

SOUL CARE: Reviving Your Soul

Week 1

February 6, 2022

DAY 1 What is the soul?

Scripture: [Genesis 35:18](#); [Exodus 31:14](#); [Proverbs 11:30](#); [Mark 8:36](#)

Reflection:

The Bible doesn't have one verse that provides a dictionary definition. But there are many references that help us to understand what it is.

First, the soul is the non-physical part of you that makes you – you. The human soul is central to your personhood. As George MacDonald said, *"You don't have a soul. You are a Soul. You have a body."* Repeatedly in the Bible, people are referred to as "souls."

Second, it is the part of you that is eternal. It is the part of every human being that lasts eternally after the body experiences death. Genesis 35:18 describes the death of Rachel, Jacob's wife, saying she named her son *"as her soul was departing."* From this we know that the soul is different from the body and that it continues to live after physical death.

Third, it is the most important dimension of you. Your soul is the real you. In fact - Jesus claimed that there is nothing more important. *"What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and yet lose his very soul?"* (Mark 8:36)

So, a simple working definition of the soul is the immaterial, eternal life center of human beings.

In some ways, you're like an iceberg – there's the part people see, but there's also all the stuff they don't see, the stuff beneath the surface. We tend to settle for taking care of what others see- like chasing SUCCESS- instead of tending our SOUL. But if your soul is the most important part of you, it must be properly cared for. It needs to be tended like a garden. God made it and it needs a keeper – and that keeper is you. Your soul needs tended like a garden to thrive in the way your Maker intended.

Your soul will be revived as you learn to live your life WITH God.

Ask Yourself:

-Which part of me gets most of my attention- my soul or the parts people can see? What is the evidence?

Pause to Pray:

God, You made me and You care for me. Open my eyes and heart to your work in my soul this week...

Take a Next Step:

-Take 5 minutes to schedule time to complete part 1 of Soul Care this week.

-Find the Soul Care read plan on YouVersion! Search "whoisgrace" to see all of our reading plans.

DAY 2 Warning Signs of a Neglected Soul

Scripture: [Psalm 42:1-11](#)

Reflection:

Yesterday we learned the soul needs care, like a garden. Left untended, some nasty weeds grow up. So, what are some warning signs that your soul is being neglected?

Your Passion Fades. Everybody struggles with lack of passion from time to time, but this is a place of sustained motivation loss.

You No Longer Feel the Highs or Lows. If you're healthy, you feel things. When the main emotion is numbness – you need to pay attention

Little Things Make You Disproportionally Emotional. Treating small things like big things and big things like small things are both signs that something deeper is wrong.

Everybody Drains You. People are a mixed bag for sure. When nobody energizes you, they're not the problem. You are.

You're Becoming Cynical. If you find cynicism is advancing at a rapid rate, it may be a sign that you're burning out. Cynicism never finds a home in a healthy soul.

Nothing Satisfies You. That's a sign of depression, and it's also a sign your soul is neglected.

You Can't Think Straight. You lose the ability to think clearly.

Your Productivity Is Dropping. You may be working long hours but you're producing little. Or you feel busy but bored.

You're Self-Medicating. To numb the pain you're turning to overeating, overworking, sexual addictions, drinking, impulsive spending, or drugs.

You Don't Laugh Anymore. This seems like such a small thing, but it's actually a very big thing. When was the last time you had a good belly laugh?

Sleep No Longer Refuels You. Not being refueled when you take time off is a major warning sign that you're burning out.

Do any of those warning signs wave at you like a red flag? Whether it is one or all eleven, your soul needs care.

"For most Christians, the great danger is not that we will renounce our faith. It is that we will become so distracted and rushed and preoccupied that we will settle for a mediocre version of it. We will just skim our lives instead of actually living." (John Ortberg)

Your soul will be revived as you learn to live your life WITH God.

Ask Yourself:

-What is the evidence of neglect in my soul?

-What are the things in my life that are good for my soul?

Pause to Pray:

God, I want to live more than a mediocre life with mediocre faith. I want to thrive...

Take a Next Step:

-Make a list of things that help you care for your soul. Make a list of your soul crushers. Make time today to do something that cares for your soul.

DAY 3 What is soul care?

