

12. COME ASIDE AND REST

What are you chasing that is causing this unrest in you?



#NCSAMENTALHEALTHDEVOTIONS

COME ASIDE AND REST

Matthew 11:28, 29: "Come unto Me all who are weak and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me because I am gentle and humble in spirit and you will find rest."

What exactly is rest? There are various ways in which we can find rest. Sometimes we need *physical* rest from physical fatigue where the body has literally become tired due to overwork. We also have something called *mental* fatigue where the mind is overtaxed from being busy with things and thinking too much. We also sometimes experience *emotional* fatigue where we feel emotionally drained due to the circumstances of things and the way they make us feel. We do experience social fatigue as well. This usually happens when we have been drained from being too social. Some people do not enjoy being around other people too much and when people are all around them, it can cause *social* fatigue. We also get something called *spiritual* fatigue where we feel spiritually tired. This could be due to confusion, disappointment or a crisis in our faith.

When we think about rest, we often just think about feeling tired. We need to start identifying exactly what our source of fatigue is. Why is it that we are not finding the rest? Is it because our physical body is overworked, or us not having a balanced lifestyle? Is it because we are constantly finding ourselves thinking negative thoughts? Is it perhaps because our emotions are running wild and we have poor emotional regulation? Perhaps we find ourselves not taking quiet time for ourselves because we are constantly around people?

**SOME DAYS YOU WILL NEED
PHYSICAL REST FROM PHYSICAL
FATIGUE WHERE YOUR BODY
LITERALLY BECOMES TIRED DUE TO
OVERWORK.**

The confusion and disappointment associated with spiritual fatigue are often because we do not find ourselves busy with the Word of God. Clarity comes when we read the Word and therefore understand life better. We then feel less fatigued and less anxious. So, clearly there is a need to rest. Usually the reason why we do not find rest is because there has been an overload. When we have experienced too much of something too quickly, we become fatigued and we struggle to really have rest. Thus, the body, the mind and the emotions have been overtaxed with too much, too quickly.

The world has drastically changed in the last 150 years. Everything is built on the principle of **too much, too quickly**. The world around us is fast-paced, it is instant and quickly. This truly is the information age where anything you want to know is at your fingertips. Variety is fully accessible. Choices are numerous. Things are very instant: instant coffee, instant mash, take-aways, fast foods. Life has lost its simplicity and its true quality because of this rat race, this rush to get somewhere. Most people are rushing, but they do not even know what they are rushing to or why they are rushing. What are you chasing, or rather, what is chasing you? You might not be chasing something, but something might be pushing you. You did not ask for this push. You did not sign up for it, yet you are running. What are you running from or what are you running towards?

Proverbs 28:1 says: *"The wicked run when no one is chasing them."* What is chasing you and making you feel that you have to live this fast-paced life? Is it just a habit? Is it just because you now have become used to this rat race? If this is the case, you need to learn to slow down.

**MENTAL FATIGUE HAPPENS WHEN
THE MIND IS OVERTAXED FROM
BEING BUSY WITH TOO MANY
THINGS AND THINKING TOO
MUCH.**

King Solomon learnt about this rat race. The whole book of Ecclesiastes is dedicated to warn people about chasing after things. He calls it a chasing after wind. He says it all is really pointless, it is useless. He says he had experienced everything. He tried everything and yet, at the end of his life he came to feel very anxious. He felt very sad because everything that he tried did not bring him the happiness he desired. Ecclesiastes 1:3 is one of the verses where he says: *"What do people get from hard work? It is a chasing after wind."* Ecclesiastes 4:16 says: *"What is the point of becoming King?"* What is the point of gaining the power of being king? He says for him it was a chasing after wind. I wonder whether you are perhaps chasing after power, to have some prestigious position within the church, within your company? At the end of the day you need to ask yourself the question: *"Is this a chasing after wind?"* Will you truly gain happiness and contentment from this? Will you gain peace from all of these things that you are pursuing and doing in your life?

