

"Finding Rest in a Restless World"  
May 7-8, 2016

Introduction:

Happy Mother's Day weekend Summit Church, it's great to be with you. My name is Will Toburen and my role, as one of your pastors is to work with the discipleship ministries of our church. This weekend I'm grateful for the opportunity to share with you a message I've titled "Finding Rest in a Restless World." And at the end, I have a special interview that I think will be an encouragement to you.

Let me say from the get-go that this weekend's message is going to be geared towards mothers. But if you're not a mom (or a female)...what I'm about to share still absolutely applies to you.

Let me explain... Most of you know what it's like to be tired. In Psalm 127 the Psalmist gives counsel to people that are tired... **"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep."** What an incredible promise...we don't have to live lives that are full of **anxiety, restlessness, and exhaustion** because God is the one building our house...He is the watchman on the wall...so we can truly rest. Did you know that promise is specifically about motherhood? The promises God gives to mothers apply to all of us.

I know a lot of you moms are tired. I heard of a mom recently who was told by one of her friends, "You look tired." She quipped back, "I have two kids, I'm pretty sure that's just my face now." Some of you feel you can relate to that all too well. I recently read these reflections from a mom and I wondered how many of you would feel this same way. She wrote:

*"I am tired. Tired of the shrill screams of a 1-year-old that are causing hearing damage to everyone in our family. Tired of redirecting her away from the stairs dozens of times a day only to find her trying to get into the cabinet under the sink. I'm tired of the seemingly out of control tantrums of a 3-year-old which he can flip off as suddenly as the flip of a switch, only to flip it back on a moment later. I'm tired of the moodiness and negativity of a 5-year-old who can spread his attitude through the whole house in five minutes flat. I'm tired of knowing that same 5-year-old will start kindergarten next week and life will never be the same again. Not ever.*

*I'm tired of getting to the end of every day and feeling like a failure. A failure because I was home all freaking day and somehow the house is still a disaster. A failure because instead of calmly disciplining the kids, I lost it. Again. A failure because all those good intentions I had gave way to wasted time. A failure because sometimes I think my frustration is going to explode from every pore, and every ounce of patience I try to muster runs away at the first sign of trouble. A failure because this is the only thing I've ever truly wanted to do as well as the most important thing I will ever do, and I am horrible at it."*

You're exhausted and your schedule has become incredibly complex, lording over you, aggressively pushing you from one 'absolutely necessary' thing to the next. And for most of us, moms included, I doubt there has been more than 2 days in the last month when you or your family have totally unplugged from work, sporting events, or activities to experience Sabbath rest.

So, "When you look hard at your life...your level of exhaustion...your complex calendars...and your lack of Sabbath rest, do you genuinely believe this is how God designed for you to live?"

Today, I want to give you hope by reminding you that God didn't intend for you to live your life exhausted and constantly running on fumes. God not only promises that he will give us rest He also shows us how.

So, this weekend we're going to deviate slightly from our 'Whole Story' series and talk a little bit about rest. So, if you have a Bible turn with me first to Exodus 20:8-11 and let's look together at the 4th command to set aside a day for Sabbath rest.

While you're turning there some of you might be asking yourself, "Is taking a Sabbath day really that big of a deal?" Which of the other commands do you break at will? God puts this in there with murder, adultery, stealing, and lying. These are not the '10 suggestions,' but 10 commandments. So yeah, it's a big deal. Let's look at why.

We're going to look at how God gives this command not once, but twice... and, oddly enough, uses different reasoning for why he gave it. In the first account, he ties our 'rest' to creation; in the second, to deliverance.

Exodus 20:8-11

*"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."*

In this passage, we see that God ties Sabbath rest back to creation.

- On the seventh day of creation God rested.
- But why? Was it because He was exhausted and needed to sit down and take a break? No, in fact the Scripture reminds us that God never sleeps nor slumbers. So, why did He rest?
  - He rests not because He needs to, but because we do. You see God is saying to us, "*Do what I do to remember that you are not God!*"

- Mark Buchanan “The Rest of God”: *“Like a parent who coaxes a cranky toddler to lie down for an afternoon nap by lying down beside her, God woos us into rest by resting...God commands that we imitate him in order to discover again that we’re not him, and that we need him. Sabbath is a return to Eden.”*
  - Mom’s / Dad’s: you’ve done that right? You’ve come to the end of a long day and you’re ready to put your kids down, so what do you do? You lie down beside them and pretend to be asleep so they will finally rest their weary eyes. Of course, sometimes you actually do fall asleep until your kid elbows you in the mouth at 3 am.
  - Illustration: Alex being restless at night. Going into his room, wrapping my arms around him and holding him tightly so he would be still, close his eyes, and sleep as he realizes Daddy is right there.
- So God ties this command to creation in order to remind us that we are not God and that we are totally dependent upon Him.

