

# Rest

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Date: 05 July 2026

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[0:00] My big question today is, how do you find rest? How do you find rest? We're going to read! A short passage from Joshua chapter 1, a short passage from Joshua 21, and then jump a little bit later on to the book of Hebrews where it discusses those. But there's this theme that runs through Joshua, he keeps touching on it, of rest. And yet rest, I suspect for many of us in the day that we live in, seems increasingly impossible. How could that be a thing? In Joshua's day, they are promised on the way into the land that they will rest in this place. Isn't that what we all really want?

Let me start by reading to you, Joshua chapter 1, starting at verse 10. And Joshua commanded the officers of the people, pass through the midst of the camp and command the people. Prepare the provisions for within three days you are to pass over this Jordan and go in to take possession of the land that the Lord your God is giving you to possess. And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, the half-tribe Manasseh, there's the guys who've already found their place to rest on the other side of the Jordan. Joshua said, remember the word that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, the Lord your God is providing you a place of rest and will give you this land.

Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain the land that Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but all the men of valor among you shall pass over armed before your brothers and shall help them until the Lord gives rest to your brothers as he has to you. And they also take possession of the land that the Lord your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and shall possess it. And the land that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you beyond the Jordan towards the sunrise. And they answered Joshua, all that you have commanded us we will do, wherever you send us we will go. Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you as he was with Moses. Whoever rebels against your commandment disobeys your words, whatever you command him shall be put to death, only be strong and courageous. So my, the thing I want us to, there's lots you can pick out there, but the thing I want us to pick out is this idea that they go into the land and they're offered rest. It's probably not the first thing that we'd think of, but they're told this is the place to go and get rest. And then towards the end of Joshua in chapter 21, reading the last couple of verses of chapter 21, so starting at verse 43, thus the Lord gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it and they settled there. And the Lord gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their fathers.

Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the Lord had given all their enemies into their hands. Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord made to the house of Israel had failed. All came to pass. This is the word of the Lord. So we've, we've seen previously that the reason they were given for the conquest was worship. They were told, this is the place that I want you to come and worship me, God says to them. But there's this other reason that he gives them, that is in one sense more for their benefit. He says, this is the place that you'll come in to rest.

They're to come and take this land so that they can rest. He says at the end, as I read in that second passage, that the end is like, oh, their rest is accomplished. They can now rest. Wouldn't that be nice?

[3:57] I suspect it's what some of us are thinking. The, um, the word rest here means settling into a place, if you like. It means kind of making it yours. It's about enjoying the work of your hands.

That was the original purpose of the seventh day, that you rest on it to enjoy what you've done in the first six, just like God did. Makes the world and then enjoys what he's made on the seventh day. So it's restful, if you like, to make a place yours. That's in one sense what they're doing in the land. They're making a place theirs. That will look different for different ones of us, I'm sure.

But there's something restful about making whatever your home looks like, about making it yours. Of course, you move into a new place and it just doesn't quite feel restful until you've done

something to make it yours.

Now some of you, that will look like different things to different people. Helen and I tend to go to the extreme, if I'm honest. The, um, when we were trying to move here, there was a house that, we found this house, nice house, just about in our bracket that we could afford, relatively new, nicely done up, good portioned rooms.

[5:10] We're like, yeah, we could buy this. And then we went home. And it's sort of the feeling changed over a couple of days, essentially because Helen's like, but what would I do to it? Which might tell you more about my wife than anything else.

But there is also a thing there about, like, how could I make this mine? And so how can I rest there? It's actually a very biblical understanding of rest that you need to make a place yours.

So we bought a place that needs a little bit more work, less than, I mean, the last place we bought in Birmingham was just a pile of bricks. And then we basically got rid of everything. And started again. It's not quite that bad. But we had stuck a stud wall up within, I think, about the first week, which says something about us, yes, but it's our attempt to make a place ours so that we can rest in it.

And that's the idea of rest in the Bible, sort of settling into the place that you are and enjoying the work of your hands. And the Bible promises us rest.

As I said, in Genesis chapter 1, God rests from his work. So we might think, oh, we rest because we're limited, right? We rest because our bodies run out of energy. We cannot keep going on forever.

[6:22] God gave us sleep so that we remember that we're not God. Absolutely. But God rests. And God is not limited. God does not need to recoup his energy.

But God rests because he wants to enjoy the work of his hands. And then he gives us this kind of pattern to live and says, well, live like I have. And then we find when the story moves on just a touch into the garden, we have Adam and Eve, and they're given work to do.