What we all need is rest. The Bible says: *"Come unto Me and I will give you rest."* We have this emptiness inside of us. We have this longing inside us to find this rest, but we often try to get this rest by doing things and by having things. Solomon is saying in the book of Ecclesiastes that all of these things do not bring that peace. It does not bring contentment. Ecclesiastes 1:14 says: *"I have seen everything done in the world, and I tell you, it is all useless. It is like chasing the wind."* In Ecclesiastes 6:9 he also says: *"It is useless, it is like chasing the wind."* Then comes his answer to this search for satisfaction: *"It is better to be satisfied with what you have than to be always wanting something else."*

**EMOTIONAL FATIGUE IS WHEN
YOU FEEL EMOTIONALLY DRAINED
DUE TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF
THINGS AND THE WAY THEY MAKE
YOU FEEL.**

Isn't that interesting? He is basically saying that we need to learn to find peace and contentment in what God has already given us. Stop chasing something bigger, something on the other side of the hill. Stop telling yourself, "If I just reach that, then I will be happy!" Solomon warns us that there is no satisfaction in these things.

What exactly are we chasing? What is the cause of all this unrest? We as humans want to experience happiness, we want to experience rest and peace. There is this emptiness inside us that we are trying to fill, an emptiness we are trying to make go away. In the end, when we tried to fill it with all the things the book of Ecclesiastes talks about, we end up feeling more exhausted. We end up feeling more tired and less satisfied. If only we will be satisfied with experiencing and cherishing the things we already have!

In chapter 2 of Ecclesiastes verses 1-10, Solomon talks about all the things he tried. He mentions laughter, wine, buying homes, planting vineyards, having gardens and parks and fruit trees. He says he built reservoirs, he had many slaves and herds and flocks and gold and silver, treasures and singers and concubines. He had everything a man's heart could desire. He denied himself no pleasure. In verse 11 he says: "*There is nothing really worthwhile anywhere.*" So he came to the conclusion that after trying all these things, trying to find peace and happiness and contentment in all these things, he really couldn't find peace.

I am reminded of a time when I attended a seminar by Neil Nedley on depression and anxiety.

SOCIAL FATIGUE HAPPENS WHEN YOU HAVE BEEN DRAINED FROM BEING TOO SOCIAL. SOME PEOPLE DO NOT ENJOY BEING AROUND OTHER PEOPLE TOO MUCH AND WHEN PEOPLE ARE ALL AROUND THEM, IT CAN CAUSE SOCIAL FATIGUE.

He asked whether we've noticed that there are far more cases of depression and anxiety in the world today than there were in the past? He also said he discovered that with the rise of technology, with the rise of entertainment, with the rise of things to keep our minds occupied, so also has depression become more intense. The rest and the calmness and the peace that we should enjoy went out the window. He further said he believes with the rise of all these things, there are so many things that should make us happy, but our levels of happiness have actually gone down.

Can we find satisfaction in all these things? Solomon says it all is useless. What are we chasing? He denied himself nothing. He only lost sleep. There is nothing really worthwhile anymore. In Ecclesiastes 2:17 he says: *"I came to hate my life."* He asks in verse 22: *"So what do people get from all their hard work in life and all the anxiety? Their days are labelled and filled with pain and grief and even at night their minds cannot rest."* Solomon is making the tie between the two when he is saying that in order for us to have rest, holistic rest, we need to learn to focus on what is important. He is saying that with all of this chasing, our bodies lack rest, our minds lack rest and with all the anxiety, even at night our minds and our emotions cannot rest.

I remember when I was in high school, I worked for a company called East Coast Imports, where my brother used to work full-time. It was a sales company and they used to sell various items, like the Verimark items. They used to go from company to company, door to door and pitching people to buy the products. They would sell to individuals, to companies or whoever would buy their items.

**SPIRITUAL FATIGUE IS WHEN YOU
FEEL SPIRITUALLY TIRED. THIS
COULD BE DUE TO CONFUSION,
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I remember the boss at this company used to pep talk the employees in the morning, saying: "If you see more people, it means more sales and that means more money in your pocket." They used to drill the little sales pitches into our heads every morning and also every evening when we came back after the sales. The whole day, as we were doing the sales, was filled with these speeches over and over again until it rang in our ears.

The whole goal of all of that was to earn money. I remember at night I would not be able to switch off my mind. The sales pitches would keep ringing in my ears. When I closed my eyes, I would think about it. I would imagine being somewhere doing a sales pitch and I even started dreaming about the things I would be doing during the day. My life became a matter of chasing after money, chasing after wind. I knew that the quicker I would go, the more money I would get and the quicker I would reach my goal because I wanted to purchase myself a guitar. Not a bad goal, but I chased after this and I pushed myself and I became part of this rat race. At the end of the holiday, I did reach my target, but I was exhausted, physically, emotionally and even spiritually. You might ask: "Why?"

