on vocation. We have the freedom to pick a path, focusing on who we are on that road rather than finding identity in what we do.

So the answer to "who you are going to be" is this: "I'm going to be a child of God! I'm going to be loved, chosen, and sent." As you're still figuring out what you're going to do, where you're going to study, or all those kinds of things, you know who you are and that makes all the difference!

Reflection (10 minutes)

- What are some recent (even current) times in your life where you have mistaken your vocation (what you do) with your identity (who you are)?

Encourage critical self-reflection here: the more specific the example the better. For instance, "When I got cut from the volleyball team, I felt like my whole world was crashing down." You can also encourage them to reflect more on those experiences- how does knowing your identity help you to move forward. To continue the previous example, "I am still sad about what happened, but now I realize that I can still continue those relationships and friendships with my teammates, play the sport recreationally, and have more time to get involved in other ways. It may not have turned out how I wanted, but I at least know who I am!"

Invite a few participants to share, always being willing to start first as the leader.

- What is your one-sentence summary of your true identity in Christ?

There are a few different ways you could do this, but I'd encourage having everyone write their sentence out in some capacity. Give everyone a few minutes to think about it and then write it out on their participant handout.

You could play a song like "God's Own Child I Gladly Say It" (LSB #594) or "Who You Say I Am" in the background as everyone reflects.

To take this further, have everyone either write their statement out on a sticky note and post it in your youth room or Bible study space. Alternatively, have everyone submit their statement to you electronically and you can create a compiled list of these identity statements to share with the group next time.

This question will be asked again in the "My Endurance Requires Rest Plan" in session 4, so encourage participants to keep thinking about finding a statement that actually works for them!

Example statements: "Child of God". "I am a loved, forgiven, baptized child of God." "I am who God says I am." "I am worth dying for." "I matter and I belong to God." "I am covered in Christ."

- What are 2-3 ways you can be reminded regularly of that true identity?

Have the group compile a list together, with each person trying to write down their favorite 2-3 examples. These are meant to be simple ways to keep your identity summary statement in front of you: making it your phone's lock screen, putting it on a sticky note in a mirror in your house, making it into a bracelet that you wear, memorizing the statement and saying it each morning, etc.

Conclusion

Knowing that your identity, meaning, and value don't come from what you do, how much you produce, or what others say about you sets you free! You are set free to rest well, live within your limits, and to joyfully serve as His beloved child. Next time we'll look at the second major roadblock towards resting well: learning how to say no.

Concluding Prayer Suggestion- Breath Prayer

Take prayer requests and consider using 1 Peter 2:9-10 as a closing prayer for your group. To make it a breath prayer, do the following:

- Say "I am chosen by you, Lord" and breathe in slowly over 2-3 seconds
- Hold your breath for 3-5 seconds
- Say "I belong to you" and breathe out slowly over 2-3 seconds.
- This breath prayer can be repeated in between prayer requests or petitions.

Endurance Requires Rest

Leader's Guide

Session 3- Yes and No

Overview

Summary: The second major roadblock to a life of resting well is that we oftentimes believe we can't say no. In our desire to please others, we say yes to anything and everything. Everything seems essential. But our faith in Christ shows us what truly matters and lasts and that enables us to say no, even to good things, which helps us create sustainable rhythms of rest.

Learning Goals: That participants will...

- Recognize what they have said "no" to in times of burnout and stress
- Treasure that which truly lasts and matters, namely their faith in Christ and relationships with His people
- Learn to say "no" even to good things so they can say "yes" to what matters most

Key passage: Philippians 3:4-14

Optional Video Link

Session 3: <https://youtu.be/m1RYEZa1pvU> (15 minutes)

These teaching videos are sections from the youth sectional "Endurance Requires Rest" at the 2025 LCMS Youth Gathering that this Bible study is a companion piece to. They can be used to introduce the study before the discussion, summarize it at the end, or reinforce or remind of key points after the study is done.

Lesson Plan

Introduction (5 minutes)

- "One of the reasons we don't rest is because we feel like we can't or shouldn't say no." How deeply does this statement resonate with you? How much do you struggle to say no?
This can be done through a show of hands initially, but is more impactful if you actually share some examples of things you should have said "no" to but felt compelled to say "yes" to. For example, "I don't have time for it and am not really sure what it means, but somehow I'm the treasurer of the thespian club at school".

- Here's the truth about the "I can't say no" mentality...in saying "yes" to all of those other things, what have you actually said "no" to?

