

2024 NWOS BIBLE STUDY

A Time To Rest

So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God;
Hebrews 4:9

A Time for Rest



Dear Friends in Christ,

Welcome to **2024: The Year of Rest**. Our focus in 2024, is to receive and to practice God's sacred gift of rest.

In Hebrews 4, we read about the promise of God's rest: **"So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God"** (Hebrews 4:9). Most Bible scholars agree that Hebrews was written for Jewish folks who are now living as followers of Jesus, the Messiah. These early Christians are being pressured by the Jewish community to return to the old ways. The author of Hebrews relooks at Jewish tradition, values, and Scripture through the lens of Jesus. Hebrews begins, **"Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son..."** (Hebrews 1:1-2a).

The genius of this approach is that Jewish tradition, values, and Scripture are not cast aside, but reinterpreted through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah. There remains a place for Torah. There remains a place for sacrifice. And there remains a place for rest. **"So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God"**.

For followers of Jesus there still remains a time to rest. A time to cease. A time to release. Though no longer a "you shall do" under the Law, sabbath rest is a sacred gift of God that we are blessed to receive and to practice.

What follows is a seven-session Bible resource focusing on seven types of active rest: physical, mental, sensory, creative, emotional, social, and spiritual. Open (or turn on) your Bible, gather with a group of friends, get outside the four walls of the congregation, and together, learn and practice God's beautiful gift of rest.

Let us pray, **"You have made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee"**. (Augustine of Hippo, Confessions, 1,1.5)

Blessings,
Bishop Daniel G. Beaudoin
Epiphany 2024

A Time for Rest

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Welcome to this journey of biblical reflection on the 7 types of active rest. All you need is a bible, a few friends, and this study.

For folks who would like to explore scholarship and resources around the 7 types of active rest with a deeper dive, we would recommend the following resources.

One of our guides on this journey is Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith. Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith is an author, international speaker, and board-certified internal medicine physician with over 20 years in clinical practice. She received her B.S. in Biochemistry at the University of Georgia and graduated with honors from Meharry Medical College in Nashville. She has been an adjunct faculty member at Baker College and Davenport University in Michigan teaching courses on health, nutrition, and disease progression.

You might be wondering about the term “active” rest. While most of us are familiar with and understand the need for rest, we tend to think of sleep or taking naps, a time-out of consciousness for physical, mental, and emotional rest. While it is true that sleep deprivation or lack of rest truly does affect us in all aspects of our lives, research is showing us that there is another kind of rest that is vitally important to our health.

Active Rest is intentional space, deliberate experience(s) and purposeful time given to seven primary areas of life that offer growth and healing through conscious activity. Rest is a skill that can be learned, and both passive and active rest are necessary for wholistic health.

A Time for Rest

WATCH

As an introduction to the 7 types of active rest, watch this 9-minute video in which Dr. Saundra provides an overview of how our society is living in a “rest deficit”, and how we can work to reconcile ourselves, relationships and lives through better rest.

https://www.ted.com/talks/saundra_dalton_smith_the_real_reason_why_we_are_tired_and_what_to_do_about_it

CHECK IN

Before embarking on this study, it could be interesting to have members of your group take Dr. Saundra’s online quiz, to identify where you may be experiencing rest deficits. Perhaps check back in after you have completed the study to see the ways you have grown.

Quiz link: <https://www.restquiz.com/quiz/rest-quiz-test/>

It is important to note: if you experience any kind of distress (emotional, psychological, physical, etc.) through this reflection time and learning experience, please seek professional help. While these are important concepts, this Bible Reflection is certainly not created as an intervention or therapeutic tool, and cannot take the place of specialized care.

READ

Sacred Rest: Recover Your Life, Renew Your Energy, Restore Your Sanity
By Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith, MD

Chapters 4 through 10 of this book follows along with each type of rest as it appears in the study. If your group would like to go deeper, consider reading each corresponding chapter before embarking on the bible reflection that corresponds with the type of rest you will be studying.

The Seven Types of Active Rest

Active: You might need some physical rest if you lack the energy necessary to get through your day, struggle to fall asleep, have an immune system that struggles to fight off colds and illness, frequently experience muscle pain and soreness, and depend on substances to either give you more energy or help you to sleep. Physical rest can look like stretching and moving your body regularly, going for a walk, getting a massage, and practicing good sleep hygiene.

Social: You might need some social rest if you find yourself feeling alone, detached from loved ones or attracted to people who mistreat you, isolating yourself or finding it difficult to make or maintain friendships or even preferring online friendships over connecting in real life. For social rest, find a balance of time alone and time with loved ones. Seek to find a balance that leaves you feeling energized, not depleted.

Spiritual: You might need spiritual rest if you find yourself feeling apathetic or hopeless, lacking motivation and feeling distant from those you love. To rest spiritually, you might engage in spiritual practices like prayer and meditation, spend time in nature, or volunteer for causes you care about. Lean into relationships with those you love and trust and explore ways that you feel the presence of God.

Creative: You might need some creative rest if you are constantly focusing on the needs of others and don't consider your own self-care a priority, find yourself doing self-destructive things, feel that your contributions are not of value, or find it difficult to enjoy things in nature. Try taking breaks from your work or pursuing a hobby. Experiment with creative activities that you enjoy and incorporate time for them into your daily life.

The Seven Types of Active Rest

Emotional: You might need some emotional rest if you have a tendency to focus on your failures/flaws, are constantly apologizing or clarifying yourself out of insecurity or self-doubt or find yourself worrying excessively. To be more emotionally rested, it is important to become aware of how you emotionally respond to relationships and systems. Try talking to a trusted friend or journaling about your emotions. It is important to care for yourself, even spending time alone or in nature.

Sensory: You might need some sensory rest if you are experiencing sensitivity or adverse reaction to sounds, blurry vision or eye pressure/fatigue/strain, have difficulty receiving touch from others or are desensitized to aromas or other sensory-rich experiences. For social rest, consider unplugging from electronics like TV, computers or your phone or taking breaks from use. Closing your eyes for a short while or listening to calming music and practicing deep breathing can all help regulate the senses. Try to identify and eliminate sensory stressors like (uncomfortable clothing, constant background noise, etc.). Resting our senses is an important way to avoid overstimulation and reduce stress.

Mental: You might need some mental rest if you find yourself being more forgetful, stressed, easily distracted, or irritable. Physical symptoms could include trouble sleeping, physical aches, an upset stomach or unhealthy eating patterns which may be ways your body is indicating that your brain could use a break. Mental rest can look like taking breaks, writing down thoughts to clear your mind, decluttering your physical space, minimizing multitasking, practicing self-care like eating and sleeping enough, and surrounding yourself with supportive people.

The book cover features a white central panel with a blue-green border. The title is written in a black serif font, and the author's name is in a black sans-serif font.

*Walk
with
Me*

Active Rest

by Bishop Daniel Beaudoin

Active Rest: Walk with Me

Icebreaker: How have you rested this week?

Scripture: “Thus says the Lord: Stand at the crossroads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it and find rest for your souls...” (Jeremiah 6:16).

Opening Prayer: Take a moment to pray together as a group

Did you know that physical rest can be passive or active? While we are familiar with passive forms of physical rest like sleeping and napping, active physical rest includes restorative activities such as movement and stretching that help improve the body's circulation and flexibility. You might need some physical rest if you lack the energy necessary to get through your day, struggle to fall asleep, have an immune system that struggles to fight off colds and illness, frequently experience muscle pain and soreness, and depend on substances to either give you more energy or help you to sleep. Physical rest can look like stretching and moving your body regularly, going for a walk, getting a massage, and practicing good sleep hygiene.

