

REST IN GOD

“The purpose of Sabbath is not rest. The purpose of Sabbath is to reflect on God, and that brings us into rest.”
— Michayla White

How would you describe your favorite place to rest? A hammock? A soft chair by a warm fire? A quiet corner with a cool breeze? Sometimes, if we just close our eyes and picture that place in our minds, we can feel rest descending over us. **True rest involves more than our bodies. True rest affects our minds, our emotions, our will — every part of us, just as love for God affects every part of us.**

The essence of Sabbath is found in the ancient words of Augustine: My heart is restless until I find my rest in You.

In times of true Sabbath, we take time to remember who we are and who God

is. He is limitless, and we are not. Neglecting rest is failing to acknowledge that we are not God; it is a denial of our human limits. Relentless activity says, “I have no need to rest and recharge. I have divine capacity, limitless physical resources.” That is one step away from saying, “I don’t need God. I am enough on my own.”

And avoiding rest is a denial of heaven. Relentless activity says, “This life is the only chance I’ll have to find pleasure and fulfillment. If I don’t live it all now, there is no other chance beyond this world when I can live.”

On the other hand, as we enjoy a Sabbath rest, we live out the message, “Christ is enough for me.” We are content, joyful, in our place in his wonderful creation at the feet of the Creator. Our resting is a powerful sermon to ourselves, our children, and our world. We are declaring that our soul is satisfied in our God. We affirm that, though we work hard at our responsibilities, we work because we love our God and want him to be on display.

As people who rest in God, we are free from the world’s relentless demands for more hustle, more profit, and more striving. We release our control and return it to God. In Matthew 12:8, Jesus declared that he was “Lord of the Sabbath.” He is the one who leads us into rest. He has invited us to rest in his provisions of grace. That calls to mind the still waters and green pastures of Psalm 23.

What a live-giving and life-changing gift we offer our children when we invite them to acquire the habit of Sabbath, finding their rest in God. Think about how that alleviates their need to gorge themselves in endless activity, or exhaust themselves on the treadmill of chasing selfish achievements. Think of the peace they will enjoy. Imagine the refreshment they will find in his presence all through life’s changes.



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INVITATIONS TO ENGAGE

Start the conversation with your child!

“Come and sit with me a minute. Let’s talk about a gift that God gave us, the gift of rest.”

EARLY CHILDHOOD (2-6 years old)

Let’s slowly read Isaiah 56:2 together: **Blessed are those who honor my Sabbath days of rest.**

What is the gift, the blessing God has given to us? We don’t always think of rest as a gift, do we? Let’s imagine in our minds that our fingers are us and we are walking all the way to the ocean. (Use your fingers to “walk” around you on the floor.) How long would we walk before we need to rest? (Let your fingers “lie down and rest.”)

The reason that rest is such an important gift is that it lets us get energy for the next thing we need to do. **The best kind of rest comes to us when we think about God while we are resting.** Let’s sit here and think about how God takes care of us and never has to rest, never has to sleep.

ELEMENTARY AGE (5-10 years old)

Let’s slowly read Psalm 23 together. When I stop reading, you read the next part of the verse. **Which part of that psalm was the most restful to you?**

Let’s take this shallow box and make it into a model of that place. While you put dirt, stones, grass, and some little twigs for trees, I will slowly read the psalm twice more so you can think about it while you make the miniature scene. Did you hear God’s voice to you?

PRETEEN/EARLY ADOLESCENT (10-14 years old)

(Some older children will enjoy making the miniature mentioned above.)

I’d like for you to slowly read Psalm 23 to me. What is the most restful, peaceful, refreshing place for you? **Now I’ll read it back to you a couple of times while you draw a picture in your journal of a place that is restful to you.**

(After the readings, continue the conversation.) What did you hear God say to you as I read? Let’s pray for each other and ask God to bring us to a restful place.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCE

“The Rest of God: Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath,” by Mark Buchanan