This is the antidote to the "I can't say no" epidemic: realizing that you're actually really good at saying "no". Because by saying "yes" to all these other things, you've likely said "no" to things like your health, relationships, friendships, church involvement, witness opportunities, etc.

The reality is that you're actually very good at saying "no". The key is to learn how to say "no" to the right things, even good things, so we can say yes to the best things.

Problem 2: We Feel Like We Can't Say No (5 minutes)

- One of the reasons we feel like we can't say no is that it's easy to see everything as essential. How would you honestly answer this question: "What is it that you can't live without"?

Give the group a few minutes to think of and actually write out a list. The goal is not to come up with the "right" answer (at least not yet), but rather to honestly examine your life and answer what the accurate picture would be today. So maybe a list would include things like: my favorite video game, my family, basketball, phone, friends, pets, etc. The truth is the more time we would be given for an activity like this, the longer the list would end up being because we become so convinced that everything that we have is essential.

God's Gift of Rest: Recognize What Really Matters (20 minutes)

When we look at the road, everything looks like stuff we need to say yes to. And when everything becomes essential, we easily get overwhelmed. But when we look at the cross, we get a different perspective, an eternal perspective.

Read Philippians 3:4-14.

- What is the eternal perspective that Paul has been given? How has it changed his life?

Paul starts off this section (in verses 4-6) by listing off a list of things that are important in the eyes of the world. He has quite a resume to put confidence in! And much of what he lists off is not inherently bad, similar to much of what we might build our own resume on.

The shift happens in verse 7-8. He now considers these things loss compared to knowing Christ Jesus. The eternal perspective he has comes from the resurrection of the dead (v10-11). He knows the end of his story is in the perfection of the new creation through faith in Christ, and that none of those things he has listed out compare to knowing Christ.

Note that the companion video for this session uses a rope illustration that can be a helpful way to visualize this eternal perspective.

How does this eternal perspective impact the following:

- Our view of what truly matters: *Encourage everyone to look through their entire list from the opening question and ask, "Is this eternal or temporary?" Almost everything is temporary, even things that are good and blessings in this life. But recognizing that other than faith in Christ, the word of God, and our relationships with His people, everything else ends with this world. Therefore, those few things which are eternal are the things that truly matter. Consider this follow-up question, "What are a few things that you have become convinced are essential that actually aren't?"*
- Our definition of what true success looks like: *It's so easy to chase after the definitions of success in our world: to be wealthy, famous, accomplished, acknowledged, etc. But at the end of the day, what truly matters is to be faithful in the eyes of God not successful in the eyes of the world. That helps us to say "yes" to roads that may be less flashy or productive from the world's perspective, but are faithful in God's eyes.*
- Our worries about missing out on something that we say no to: *FOMO or "fear of missing out" can be a powerful motivator to say "yes" to all the options around us. But our eternal perspective helps us remember that even when we are missing out on something in this life, even if it is good, we are not missing out on the best life has to offer. Because the best life is found in Christ (John 10:10).*
- The vocations we have that are the most important: *When we look at what lasts, it's our faith in Christ and relationships with His people. That means our most important vocations or callings, are as a child of God, church member, witness, and those roles in our families where we encourage and strengthen God's people.*

- The gifts of God that we consistently need to say “yes” to: *There are some things that we should consistently say “yes” to: God’s forgiveness given to us in the words of absolution, hearing His Word as it is preached, read, studied, and sung, taking a day of Sabbath rest each week, etc. These gifts sustain our faith, which gives us the rest we need to endure.*

Note that if you’re looking for an example of this type of eternal perspective in action, the companion video shares the inspiring story of a young Christian man, Bill Borden, whose life showed that this eternal perspective is one of no regrets. Consider using that clip or retelling his story in some way as an example for your group.

“Postcard from the New Creation” Activity (10 minutes)

Write a short postcard note to yourself from the perspective of someone in the End of the story, in the perfect new creation after the resurrection on the Last Day. It could be coming from you in that future reality, from a favorite Bible character, or a loved one.

- How might they encourage you about what’s most important?
- What would they say about what lasts? What would they have to say about the importance of true rest in Christ?

This activity provides a creative way to summarize the key teachings from the lesson. Encourage each participant to create something meaningful, and to focus on the new perspective that the promise of the new creation gives us today.



Conclusion

It can be difficult to say "no" to a good opportunity or to feel like you're missing out. But because you have been created with limits and you need rest, it is important to choose wisely what you say "yes" to. Through Christ, we know the ending to our story, being with Him in the new creation as we're saved by grace through faith. This gives us the perspective we need to confidently step forward at the crossroads of life knowing that Christ is with us every step of the way and that whatever we may be "missing out" on here in this life is nothing compared to the joy we'll experience with God and His people in the new creation.