I felt dirty at the end of that holiday. I felt that I've been used by the company. Not only being used by the company to make their profit and to make their sales targets, but I was using other people as well, because some people were gullible as to the products and we did not always tell them the complete truth about it. We were there just to make money, to acquire our own selfish needs. What I thought would bring me happiness, only ended up bringing me unrest.

**WITH THE RISE OF TECHNOLOGY
AND ENTERTAINMENT SO ALSO
CAME THE RISE OF DEPRESSION
AND MORE MENTAL ILLNESS.**

My body was tired at the end of the day from carrying the big bags around everywhere, walking for miles and miles and hours and hours on end, not taking proper time to eat because time was money. My mind was so unrested because I was only focused on this one thing: to get the sales, to make the pitch. My emotions were also haywire because I felt guilty, because I would pitch people things that they did not need and I would try and sell them this product even though I knew that this person didn't have money and they really didn't need this product. For me, it was just a thing you did in order to close the sale, to get the money.

We need to learn to be careful of chasing happiness and rest only to end up being unhappy and filled with anxiety. Are the things we are doing truly giving us rest? Rest is not just sleeping. Oftentimes when we think of rest, we think about sitting around and doing nothing. Rest can also come from activity. Proper activity and proper work can give us rest if we live a balanced lifestyle.

This lockdown can be a time for you to re-evaluate your life and to ask yourself: "Are the things that I am chasing and the time that I am spending on certain things, truly bringing me rest? Is it giving me peace? Is it giving me contentment and happiness?" You can either use this time to rest and to re-evaluate, or you can continue in the rat race. Now that you are working from home, you might be out of routine and you might even use this time to catch up on your work. So much so that you might even be doing more than what you did before, making the rat race even worse. You might be on this fast-paced, instant gravy train, trying to satisfy yourself like the rest of the world.

**REST IS NOT JUST SLEEPING. REST
CAN ALSO COME FROM ACTIVITY.
PROPER ACTIVITY AND PROPER
WORK CAN GIVE US REST IF WE
LIVE A BALANCED LIFESTYLE.**

You need to re-evaluate. You need to really stop. Stop and ask yourself if this is really worth it? Is it worth your emotional and spiritual and physical and mental agony?

When last have you stopped to smell the roses. I am sure you've heard the saying. I am not literally talking about roses, although that also has health benefits. (If you do have roses to smell, please do smell them.) To stop and smell the roses just means to slow down and enjoy the small things in life. Do not rush past those things which are already in your life and that can give you satisfaction, towards some bigger goal at the end of the rainbow.

We really stopped living the way we should. We don't do small things anymore the way we used to when we were younger, before this age of instant satisfaction came along. We used to write letters (love notes?) to one another. We used to take the time to show people that we care. Now everything is instant. We do e-mails, we do text messages. Sometimes we don't even do text messages anymore because that is too slow. We sent voice messages while we are driving. We don't do home cooked meals anymore, we do take-aways. COVID-19 may have helped us to re-evaluate this part because right now there are no take-away shops open and we are forced to do home cooked meals. If it isn't in your ability to do a proper meal, take the time to learn how to do a proper meal and enjoy it. Enjoy the art of cooking, enjoy eating that meal with your family, sitting at a table. Do not sit in front of the television and gulp it down, chew your food, enjoy it.

**TO STOP AND SMELL THE ROSES
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- Take time to slow the pace. Take time to smell the roses. Enjoy life like Solomon said, the life which God has given you here upon this earth.
- Listen to slower music, get up earlier so you are not rushed.
- Take time to read a book instead of watching television.
- Take time to be outdoors and in the sun, something which you were never able to do when you were at work. Sometimes we go to work in the dark and we come home in the dark. Choose between being outdoors versus indoors.
- Take time to be with your family and enjoy their company versus always rushing past them.
- Take time to be in God's Word instead of just reading a short paragraph or a short devotional in the morning.
- Take time to pray and lay your heart before God.

When the lockdown is over:

- Drive slower; don't be rushed because there is traffic, wake up earlier.
- Switch off the car radio. Choose music that uplifts your spirit instead of music making you feel anxious.
- Choose the good things in life.