Scripture: [Deuteronomy 4:9](#); [Psalm 63:1](#); [John 7:38](#)

Reflection:

Self-care is a buzz word right now. You can get self-care by going to the gym, or going to the spa, or going to bed earlier, but you can only get soul care by going to Jesus. It involves arranging your life in sacred rhythms.

“Your life is simply the by-product of your lifestyle. By ‘lifestyle’ I mean the rhythms and routines that make up your day-to-day existence. The way you organize your time. Spend your money. Leverage your energy.” -- John Mark Comer

Every system is perfectly designed to get the exact results it is getting. It’s not just true of HR best practices and assembly lines, it’s true of your life as well. If the results you are getting with your life are lousy—*anxiety is at a constant simmer, mild depression is a close friend, high levels of stress, chronic emotional burnout, toxic relationships, little to no sense of the presence of God*—then the odds are good that there is something about the system of your life that is off kilter. The rhythms and routines are wrong. The way you’ve organized your morning or evening, your schedule, your budget, your relationship to your phone; how you manage your resources of time, money, and attention —something is out of whack.

You must arrange your days so that you’re experiencing deep contentment, joy, and confidence in your everyday life with God. – Dallas Willard

Your soul will be revived as you learn to live your life WITH God

Ask Yourself:

- How is my soul? (Think of a word or phrase, an image, or a scale of 1-10)
- How have I contributed to the state of my soul in good ways and bad ways?

Pause to Pray:

God, my soul is thirsty, and I know I need you...

Take a Next Step:

- Take inventory of your current weekly rhythms. Reflect on last week- On what things did you spend your time and energy? Write these down. Now look ahead to the week in front of you. Where do you want to make changes? Consider adding 1 spiritual priority to each day and deleting 1 soul crusher.

DAY 4 How to find rest for your soul- part 1

Scripture: [Matthew 11:28-29](#); [John 14:6](#); [Psalm 63](#)

Reflection:

Your soul will be revived as you learn to live your life WITH God. So how do you do that? Jesus has some words for us. In fact, He extends the promise of soul care in Matthew 11:28-29.

Like every rabbi in his day, Jesus had two things. First, he had a yoke. Not a literal yoke, but it's the same concept. Imagine two oxen yoked together to pull a cart or plow a field. A yoke is that wooden instrument that connects them together. It's how you would share the weight or force of a load.

A yoke for a teacher was another word for a rabbi's way of reading the Torah. It was also his set of teachings on how to be human. The way he taught his followers to shoulder the weight of life—marriage, divorce, prayer, money, sex, conflict resolution, government—all of it. What made Jesus unique wasn't that He had a yoke; all rabbis had a yoke. It was that He had an easy yoke.

Second, Jesus had followers. In Hebrew the word is *talmidim*. It's usually translated as "disciples," but an even better word "apprentices." To be one of Jesus' *talmidim* is to apprentice under Jesus. Think about what an apprentice does – if you're an apprentice to an electrician you spend time with him, you learn to do the things he does and eventually when he's not there, you hope to pattern your ways after what he would do.

So, in Matthew 11:28-29, Jesus teaches His apprentices how to care for the soul:

1- Spend time with Jesus- "*Come to me...*"

This is the most beautiful and generous invitation of Jesus. It's time together. The things and the people you fill your time with will shape the trajectory of your life. How much time do you spend with Jesus?

2- Learn from Jesus- "*Learn from me...*"

We have so much to learn from the teachings and truths of Jesus. He taught using parables, He led by example, He healed, and He prayed. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Christians put a lot of emphasis on the truth part, but what about the way and the life?

Ask Yourself:

- How much time do I spend with Jesus?

-How well do I know the ways and the truth and the life of Jesus?

Pause to Pray:

Jesus, I know You are the way, the truth, and the life, and I want to be your apprentice...

Take a Next Step:

-Consider committing to reading through one of the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John) in its entirety so that you can walk with the disciples as they walked with Jesus.

DAY 5 How to find rest for your soul- part 2

Scripture: [Matthew 11:28-29](#); [Psalm 23](#)

Reflection:

Yesterday, we learned from Matthew 11:28-29 two steps to caring for the soul: Spend time with Jesus and learn from Jesus. Today, let's look at a third step.

