8 Simple Rhythms To Replenish Your Life OVERCOME WEARINESS WITH THESE SOUL-RENEWING TOOLS



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OVERCOME WEARINESS WITH THESE SOUL-RENEWING TOOLS

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Somewhere along the way I bought into the idea that exhaustion is normal, to be expected, even admired in high achievers. It was a weird sort of badge of honor for me. Whenever I (David) felt tired, my mind would push my body further by saving "you know you can do more than this".

I've now come to see I had an arrogance of capacity.

I wanted to lead and serve others well, beginning with my family and extending to thousands I pastored in our church at that time. And I had this dream to accomplish great things for God. I thought it was a noble thing to regularly feel weary for God's cause.

For a long time I was convinced I could handle just about anything. But part of me was asleep.

Over time, between the me I wanted to be and the person I believed others wanted me to be, it all became too much.

I couldn't sustain the grinding pace over multiple decades and it caved in my life on multiple fronts. I lost my home, income, friends, church, reputation, and almost my life and marriage. Because I couldn't wake up to the drain of my pace, my life did it for me.

Trust me. You don't want that kind of wake up call.

As a young leader, husband and father I felt guilty whenever I rested or relaxed. The greatest compliment I could receive was from someone who saw how hard I was working. I never wanted people to think I was lazy.

Many years later, I saw the value and felt the joy of slowing my pace down at the end of each week

and several extended times each year. I got good at both rest and recreation. But I still didn't want people to know when I was on holiday lest they think I was shirking my responsibilities.

Over the last 5-7 years Caron and I have found a different gear. We've found a healthy rhythm between rest and work. We've even found ourselves bragging more about our rest than our accomplishments. We want to pass on to you some simple rhythms, practices and mindsets that have made a transformative difference for us. But first- a question:

How many times have you said to yourself

I don't know how much longer I can go on like this? How often has the load you're carrying felt like it was about to collapse some part of your life? And how often have you just trudged on anyway hoping for divine intervention?

It's just possible the thought that you're feeling fried is divine intervention.

If you've been telling yourself things like:

My life will get better soon.

If I slow down everyone else will get ahead of me.

This is just an extra busy season.

If I work hard then I can play hard.

We've thought this, too. It was an illusion. Life never slows down until we do.

If you're feeling stressed, stale, sluggish or stuck we've put together some of the things we do each week to feel more restored and refreshed.

But first, let's take a second to assess where you are right now...

Answer "Yes" or "No" to the following statements
I often feel there's not enough time to get things done. YES NO
I have a greater capacity than most people around me. YES NO
It often feels like everyone is relying on me. YES NO
I want people to know how hard I work. YES NO
I often feel worn out or tired. YES NO
It's not important how I feel. Feelings get in the way of finishing. YES NO
Texting and emailing after work is normal for me. YES NO
I secretly think poorly of others who need time off. YES NO
It's challenging to sit still or alone with nothing to do for more than a few minutes. YES NO
I feel guilty when I take time off. YES NO
I put more time & energy into my work than my relationships or hobbies. YES NO
I feel better when I'm in control of most situations.
I get annoyed when I'm interrupted. YES NO
My mind is mostly on future projects. YES NO
I am often impatient when projects or people don't move fast enough. YES NO
If you answer <u>yes</u> to any of the above statements you are on some important level, feeling the need for relief.

Here's the compelling invitation Jesus offers us everyday:

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly." Matthew 11:28-30 Msg

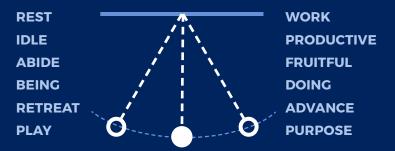
If Jesus is saying "I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you," we have to ask ourselves —where is our stress really coming from?

THE PACING PENDULUM

There's a gentle ease to the rhythms of creation and the pendulum below portrays these rhythms in a simple diagram.

To which side do you most often find yourself? Both sides work in tandem with each other to bring fulfillment as well as fruitfulness. If you identify more with one side, creating some rhythms that regularly move you back in the other direction are key to replenishing your life.

Most of us tend to live into the right side of the pendulum and we need help unlocking those "unforced rhythms of grace."



Here are some simple tools we personally use to overcome weariness and live into freedom and lightness.

Establish a clear "Finish Line" for each day, week and year.

Many of us work in jobs or ministries that seem to be in perpetual motion. Or maybe we're an entrepreneur with no official beginning or ending of work days or not even a permanent office. It's a healthy move to find a specific moment that defines the end of our work day and becomes the start of our rest.

Example: Stop Work/Start Rest-6pm. Stop Rest/Start Work-8am.

When you cross your finish line, **say out loud** to yourself or others the same thing God said at the end of each of his work days: **"This is good. It's enough for today."**

Then **create a small ritual** that makes it official for you. Ring a bell, intentionally listen for the sound of your door closing, or pour a glass of wine. *Do something* that requires one or more of your senses to help you close the lid on the day.