Now turn with me to Deuteronomy 5 and let’s look together at vs. 12-15.

*“Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.”*

Now, again, in Exodus 20 God ties the observance of the Sabbath to creation. But in Deuteronomy 5 He ties the Sabbath to emancipation from slavery.

- The people of Israel had been enslaved for 400 years. For 400 years they had a taskmaster lording over them and oppressing them. So, when God calls them to rest, He does so by reminding them that they’ve been set free, and now in their freedom they can have rest.
  - Can you imagine just how liberating this was to the people of Israel? To no longer be under the tyrannical rule of Egyptian leaders who oppressed them as they anticipated taking possession of the land God had promised them hundreds of years before.
  - So God is saying ‘Rest, because you are no longer a slave...you are free.’”
- God wants us to rest because we are not him. He never intended for us to take on ourselves the stress of provision. We do what we are supposed to do, and then we trust him with the results.
- And that is even *more* true for us who have been saved by him--if he went to such lengths to save us, do we not feel like we can trust him with our needs?

- When you don't trust God with your needs it's like going back to Egypt. He's saying stop...rest...remember that I have set you free and will continue to supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus!
- You see it is possible, like Moses is telling them, to have been freed by God but still live as a slave. And when you are a slave, you never feel like you can rest.
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Key: **Slaves don't rest.**

Let me be very frank with you, and listen, what I'm about to say is extremely convicting to me. If there is never time in your schedules to unplug then whatever you're spending your time doing owns you...you have become it's slave. It's become a taskmaster lording over you...controlling you. You see, failing to rest means that you've become a slave!

Keller wrote: *"Anyone who cannot obey God's command to observe the Sabbath is a slave, even a self-imposed one. Your own heart, or our materialistic culture, or an exploitative organization, or all of the above, will be abusing you if you don't have the ability to be disciplined in your practice of Sabbath."*

- Some of you have become a slave to your work...putting in 50 to 60 hours a week trying to **get that next promotion that will give you more power**, or that **next raise that you believe is going to bring you some measure of security**.
- Mom's and dad's some of you have become slaves to your kids by buying into the lie that says you have to take them from **activity to activity, function to function, because that's what society says will make your kids happy** and is what's **necessary to set them up for success as you try to distinguish** them from other kids.
- Some of you are slaves to other people's opinion of you...so you go through life never being able to set boundaries, never saying 'no', constantly worrying about what others think, always trying to manage perceptions, so you're exhausted physically and emotionally.
- And still others of you have become a slave to pleasure...you're in constant pursuit of that next 'high'. Whether that be the next **item you purchase, vacation you take, or sexual encounter you experience**.

But here in Deuteronomy 5 God is reminding you that when you stop and rest and reflect on what He has done in your deliverance, you can certainly trust him. It's like John Owen always said, **"After the cross, the greatest insult you can give to God is a failure to trust him."**

When you understand his love,

- You won't be a slave to your work because although your work is important it doesn't define you!

- “Times when my self-identity was built on... How good of a swimmer I was. Swimming year round from the age of 9...going to 8 practices a week in the 8th grade- roughly 20 hours a week.
- There have been times throughout my ministry when I build my identity on how good of a preacher I was. So, if I preached a bad sermon, I would go home on Sunday afternoons devastated and make Julie recount awesome deeds I have done. I’ve heard pastor J.D. say he feels that way...but really, has he ever preached a bad sermon? For me, it’s a little different. When I get up here, it’s a roll of the dice.
- I remember one time I was quoting the title of a book by Kevin DeYoung that had the word ‘liver shiver’ in it. Well, as I’m preaching I got a little tongue tied and inadvertently used the other ‘s’ word. I wanted to walk off stage, pack up my office, and leave, because I knew I was going to be fired anyway.
- You aren’t a slave to your kids because you know the Lord is building your house and loves your children even more than you do.
  - There are times when I find myself worrying about my kids
    - Daughter went to the prom last weekend. She was excited...I was terrified. God help her to be wise!
    - Alex - what does it look like for God to save the soul of my autistic child? Or who will care for him when Julie and I are gone?
- You aren’t a slave to what others think and say because God has said that you are my son / you are my daughter and have been made right with me.
  - If God loves you, who cares what people think?
- You aren’t a slave to worldly comforts because God has proven to be a greater comfort and promised you an eternal home...a new heaven and new earth where everything will be as it should.
  - Like a kid waiting for a dessert. You know it’s coming and you can wait.