Even Jesus took time to be quiet, to have rest. His rest started early in the morning with God. The Bible says that He got up early in the morning while it was still dark, and He would go and spend time with His Father, to lay His plans bare before His Father. He also enjoyed the little things in life. He walked in the cornfields on the Sabbath, spending time in nature. He would pick the grains and eat them and enjoy that which was available to Him.

**EVEN JESUS TOOK TIME TO BE QUIET,
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He took time to be with family and friends. He went to weddings, to feasts. He ate at Zaccheus' home. He stopped and He looked at the lilies of the field and he drew other people's attention to it when He said: *"Look at the lilies of the field, look at the grass."* He went out on boat rides where he spent time in nature and on the water. He even took time to prepare a breakfast for His disciples. The Bible tells us that after His resurrection, He was out on the Sea of Galilee and thereafter He made a grilled fish and some bread for them. They sat by the fire and they ate and they spoke, they socialised.

Jesus took time to live a balanced life, a life that was not rushed, a chasing after wind. If you do not stop, you will be causing a lot of anxiety and unrest in your own life. Do not be pushed by the fast changing times and the rat race of this world. Do not allow something that you did not ask for, to chase you. You have the power to choose.

This world has changed drastically in the last 150 years which is a sign of the last days. A chasing after pleasure, a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God. That is what really causes anxiety and unrest inside of us. The older generation understood this very well. The previous generations, our grandfathers and grandmothers and those who came before them, understood how to live life, how to enjoy the small things of life, without rushing.

My husband is reading a book right now about the war in South Africa that took place in the 1900s. I think it was the English that came to South Africa and they fought with the inhabitants of the land in order to make it their colony. The story he is reading is specifically about the war against the inhabitants and the Boers (the whites).

**JESUS TOOK TIME TO LIVE A
BALANCED LIFE, NOT RUSHED OR
CHASING AFTER WIND. IF WE ARE NOT
CAREFUL, WE WILL CAUSE A LOT OF
ANXIETY AND UNREST IN OUR LIVES.**

One of the rivals went with the Boers while they were busy fighting and he documented how they conducted themselves during this time of war that should have been a very anxious time for them. He noted that while they were fighting this war, the Boers would always stop for lunch and supper. Religiously at 11 o'clock they would stop for lunch. They would stop ceasefire and they would enjoy their lunch. Then at 5 o'clock in the evening, they would stop for supper. At 1 o'clock they would always stop for tea time. He said the interesting thing he noted about them, was that they would not rush back to fight. Sometimes the fighting will only resume at 4 o'clock. They were not rushed. They were not pushed by the circumstances that surrounded them. They still tried to live life as normally as possible.

He also noted that on Sabbath (for them it was Sunday), they would not fight at all, even though the enemy's army would not stop advancing. The enemy's army would still be digging trenches, trying to outscheme and outwit them, while the Boers would take some time and move away from the gunfire, away from the sounds of the cannons that the enemy was firing upon them. They would move to a quiet place where they would sit with their pastor they brought along with them. He then would preach to them the Word of God. They would take time off on the day of rest to recuperate. The man noted that during this time they would sing religious hymns, they would contemplate the Word of God and they would not stop until it was sunset.

We on the other hand, have become so overtaxed because we have neglected the principles of the Bible. Even though our ancestors were in a time of much anxiety, they knew they needed to spend time in the Word of God.

PERHAPS WE ARE OVERTAXED BECAUSE WE HAVE NEGLECTED THE PRINCIPLES OF THE BIBLE. THE BOERS DURING MUCH TIME OF ANXIETY, KNEW THEY NEEDED TO SPEND TIME IN THE WORD OF GOD.

They knew they had to take time to appreciate the simple things in life, to enjoy a small cup of tea and to eat the bread that was baked for them by their wives, As we are in this time of anxiety, we also need to keep doing these things, to find the rest in the simple things of life.

We have become so overtaxed because we neglect the principles of the Bible. Exodus 20:9-11 says: *"You have six days in which to do your work, but the seventh day is the day of rest, dedicated to God. On that day no one is to work - not you, not your children, your slaves, your animals, nor the foreigners that live in your country. In six days I, the Lord, made the earth, the sky, the seas, and everything in them, but on the seventh day I rested."* Very interesting that our forefathers took this time of rest.

There is the song we always used to sing: *"Give me that old time religion, give me that old time religion, it is good enough for me."* We need to go back to the old ways of life. I do not say the ways that did not work. I am talking about slowing down and really enjoying life.