Story: Invite someone to read the story out loud

Many of you know that I love to run and spend much of my free time running and racing with friends in the Toledo area. I log my daily jaunts. I change my shoes every 400 miles. I dream about one day running the Tour du Mont Blanc. Running is a passion, but so is hiking and walking. Hiking and walking are 2 ways that I practice active physical rest.

During the Spring and Summer of 2023, my wife Rachel and I walked lots and lots of miles together. In Northwestern Ohio, we walked the Sand Dune Trail at the Bradner Nature Preserve; the Sora Trail at Howard Marsh; and the Ridge Trail at Oak Openings Preserve. In Michigan's Upper Peninsula we hiked miles and miles of the North Country Trail through Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore and along the sandy stretches of the Lake Superior shoreline. Even as I write this 5 months later, I can still hear the sound of Lake Superior's breaking waves. Our slow, steady walks together were filled with the beauty of God's creation, intimate conversation, and a deep rest that filled our souls.

Active Rest: Walk with Me



Discussion Questions

1. Do you have a favorite hiking trail or walking path? Take a moment to paint a picture of that trail or path for your reflection group. Describe it using as many of your senses as you are able.
2. Take a moment to consider where the closest hiking trail or walking path is located. Share with your group what you know about it. Tell the trail's story.
3. When you are hiking or walking do you prefer to be in conversation or to move ahead in silence? Is one or the other more restful? Is one or the other more soulful?

Bible Reflection Passage

Truly, O people in Zion, inhabitants of Jerusalem, you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when he hears it, he will answer you. Though the Lord may give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.' (Isaiah 30:19-21)

Active Rest: Walk with Me

Some Thoughts on the Passage

The prophet Isaiah writes to a people who have been brought low. The inhabitants of Jerusalem have experienced hunger, poverty, and woe. God's people are beyond tired. God's people are weary, and there is a difference between being tired and being weary. When you're tired a good night's sleep brings needed relief. When you're weary, it takes more than a night's rest, it takes the promise of God and the presence of God. The God who hears the sound of our cry. The God who offers a Word. The God who is our rest. The God who guides us along the path of life. "This is the way", God says. "Walk in it".

Notice that God doesn't say to those who are weary, "Sleep on it" or "Rest in it". God says, "This is the way; walk in it". Here in Isaiah chapter 30, God is calling us to a practice of active physical rest, which helps to renew and restore both body and soul.

Discussion Questions

1. How would you describe the difference between tired and weary? As you are comfortable, share with your group about a season in which you were weary? What was that experience like? And what was it that brought renewal and restoration to your soul?
2. Slowly re-read Isaiah 30:21 "And when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.' What images come to mind when you hear this verse? Share those images with your group.

The Spiritual Practice of Walking

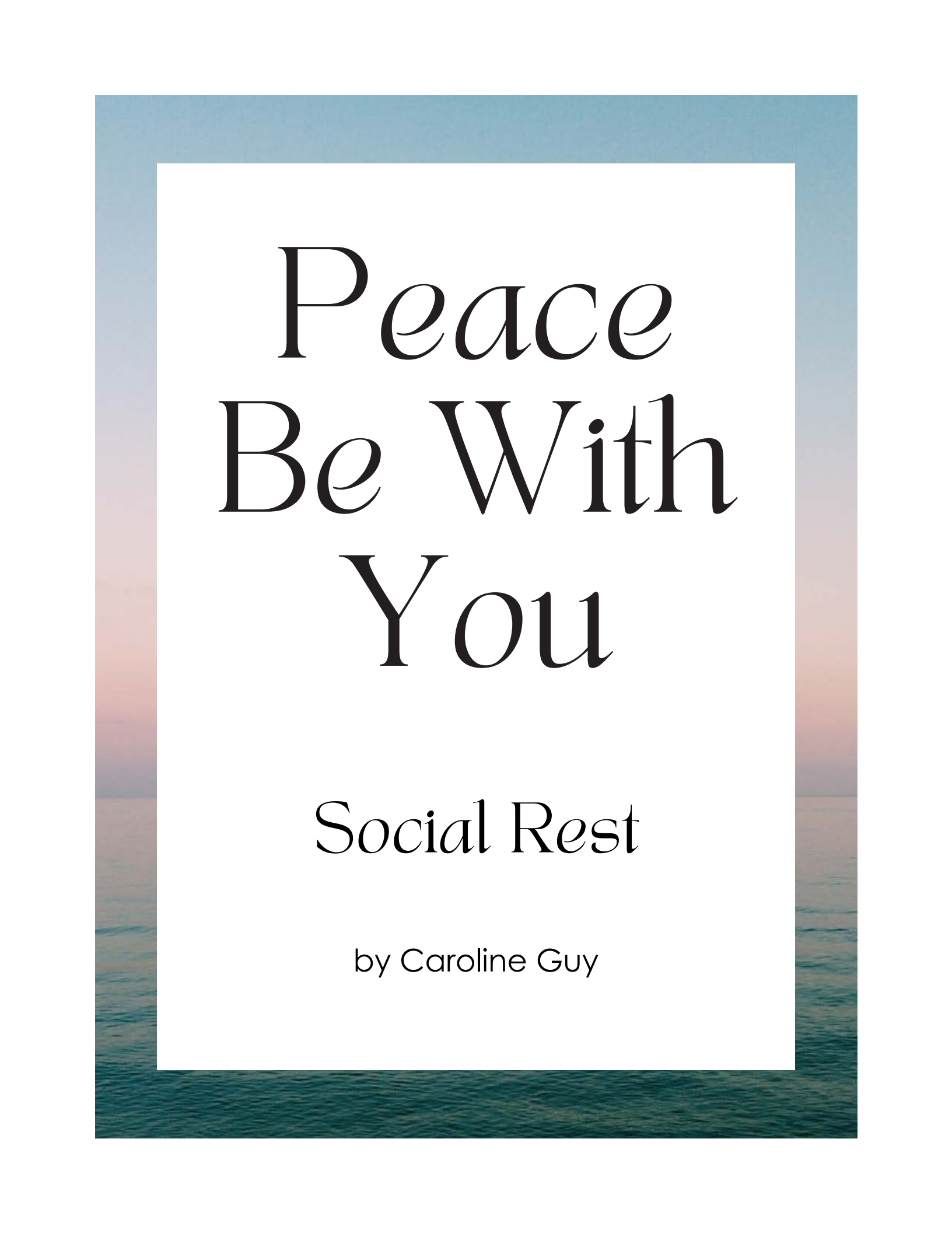
You had to know that this was coming. Remember that local trail / walking path that you talked about earlier. Bundle up. Lace up your shoes. And head out for a 20-minute group walk. After you have completed your walk, close your time together with a simple prayer.

Closing Question: What will you do this week to practice physical rest?

Closing Prayer: "Walk with Me" by Helen Parker

Walk with me, O Lord I pray.
Give me strength throughout the day.
Take my problems big and small,
Lift me when I tend to fall.

Walk with me, O Lord I pray.
Prompt me what to do and say.
Let me feel you always there.
Lift me when I feel despair.



*Peace
Be With
You*

Social Rest

by Caroline Guy

Social Rest: Peace Be With You

Icebreaker: How have you rested this week?

Scripture: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

Opening Prayer: Take a moment to pray together as a group

Getting enough social rest is about striking a balance between feeding our need as social creatures and taking time alone for ourselves. You might need some social rest if you find yourself feeling alone, detached from loved ones or attracted to people who mistreat you. Isolating yourself or finding it difficult to make or maintain friendships or even preferring online friendships over connecting in real life could be signs you need social rest. For social rest, find a balance of time alone and time with loved ones.