Concluding Prayer Suggestion- Breath Prayer

Take prayer requests and consider using Philipians 3 as a closing prayer for your group. To make it a breath prayer, do the following:

- Say "Because I have Christ" and breathe in slowly over 2-3 seconds
- Hold your breath for 3-5 seconds
- Say "I have all that I need" and breathe out slowly over 2-3 seconds.
- This breath prayer can be repeated in between prayer requests or petitions.

Endurance Requires Rest

Leader's Guide

Session 4- Resting Well

Overview

Summary: We conclude the series by looking into the *how* of resting well. We'll find that resting well focuses on receiving from God rather than merely being inactive. We need to be poured into and God offers numerous ways for us to receive His generous gifts!

Learning Goals: That participants will...

- Understand the difference between rest as inactivity and recharging rest
- Treasure the gifts that God gives to us in worship, which offer us true rest
- Learn to prioritize regular recharging rest in each season of life

Key passages: Matthew 14:13-14, 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Optional Video Link

Session 4: <https://youtu.be/46BoSJirCzE> (9 minutes)

These teaching videos are sections from the youth sectional "Endurance Requires Rest" at the 2025 LCMS Youth Gathering that this Bible study is a companion piece to. They can be used to introduce the study before the discussion, summarize it at the end, or reinforce or remind of key points after the study is done.

Lesson Plan

Introduction (5 minutes)

Now that we've laid the foundation for the *identity*, *perspective*, and *reason* for rest, we move to the *how*.

Consider, if you were given four completely free hours to rest during the afternoon tomorrow, how would you spend that time and why?

Have participants either write down their answers or take turns answering in a small group. The goal is to reflect on how we normally spend our "rest time" and what that could possibly look like if we were more intentional about it.

Problem 3: We Don't Rest Well (5 minutes)

- For many of us, rest is equated with inactivity (not exerting more effort or energy). What are some examples of this type of rest?

This is, I've found in the field testing of this study, the most common type of rest. Examples include watching TV or other media, doomscrolling social media, listening to podcasts, etc. While this type of rest is not altogether bad, if it's the only way that we rest, it is very inefficient in filling us back up.

- Oftentimes even when we devote a lot of time to this type of inactive rest, we don't really feel well rested or recharged. Why do you think this is the case?

Simply put: it's because we're not being poured into. It's like being in a car that is running low on gas. Pulling over and turning the car off will solve one problem: the car will not run out of gas anymore. But the larger problem is you still won't get where you're trying to go. Better than this would be to go to a gas station and fill up the tank. That's what real rest does- it fills us up. Inactive rest is more akin to just turning off the car, unless we intentionally choose kinds of rest that recharge us (and for some of us, types of "inactive rest" like reading can fill us up).

God's Gift of Rest: Recharge through God's Gifts (15 minutes)

When we look at the road, we look at which option will be the easiest or require the least amount of energy. But when we look at the cross, we see that God's outstretched arms have gifts to give to you, to fill you back up!

There could be an entire Bible study on each of these three parts, so don't feel like you have to go into a tremendous depth in each of these discussions. The main purpose here is to introduce these types of recharging rest, which will then be personally applied in the rest plans that are the closing activity.

To rest well means to prioritize recharging rest, in three different ways:

1. Worship

St. Augustine famously wrote, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in you, O God". How do each of these gifts God gives to us in the Divine Service invite us into true Sabbath rest:

This is one of the key points of the whole study: worship is about receiving God's gifts, and so is one of the main places where rest is found. There's a reason the Sabbath day of rest has always been connected by God's people with worship!

- Forgiveness: *Our sins weigh us down and are heavy burdens. God's full and free forgiveness proclaimed to us in worship remove that burden, allowing us*

to rest well. Think of how often you've stayed up late fretting over something you said or did that day. Forgiveness removes that guilt, shame, and regret and offers us rest in the promises of Jesus.

- Identity: *This takes us back to session 2, where we focused on identity. When we remember our baptism into God's name in places like the Invocation or Benediction, we are reminded anew of our true identity. We are limited, but with limitless value. We are called to rest as a part of our stewardship as caretakers of God's creation.*
- Perspective: *This connects to the teaching from session 3, on the eternal perspective we get as we confess in the Creed "I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting". This reminds us of what truly matters and lasts: our faith in Christ, God's Word and promises, and our relationships with His people.*
- Community: *Too often, we are burdened and weighed down when we feel like we're going through life alone. We worship together, not individually, but as a community of faith, the body of Christ in which "one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together" (1 Corinthians 12:26).*

2. Time Away

Jesus regularly and intentionally takes time away from the demands of life and His other vocations, to focus on the most important relationship: with His Father. What does Jesus teach us in each of these passages about taking time to rest?