(Note to parents with young children: Your day may need to end at your child's bedtime. Keep it consistent for them and for you.)

Calendar your WEEK in the same way. Set a specific day and time that defines the end of your work week and begins your rest. Create a week ending ritual that makes this official for you. Then define when a new work week begins.

Example: Stop Work/Start Rest- 6pm Friday. Stop Rest/Start Work- 8am Monday.

When you cross that finish line, again say out loud to yourself or others: <u>"This is good. It's enough for this week."</u> Do the same for your work YEAR.

Example: Stop Work July 30/Start Rest July 1. Stop Rest July 14/ Start Work July 15.

When you cross that finish line, say out loud to yourself or others: "This is good. It's enough for one year." Create a simple year end celebration ritual that signifies to you completion.

2 Shush Your Inner Critic

A good portion of our stress comes from the constant chatter of our subconscious ego that is always in correction or protection mode.

Learning to notice when the critic in you is activated is one way to increase your peace. The simple act of noticing will allow the critic to relax.

Give your critic a gentle nod of acknowledgment, then say internally or out loud, "Thanks for looking out for me but I've got this." Increase your capacity for self-compassion and let go of the compulsion toward self-criticism and perfectionism. A "house" divided against itself cannot stand.



Go Natural

Nature has it's own soothing pace. Something deeply replenishing happens when we go outside and get immersed in the universal art gallery around us. This the simplest, easiest to access, and most cost effective restoring agent we know.

It's crazy to think about now, but for thousands of years creation was the only Bible available for people to know and experience God.

Each atom reveals His divine blueprint. God's first incarnation of himself, came in the form of the universe. One powerful act of love is forever exploding outward in all directions.

Romans 1:19 For since the beginning of the world the invisible attributes of God, e.g. his eternal power and divinity, have been plainly discernible through things which he has made and which are commonly seen and known... (Phillips Translation)

So, it's totally natural for us to feel close to God in nature! Air, water, sky, stars, oceans, rocks, sun, rain, mountains, streams, wind, forests, prairies, flowers, trees, animals, people- all unique works of

art designed for our wonderment, enjoyment and replenishment.

- **Sit still or walk** in a park or by a lake and take in all the sights around you. Try closing your eyes and counting the number of sounds you hear.
- Locate your nearest state or national forest and go for a hike
- At night, drive to the outskirts of town where there is less light pollution and gaze at the stars
- Make a goal to visit all the parks or gardens in your area
- Put your feet in a stream or find a place on the water that rents kayaks
- Even if you can't leave home you can feel like you're right there by watching a number of nature shows shot in HD. Recently we watched The Moving Art series on Netflix. It's a slow, immersive, meditative experience with deserts, flowers, oceans, forests that will totally renew your spirit.

Day End Reflection

Do this several times a week, at the end of your work day, either sitting in your car, on the subway or stopping by a park for 5 or 10 minutes on your way home or you can do this prior to going to sleep at night.

- Become aware of your breathing. Get still and re-center yourself in God. Then invite the Holy Spirit to take you on a mental tour of your day. Replay the tape of the events and look for some times you were aware of God's presence and once or twice that you weren't. This is simply a practice for awareness, not condemnation. Acknowledge both your awareness and unawareness of God's presence.
- Thank him for each experience, even the smallest and give thanks for further opening your awareness. Then savor the goodness of the day. Name those things that seemed pleasant and surrender to God whatever is still broken or incomplete.
- Thank him that his Spirit will continue to be at work in all these areas, even while you're away from them.

Now rest.

Stay Inside One Day's Grace

God's grace is like the manna God gave to the children of Israel. There is just enough for one day at a time. Jesus taught us to pray for our "daily bread," not next week's rations. Bread represents whatever we're going to need for this days oxygen, food, shelter, purpose, wisdom, love, etc.

Even the breaths we breathe come one at a time and sustain us only for this moment. There's significant insight for us in that.

So much of the weariness and stress of each day comes because we aren't actually living in that day, but we're living in our past or our future.

There are 3 time zones:

Past. Present. and Future.

Maybe you spend a lot of your days replaying tapes of the PAST, where you failed, succeeded or others failed you in some way. Pain and shame live in this time zone.

Or maybe you spend part of each day forecasting the FUTURE, where you're guessing what's going to happen next or worrying that you don't have today what you know you're going to need tomorrow. Fear and anxiety hang out in this time zone.

Peace is found only in the present.

Ninety-nine percent of the time there is nothing fearful or painful happening to us right now. How are you doing this moment? You're probably okay. You might not have everything you want, but you probably have all you need to live right now.

