

Working and Resting

By Mary Kane

*"Come to Me,
All you who 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 and my burden is light."*

Matthew 11:28-29

Is there any phrase from the above verses that really speaks to your heart?

In a sentence, please summarize the main idea set forth in these verses.

Please go back and take a look at the last word of the first sentence. Circle or highlight that word right now please. What word did you highlight? Like me, were you surprised to realize that in these verses Jesus was teaching about working *and* resting? I know I was. In all the previous times that I have read these verses I never saw the part about *rest*. I've also never heard anyone use these verses to teach about how to rest in Christ. However, in this passage Jesus is calling us to come to Him to learn about the proper balance between working and resting. We all know that we need to let Jesus teach about how to properly use our gifts to work for the kingdom. But, Jesus is also very concerned about teaching us how to rest! Who in the twenty-first century needs a lesson in resting? We all do! God has hit the nail on the head with the hammer of His Word! (And some people say that the Bible is not relevant!)

Why do you think Jesus needs to *teach* us how to rest?

Do you take time to rest?

If not, why not; if yes, how do you rest?

Why is it important that followers of Jesus take time to rest?

Shouldn't we always be busy going about our Father's business? There are so many needy, hurting people who need to hear about Jesus. In order to meet all these needs shouldn't we be constantly working and striving for the Kingdom? Didn't Jesus work 24/7 doing His Father's will? Hmmmm.... Let's see what we can learn from Jesus about this subject from God's Holy Word.

Please read Luke 5:12-16.

Right at the beginning of verse 12 there is a wonderful word, *happen*, that bears a closer look into the original language. In Greek, the word *happen* transliterates *ginomai*. *Ginomai* means "of miracles, to be performed, wrought, be ordained to be." From the meanings behind this Greek word we can safely assume that Jesus didn't just happen upon this city by chance. This was a pre-ordained stop on the kingdom agenda. Our Savior had a divine appointment to keep!

Whom did Jesus meet?

Notice how this man is described; he doesn't just have leprosy—he was **full** of leprosy. The word *full* used in this verse is *pleres* which means "of a hollow vessel, of a surface, covered in every part, *of the soul*, thoroughly permeated with (emphasis mine)." Can you imagine having "leprosy of the soul?" Do you have any rough scaly patches on

your soul that need healing? I know I do! How do we get rid of this disease?

Look at verse 12 to find the antidote and record it in the space provided!

If we need healing for the “leprosy of our souls” we need to call out to Jesus!

What statement did the leprous man direct to Jesus in verse 12?

What was Jesus answer?

I am very glad that Jesus is always willing to heal us!

What happened as a result of Jesus healing the sick man (verse 15)?

What did Jesus do after healing and teaching a multitude of people (verse 16)?

Please look up the following verses and record what Jesus did in each:

Matthew 14:23

Mark 1:35

Mark 6:46

The Greek word for *withdrew* in Luke 5:16 is *hupochoreo* which means to “retreat secretly and quietly to a secluded place.” When my boys were smaller, I liked to wake up early in the morning so I could enjoy a little peace and quiet before they got up. I’d move through the house very carefully and quietly with my Bible, study book and pen, trying to get to my porch swing without alarming the troops! In my mind, I can imagine Jesus doing the same thing—secretly tiptoeing through His sleeping Disciples, enroute to a lonely mountain top to spend time with His Father in the peace and quiet of the early morning!

Please read verse 16 again and check the box that tells what Jesus did when He went off by himself.

- Slept
- Read scripture
- Prayed

Part of Jesus’ retreat time involved prayer. My Bible notes that the construction of the Greek in verse 16 indicates that Jesus regularly and continually retreated to a quiet place to rest and be with His Father and as we have seen, scripture supports this information. Despite the multitudes of people who still wanted to learn from Him and be healed by Him, Jesus took the time he needed to rest and pray. In order to serve Him efficiently and effectively, we also, like Jesus, need to “regularly and continually” retreat and rest with our Father.

So...what about this connection between prayer and rest? How does praying bring about rest? Here are a few of my ideas:

1. **Praying usually involves finding a peaceful place.** Most people pray in a quiet, private place. Simply removing ourselves from noise and activity will immediately begin to rest, refresh and revive us.

2. **Praying helps us to drop our burdens.** Because I am a teacher, I often carry bags and bags full of stuff, back and forth to school each day. On days when I have an exceptional amount of stuff to carry, the walk from the parking lot to my classroom seems to be 145 miles long. After twenty years of hauling teaching materials, I'm surprised that I do not have the arms of an orangutan. How happy I am when I am able to hand off my burden of books and goodies to the very strong capable arms of one of my sons. What is a tremendous hardship for me is a simple task for one of my burly, brawny boys. How silly it would be for me to walk into school each day, along side my sons, dragging all that stuff by myself. But don't we do that same thing with God? We work, schlep and labor through life, dragging our concerns painfully along while He walks along side, longing to take our burdens from us. My sons will carry my burdens for me whenever I ask them to. God is waiting to do the same thing for you. His infinitely strong, mighty arms are waiting to lift the burdens you were never meant to carry, the second you ask for help.
3. **Praying reminds us that God is working on our behalf.** God tells us to "Be still and know that I am God." Taking time to reflect that God has every thing under control and we are not responsible for running the universe can be very freeing and relaxing. Our Redeemer never sleeps or slumbers. We can rest because He is on the job!
4. **Praying brings us into the presence of God.** Please go back to our opening verse in Matthew 11:28. What does God tell us to do when we are tired and weighed down with worries? We are to *come* to Him. Just being in His presence will bring us rest. After all, He is the Prince of peace! The word *come* in the original Greek is an interjection which means "in urging and calling." God isn't just inviting us to come and rest in Him, He's urging us and longing for us to come to Him and be at peace.

Do you have any other ideas about the connection between prayer and rest?

In closing, please look up the following scriptures and record any information about *rest* that you can find:

Psalm 37:7

Jeremiah 6:16

Exodus 34:21

Your final assignment is to make a plan to take some time to rest—today if possible. For me sometime resting is simply sitting on my porch swing and enjoying nature with my Creator. At other times, resting is going to a favorite quiet place with my Bible and spending time with God in His Word.

Please record your plan for rest below.

I've prayed for God to bless you as you learn to take time to regularly rest in Him.

*"Return to your rest, O my soul.
For the Lord has dealt bountifully with you."*

Psalm 116:7

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