

Endurance Requires Rest

Session 1- Faith and Endurance

Introduction

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

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

Crossroads

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?

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

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?

Option 1: Inspiration

In what ways do we reduce our faith to mere inspirational words or phrases?

"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?

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?

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?

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?

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:

Health

Relationships

Witness

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

Reflection

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

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

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

- 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.

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Session 2- Rest and Identity

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

God's Gift of Rest: Remember Who You Are

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?

Looking at Genesis 1-2, where do we see these limits reflected?

Adam and Eve have been created to caretake or steward God's creation. Who does that include?

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

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?

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

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

Reflection

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)?

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

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

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

- 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.

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Session 3- Yes and No

Introduction

"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?

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?

Problem 2: We Feel Like We Can't Say No

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"?

God's Gift of Rest: Recognize What Really Matters

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?

How does this eternal perspective impact the following:

- Our view of what truly matters

- Our definition of what true success looks like
- Our worries about missing out on something that we say no to

-The vocations we have that are the most important

-The gifts of God that we consistently need to say "yes" to:

"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?

POSTCARD FROM
THE NEW CREATION

to: _____

from: _____

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

- 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.

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Session 4- Resting Well

Introduction

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?

Problem 3: We Don't Rest Well

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

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?

God's Gift of Rest: Recharge through God's Gifts

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!

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:

- Forgiveness
- Identity
- Perspective

-Community

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

Matthew 14:12-13

Matthew 14:23

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?

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

Ephesians 4:32

Romans 13:8

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?

My "Endurance Requires Rest" Plan

Identity Statement: Through Christ, I am...

Some of the God-given limits that I have are...

What's at stake if I don't live within those limits and don't rest well...

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):

Time Away (what are 2-3 things that I can do alone that pour into and recharge me):

Receiving Enjoyment from your vocations (which vocations and what activities):

Daily Moments of Rest

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):

Time Away (I will take some time each day to prioritize at least one of these things which pour into and recharge me):

Receiving Enjoyment from your vocations (who is pouring into me each day and what are the activities through which we build one another up):

In Times of Crisis

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...

After the season is done, what will help me to recover and recharge well is...

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...

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.