They're told to garden, keep the garden, just like the priests were later told of the temple. But they're given this promise of rest, most likely on the seventh day, when they're told they can walk in the garden with God in the cool of the day.

And then, obviously, that all goes wrong fairly swiftly. As they try to take rather than receive. But then there's this story that starts to spin up in the Bible of where is rest coming from?

And the man who most next looks like Adam, the man who in the Bible you're most next thinking, oh, maybe it's going to be okay. It's a guy whose name means rest. Noah. And he does this thing with the ark and the flood and all that.

[7:39] But at the end, he then gets put after that in a garden. When he's grown himself a vineyard. And Adam was a man who made bread, but Noah is a man who grows grapevines and then makes wine for the first time.

Wine that the Bible tells us is given to gladden our hearts. It's a gift of rest. Okay, that goes wrong because his son Ham does some truly heinous things that we won't get into. But there's this sense of rest.

Rest is coming. Rest is coming. And then we, as the people go on and they start being given the law by Moses, they're given this command to Sabbath.

They're told, well, you must live as God did. You must one day in seven rest to enjoy the work of your hands. Which is good for them.

It's good for everyone else too. It produces a society that learns how to rest. But then it gets a bit deeper than that. As the story goes on slightly into Exodus 33 and everything's gone wrong.

[8:40] Moses brought down the law, but then he's made a golden bull to worship and it's all sort of gone backwards and he's destroyed that and made them drink the dust of it and all that.

And he's then standing with God and it's like God is saying, well, I'll go with you, but not the rest of the people. And Moses is like, well, I won't leave them. So God says, okay, I'll send an angel to go with you then.

And Moses says, no, Lord, we can't go. We cannot go on without your presence. And it's like you can sort of feel it in the text. It's like the Lord's smile lights his face and he looks at Moses and says, well then, my presence will go with you.

My face, literally, my face or presence will go with you and I will give you rest. That's the great promise that he gives them in Exodus 33. I will go with you and I will give you rest.

And what does that story tell us? It tells us that rest is found in the presence of God and that rest is deeply connected to worship. That the day for the worship of the Lord is the day of rest.

[9:47] That to rest is to be in God's presence. And then we'll fast forward the story massively. Let's get ourselves to Jesus. And he's dying on the cross.

He dies on a Friday. And then he rests on the Sabbath in the grave. I wonder if you've ever noticed that. That's why he rises on the Sunday, not the Saturday. He observes the day of rest.

And then rises to rest forevermore, almost in this eternal Sabbath that comes. It's why, in fact, why we take our day of rest on a Sunday, not on a Saturday.

But then he, through his work on the cross, offers us rest. He says in Matthew 11, Come to me, all who are labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, or you could translate that kind.

[10:57] My yoke is kind, and my burden is light. He offers us rest. In his presence, doing his work.

Rest. Rest is to be in his presence. Rest is worship. It's why when sometimes people say, Oh, I'm going to have a rest from church, you kind of want to cock your head and think, I wonder if you've really understood what rest is.

Rest is to be in God's presence. God's presence is found in his temple. His temple is made of the living stones of his church. Rest is found here. That's where we find rest.

Okay. All well and good, Tim, some of you are thinking, in the back of your heads. Lovely little biblical theology of rest, sure. But I'm exhausted. I'm working all hours, and I'm doom-scrolling the rest of them.

Yeah, I get it. And we live in this moment of extreme spiritual exhaustion. Jesus has more for us than that.

[12:06] But we do. We live in this exhaustion economy where we just all grind ourselves in every direction to try and make ends meet.

People are trapped in this two-income trap. There's not a lot you can do about it, but it's a real drain on any family with children. And we're told that you can do it all.

But you can't. There is wonderful liberation in limits, but that's not what culture says to us. You can do it all, and then you try, and then you break. You're just kind of ground and stretched.

Like, what's the thing that Bilbo says in Lord of the Rings? Like butter scraped over too much bread. Yeah, that's sort of like just thin. And we have this kind of lack of boundaries.

Like everything is in on us all the time that just makes it almost impossible to rest. Let me give you three examples. You will not know all of these in your life, but I suspect most of us will know at least one of them.

[13:11] So you almost always now can find out what's happening somewhere else in the world. Rolling news is happening all the time. You can put it on a TV channel, sure, but it's also on your phone.