Luke 5:15-16: *Jesus withdrew to pray on a regular basis, not just one time. This was a part of His habit of rest.*

Matthew 14:13-14: *Right after Jesus hears about the death of John the Baptist, He withdraws to pray. He is grieving and knows rest is even more important in times of great sorrow and trouble. However, what happens after this is also very instructive: people interrupt Jesus' rest! This oftentimes happens to us when we try to carve out time for rest. Rather than losing it on the people and yelling at them to let Him be, Jesus has compassion on them! This teaches us that rest is not an idol that we put above the needs of the people around us.*

Matthew 14:23- *This takes place right after our previous verses. Jesus has just had compassion on the people, fed them, and notice what He does now. He dismisses the crowds, having just sent the disciples away in a boat, and then*

He returns to His quiet time with His Father. This is so instructive for us! When our rest gets interrupted, as it often does, we don't just wait another week or year to rest. We prioritize it right away, because we need to receive God's gift of rest.

- While this element of rest is certainly important, what happens when we think that the *only* way to rest is to get away from the people, vocations, and responsibilities that God has given to us?

This question is important, because sometimes we can think the only way we can rest is getting away from everyone. The first problem here is that this is not oftentimes possible on a consistent basis. The greater problem is that we end up seeing the people around us as burdens rather than blessings. We may begin to wonder, "If I didn't have these people or these responsibilities, then my life would be better" and this line of thinking has caused people to sinfully walk away from their marriages, families, or ministries out of a misguided sense of what they're entitled to. We must also see the blessings of our vocations, which leads us to the next category of rest.

3. Receiving Enjoyment *from* Your Vocations

God has given each of us vocations or roles within the relationships He's blessed us with, not just for us to pour into them but also to receive His gifts through His people. What do each of these verses have to say about how we as the body of Christ care for one another?

1 Thessalonians 5:11- *We are to encourage and build one another up.*

Ephesians 4:32- *We are to be kind to one another, forgiving one another.*

Romans 13:8- *We are to love each other.*

There are many other verses that can be found by searching "one another" in a Bible app or concordance. The point here is that God gifts us with the people around us so that they can pour into us, not just so that we can serve them.

- What are the various vocations that God has given to you? What are some examples within those vocations of activities or interactions that God uses to pour back into you?
Vocations, or callings, are the roles and responsibilities God gives to each of us such as son or daughter, sibling, teammate, student, friend, etc.

The second question involves thinking through some of these relationships and reflecting on how God uses these people to pour into you. Are there certain people that really pour into you? How do they do that?

The key then is to prioritize these types of interactions within your vocations when you have time with those people. Give the group time to think through "what recharges me?" because we each have different answers based on how God has wired us. For some, it will be reading a good book and talking about it with a friend. For others, it may be spending time telling stories with a large group of friends and laughing together. Some will be recharged by playing their favorite sport, even though it also involves using energy to do so. Others will be poured into by playing their instrument for fun rather than just for rehearsal. Help each participant to identify some of these types of rest that pour into them, and then encourage them to prioritize those recharging activities when they have those opportunities to rest.

My "Endurance Requires Rest" Plan (20 minutes)

This activity involves each participant filling out a plan on how they can rest well. This draws from the entirety of the series, but can be quickly explained to anyone that missed one of the sessions. Be sure to fill one out for yourself, because as the leader, you need to rest well too! Consider printing extra copies of these planning pages for people to take extras home or to have on hand for the future.

In field testing this study, it worked well to take 5 minutes to walk through the plan and explain each part, and then to give 10-15 minutes of uninterrupted time for everyone to actually write out their plan. Encourage members to take their plan home and find some way to follow up on them in the upcoming weeks.

What I'll provide in the comments here is one sample plan rather than the "right" answers for this, as well as a few reminders as to when

Identity Statement: Through Christ, I am...*a loved forgiven, child of God.*

Remember, this could be the identity statement they came up with at the end of session 2.

Some of the God-given limits that I have are...*I am limited in my time, energy, resources, skills, and relationships.*

If needed, call back to the discussion of limits in session 2.

