

Weekly Devotional 5.13.2024

God's Promises

God Will Give You Rest

“He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake.” *Psalms 23:2-3*

“The way to a more productive, more inspired, more joyful life is getting enough sleep.” The Huffington Post co-founder Arianna Huffington shared this insight about the importance of rest. Huffington believes: “By helping us keep the world in perspective, sleep gives us a chance to refocus on the essence of who we are. And in that place of connection, it is easier for the fears and concerns of the world to drop away.” Rest is natural and helps our mental health, increases our memory and concentration, and supports a healthy immune system. There is perhaps no better feeling after a long day than to climb into bed and rest. We all have sleep aids that help us get a better night’s rest. While some might use cooling pillows and a higher thread-count sheet, others might use an essential oil diffuser or a warm sleep mask. We understand the importance of rest and will spend money to purchase products that help us get a more wholesome night’s rest. The sleep aid market was worth \$512 billion in 2022 and is projected to be worth \$950 billion by 2032. As humans, rest is essential to our quality of life, and we strive to make our rest as productive as possible. Rest is a natural part of life and a reflection of our creator. The Lord rested on the seventh day after creating the heavens and the earth and filling them. As his image bearers, he also calls us to rest. In Jesus, we have physical rest, spiritual rest, and the hope of eternal rest, where we will be with Jesus forever.

Rest is an important theme throughout the Bible. We first find God creating and resting (Gen. 2:3). God then established the Sabbath and called his people to rest on the Seventh day (Ex. 20:8-11). There is a pattern of work and rest, and on this day of rest, it is a reminder to find our rest in the Lord. Though we toil in our work, it is the Lord who sustains us and provides for us. At Sinai, the Lord promised Moses and the people that he would give them rest (Ex. 33:14). Jesus refers back to this important promise and promises rest for all who come to him: “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:28-29). Jesus is inviting us to come to him to find rest, to be our teacher, and to ease our burdens. When we think about David using shepherd and sheep imagery, it is helpful to know when sheep rest. Sheep lie down and rest when they feel both safe and satisfied. They will not lie down and rest if they have not eaten or feel threatened. Imagine the sheep trusting their shepherd to leave green pastures, only to encounter barren land and predators. The sheep think, “This land is rocky, there’s no water, the path is longer than I thought.” Sound familiar? In the same way, we do not rest well when our needs have not been met. Think about those restless nights when you tossed and turned because of hunger or a big life change that had you worried. When we are not satisfied and secure, we do not rest well. Does it feel like you were in green pastures, and now you are only on rocky terrain and unsure of the path? Jesus doesn’t make mistakes or take us down wrong paths. We might not know where Jesus is leading us, but we can trust that the Good Shepherd is leading us to a better place despite the path taken to get there. Jesus gives us physical and spiritual rest. We can trust in his plans and know they are for our good. Rest is not merely the absence of work but relying on Jesus for our physical and spiritual needs and knowing that the Good Shepherd provides for his sheep. True rest is found when we rest in Jesus and trust his promises.