Maybe you've got push notifications on, and your phone is just telling you all these awful things that are happening all around the world all the time. It leads to something that some social psychologists have called present shock.

Because everything is happening to you all at once that it puts you in a state of psychological shock. Because we're not made to know what's happening on the other side of the world.

And it's actually very difficult for us to cope with all the awful things that we can't do anything about that are affecting people we mostly don't know. But yet, it affects you. It puts you in a state of spiritual exhaustion and can't do very much about it.

Or maybe you work, but you also work from home, and you also work on your phone, such that your work reaches into every part of your life, and you can't really escape it.

[14:17] That will be true for many of you. It's like, it's on at work, and it's on at home, and you just, you don't really get the option to not be on, because then the email pings, and you're kind of expected to look at it, and you can't manage to get the boundary in place.

And again, it leads us to being exhausted, because you're just work, work, work, work. Work isn't going to be a good thing, though it's under a curse. Or you're scrolling your phone on Insta or TikTok or Snapchat, if you're of a generation that's younger than me.

But again, you're having stuff pushed to you all the time, telling you how you could do better, giving you an image of something that is much fancier than your life, telling you what the one thing is that

you need to do to make everything good and better again.

And it just is constant. It's absolutely constant, and so we end up being turned into these commodities. It's particularly affecting young, it's particularly affecting young women, if you read the stats, but there is an effect across the board for anyone who has one of these little black glass bricks of Babel in their pockets that are just sort of jamming themselves into our heads at all times.

But how do you live without one? It's possible, but it's quite hard. And we find ourselves with this real problem. Like, it's not your fault. It's kind of happened to you.

[15:43] And not all of those things will be, not all of those things will be something that's directly affecting your life, but maybe one of them is. And yet it leaves us just, where's rest?

We're just tired, worn thin. We've got ourselves a real problem. Not one that many of us have lots of levers about. To some extent, it is, how do we live in this world, rather than how do we change it for the majority of us?

But a couple of thoughts for you, for just little habits that might help you. Help me. Mark Sayers, some of you will know, an Australian pastor, says when he wants to pray, what he does is he takes his phone and he puts it on the other side of the house.

And then he goes to pray. My own experience would be, if I get up early to pray in the morning, great, if I pick up my phone, there ain't much praying happening. Immediately you're sucked into whatever the thing might be on it.

Like, it's designed to be addictive. It literally hacks your central nervous system. But if I want to pray, my phone needs to be somewhere else a lot of the time. So I have to learn and develop a habit that means it's like, oh, I'm going to set this time aside to pray, so I phone over there.

[16:59] I mean, sometimes you tend to throw it in the river. It's not particularly good for the river. But we need to think about this. You want to discipline a prayer in your life and you're thinking, why can't I pray?

Like, one of the reasons is this thing that's trying to make you not pray just wants to sell you stuff mostly. So put it aside. Or do things to it to make it possible.

Hack it, as it were. Get all the notifications off it. It'd be put in lots of deliberate habits. Sure. It's one of the reasons that I try and encourage people to bring a paper Bible with them on a Sunday because, okay, yeah, it's actually wonderful, the Bible app.

You can search it. You can't do that with a paper Bible. That's really useful. But at the same time, it's loaded on a distraction device that wants you to think about a hundred other things. And it actually requires quite a lot.

Some of you might be able to do it, but it requires an awful lot of discipline, more than I have, to be able to look at the Bible on your phone and not think about another thing. So these are really useful.

[18:03] Get your face in the Word. And my friend Andrew Wilson, some of you will know him, talks a lot about the discipline of happiness. And he would say that, well, I think someone said to him as a young man, find the thing that makes you happy, that makes you delighted, and turn that delight into a discipline.

As in, do it repeatedly. And I would say the same thing about rest. Find the thing that gives you rest, and turn it into a discipline. By which I mean, you plan it in.

You're just like, this thing gives me rest. Now I've been reflecting recently. For me, I'd say things like, oh, walking in the woods. And I reflect, it's like, when did you last do that, Tim? Like, build patterns into your life.

Now you do not have control over everything in your life, and so you are fighting an uphill battle, sure. But build patterns as much as you can. So what's the thing that gives your soul rest, that just makes you feel, oh, I'm with the Lord, and I'm peaceful.

What's that thing? Build a pattern of it. Build a discipline of it. Be deliberate about it. Put it in. How often can you do that, realistically?