What activities do you like to do alone? What social situations feel comfortable, and to what situations might you need to learn how to say no? Seek to find a balance that leaves you feeling energized, not depleted.

Story: Invite someone to read the story out loud

One Sunday morning in October, I pulled into the parking lot of St. John, Rocky Ridge, and my nerves set in. I was running on few hours of sleep and my brain was still overwhelmed from everything that occurred the previous week. 8 days prior my dad coded, died for 11 minutes, and was revived. I became healthcare power of attorney as he went through amputation surgery, numerous tests, and a lot of waiting for answers that wouldn't come. I tried to learn the medical, financial, and legal languages, which became harder with each complication. That week my life was turned upside down.

But as I walked through the front door and began to meet the people of St. John, I took a deep breath that reached my soul. The energy around me was so joyful! The tech team showed me the streaming setup and we geeked out about the technology together. I met the young people I'd be leading worship with, and they helped me get my bearings of where I was supposed to be. I chatted with the lay folks who were the backbone of the service and learned about their history with St. John. I said “hi” to Pastor Holli and her family who came to celebrate. The past week was comprised of many short interactions with doctors, nurses, and specialists, that usually left me more anxious than when we started. Those interactions left my social energy depleted. With every new person I met at St. John, I could feel that energy being restored. We laughed, we sang, and we celebrated, and through it all I could feel the Holy Spirit celebrating with us.

Social Rest: Peace Be With You

Discussion Questions

1. Consider the people in your life. Who are the folks that bring you a sense of peace? Share with the group a story of how one of these people brought you peace.
2. How do you make time to connect with the people who revive your soul instead of exhaust it? If you don't make time, what is one thing you can try in order to do so?

Bible Reflection Passage

"Peace, I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." John 14: 27

Some Thoughts on the Passage

In Chapter 14 of the Book of John, Jesus is talking to his disciples, comforting them after predicting his betrayal and denial. They have many questions and don't understand the things he is telling them. Jesus does not promise the journey will be easy, but he does promise to be with them and to send the Holy Spirit to bring them courage and peace. Like so many other times in scripture, Jesus makes it clear that the future may not be what they want but God will be in and through it all, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Discussion Questions

1. In John 14:27 Jesus says that he does not give peace to the disciples as the world gives peace. How do you think Jesus' peace is different than the peace of the world?
2. Reflect on and share a time when God answered your prayers, but in a way that was different than what you wanted. What was that like? What would you say to God about that experience?

The Spiritual Practice of Communal Prayer

- Take a few moments to write down the names of the people who revive your soul
- Hold the list in your hands and take a few deep breaths
- As a group pray over these people. Keep it simple:
- "Good and gracious God, we give you thanks for the people you have brought into our lives. (go around the group and name, out loud, the folks on your list) Thank you for the gift that they are to us. Amen."

Closing Question: What will you do this week to practice social rest?

Social Rest: Peace Be With You

Closing Prayer: Prayer of St. Francis

Make me a channel of Your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring Your love.
Where there is injury, Your pardon Lord.
And where there's doubt, true faith in You.

Make me a channel of Your peace.
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope.
Where there is darkness, only light.
And where there's sadness, ever joy.

Oh Master, grant that I may never seek.
So much to be consoled as to console.
To be understood as to understand.
To be loved as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of Your peace.
It is pardoning that we are pardoned.
In giving to all men that we receive.
And in dying that we're born to eternal life.

“Make Me a Channel of Your Peace” Music by Sebastian Temple

Video Length: 2:47

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fYz14jEoaeU>



A
Sacred
Space for
God

Spiritual Rest

by Bishop Daniel Beaudoin

Spiritual Rest: A Sacred Space for God

Icebreaker: How have you rested this week?

Scripture: 'But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him!' (Habakkuk 2:20).

Opening Prayer: Take a moment to pray together as a group

Leaning into spiritual rest allows us to connect with our inner selves and our supportive communities, which bring hope and meaning to our lives. You might need spiritual rest if you find yourself feeling apathetic or hopeless, lacking motivation and feeling distant from those you love. To rest spiritually, you might engage in spiritual practices like prayer and meditation (there are numerous examples throughout this bible reflection), spend time in nature, or volunteer for causes you care about. Lean into relationships with those you love and trust and explore ways that you feel the presence of God.

Story: Invite someone to read the story out loud

In the Summer of 2023, I was given the gift of a sabbatical. Much of that sabbath time was spent in monastic communities. In southern Indiana, I stayed and prayed with the Benedictines at St. Meinrad Archabbey and was deeply blessed by their gracious hospitality. In northern Quebec, I stayed and prayed at the St. Irenaeus Prayer Center. Father Rick Gariepy offered spiritual conversation and guidance. In Quebec City, I stayed and prayed at the Le Monastère des Augustines with six Augustinian sisters, who treated me like a member of the family. In rural Kentucky, I stayed and prayed at the Abbey of Gethsemani with the Trappists. The Trappists observe silence throughout the day. The only time they speak is during the seven daily prayer services, which are held at 3:15 a.m., 5:45 a.m., 7:30 a.m., 12:15 p.m., 2:15 p.m., 5:30 p.m., and 7:30 p.m. And yes, I went to all of them. Though challenging at first, I soon settled into the long and peaceful days of silence, which lingered in my soul for many days to follow. Silence is an active form of rest, that helps me to calm and quiet my soul.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the ways people in our culture avoid or resist resting in silence? As you are willing, please share with your reflection group some of the ways that you avoid or resist silence.
2. Take a moment to consider the last time you experienced a time of silence. Describe that quiet moment using as many of your senses as you are able.

Spiritual Rest: A Sacred Space for God

Bible Reflection Passage

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb! And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, singing, 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.' When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. (Revelation 7:9-12, 8:1).

Some Thoughts on the Passage

In the Book of Revelation, John of Patmos, gives us a glimpse of heaven. It is quite the vision with lots of heavenly creatures making heavenly sounds. Instead of soft organ music think of a raucous rock concert with 4 main acts: the four living creatures, followed by the twenty-four elders, followed by the great multitude, followed by the angelic choir. At one point, they all take the stage to sing a new song, "Amen! Blessings and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving..."

But then in Revelation 8:1, we read that suddenly there is "silence in heaven for about half an hour". The singing stops. The voices cease. So often in Scripture, silence precedes the gift of God's presence. Silence is an active form of rest, that provides a sacred space for God.

Discussion Questions

1. In Revelation 8:1, we read that "there was silence in heaven for about half an hour." What do you envision is going on during that time of silence? How do you sense God's presence in the silence? Do you believe that God values time with you in silence?
2. Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said, "We are so afraid of silence that we chase ourselves from one event to the next in order not to have to spend a moment alone with ourselves, in order not to have to look at ourselves in the mirror." Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not? What might God think about this quote?