3- Adopt His Lifestyle- *"Take my yoke upon you..."*

A yoke is a work instrument. It seems to be what exhausted people need least! Don't they need a nap or a trip to Cancun?? Surely not a yoke! But Jesus knows that the most restful gift He can give those who are tired is a new way to carry their life, a fresh way to bear responsibilities. He realizes that life is a series of burdens; we can't get away from that. But, instead of offering an escape (like a Netflix binge or a spa day), Jesus offers a tool. But it's a tool that will connect us intimately to him. Jesus's invitation to take up his yoke is an invitation to travel through life at His side, learning to shoulder the weight of life with ease. To step out of our screen-time, consumer-driven society to a life of soul rest. Where I go, He goes and where He goes, I go. A constant companion and friend.

So, we learn from Jesus a simple set of practices. Things like building in rhythms of silence and solitude. Away from the noise and notifications. Building in proper rest. The practice of simplicity. The practice of Sabbath. Ironically, the practices are almost never commanded by Jesus. The one exception is prayer, which is commanded multiple times. But Jesus never commands you to wake up in the morning and have a quiet time, read your Bible, live in community, practice Sabbath, or give your money to the poor. He just does them again and again, and then says, *"Follow me."* It's an invitation to apprentice under Him. Jesus is saying, "Copy the details of my life. Take the template of my day-to-day life as your own." Jesus' yoke is an invitation to the life we ache for. A life that can be found only by moving through the world shoulder-to-shoulder with Jesus.

Your soul will be revived as you learn to live your life WITH God.

Ask Yourself:

-What step can I take to adopting the lifestyle of Jesus and His followers?

Pause to Pray:

Jesus, I want to walk with Jesus. Lead me...

Take a Next Step:

Look for Soul Care part 2 on YouVersion! Search "whoisgrace" to find all Grace reading plans.

SOUL CARE: Solitude

Week 2

February 13, 2022

DAY 1 - IF JESUS NEEDED IT, SO DO YOU!

Scripture: [Mark 1: 35-37](#), [Mark 6:30-31](#), [Luke 5:15-16](#), [Luke 6:12-13](#), [John 12:49-50](#)

Reflection:

Rest, pray, and hear from God. This is the purpose of solitude. Throughout the gospels we see moments when Jesus got away alone, or with his disciples. Sometimes it was directly after a great movement of healings and other miracles. Other times it was in preparation for the crowds He was about to minister to. It's worth noting that Jesus went up on a mountain and prayed all night before naming the twelve apostles. And don't let this get past you, Jesus had to be very disciplined about his solitude! People were constantly pursuing him, so He did things like get up before dark and climb a mountain, or He would find some other desolate place.

But this is Jesus, God the Son. He is the one who created all things. How is it that He needed to rest, or set aside time to pray and hear? This may be hard to understand, but one thing is clear, if Jesus needed times of solitude, then so do we. What if we pursued hearing from the Father like Jesus did? What if we wanted to be sure that every word that came from our mouths was a result of meeting with God? What do you think would happen if we also did whatever it took to find solitude before we moved into action?

Ask Yourself:

-What practices in your life demonstrate that you value hearing from God?

-Where will you go for solitude?

-When will you go?

*Remember, solitude does not have to be complicated. Solitude could mean a whole day on an actual mountain, but more often it will be finding a half hour of quiet space in your own home or nearby park.

Pause to Pray:

Holy God, please increase my desire for times to be filled by you...

Take the Next Step:

-Make a plan for solitude- Where will you go? When will you go? Try to go for at least two hours of rest, reading, prayer and worship.

DAY 2 - HOW PRODUCTIVE ARE YOU REALLY?

Scripture: [John 15:1-11](#)

Reflection:

How productive are you, really? Imagine this...

A laborer digs a trench eight feet deep by hand. He's so proud of himself. He's never worked harder, and he dug that hole in record time! Just as he tosses his last scoop of dirt the foreman peers into the hole.

With a scowl on his face the foreman says, “Why did you dig here and why is the hole so deep? You need to fill this hole in and dig again in the right place!” He continues, “If you had taken the time to talk to me and read the blueprints, you would have saved so much time and energy, and your efforts would have counted for something!”