[19:14] It won't be the same, you know, not everyone's going to do that thing every day. Sure. One of the things every week, okay. But make a discipline of it. What is it? It's good for you. Because rest is important for us.

We find rest in the presence of God among his people in worship. Yes. But we live in this society that wants to pull and pull and pull and pull at all of us. What does Joshua have to do with this?

Let me turn to Hebrews chapter 4. Let me read to you from verse 8. It says, sorry, I'm jumping right into the middle of an argument.

I'm not going to explain the whole thing. But he says, the writers of the Hebrews says, for if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.

So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works, as God did from his. What's he saying?

[20 : 21] Well, he's referring to those passages that I read in Joshua, where it says they had rest. And then he's going, great, but did they? As in, they did have rest. But God says there's another day coming for rest.

He teaches them a pattern of rest, which is supposed to point to a future reality of rest. And the writers of the Hebrews want to say, that rest that Joshua and his people received in the Holy Land was just a sign of the true rest that you can find in God.

there is this kind of eternal Sabbath rest. He says on the next sentence, let us strive to enter that rest.

Which sounds counterintuitive, doesn't it? Strive to enter that rest. Because there is a rest that is coming. There is a better rest that is offered.

Yes, we should, kind of, habits are good for us. And they might help our bodies and our minds and even our souls. But there is a better rest promised. Something that is coming in the age to come, but that we can taste now by God's Spirit.

[21 : 31] So what do we do? How do we respond? Well, we lament the state of the world and the system we live in and all the things you can't control. Yeah, that is a good thing to do in prayer.

Lament it. You can't change it. But also, yeah, healthy habits. That will help you. Be different things for different people, but find them. What are healthy habits that will help you rest?

And yes, to kind of kingdom change in the world, to rid us of this demonic system that we live in, sure. When you know what to do and you're able to put your arm to that, great.

But all of those things are good, Godly responses, lament, habits, kingdom work. But there is a fuller rest that is promised.

A rest in some ways that's found in longing for that day where total rest will come for our souls forever, but also one that you can taste in encounter with the Holy Spirit right now.

[22 : 28] After all, what does Jesus say that I read earlier on, Matthew chapter 11, come to me, all who are labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

Essentially, the inspiration of the song that we started with. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is kind and my burden is light.

Jesus is tender. For all the wisdom of habits and they are wise, the wisdom of discipline that is wise, Jesus' response to our inability to rest or like the tiredness of the exhaustion of our souls is not to say stop doing that and start doing this.

Though that is not a bad thing and the Bible does that on several occasions. Jesus' first response is to say come to me and I will give you rest. He wants to give us rest in an encounter with him.

Do you want that? Can you feel the weariness of your soul? Do you want rest right now? So what we are going to do is the band are going to come back and we are going to ask Jesus to give us rest in the expectation that we can encounter him directly by his spirit and he can give us a taste of the age to come and something of rest for our souls.

[24 : 09] We still got to go and live in the world that is exhausting us at all corners. It's still a good idea to put in place habits and wisdom and they'll help to an extent.

Don't want to over promise that. But he can give us a taste of rest for our souls. A taste of rest in the age to come. A taste of peace from all the roiling stuff that you find inside yourself.

He wants to offer us rest. Why don't we stand together if you're able? Perhaps it might help you to close your eyes.

It might help you to open your hands like this. You can't see me because you've just closed your eyes. I'm just going to pray and ask him to come and encounter us. We'll sing a song in a moment but just with the expectation that Jesus is going to come he's going to encounter and he will give us some taste of what rest for our souls looks like feels like.

Lord Jesus we come to you weary people for many different reasons living in a weary age but we believe you when you say come to me you weary and I will give you rest.

[25 : 39] We want to take you at your word and we believe that we receive that as we trust you weariness from the sin that we would hold but we also believe Lord that there is a rest for our souls a rest from our exhaustion in your presence.

So we ask that you'd come to us right now by your presence by your Holy Spirit gift us rest please oh God Harvest Church receive the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus right now with deep and abiding peace that surpasses all understanding and know that God is for you Lord would you would you just apply that to our hearts thank you Jesus thank you Jesus and Lord we ask for more we don't believe that you are stingy in what you give should we ask for more we ask that you would increase your presence with us right now thank you Jesus thank you Jesus thank you Jesus friends we're going to sing a song but that's not the end of this you don't have to sing along if you don't want to if you're kind of resting in the presence of Jesus and then we're expecting that we're going to keep responding to this

[illegible]