Spiritual Rest: A Sacred Space for God

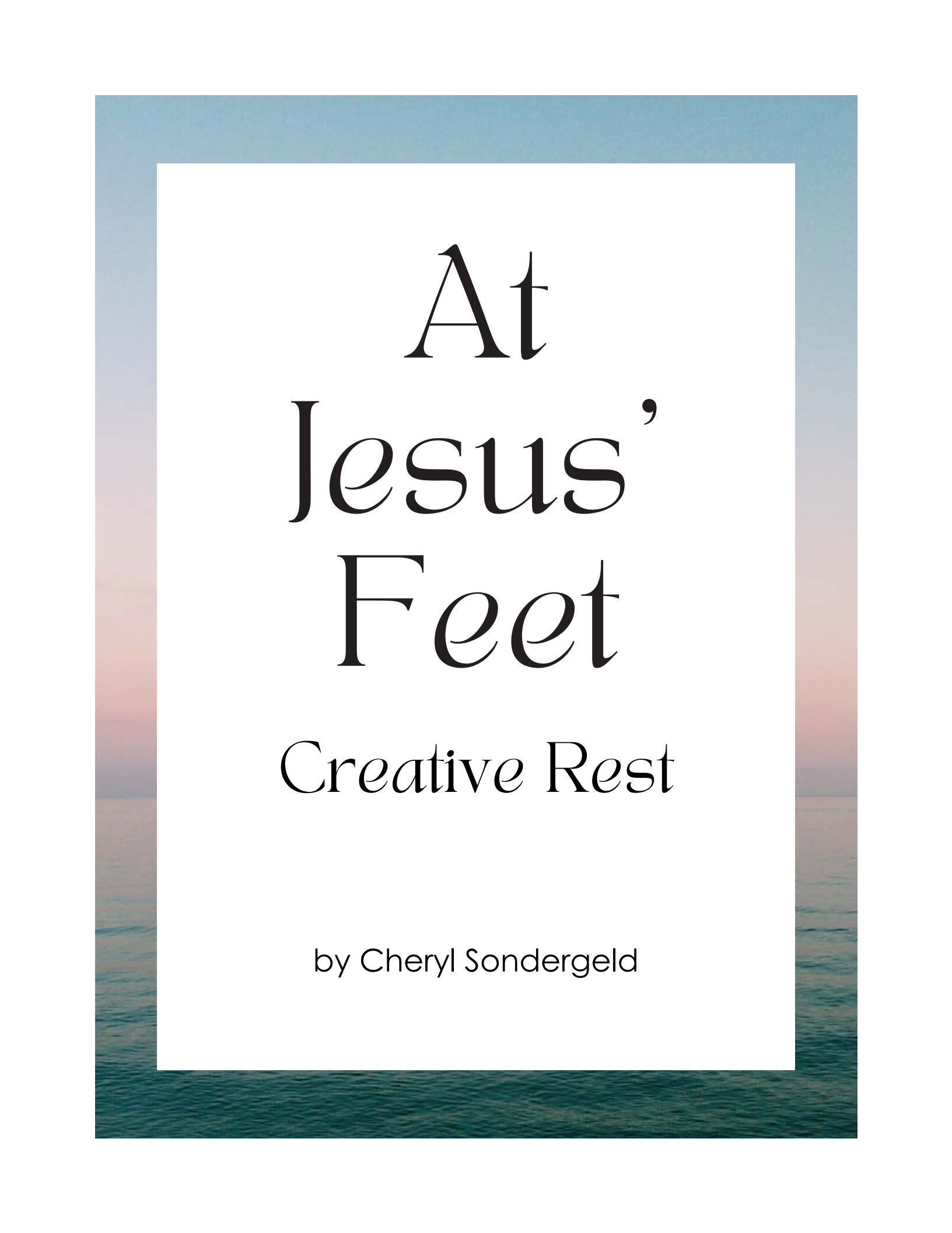
The Spiritual Practice of Silence

If the practice of silence is new (or scary) for you, begin with a few baby steps. Have someone in your reflection group set a timer / phone for seven minutes. Seven is a good Biblical number. Get comfortable and grow silent as you place yourself in the presence of God. There will be noise. Voices. Traffic. Wind. Your beating heart. Let the noise go. Continue to let the silence deepen. Simply be with God. After seven minutes draw back to the group and share with one another your experience with God's gift of silence. Repeat this spiritual practice several times a week by yourself or with others. Close your time together with a prayer.

Closing Question: What will you do this week to practice active spiritual rest?

Closing Prayer "So Much Noise" pg. 107 *Hear My Voice: A Prison Prayer Book*

God of the still, small voice: I am exhausted beyond control by all the noise. Dominoes hammer on tables outside my cell door. Flat palms slap poker cards with tornado force. Televisions stutter full-volume echoes against concrete walls. Metal doors slam from morning's first count until the last one at night. Static vibrates from radios. Shouting spills out of showers. Announcements boom over voice-distorting speakers. Chairs make crash-landing collisions. Alarms screech... The relentless noise punishes me until I want to scream a demand for silence that never comes. Dear God, in all this endless noise, grant me quiet rest. I ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.



At
Jesus'
Feet
Creative Rest

by Cheryl Sondergeld

Creative Rest: At Jesus' Feet

Icebreaker: How have you rested this week?

Scripture: But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things, but few things are needed—indeed only one. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.” (Luke: 41-42)

Opening Prayer: Take a moment to pray together as a group

Our culture is inundated with messages encouraging constant producing and creating, but in practice, this depletes our energy and creativity. You might need some creative rest if you are constantly focusing on the needs of others and don't consider your own self-care a priority, find yourself doing self-destructive things, feel that your contributions are not of value, or find it difficult to enjoy things in nature. Creatively resting is about giving our minds time to explore new ideas. Try taking breaks from your work or pursuing a hobby. Experiment with creative activities that you enjoy and incorporate time for them into your daily life. Work within your circadian rhythm and set reminders to take breaks throughout the day. Being creatively rested allows us to feel inspired and motivated.

Story: Invite someone to read the story out loud

My mother grew up on a homestead farm in a multi-generational household. I loved “going home” with my mother and visiting on Wednesday nights while my brother was at catechism class, Saturdays and Sunday afternoons after church. There are many sweet memories of farm life and time spent with extended family during these visits. A few that came to mind when considering Luke 10:38-42, were times that I spent with my great-grandmother, Anna. I can recall sitting at her feet quietly while she read her Bible in her room. This taught me the importance of spending time in the Word and often lead to lap time and reading Bible stories together. Sweet, quiet memories of rest and engaging with God. As you can imagine, a farmhouse is also a busy place. Young and inquisitive, I was always underfoot, trying to be in the mix. Being the 5th in a line of 7 grandchildren and the oldest girl, I was often sent to help in the house before dinner. I loved this because it meant more time with great grandma. She was pretty much past cooking during this time but would often set the table. Remember, everyone on the farm has a job. I loved helping her select from the unique collection of antique dishes that were used by the family for generations before her even and lay the flatware on the table. It always felt like a special event to me as she seemed to do it with such love and care. I remember her saying to me, it is important to take care of your family. Pray for them as you set the table. Everyone needs prayer. This was not work for her. She was blessing the family.

Creative Rest: At Jesus' Feet

Discussion Questions

1. What Mary memories do you have of learning of Jesus from someone?
2. What Martha memories do you have of serving others?
3. What do these memories bring you? How might you inspire others with them?

Bible Reflection Passage

Luke 10:38-42 Now as went on their way, he entered a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at Jesus's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her, then, to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things, but few things are needed—indeed only one. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

Some Thoughts on the Passage

How often in our busyness we seek to help others. There is so much to be done and for good reason. All these things are blessings to many as we are God's hands and feet in the world. In this "Year of Rest", consider, are we so busy that we miss the whole point? In God's presence, how can we be creative with our time and talents and bless others? Time spent at Jesus feet in prayer is the rest we need..."the better part, which will not be taken away" (Luke 10:42)

Discussion Questions:

1. How can you relate to Mary and Martha?
2. How could you serve others while spending time with God?
3. What are you passionate about? How can you bless others while doing something you love?
4. How can you be creative with your time, blessing others as you go about your day?



Christmas blessing

Around the Christmas table on the farm.
My brother Eric, cousin Gary+, Great-Grandma Anna+, Grandpa Earl+



Creative Rest: At Jesus' Feet

The Spiritual Practice of Everyday Prayer

In my adult life, my experience with my great grandmother has led me to the practice of praying for my family as I set the table and fold the napkins into special shapes when hosting dinners for the holidays. Setting the table is work there is to do and praying as I go is a spiritual discipline to pray for my family and guests. Give it a try!