That illustration makes one’s heart sink just thinking about it! What an awful feeling it would be to discover that all your busyness was just that, busyness! Solitude is taking time to communicate with the ultimate Foreman, and to internalize His blueprints. Solitude is listening and being filled before action. Solitude ensures that, when we do move, we are putting our energy into the right things, and with the right spirit. Solitude ensures that our expended energy is actually productive and actually counts toward what is valuable in God’s eyes.

Ask Yourself:

-When have you changed direction because you discovered, by time with God, that your busyness was not according to his blueprint?

-How are you ensuring that your busyness is actually fruitful?

-How are you ensuring that your definition of fruitful is God’s definition of fruitful?

Pause to Pray:

My Jesus, I so desperately want to bear much fruit! Teach me what it is to abide in you day by day...

Take the Next Step:

-Make a list of tasks that you plan to do this week or take a look at your calendar of meetings/classes/events. How many of them have you prayed about? Take time to pray, even for the small things that seem to not need prayer.

DAY 3 - PREPARED FOR THE DARK

Scripture: [Psalm 13](#)

Reflection:

“Don’t forget in the dark what you learned in the light!” Have you ever heard that saying? This isn’t a Bible verse but it’s advice. The idea is that you will have some “in the light” moments with God. Perhaps it was a very timely scripture passage that opened your eyes a little more to the awesomeness of God. Or maybe it was an answer to prayer that gave you a great sense of His faithfulness. Perhaps you’ve had quiet times with prayer, Bible reading, and worship that left you feeling closer to God than ever before. But then the busyness takes over. Or maybe you are faced with a difficult situation or even a tragedy. In the dark, it’s hard to know what to think or what to do. So, many times, if we can just recall what we learned, or experienced in the light, we can find strength, hope, peace, and even joy.

But, to remember in the dark what you learned in the light, you must first have those “in the light” moments. This is where solitude comes in. You will gain a deeper knowledge of who God is and His ways. This will be your light. The overwhelming sense of His love, his faithfulness, and His vision for you will be light to you in the dark days.

In Psalm 13 King David is clearly having some dark days and feeling confused, even about God. But as you may already know, King David has had many other “in the light” experiences with God. Pay attention to the truths he draws upon in his time “in the dark.”

Ask Yourself:

- What have been your most memorable “in the light” moments?
- How have those moments helped you?
- When is the last time you have had one of those moments?
- What are you doing, or not doing, that could be affecting the frequency of those moments?

Pause to Pray:

Oh God, the Father of light, thank you for revealing ... Help me to recall this truth when ...

Take the Next Step:

Memorize Psalm 13:5-6. You can do it!

DAY 4 - DON'T JUST DO SOMETHING!

Scripture: [Luke 10:38-42](#)

Reflection:

“Don’t just do something. Stand there.” Have you ever heard anyone say that? Probably not! This is certainly not what Martha was saying. In fact, her words to Mary were more like the more familiar phrase, “Don’t just stand there, do something!” If Jesus arrived at your home, which sister would you be like? The sister you choose reveals a little about how you view Jesus and what He wants from you. Are you like Martha? Do you feel like you need to please Jesus with your actions? Do you feel like Jesus will be disappointed with you if you don’t have a lot of accomplishments in His name? Or, are you like Mary? Can you sense that He wants you to enjoy His presence? Do you want to sit and listen because He is all wise and wants to give generously of that wisdom to you?

Obviously, action is important. Being fruitful matters. But fruitfulness is accomplished by His wisdom and power, not yours. The work of God is His, not yours. You know when you are seeking to do things for Jesus in your own wisdom and strength when, as Jesus said, “*you are anxious and troubled about so many things.*” For some of us it’s very hard to not be focusing on tasks that need to be done. And maybe it feels like we are doing far more for God than those who spend more time in solitude. But when you feel that way remember this story. According to Jesus, “*one thing is necessary.*” Sitting at Jesus’ feet is choosing “*the good portion.*” And you will never hear Jesus say, “Stop sitting at my feet!”

Ask Yourself:

- Which sister do you most relate to?
- What tasks are preventing you from sitting at the feet of Jesus?
- What tasks are making you anxious and troubled?

Pause to Pray:

My Jesus, I confess that I have not been sitting at your feet because...

Take the Next Step:

- Share with a friend something God is teaching you about caring for your soul.