Another interesting thing about the story my husband is busy reading is where it says that if the battle went on long, the soldiers in the army were not forced to stay at the battle. If they wished to go home to their wives and to their children, they could do so. Because they had this freedom to do what they wanted, many of them would return later, refreshed. They would return to fight the battle, rejuvenated, because they saw their families.

This underlines a very important principle in life that we should take time to be with our family because it does refresh and recuperate us to continue the fight of life.

**DURING TIMES OF ANXIETY MAKE SURE
TO APPRECIATE THE SIMPLE THINGS IN
LIFE, ENJOY A SMALL CUP OF TEA
EATING SOME BAKED BREAD
AND SPENDING TIME WITH THE ONES
YOU LOVE.**

In order for us to have true rest and happiness, a type of contentment, we need to be grateful for what God has given us. Enjoy the little things like family, time, food, singing, praying, nature, sleep.

Ecclesiastes says: "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth. Enjoy every minute of life, enjoy life with the wife that God gave you, enjoy eating and drinking (it does not refer to alcohol), enjoy the labour of your hand. You have worked hard for it, so don't rush past it all towards some greater goal." So, do not push past the results your work gave you, towards some greater goal. If you have worked today and you've gained money and tonight you can buy your food, enjoy that what your labour has given you. Take the time and rest and be happy with what God has given you.

We always say 'someday'. If only I had this thing or I did that thing, then I will be happy. But we only have today. We need to learn to stop and smell the roses right now. If you only have a bowl of 2-minute noodles to eat today, then enjoy your bowl of 2-minute noodles because you might not have tomorrow. And if you have tomorrow, you might not even have that bowl of 2-minute noodles to eat. Thank God for each day you have.

If we look at the Hollywood stars and the documentaries they sometimes make about their own lives, many of them confess that even though they have everything in life that should give them satisfaction, even though they have tried everything like Solomon, they're still not happy. They are anxious. They are depressed.

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We need to take time for the things in life that will bring us true happiness. God is at the top of this list and then everything else our labour gives us. Unfortunately we tell ourselves we do not have time for those things, but we can learn from Jesus and how He made time. The Bible says He woke up early in the morning while it was still dark. He did not allow the day to catch up on Him, He caught up on the day. He started His day before the day even started, so He had many hours in order to accomplish that which He had planned. He also laid His plans before God. This is important. When we lay our plans before somebody, maybe we can start evaluating whether everything we plan on doing, is really worth doing. Is it really achieving our happiness?

In Psalms 31:14-15 David writes: *"My time is in Your hands, o God."* Psalms 37:7 says: *"Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him."* We are always rushing. I don't say we should not work or that we should be lazy. Laziness is not rest. As a matter of fact, laziness will cause more anxiety and unrest within us. Rest is to be found in useful activities.

Proverbs 6:6-10 says we should go and learn from the ant. Lazy people should learn a lesson from the ways of the ant. They have no leader, chief or ruler, but they store up food during the summer. They get ready for the winter. Ants work when it is time to work and they sleep when it is time to sleep (in winter they rest completely, they hibernate, they don't come out). An interesting thing about ants is that you never see them running. Have you ever seen an ant running? I haven't. They are always walking at the same pace. They are not chased by anything and they are also not chasing anything either. They work at a steady pace to get their work completed and they enjoy the fruits of their labour.

**WORK AT A STEADY PACE TO GET
THEIR WORK COMPLETED AND
THEY ENJOY THE FRUITS OF THEIR
LABOUR.**

Let us re-evaluate our lives today. We have some time during this lockdown to do it. Yes, people have said that our lives won't be the same after COVID-19. And maybe, it shouldn't be. If you have been emotionally and spiritually and physically drained, take some time off today, just today. Do not think about tomorrow or the weeks to come. Slow the pace today and enjoy the things you have. Stop chasing. Keep working, but enjoy the fruits of your labour. Allow yourself time to rest.

See that you rest during the day, but also take time at the end of the week, on the Sabbath, to rest as the Bible recommends. God says in Matthew 11:28: *“Come unto me all you who are weak and heavy laden (those who are tired), and I will give you rest.”*

**SLOW THE PACE TODAY AND
ENJOY THE THINGS YOU HAVE.
STOP CHASING. KEEP WORKING,
BUT ENJOY THE FRUITS OF YOUR
LABOUR. ALLOW YOURSELF TIME
TO REST.**

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