Here are a few ways to weave prayer into your everyday activities:

Pray as you prepare a meal. When the pasta is boiling or you are flipping burgers on the grill, think about those you have encountered that day and pray for them. The cashier at the grocery that seemed stressed, the guy that cut you off in traffic, your neighbor down the street you haven't talked to in a while. Ask the Holy Spirit to move in their lives.

Pray as you walk. This doesn't have to be a 5k or even a long walk around town. Park further out in the parking lot and pray on your way in and out of the store. Be mindful to act with kindness, even when frustrated by waiting in line. Use this time as a prayer pause. Pray for the cashier who's overwhelmed with grouchy customers and thank them for their work.

What other ways can you pray as you go and bless others?

Recommended Apps:

<https://pray-as-you-go.org/home/>

<https://abide.com/>

<http://tinyurl.com/prayandfoldnapkins>



Great-Grandma Anna quilting in the church basement in her 90s, no doubt praying as she quilted

Thanksgiving blessing





Authenticity,
Accountability,
&
Acknowledging
Truth

Emotional Rest

by Deacon Sherry Krieger

Emotional Rest: Acknowledging Truth

Icebreaker: How have you rested this week?

Scripture: And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. (John 8:32)

Opening Prayer: Take a moment to pray together as a group

When we rest emotionally, we give ourselves more time to sort through our feelings so that we can be more balanced and less overwhelmed. You might need some emotional rest if you have a tendency to focus on your failures/flaws, are constantly apologizing or clarifying yourself out of insecurity or self-doubt or find yourself worrying excessively. To be more emotionally rested, it is important to become aware of how you emotionally respond to relationships and systems. Being emotionally rested is about being authentically yourself and showing up in vulnerable and real ways. Try talking to a trusted friend or journaling about your emotions. It is important to care for yourself, even spending time alone or in nature.

Story: Invite someone to read the story out loud

The goldfish laid there, limp. This pretty, orange, plump fantail goldfish that had brought so much joy to my daughter Jessica was now laying on the carpet staring into the abyss of death. He was still wet...so Samson had not been “gone” for very long when he was found out of water, out of life. Jessica’s wails were loud, her sobs very deep for Samson had been loved. What happened? How’d this fish get to this place that he was not supposed to be? Mother-bear got busy interrogating the group of kids: friends, cousins, and siblings in the house... “were you in Jessica’s room earlier?” “Did you touch the fish?” “Are you the one who killed Samson?” On it went, as did the denials and the tears now streaming down each little face on each little kid in the house. At this point, no one had killed the fish, he simply and miraculously ended up out of water.

The overnight went on, Mama-bear didn’t send everyone home. It was only a fish, right? Jessica would get over it, we’d get a new fish, life – human life that is, would go on. My niece, Caitlin, stayed the night. She was usually very sweet and demure, quiet, and compliant. But this evening she was out of control. She had anger outbursts during games that I had never seen before. She hardly ate her pizza, and she was definitely the last child to fall asleep that night. In fact, I had to talk to her more than once about settling down and quieting down so everyone could get some rest.

Emotional Rest: Acknowledging Truth

The next day the kids went home, Samson's death was still a mystery. Several days later I heard a knock at the door and there stood Caitlin and her mom asking if they could come in. Seems Caitlin had been uncharacteristically angry and anxious at home and her mother kept questioning her about what was wrong, wondering what was setting her off so easily... and finally Caitlin confessed to having "messed with" Samson at Jessica's house. She had tried to hold the fish, but he jumped and squirmed out of her hand and landed on the floor. Long-story-short, Caitlin's emotions of fear and anxiety about doing something that had drastic consequences, killing her cousin's beloved fish, and holding in the secret for so long had gotten the best of her. It wasn't until she shared her secret, acknowledged, and shared her feelings, fears, and ultimate apology with her mom and now me and Jessica, that she was able to calm down and find some peace. Even in the face of embarrassment and deep sorrow, once the confession was out, a visible calm, acceptance, peace, and recognition of accountability was evident.

Discussion Questions

1. Think of time in your life when you were the Caitlin, the Jessica, the other kids, and/or the Mama-bear in a similar life experience. Share that story and how you felt as you lived out that emotional scenario.
2. Professionals say that emotions are "contagious." What do you think that means? Where do you see that being true, or not, in this story? Was there one or more characters that acted in such a way that spread infectious emotions or made it difficult for the others to get in touch with their emotions?
3. Identify a time in your life when you knew things were "off" and you had to identify feelings and/or behaviors that were out of character for you. Share as you are able. Who helped you get honest with yourself or others?

Bible Reflection Passage

They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate." ...

Emotional Rest: Acknowledging Truth

The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living. And the Lord God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them. Then the Lord God said, "See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever..." (Genesis 3:8-13, 20 – 22)

Some Thoughts on the Passage

The emotionality of life has been with humanity from the beginning. Emotions, feelings that positive and negative, are gifts from God that help to make us the cognitive, emotional and wholistic beings that we are. And yet we sometimes hide, don't we? Adam and Eve's response to God in the garden – being afraid, being ashamed, is foundational to the human being's sense of balance and/or imbalance with each other, with God, and with the world around us. When we hide our feelings and emotions, we have trouble accepting ourselves and others, we have difficulty acknowledging both our power and our frailty, and we are inhibited in our ability to be authentic and accountable to ourselves or others in our relationships.

The Spiritual Practice of Naming and Affirming Emotions

1. Notice God's response to this incident with Adam and Eve, particularly Gen 3:21. How has God responded to your mistakes in life? How did or does this make you feel?
2. Naming emotions is vitally important to our ability to be authentically and fully human. Take a moment and become aware of your emotions, identify and name one or two right now. Refer to the Emotions List below or Google a list on your computer or phone if needed. Sit with those emotions and share them with the group, as you are able.
3. Think about a situation that had caused you some distress. Step 1: Identify the emotions and write down a word or two that describes your feelings about the situation. Step 2: Write a note to yourself acknowledging and affirming your feelings – even if they are negative – give yourself permission to feel them. Step 3: Give those feelings, emotions, and your deepest real self to God; acknowledge and admit it all to God. Step 4: Give the situation to God, pray over it, and ask for guidance in how to handle the situation or person moving forward. Listen. Step 5: Share with the group, as you are able how this process unfolded for you, how it felt, and what you'll do with it now – be honest, there are no right or wrong answers!