What's at stake if I don't live within those limits and don't rest well...*I will get sick, continue to be tired all the time, and my relationship with my girlfriend will get even worse because I am cranky when I'm stressed.*

If needed, remind of the discussion on "what's at stake when we don't rest" from session 1.

Weekly Sabbath (Day of Rest)

I will prioritize recharging rest on a set aside one day each week, as gifted to me by God in the Third Commandment, through...

Worship (when/where will I attend Divine Service): *My family normally attends worship at the Sunday 10:45am service and Bible study at 9:30am.*

Time Away (what are 2-3 things that I can do alone that pour into and recharge me): *I feel poured into when I play piano, so I will carve out 30 minutes each Sunday to play for enjoyment not for rehearsal. I also enjoy being outside in God's creation, so I will walk around my neighborhood each weekend as well.*

Receiving Enjoyment from your vocations (which vocations and what activities): *I am encouraged whenever I talk to Jerry, my best friend. I will make sure I text him to try and either talk or chat as we stream our favorite video game together. My dad and I like to shoot hoops together, so I will prioritize that. My mom, brother, and I have a joke of the day that we read together and laugh about.*

Daily Moments of Rest

**The purpose in this section is to remember that rest is not just a once-a-week thing, but to find moments of rest every day.*

I will maintain a life of rest daily by taking moments to rest well through...

Worship (when/where will I read the Word, pray, or another spiritual habit): *I have a few minutes on my drive to school where I can listen to an audio devotion through Lutheran Hour Ministries.*

Time Away (I will take some time each day to prioritize at least one of these things which pour into and recharge me): *After a long day at school, I will take 10 minutes to be disconnected from my phone and other devices and either read or play my instrument to unwind from the day.*

Receiving Enjoyment from your vocations (who is pouring into me each day and what are the activities through which we build one another up): *Joking with Dave during math class, texting gifs to Sandy, talking with my youth leader, playing games at youth group, high-fiving teammates after practice, playing goofy warm-up music before our games, etc.*

In Times of Crisis

This section teaches that crisis times involve different rules. Oftentimes, the rest of our plan gets thrown in the chaos. But we can't just not rest in this time, we still need to be intentional.

When I am in the middle of a crisis and very little can be taken off the plate, I will continue to recognize my limits. God has placed me here to love and serve my neighbors in the midst of this situation, but I cannot do everything. I will be careful for this "season" to not last more than 3 weeks, otherwise it will become a habit. I will fight even harder to rest well when those set-apart moments come each day. What will get me through this busy season will be prioritizing... *I will still make sure I go to church and youth group each week. As able, I will continue to get at least 30 minutes outside each afternoon.*

After the season is done, what will help me to recover and recharge well is... *going to a sports event or concert in the area. Taking an entire Sunday afternoon just to sleep. Get coffee with my youth leader to talk through things.*

When I Am Feeling Overwhelmed and Burned Out

When I recognize (or am told) I am burned out, overwhelmed, or dealing with a tremendous amount of stress, I will acknowledge that this is not sustainable. Realizing I am in "triage" mode, I will prioritize recharging rest even more than normal in order to get back to a healthy baseline by... *turning off my phone way more than normal. Going to bed an hour or two earlier than normal for a few days in a row. I will let my close friends and family know I am feeling burned out and what steps I'm taking to get back into a more regular rhythm.*

After you've given everyone time to fill out their individual plan, encourage them to take it home with them and think through who will help encourage them in their rest journey. Check back in on these plans over the upcoming weeks and months with your group. Consider using the "My Endurance Requires Rest" plan when you counsel youth or families, and also in times of transition like helping your graduates think about sustainable rest when they go to college or enter the workforce.

Conclusion

Whatever the crossroads you're at in life, whenever you feel overwhelmed, burnt out, and stressed, I pray that instead of focusing on the roads you have in front of you, you would fix your eyes on the cross. That you would remember who you are, recognize what really matters, and recharge through God's gifts. Fix your eyes on the cross, for there you find true rest. And by resting well, you will endure through Christ who endured *for* you.

Concluding Prayer Suggestion- Breath Prayer

Take prayer requests and consider using Matthew 11:28 as a closing prayer for your group, to loop back around to the first session of the series. To make it a breath prayer, do the following:

- Say "come to me, Jesus says" and breathe in slowly over 2-3 seconds*
- Hold your breath for 3-5 seconds*
- Say "and I will give you rest" and breathe out slowly over 2-3 seconds.*
- This breath prayer can be repeated in between prayer requests or petitions.*