Try stopping at random places every day to take your emotional temperature. Set a time on your phone to remind you. When it goes off just notice if you are stewing on the past or dreading some future happening. Peace, joy, and fulfillment are found in the PRESENT time zone.

At this moment, neither the past or the present exist. They are complete illusions. The Bible reminds us: "Don't worry about tomorrow... Each day has enough trouble of it's own." Matt. 6: 34 and "This is the day that this Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." Psalm 118: 24

Your whole life has led up to this day, this moment.

Now is the place of your peace.

6 Try Something New

Sometimes the repetitive routines of our life can **Iull us to sleep.** When was the last time you tried something new or something you once enjoyed but haven't done in a long time?

Learning a new skill can be just the spark you need to feel re-energized. It needs to feel both fun and a little challenging without over taxing you.

Ideas to get you started:

- · Learn land paddling- (it's paddle boarding on a skateboard)
- Take paddle board lessons
- Ballroom dancing
- Join a chess club
- Take an art, photography, cooking or jewelry making class
- Practice martial arts or Yoga
- Archery, Fishing,

- Build something or make something out of wood
- · Audit a class at a local college
- Learn how to write your memoir
- Write poetry or play an instrument
- Learn a new language
- Practice flower arranging
- · Walk through a craft store and choose a random project
- Sew a quilt or learn to knit or crochet
- Start a garden
- Join a bowling league
- Go geocaching
- Study the stars
- Research your genealogy
- Start a bunko or card playing group
- Volunteer in an area of your interest



Centering Prayer

Our friend, Ruth Haley Barton, talks about a time when she was so busy and distracted that her insides looked like river water in a mason jar that was all shaken up. Visibility was cloudy. But as she slowed down and got still all the sediment of her thoughts, experiences, and emotions were able to settle to the bottom. She was able to see herself, God, and others more clearly.

It seems the hardest thing for a human to do is sit still in the quiet. We are often afraid to be by ourselves. Yet sitting silent in the Presence of God absorbing his continuous, radiating love is the most peace giving practice of all.

In this guiet place, we aren't looking for insight or even an experience-though that might happen, it's not the point. We are simply showing our intent to know ourselves joined to the Spirit of God.

The practice of Centering Prayer has been taught to Christians for centuries. It has such a settling affect on us that we do some version of it almost everyday.

Here's one way to do it.

- Set aside 5 or 10 minutes.
- · Find a guiet place to sit comfortably with your eyes closed... (eventually you can do this anywhere)
- Breathing naturally. Relax. Be aware of your breathing for 10 or 20 seconds.

- Now become aware of your desire to be with God. Become aware of God's desire to be with vou.
- Choose a word or short phrase that expresses your intention to be open to God's presence (ex: "Be still," "I'm here," "Father" "Yes" "Come Lord" "Quiet me with your Love"
- Hold your word gently, without speaking, repeating it slowly in your mind in rhythm with your breathing.
- Whenever you become aware of other thoughts, feelings, sensations, bills to pay, etc, simply come back to internally saying your "word," which symbolizes your desire to return to connection with God.
- Now gradually let the word fall away as you rest in of the loving presence of God.
- · Continue as long as you wish.

This is not a practice to prove anything to God, to yourself or to a spiritual leader. There is nothing whatsoever to prove in the presence of God. Nothing there to accomplish or "buy" —nothing to achieve. This is the practice of being your true self in God, enjoying him in pure peace and love.

I am who I am in the eyes of God. Nothing more. Nothing less. St John of the Cross. 1579

Return to your rest, my soul, for the Lord has been good to you. Psalm 116: 7





Unwrap The Gifts You Never Asked For

The most powerful gifts we receive are the ones we didn't expect or know we do not deserve.

Every breath you take, every nutrient that enters your body through food or the sun, every expression of love you receive, even your very existence is nothing you can take credit for. But stopping to notice all the gifts, to truly give thanks for them, reminds you that much of your life comes freely without any effort on your part.

"Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights..." James 1:17

Replay the past week and think about one simple undeserved gift you received. Take a minute to mute your phone, turn off your computer. Shut the door. Internally, focus on that gift. See it? Feel it? Now look just above it. God is right there. Whisper: "I didn't realize you were there in this gift. I'm amazed at how you wrap yourself in every good thing that comes to me, " Now, in the silence of one minute experience God present with you in that gift. And whenever distracting thoughts interrupt internally say the words: "You're here with me now."

You are in charge of your recharge. No one else knows when you're running on empty. We used to think exhaustion was a kind of badge of honor that showed how hard we were working. Now we see it as an unhealthy indicator that needs serious attention.

- Take some time to determine how much of vour stress is self-inflicted, and how much of it is truly beyond your control.
- Decide now that you will put at least 1 or 2 of the above practices in place this week.

No matter what type of leader you are we love this word from Parker Palmer:

A leader must take special responsibility for what's going on inside of himself or herself... lest the act of leadership create more harm than good.