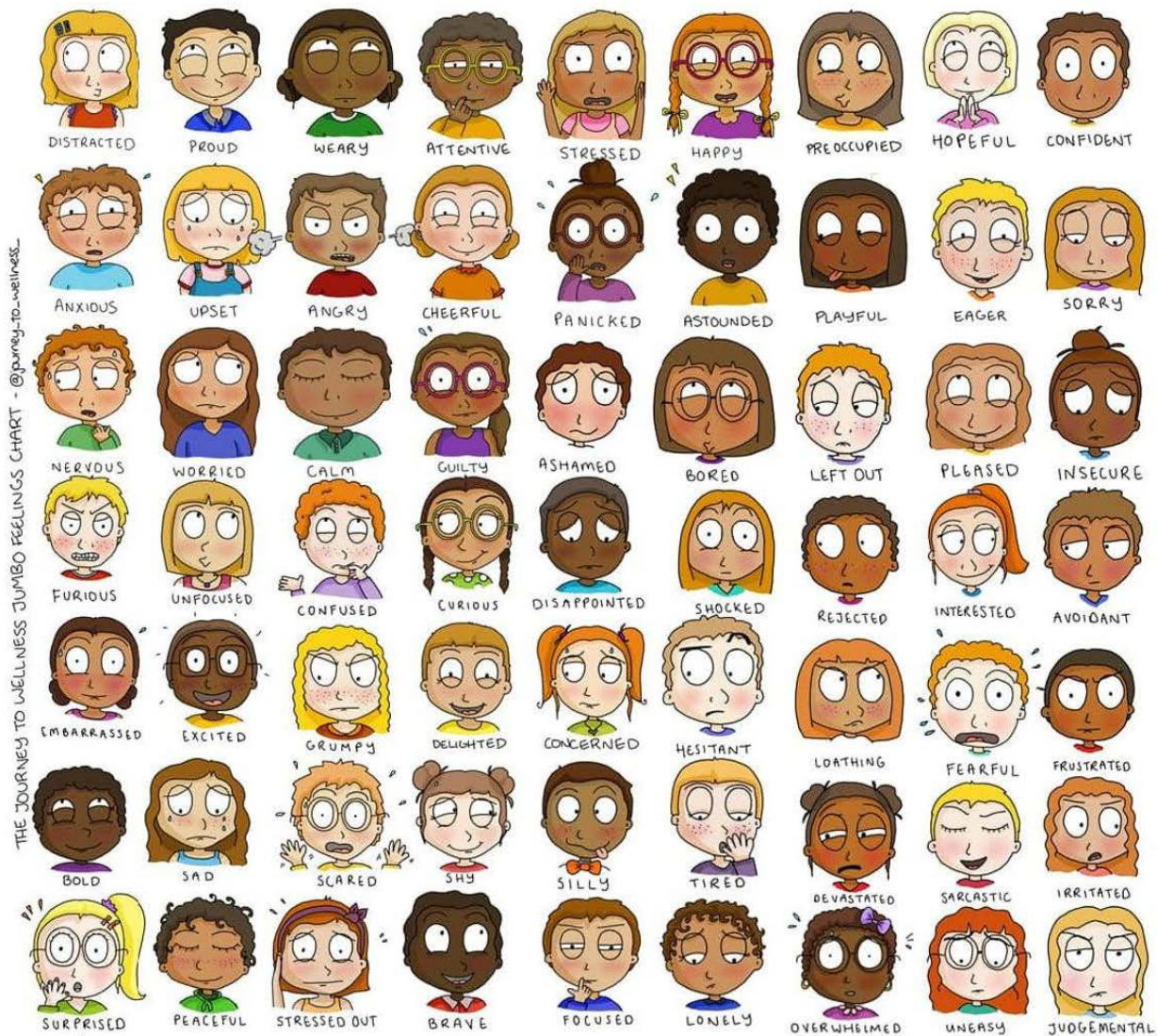
Emotional Rest: Acknowledging Truth

Closing Question: What will you do this week to practice Emotional Rest?

Closing Prayer

Lord God of all creation, I surrender to you everything that I am and everything that I'm striving to be. I surrender to you all my hurt, pain, worry, doubt, fear, and anxiety. I ask to be aligned with your will, balanced in your love, and washed clean by your grace. Jesus, I give everyone and everything to you; I give myself to you. I release it all into your compassionate care. In Jesus name, I pray. Amen

EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS CHART





God All Around Us

Sensory Rest

by Pastor Sarah Schaaf

Sensory Rest: God All Around Us

Icebreaker: How have you rested this week?

Scripture: “O Lord, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul...” (Psalm 131:1-2a)

Opening Prayer: Take a moment to pray together as a group

We face constant sensory input every day, and sometimes the bombardment of light, sound and other stimuli can overload us. You might need some sensory rest if you are experiencing sensitivity or adverse reaction to sounds, blurry vision or eye pressure/fatigue/strain, have difficulty receiving touch from others or are desensitized to aromas or other sensory-rich experiences. For social rest, consider unplugging from electronics like TV, computers or your phone or taking breaks from use. Closing your eyes for a short while or listening to calming music and practicing deep breathing can all help regulate the senses. Try to identify and eliminate sensory stressors like (uncomfortable clothing, constant background noise, etc.). Resting our senses is an important way to avoid overstimulation and reduce stress.

Story: Invite someone to read the story out loud

Somewhere between 5:00 and 5:45am my alarm goes off. Her name is Nessie. Nessie is an 8-month-old mini Bernedoodle puppy. Her first yelp of the morning is quiet. I never want to get out of bed, but thankfully she is persistent. Her yelps quickly grow in urgency. “Now!” she seems to declare. “It has been hours and I need to go out now!” So, I don’t brush my teeth or comb my hair. I put on whatever is warmest and closest (it is January after all), grab my coat, step into my galoshes and I go. In the moment, I never think to take my phone. It is a blessing. On the mornings when I walk with Nessie the day doesn’t begin with notifications seeking my attention.

A small head lamp lights the way on our early morning walks in the darkness. We move quietly. There is nothing to say. No place to go. It is enough to just walk. In the absence of light my other senses elevate. I feel the crisp cold air, the softness of her fur, the tug of the leash, the ground under my feet. I hear animals stirring, the frozen ground crunch, the rhythm of our steps moving together, and the growing volume of our inhalations. I smell the lake. The scent of trees. The taste of the cold air is oddly refreshing. For a moment there is nothing to see or do. It is enough to just be where I am. Why does that fill my heart with such gratitude?

Sensory Rest: God All Around Us

Discussion Questions

1. Share a story of a time when one of your senses was minimized and other senses heightened in response. What did you notice in that moment?
2. Which of your sense(s) is most often overstimulated? What would it look like to take a break from this sense?

Bible Reflection Passage

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you — you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. "So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today. (Matthew 6:25-34)

Some Thoughts on the Passage

Imagine the scene that day, as Jesus presented his lesson on worry. How did the birds sound? Was there a “musical battle” taking place overhead? Were they nesting in the trees or in flight? How did the lilies look? Did the scent of pollen dance in the air? Would its abundance produce a tickle in your nose, the beginnings of a sneeze? Feel the ground under your feet. Imagine what the air smelled like.

I believe it is significant that Jesus combats worry by inviting us to notice simple things: birds, flowers, fields. I am convinced that Jesus and the disciples were moving through creation as Jesus taught his disciples. That Jesus wasn't waxing on about hypothetical birds and lilies. He was pointing to real ones that were all around them.

This is a passage that you are meant to wrap yourself in, not analyze from a distance. Anxiety can overstimulate our senses. Our heart rate increases. Our chest tightens with each breath. Our mind tumbles through the “what ifs”. Jesus seems to recognize that you can not think your way out of anxiety. You feel your way out. You ground yourself in the world that surrounds you. You notice small things and awaken your sense to them. You point out small revelations of God's goodness.

Sensory Rest: God All Around Us



5-4-3-2-1 Grounding
Take a deep breath and identify:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

Discussion Questions

1. What do you see, feel, hear, smell, and taste when you imagine this story?
2. If Jesus were walking with you today, what might he point to illustrate God's provincial care?
3. Who in our world is anxious? What are they anxious about? What might they need from us as people of faith?

The Spiritual Practice of Grounding & Gratitude

Follow the directions on the image above to ground yourself in this moment.
Once you are grounded, go for a walk.

Notice God's care in what surrounds you. Take a moment to be grateful for small things.
(Optional: Record your discoveries on pen/paper or on your phone camera to share later.)

Closing Question: What will you do this week to practice sensory rest?