DAY 5 - WAIT!

Scripture: [Isaiah 40:1-3, 28-31](#)

Reflection:

"The Lord's work done in human energy is not the Lord's work any longer. It is something, but it is not the Lord's work." (Francis Schaeffer)

What a powerful statement! The Lord's work is not something I do for God. The Lord's work is something God does. Christians are certainly conduits through which His power moves, but the power and work is God's. But how often do we go about our day without the awareness of this truth? We must be filled with the Holy Spirit. It must no longer be I that lives, but Christ who lives in me. How will this happen? When will this happen?

Isaiah says it all happens when we wait patiently on the Lord. What does waiting on the Lord look like? It's waiting to hear. It's seeking Him in prayer, while we wait. It's seeking Him through the Scriptures. It's waiting to be refreshed. It's refusing to get ahead of God. It's trust and faith that He will move, work, and empower in His time. May we be so hungry for the work of God, by God Himself, that we accept nothing less! And accepting nothing less will mean that we will not accept anything done in our own human energy. And if that means we must wait, we will wait.

Ask Yourself:

- Can you think of an example of when you truly waited on the Lord?
- Can you think of an example of when you should have?
- Is there any current situation in which you need to step back and wait before moving forward?

Pause to Pray:

Oh God, the Almighty, I humbly admit that I am not strong enough...

Take the Next Step:

- Write out the quote by Francis Schaeffer and post it in a prominent place as a reminder to make time for solitude.
- Look for "Soul Care part 3: Silence" on YouVersion! Search "whoisgrace" to find all Grace reading plans.

SOUL CARE: Silence
Week 3
February 20, 2022

DAY 1

Scripture: [John 10:27-30](#); [Isaiah 30:15](#)

Reflection:

Does it ever seem like all the noise in your life keeps you feeling constantly distracted? Like there are a hundred little things to do or check or remember every day, and the undercurrent of stress or angst in your life is so normal you barely remember what it's like to live without it? Between your phone and your to-do list and your relationships and your own thoughts, the hamster wheel just never stops spinning.

Don't worry - you're not alone. But you're also not doomed to continue living this way. That's where the spiritual discipline of *silence* comes in. Spiritual silence is more than just being quiet. Silence is practicing "being present" with God. No agenda, no plan. It's giving him our undivided attention and just listening. It requires that we sit in external silence in order to reach internal silence. Spiritual silence is clearing space in our noisy minds for God to fill with His voice. And it looks a little different for everyone, so take your time exploring what it looks like for you.

It's rare for most Christians to hear an audible "voice from the sky" when they listen to God. But many seasoned Christians will say that they have learned to sense God's promptings when they approach him in spiritual silence. Sometimes it uncovers a subtle sin that has taken root in their hearts. Sometimes it leaves them with a funny feeling that they need to text a friend. It can take on so many forms.

For many people, silence is the hardest spiritual discipline to practice, and it's pretty radical for a society that always has a distraction to offer. But the payout is huge. Give it a try for a month, and you'll see. Here's a hint- if you're not practiced at this, it will take more than a few minutes of external silence to arrive at internal silence. It could easily take 20 minutes, plus the additional time of actually sitting in that peaceful silence. But as you'll see through the rest of this plan, it's a crucial practice for all followers of Jesus, and it's often the very thing that brings us the joy and healing that our souls crave.

Ask Yourself:

- Can you recall a time when you have discerned the voice of the Good Shepherd?
- Do you believe that God will speak to you in silence?

Take a Next Step:

- Set aside uninterrupted time to sit in silence with God today. If possible, do it outside or near a window. Visualize yourself clearing out the clutter in your mind, and whenever you get distracted, repeat "Here I am, Lord."

DAY 2

Scripture: [Mark 1:12](#); [Mark 1:35](#); [Mark 6:31-32](#); [Luke 5:16](#)

Reflection:

In order to be followers of Jesus, we have to actually follow his example and do what he did. Jesus often withdrew to quiet places to be with God the Father, and he encouraged his disciples to do the same. If Jesus, who was God incarnate, made quiet time a priority, you should, too!

The Bible uses the Greek word *eremos* for the desolate place or wilderness where Jesus would go to pray. You'll see it in each of today's scriptures. The busier Jesus got, the more he found the *eremos*.