It’s only when we rest that we can, as the psalmist would say, stop eating the bread of anxious toil. This is profoundly good news!

So, failing to rest reveals that you’ve become a slave. And, the bad news is that when you are a slave, you turn others into your slaves. Let me show you.

KEY: **Slaves make others slaves.**

Mom’s, let me illustrate this by speaking directly to you. There is not a mother here who doesn’t want her child to thrive and succeed. But far too often your self worth and value is directly tied to your children’s successes academically, athletically or otherwise. So, when your success is tied to their success you begin to demand perfection from yourself and your children. *Not out of love for them, but out of self-validation on you.*

Paul David Tripp, *"We begin to need them to be what they should be so that we can feel a sense of achievement and success. We begin to look at our children as our trophies rather than God's creatures. We secretly want to display them on the mantles of our lives as visible testimonies to a job well done."*

So, what do we do? We try to 'control' their lives and protect them from harm:

- Starts when their young: say "helicopter parenting", everyone knows that is bad
  - No high dives
  - Bike helmets, elbow pads, knee pads (look like the Michelin man...no wonder your kids fall off the bike)
  - trampoline nets / etc. can't have friends with trampolines or friends with friends with trampolines.
- When they get older we continue the pattern we started when they were young
  - Reggie Joiner, *"We're fine if our children never climb a mountain as long as it guarantees they never get hurt. But what if your children were made for the mountains?...The ultimate mission of the family is not to protect your children from all harm, but to mobilize them for the mission of God. It is possible to hold on to our kids so tightly that we forget that the ultimate goal of parenting is to let go."*
  - Ps. 127 - "arrows in the hand of a warrior", not trophies to showcase in your house.
    - "J.D. says they are arrows, not art. Arrows you pull back on the bowstring of faith and launch; art you keep in your house."
- In talking with our college leadership, do you want to know what the biggest obstacle to sending the next generation to the mission field?
  - Raising support? Hard, but no.
  - Being away from home and American culture? Again, hard, but no.
  - No McDonald's? Again, hard but no.
  - It's parents! Parents who are afraid that spending time overseas will either hurt their future earnings potential or that their students will be in harm's way.

So, on one hand we try to control them, but on the other we push them. We push...harder and harder...all the while demanding excellence and perfection!

- We push them to be the best students...
- We push them to be the best athletes...
- We push them to be the most well rounded...
- So, instead of leading our children to rest and delight in Christ we are, as one author said, *"pressuring the next generation to become restless versions of ourselves."*

Jonathan Lenker, our North Raleigh Student Director, shared with me a survey of graduating seniors that were asked this question: *"If my parents could know one thing about me right now what would it be?"* Listen to how they responded:

- I would want them to know that I'm making mistakes but I'm also working hard to be independent and successful.
- I would want them to know that I'm working as hard as I can to please them.
- That I'm overwhelmed.
- I'm really stressed out and I need them to back off.
- That I'm scared and not athletically prepared for college.
- I wish they would stop stressing me out about college...I know how important it is.
- I wish they knew how hard I'm trying to finish strong.
- Wish they would stop making me take the ACT when I'm already in the 98th percentile.
- That I tried my best.
- That I'm scared.
- That I need to rest and I wish they I knew they appreciated my hard work.

I wonder how many of our children, if they were really honest, would tell us that they are exhausted and overwhelmed by the expectations we have placed on their lives?

These students didn't saying exactly like this, but you hear it: "Dad / Mom you're a taskmaster."

But because you are a slave; you put them into slavery. Their exhaustion comes from the demands you place on them, because you've never learned to be free yourself.

Closing:

This will always be the case when we fail to rest!

And by rest, I mean more than just taking a day off once a week...it's more than just having extended vacations away from work when we unplug.

You see, deep soul rest can't simply be found in a day off...it's found in a relationship with a person. Jesus said, "*Come unto me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you REST.*"

Listen until you find deep rest in Christ you will always labor and be heavy laden.

- The reason you feel driven to prove yourself and protect yourself is because you have lost your identity in God and your trust in God.
- But the gospel tells us that Jesus has saved us, and if you have received his salvation, you have significance in him.
- Jesus loved you so much that he went to a cross for you--and that assures you that you are important--to God!
- And your kids are important to him too, and they have a purpose--they have an assignment from the King of Kings!
- You find your identity in serving him, and in serving him there is freedom. And you know you can trust him. If he went through all that trouble to save you, surely you can trust him with all your needs.

So, weary son and weary daughter, weary father and weary mother, come to Jesus and find rest.

As the hymn writer would say, "Lay your deadly doing down, down at Jesus feet. Stand in Him, in Him alone, gloriously complete."