Closing Prayer – Mary Oliver, "Invitation," *A Thousand Mornings*
(New York: Penguin Books, 2013)

Oh do you have time
to linger
for just a little while
out of your busy

Sensory Rest: God All Around Us

and very important day
for the goldfinches
that have gathered
in a field of thistles

for a musical battle,
to see who can sing
the highest note,
or the lowest,

or the most expressive of mirth,
or the most tender?
Their strong, blunt beaks
drink the air

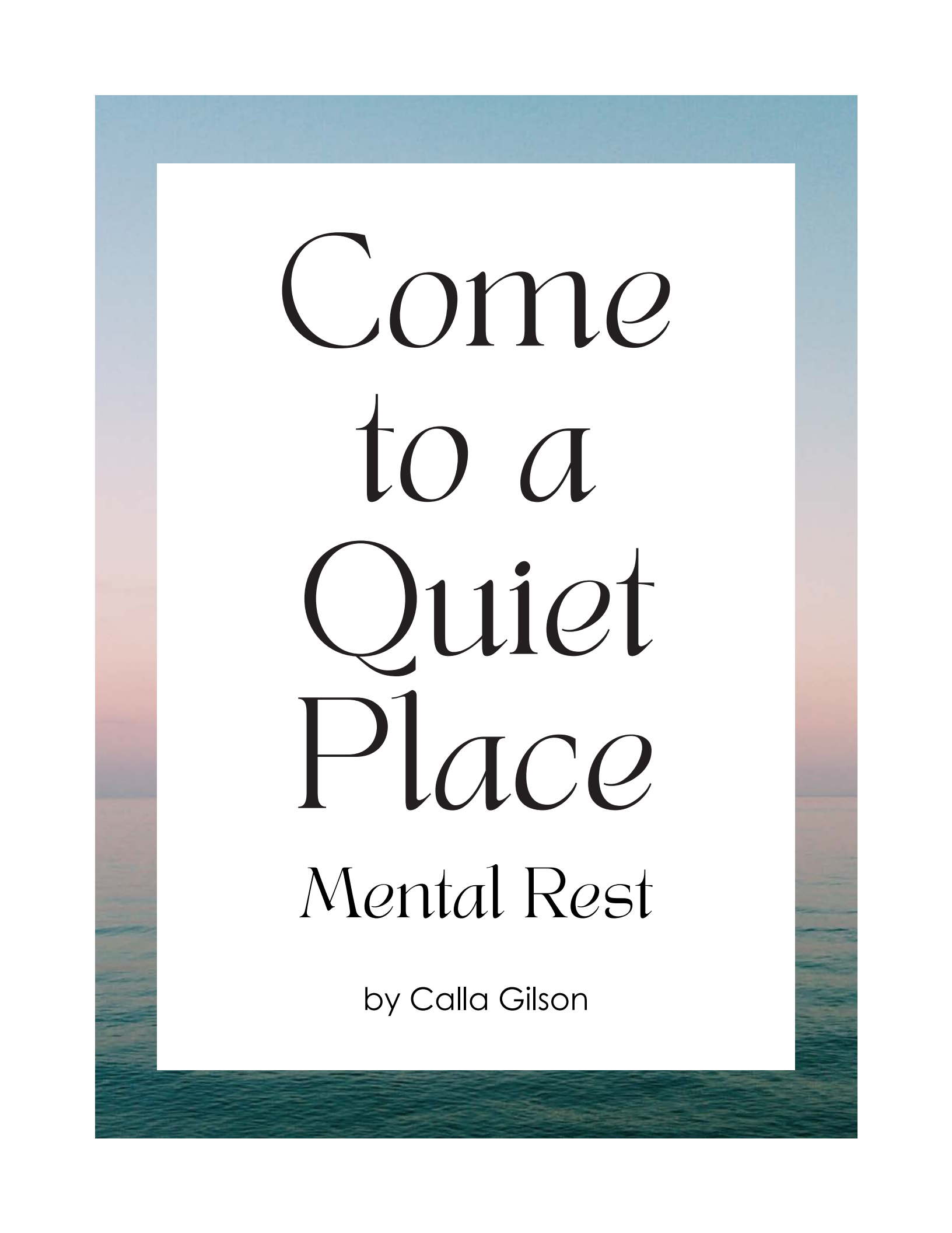
as they strive
melodiously
not for your sake
and not for mine

and not for the sake of winning
but for sheer delight and gratitude –
believe us, they say,
it is a serious thing

just to be alive
on this fresh morning
in the broken world.
I beg of you,

do not walk by
without pausing
to attend to this
rather ridiculous performance.

It could mean something.
It could mean everything.
It could be what Rilke meant, when he wrote:
You must change your life.

The book cover features a white central panel with a blue-green border. The text is centered on the white panel. The main title is in a large, black, serif font, and the subtitle is in a smaller, black, serif font. The author's name is at the bottom in a simple, black, sans-serif font.

*Come
to a
Quiet
Place*

Mental Rest

by Calla Gilson

Mental Rest: Come to a Quiet Place

Icebreaker: How have you rested this week?

Scripture: “Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’ Mark 6:31

Opening Prayer: Take a moment to pray together as a group

Mental exhaustion is the result of prolonged cognitive activity, which can affect your mood, focus and decision-making skills. You might need some mental rest if you find yourself being more forgetful, stressed, easily distracted, or irritable. Physical symptoms could include trouble sleeping, physical aches, an upset stomach or unhealthy eating patterns which may be ways your body is indicating that your brain could use a break. Mental rest can look like taking breaks, writing down thoughts to clear your mind, decluttering your physical space, minimizing multitasking, practicing self-care like eating and sleeping enough, and surrounding yourself with supportive people.

Story: Invite someone to read the story out loud

It rattles when the steam puffs out the top and it's dented and scratched, but of any tool in my kitchen, my trusty rice maker has fed more loved ones than any other appliance. It came to me used, for \$5 from a random guy on the campus quad. There was no shortage of stress in that season as my friends and I tried to balance our lives as young adults, across the country (or world) from our families, maxing out our course credits while working multiple jobs to do so. We didn't have much time to sleep, and barely made time to eat. We were mentally exhausted.

But in microscopic dorm kitchens and crowded apartment, I discovered that while chopping, boiling, stirring, and tossing together meals, my mind quieted. I ignored recipes, their specific measurements, and instructions (not to mention expensive ingredients) only causing more stress. Baking—with chemistry to which you must attend or suffer cataclysmic results—was out. But cooking, with room for experimentation for ways to best nourish my body and mind, was a sacred time when the chaos would quiet, allowing the aromas and flavors to take over.

Mental Rest: Come to a Quiet Place

Weary friends would regularly find their way into my apartment, and I would first flick on the rice cooker and begin reimagining whatever the fridge could offer. Some sad, but nutritious bell peppers, sautéed! What about gingering some carrots for crunch? A handful of fresh spinach, saluted with browning garlic and lightly tossed before frying an egg on top for a sunny yolk of protein. A simple red chili soy sauce to pull it all together.

And in the time it took to peel and chop, sauté and sizzle, dress and heap that simple meal into a bowl, my friends would release the troubles of their hearts. With my mind clear, I could be fully present as they share of their deep questions and laments, unburdening themselves to also settle into a time of rest. Grateful for the company and a moment to rest, it was such simple food, but such necessary nourishment for us both.