Ask Yourself:

- Why do you think Jesus went away from society into desolate places to be with God?
- What do you think is more likely to happen in the *eremos* than when we are surrounded by distractions?
- What place of *eremos* can you withdraw to regularly?

Take a Next Step:

- Find a place of *eremos* and spend time in silence there with God today. You might literally have to lock yourself in your bathroom and turn off the lights. Visualize yourself moving away from the thoughts and distractions that regularly fill your mind and drawing near to Jesus in the *eremos*.

DAY 3

Scripture: [Psalm 25:5](#); [Psalm 37:7](#); [Psalm 46:10](#); [Psalm 62:5](#)

Reflection:

The book of Psalms is a great place to go for wisdom on how to approach God. Over and over again, we find the psalmists adopting a posture of silence and waiting on the Lord. There is ancient wisdom to be gleaned here. The psalmists know that being still and waiting for God to move is a powerful practice. Plus waiting on God in silence is excellent training for waiting on God in the rest of our lives.

Mindfulness is a big buzzword nowadays. It's basically silence and solitude without the best part—God! There is something undeniably powerful about the physical act of removing the noise and clearing space in our minds. Add God into the equation and now there's potential for something supernatural to happen!

But like the psalmists, we must be prepared to wait. That's the hardest part of spiritual silence, isn't it? But it is the very act of waiting that opens our hearts to God's will and unites us with him.

Ask Yourself:

- How much time do you think it should take to feel connected to God in silence, and where did you get that idea from? Is it biblical?
- What is the hardest part about spiritual silence for you, and how could God be using that to draw you closer to himself?

Take a Next Step:

- Listen to a worship song before practicing silence today. (suggestion: [“Not In a Hurry” by Will Reagan](#)).
- Whenever you get distracted, repeat, "Here I am Lord. I'm not in a hurry."

DAY 4

Scripture: [Psalm 85](#)

Reflection:

For the last 2,000 years, Christians all over the world have identified silence as a crucial practice for being a follower of Jesus. When we practice silence, our goal is to draw closer to God and become more like Christ. We don't attempt to hear from God as a divine magic 8 ball. Instead, we humble ourselves in his presence to receive whatever he may have for us. The fruit of silence should be obedience. When we hear his voice, we obey.

But you won't always feel like you hear from God. And that's ok. In silence, your mind should always find truth though, and that will lead you toward God in one way or another. Sometimes spiritual silence involves letting your mind wander in a productive direction. It can start with meditating on a truth of scripture, and then letting that truth search your mind for places where it needs to influence your thinking. Sometimes spiritual silence is just slowing down and reconnecting with your mind, body, and soul. Sometimes it's just remembering God's faithfulness and enjoying his company. No matter what form silence takes on for you, remember that the goal is to draw closer to the heart of God.

Ask Yourself:

- Have you sensed God's voice or presence in the past? If so, what did you do to experience that, and how did you know it was God?
- When you finish your time of silence, do you "turn back to folly" (Psalm 85:8) or are you more able to walk in obedience?

Next Step:

- Read Psalm 85 out loud, slowly. Then sit in silence and ask God to speak to you. Whenever you get distracted, repeat "Here I am, Lord. I am listening."

DAY 5

Scripture: [Matthew 4:18-22](#); [John 14:16-17](#); [John 16:13](#)

Reflection:

When Jesus called his disciples to follow him, he didn't pick super spiritual, impressive people. He chose ordinary men who would have never had a shot at being disciples under any other rabbi. In fact, rabbis at Jesus' time *never* asked disciples to follow them. The smartest, most spiritual men, who had spent their entire lives studying and memorizing the Old Testament scriptures, would essentially apply to become a rabbi's disciple - and they were often rejected! Jesus flips the system upside down and handpicks ordinary men who are simply willing to adopt his upside-down lifestyle.

So, if spiritual silence feels a little too advanced for you, remember that Jesus intentionally made faith accessible to everyone no matter how qualified they may seem. If practicing silence over the last four days has felt awkward or unproductive, don't assume you're not the kind of person who can do this on a regular basis. If you are a Christian, then the Spirit of God dwells in you! You have all you need to succeed at spiritual silence. It just takes practice.

