

FAITH @ HOME

Way of Love

Week 8: Rest

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Genesis 2:2-3

REFLECT: Many times when we think of “rest,” we think of sleeping. Sleeping is a great way to rest! Sleep helps your body grow and be ready for the next great activity. Even Jesus took naps! But “rest” can also mean doing something that brings you joy. When you do something that bring your joy, your body is more relaxed, your brain is more ready to learn and your heart feels happier. It’s important to think about what brings you joy. Maybe it’s creating an art project, or digging in the dirt or playing soccer. Doing what brings us joy regularly helps prepare us for when we need to deal with hard things.

RESPOND: Talk about what brings you joy, both as individuals and as a family. Do those things! And perhaps try some of these as well: play board game; try a new ice cream store; feed the ducks peas or grapes at the park; have a dance party; make a collage using things your find in your yard.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: HANNAH GRAHAM



For nearly 15 years, Hannah has served Episcopal parish communities in a variety of Christian Formation roles. As a gifted Godly Play storyteller and youth mentor, Hannah utilizes her knowledge of child and adolescent faith development not only in the classroom, but also in executing big picture planning to enhance the shaping of Christian community. Hannah has led the Education for Ministry Program as a trained mentor for 4 years, and regularly contributes to Diocesan events, camps, retreats, and committee work. She is recognized for her innovated use of social media to integrate liturgical seasons, parish programs, music, faith at home activities and outreach. In addition to the spiritual formation of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Glenwood, Maryland, Hannah devotes herself to growing in faith as a beloved child of God, wife and mother of three boys, ages 10 months-5 years old.

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Matthew 11:28-30

REFLECT: It's no secret that we live in a time where it's easy to not get enough rest. Many people are always busy doing something, and it's easy to get caught up in all the things we have to do every day. Whether it's adults getting wrapped up in a work project, kids working on homework or practice for an after-school activity, families trying to find time to spend together, or even families balancing multiple households, it's easy to get busy. It's easy to worry about the things that make us nervous, uncertain, or scared. We can sometimes numb those fears by instead turning to our electronics—video games, tablets, phones, or whatever else—to distract us. There's always something to do or something to distract us.

Jesus calls us to come and rest. He invites us all to bring all that burdens us—those things that wear us down and are not life-giving. We are welcomed in to sit and be, to take our load off for a moment and be present with God. An invitation to unplug from all the noise, all the distractions, all the demands on our time may sound wonderful, or it may sound weird or difficult. Either way, we as Christ-followers are called to take time to rest our bodies and minds to be renewed. When we practice self-care and allow God to nurture our spirits, we find we can then return with more energy and a renewed sense of direction. Our problems or challenges won't magically disappear, but when we remember that we don't go it alone because God is with us, it's easier to keep moving forward.

RESPOND: Every day this week, spend at least five minutes doing nothing. Find a quiet place where you feel comfortable and just sit. As you go through the week, see you can put down your distractions longer each day. Invite a friend or family member to do this with you and rest together. Write down each day how this makes you feel. What do you notice around you? Where is God present in the quiet?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: ERIN WOLF



Erin Wolf is a Youth Minister hailing from Little Chute, WI where she lives with her four kids. She serves both All Saints Episcopal in Appleton and the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac. Her ministry focuses include children & youth, camp & retreats, music, service work, interactive prayer for all ages, and more. You can connect with her via email at ewolf@diofdl.org.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Psalm 23

REFLECT: This week we are looking at the spiritual practice of rest. Whenever I run into someone I haven't seen in a bit, I give them a hug and ask, "How have you been?" Eight out of ten times folks say, "I'm tired/exhausted/busy." We are a people who are over scheduled, overbooked, and stretched too thin.

I love the New Revised Standard Version of Psalm 23 in part because of verse two, "He makes me lie down in green pastures." Often for me to take time and to rest, I have to be made to rest. Which happens most often when I am sick, where being sick ties me to my bed and allows me to truly slow down enough to sleep and move more slowly. This is not a great example of resting.

God gives a far better example in the pattern that is set up between labor and rest in Genesis, to take time to rest from all the work that had been done. So we must make that pattern with God, and allow ourselves to trust in God that we will be lead to water, that we will be restored, that we will be lead in right paths. That these things will be done for us if we create that space where rest can come.

RESPOND: My favorite place where I feel restored and rested is on the beach or along the waters of the Guadalupe River. Water is a very restful place for me to sit and close my eyes and listen to it brushing against the sand or against the river banks and rocks. Share with each other about the places you feel rested and restored.

In the times I need rest I often cannot make the time to drive to those places, so I will make time to have a footbath in warm water and find the noise of a river or beach on YouTube. If you cannot go to your place you feel rested right this moment, how can you bring that place into your home? Think about incorporating as many senses as you can.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: MEREDITH ROGERS



Meredith serves as the Director of Youth Ministries at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in San Antonio, Texas. She is a strong advocate of mental health in ministry and the benefits youth can gain from a summer camping or retreat program. While she feels incredibly underqualified to be a writer on behalf of Forma & Faith @ Home, Meredith trusts that her voice might be one that you need to hear and knows your voice is one that the world needs to hear.

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11

REFLECT: God created the heavens and earth in six days, and on the seventh day, God rested. Then, when God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, one of them was to rest on the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Resting on the Sabbath, the way God did, sounds like a reasonable request. But this is the commandment that we consistently break – and some of us break it somewhat proudly. We get caught up in the culture of busyness in our culture. Resting is often viewed as necessary and a sign of weakness. Our expectations of the workday and workweek encroach on our family and leisure time to where we don't feel we deserve to rest.

Here's the good news: God commands us to rest! God doesn't say take a nap or watch TV for a few hours. God wants us to enter into a restorative rest, complete with prayer, meditation, quiet, and quality time with loved ones. In other words, do things that bring us closer to God. Maybe watching TV will restore your soul. My guess is that reducing viewing time and increasing prayer time might do a better job of soul healing.

If you're anything at all like me, you might think: Ok, God, I get it. I can always use more time in prayer. But I've been waiting to binge-watch _____/read _____/hang out with _____ all week. If I add more spiritual practices to my Sabbath, when will I get the laundry done? Sorry, God, I have to switch a load so I can meet Gina for dinner. God doesn't offer an opportunity to negotiate on these commandments; they're pretty clear. The rest that we practice now – true, restorative, Sabbath rest – prepares us for the rest to come. If we truly want a future in the kingdom, we need to live like we're striving to get there.

Do this for yourself and do it for God. Rest on the Sabbath.

RESPOND: If you struggle to rest on the Sabbath, start this week with one hour of rest. Leave your phone out of your rest unless you use it for meditation or prayer. If you already honor the Sabbath, invite a loved one to enter this practice and share with them what works for you.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: MIRIAM MCKENNEY



Miriam is a child of God who finds extreme joy parenting her three girls: Nia, Kaia, and Jaiya. She met her husband, David, at the Union of Black Episcopalians conference in 1981. Miriam works as Forward Movement's Development Director, and writes for their family blog, Grow Christians. She was a children's librarian and school media specialist for 20 years before joining Forward Movement's staff. She has recently discovered a love of outdoor fitness in extreme temperatures, as there is no bad weather, just incorrect clothing choices.

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