Discussion Questions

1. When I cook, there's no mental score-keeping or judgement of how close I've gotten to some end goal. It's just fun to play with colors, flavors, and explore new textures! **What hobbies or habits allow you to mentally relax in such a way?**
2. Sometimes setting boundaries is important for our mental rest. Often I'll forgo social media for periods of time, as it tends to be a source of mental chaos for me. **What about your lifestyle either welcomes moments of mental rest, or discourages opportunities for mental rest?**
3. Sometimes it's my friends and family that point out when I'm not mentally present, and signal that I could really use a break. Sometimes I do that for them. **How might you build more opportunities for mental rest into your life? Into the lives of those you love?**

Bible Reflection Passage

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone because many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. (Acts 2: 42-47)

Mental Rest: Come to a Quiet Place

Some Thoughts on the Passage

I've often thought about the people and kitchens who made some of the most memorable meals in the bible possible. The mothers, sisters and wives who were inevitably behind the scenes cooking up sustenance for the disciples as ministry took them far and wide. The little child with fish and loaves that fed multitudes out of a basket. And I can't help but wondering what the home kitchens would have looked like in the early communities of Acts where all was held in common (maybe as chaotic as my own?). Each of these meals aren't about cookbooks and conversions, weights and measures. It's not about balancing macros or diversifying palates. Rather, nourishment for everyone is the goal, and as the crowds grow, the tables grow longer.

The people of God use the most common and stretchable of things to fill bellies, and every person is invited to the table. While the Greek word "common" (koinos) can refer to things being shared, as in, they "had all things in common" (Acts 2:44), it can also mean that things are not set apart or holy. The most ordinary is used by God to do the extraordinary. St. Luke the Evangelist paints a picture of a remarkable community in Acts, forming people through practices of faith in a way that will help everyone be healthier and more whole for all the change and newness that is coming.

Discussion Questions

1. The people of The Way in Acts lived an inter-connected life. Connecting with supportive people is an important way to prevent mental exhaustion and burnout. Who are the people around you that you trust to support you? Share out.
2. In this passage, the community "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship...and prayer". Part of the importance of mental rest is that it allows us to better focus on things that are important and meaningful to us. What would you like to spend more of your time and focus on? How might you do that?
3. Jesus used the most common foods of the table to provide us with a reminder of his love. Have you ever thought of the practice of Holy Communion as a meditative experience? What is the mental experience of communion like for you?

Mental Rest: Come to a Quiet Place

The Spiritual Practice of Mindfulness

If you are looking to attempt a new mindfulness practice, why not try baking a loaf of bread! Given what I've shared about my kitchen chaos, I'm not an expert here. Enjoy this beloved recipe for communion bread from Luther College.

1. Sift dry ingredients together three times:

- 2 cup whole wheat flour
- 1 cup white flour
- 1 ¼ teaspoon baking powder
- 1 ¼ teaspoon salt
- Stir in 4 teaspoons oil

2. Set dry ingredients aside. Mix wet ingredients together until dissolved:

- ¾ cup + 2 Tablespoons very hot water
- 3 Tablespoons honey
- 3 Tablespoons molasses

Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients and mix well. Dough should be slightly sticky. Do not knead.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

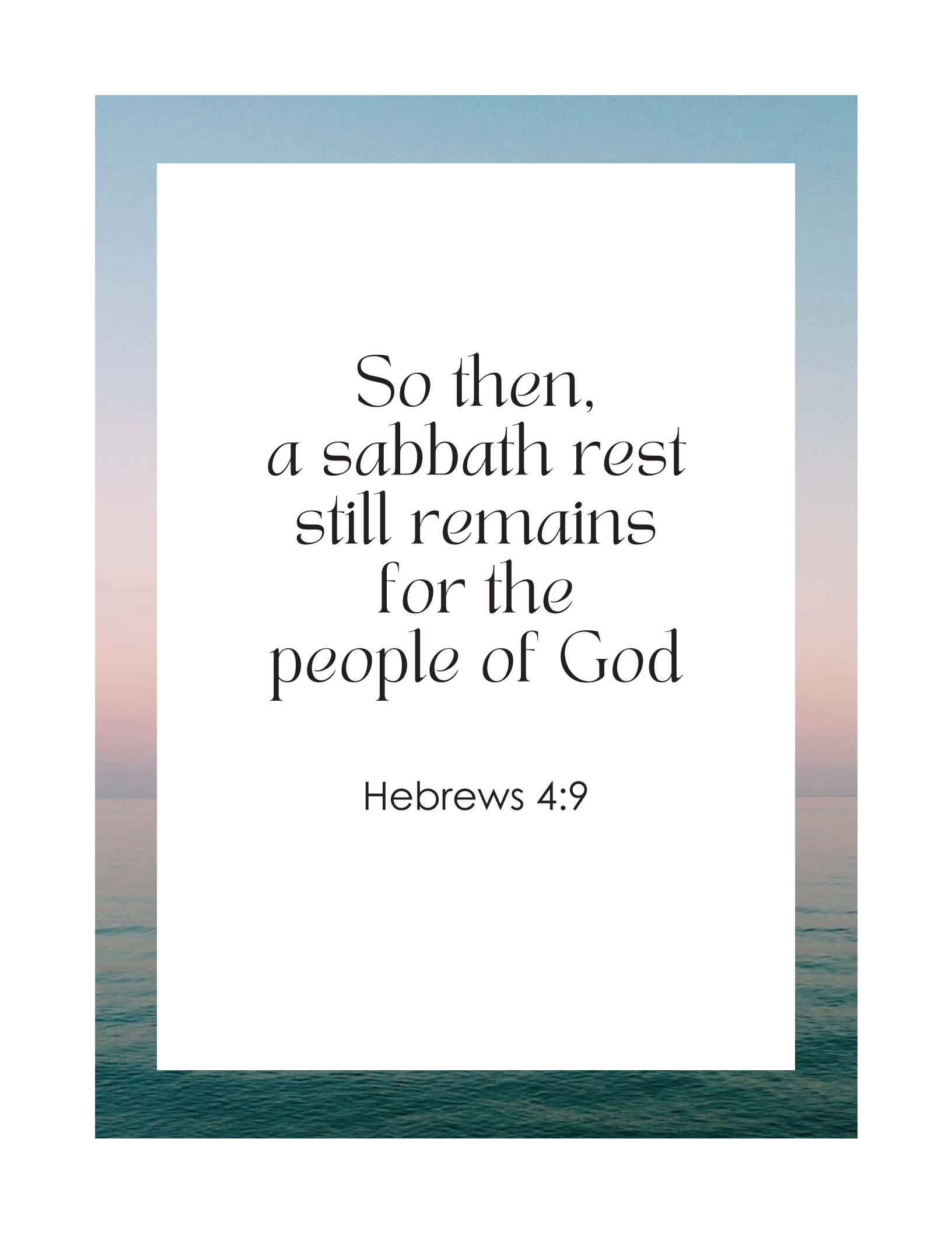
Divide into four balls and flatten each into a 1/4 inch thick disk. With a knife, score the top of each loaf into eight pie-shaped sections, so that the sections can be more easily broken off while serving. Alternatively, you could score a cross onto the loaf. Lay the loaves on a baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 minutes. Remove from oven and brush the tops of the loaves with oil. Bake an additional 5-8 minutes. Let cool.

Yield: four 8 oz. loaves. Each loaf serves 60-70 people, depending upon the size of the piece given. The loaves freeze well.²

Closing Question: What will you do this week to practice active spiritual rest?

Closing Prayer: Devote time in your day to meditate on a mantra. If it feels natural to sit in silence for a moment to do this, try it! This can also be done while cooking, cleaning, driving or physically moving your body, with the goal of quieting your mind. Repeating a word or phrase (mantra) while meditating can help you find a natural breathing rhythm to help calm your mind. If you find yourself distracted, do not judge yourself or be discouraged. Simply come back to your mantra. Here's one beautiful invitation from Jesus to get you started:

'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.' (Mark 6:31)



So then,
a sabbath rest
still remains
for the
people of God

Hebrews 4:9