In 2021, the average American spent over 5 hours on their phones every day. We have all the time we need to find our *eremos* and to get quiet with God. The sad reality is that we just normally choose noise instead.

Ask Yourself:

- Don't you long to clear your mind and hear God's voice over the roar of this world?
- What's stopping you from practicing silence regularly?
- How can you clear space for silence to become a regular priority in your life?

Next Step:

-Imagine Jesus calling you to be one of his disciples. What does His upside-down lifestyle look like for you? Sit in silence with him today and enjoy Him, remembering that He handpicked you and His spirit dwells in you.

-Look for "Soul Care part 4: Sabbath" on YouVersion! Search "whoisgrace" to find all Grace reading plans.

SOUL CARE: Sabbath
Week 4
February 27, 2022

DAY 1 Rhythm of Rest

Scripture: [Exodus 20: 8-11](#); [Exodus 31: 12-17](#)

Reflection:

As descendents of Abraham, God made a covenant agreement with the nation of Israel – If they would obediently follow Him as their King, He would be their God and would protect, provide for and bless them. The Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 clearly laid out God’s primary expectations for His people. The first three commandments dealt specifically with how the people were to revere God; the last five dealt with how they were to interact with each other. The fourth one, remembering and keeping the Sabbath, gave specific instruction on how to maintain a healthy relationship between their spiritual and earthly lives. This observance was meant to be a regular act of humility, stopping all work and acknowledging that He is the LORD, the source of all things. The repetitive nature established a healthy rhythm of rest and refreshment for the people.

By definition, none of the commandments were optional. Each one was a non-negotiable part of the agreement. Yet history has shown that the observance of God’s Sabbath is often minimized or ignored in disobedience of His command.

Ask Yourself:

-Why do think God included His Sabbaths as one of His primary commands, right along with “*You shall have no other gods before me*’ and *You shall not murder*?

-Why do you think this particular commandment is so frequently disobeyed?

Pause to Pray:

Father God, I thank you for loving us enough to give us clear instructions for holy living with you. Please align my heart with your commandments and grant me insight into your heart for observing your Sabbaths. Help me to honor you more fully in _____.

Take a Next Step:

-Set aside some quiet time to make an honest assessment of where you currently stand in regard to observing the Sabbath Commandment. How important is it to you? How well does it/ would it fit into your current schedule? If you aren’t practicing it regularly, what would need to change for you to start?

DAY 2 Blessing in the Break

Scripture: [Mark 2: 23-28](#), [Deuteronomy 5: 27-33](#) and [Isaiah 58: 13-14 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflection:

Although not always easy, the commands God laid out for His people were straightforward and simple; yet by the time Jesus walked the earth, religious leaders had layered on so many specific rules and restrictions that trying to comply was stressful, confusing and... impossible. They were really missing the point.

God intended for the Sabbath to create a life rhythm and focus that would make it possible for the people to receive all that He had for them. Today's passages reveal some of God's heart for the Sabbath and a few of the specific blessings that obedience promised to bring. How do these things differ from the concept of Sabbath that the Pharisees approached Jesus with? How do these things agree or disagree with how you think about Sabbath?

Ask Yourself:

-How easy is it to apply layers of do's and don'ts over God's instructions in your life? (Maybe interpreting His guidance through a social or cultural lens or making assumptions for today based on something that you went through last year.)

-What are some specific ways that you may be tempted to overcomplicate a Sabbath practice?

Pause to Pray:

Lord, lead me in the way of obedience to your word. Help me to surrender _____ so that I can find delight in your Sabbath rest and honor your holy day. Pour out your joy as I learn to live fully and freely in your kingdom.

Take a Next Step:

-Identify one or two specific 'rules' that you may have about what Sabbath looks like that are not actually included in the commandment. Ask God for fresh revelation on what it can look like for you to keep it holy and then try out this new approach.

DAY 3 Soul Rest

Scripture: [Jeremiah 6: 16](#), [Matthew 11: 28-29](#) and [1 John 5: 1-5](#)

Reflection:

Sabbath has been a part of God's created order from the very beginning (Genesis 2: 2-3), but time and time again, God's people have fallen prey to the temptation to take other paths and to avoid carrying out His commands. As worldly worries and burdens weigh us down, it can be so easy to believe the lie that His ways are too hard and to look for an 'easier' way.

Although it may seem counter-intuitive, it is only through His created order and following the way of Jesus that we can find true rest. And isn't that something we all desperately need?

Ask Yourself:

-How might someone come to believe that God's commands are burdensome?

-What are some ways that people try to find relief, rest or relaxation, especially during stressful situations? How effective do you think these strategies are? How long do the effects last?

-How is rest for your soul different from sleeping or engaging in mindless entertainment? Why is it so attractive to us? Why is it so necessary?

Pause to Pray:

Jesus, my heart is weary and burdened about _____. Teach me to walk in your ways and trust you. Help me to find true rest for my soul...

Take a Next Step:

- Start to lay a foundation for developing your regular Sabbath practice. Choose a period of time during the week that you can begin to set aside your burdens and be completely available to God and His rest.
- Schedule the time into your calendar if necessary to help you avoid distractions.

DAY 4 Provision for Peace

Scripture: [Exodus 16: 1-30](#)

Reflection:

The Exodus account of manna and quail is a beautiful and insightful illustration of our human tendency to play tug-of-war with God. We desire His provision, and readily seek it out when things are beyond our control, but the moment we have it in our hands we try to take charge again. We want to do things our way; we want to stock up on the 'stuff' so that we won't be in a position of need again. Deep down, we don't want to have to rely on anyone, including God. Despite His ongoing faithfulness, we struggle to trust Him to provide what we need for today – and then do it again tomorrow. That's precisely why He sent the manna each morning, to teach His people to trust Him.

But then He inserted this additional lesson of Sabbath. One day each week, they were to gather enough for two days so that one day each week they could rest and spend time with Him. He is willing and able to provide exactly what is needed for us to live exactly the way He intended. The Sabbath is an opportunity for us to trust His work and His ways more than our own.

It's interesting to note that the people needed to do a little planning and preparation prior to the Sabbath day – they had to work a little harder and gather what would be needed so that they wouldn't be scrambling on the day of rest. And God made sure there was enough manna in supply that specific day to account for the preparation.

Ask Yourself:

- Why is it so challenging to trust God each day for that day?
- In what ways have you tried to provide for yourself? How do you think that wavering trust impacts your relationship with God?
- How does stopping all of your efforts to provide for yourself one day a week impact your faith?

Pause to Pray:

Oh God, forgive me for not fully trusting you in _____. I surrender this to you today and choose to wait with hopeful expectation for your provision...

Take a Next Step:

-Now that you have set aside your pre-conceived notions of Sabbath and determined a time in your week to faithfully rest, consider what changes you may need to make to the preceding day(s) in order to make this space and time possible. As God leads, take a planning or preparation step today.

DAY 5 Choosing What is Better

Scripture: [Luke 10: 38-42](#), [Luke 12: 22-26](#) and [Hebrews 4: 6-11](#)

Reflection:

We live in a society that values productivity – or at least the appearance of it. Multi-tasking and over-scheduled calendars seem to be viewed as indicators of a person's importance and an individual's perceived identity and value are directly tied to what they do. Think about it – in the US we typically introduce ourselves by stating our name and our occupation, literally what we 'do'. So, this idea of stopping all of our 'producing' for a full day each week is very counter-cultural, rebellious even.

Jesus tells us that taking intentional time to be with him is more important than ceaseless activities and expectations of people. He also teaches that we have more value than birds, which produce almost nothing their entire lives. Hmm. Our misguided attempts to define ourselves through activity and independence leave us confused and exhausted but the scriptures remind us that there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God if we will have the courage and humility to find our value in Him and pattern our lives as He designed.

Ask Yourself:

-What kind of roles or accomplishments are you tempted to find your value in? If you had to introduce yourself without naming a single thing you do or have done, what would you say?

-Who do you find it easier to relate to in the account of Mary and Martha? Why?

Pause to Pray:

Jesus, I thank you that you have made provision for a true Sabbath rest for *me*. When faced with worry and work, help me to choose what is better in you...

Take a Next Step:

-As you continue to invest in your Sabbath rest practice, understand that it will run counter to the way of the world. Prepare yourself to 'rebel' against society's perspectives on productivity and value by memorizing a few key scripture passages that remind you to follow the rhythm of rest.