



*Flo Harvey*

The last few months have been a flurry of activity for the Harvey family. My husband, Mike, was diagnosed with breast cancer, and doctors moved quickly to perform a mastectomy. While he had daily radiation treatment for a month, he continued to work daily, except for a two-week recovery. In the last few months, our second son has been making wedding plans for June, then our oldest daughter began making wedding plans for October of this year. By the time you read this, they will both be married, and our first grandchild, a boy, will be approaching his first birthday.

It seems our lives are moving at break-neck speed, and I have found myself in need of—and longing for—rest. This week, we will explore the effects of hurry and busyness, and what the Word says about rest. I pray this will encourage your soul to slow down and find rest in the midst of the busy. Here is a picture of me and my precious grandson.

*BIBLE READING: Psalm 37:7*

Busyness is a common malady in our world today. We don't recognize it as such, though, because modern society glorifies busyness and uses it to measure our importance. If your calendar isn't filled with back-to-back appointments and events, then somehow, you are made to feel less important than others.

Yet in our heart of hearts, we know this same busyness is literally and figuratively killing us. We are often exhausted, anxious, overworked, and overwhelmed. It leaves us deaf to what is important, responding only to the seemingly urgent calls of an over-booked life.

God knows that rest is vital to our well-being. God, in the creation process, "finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work" (Genesis 2:2). I don't know if God truly needed the rest or not, but it does indicate to me that rest is vital and that time should be set aside for it.

My challenge to us this week is to arrange and plan for some extra resting today, or on the Sabbath. Take a nap, read a book, go for a leisurely walk—with no guilt. Drink it in, my friends, no busyness today!

*SONG: I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: God, please forgive us for our tendency to overload our schedules. Help us to carve out time to rest and fervently seek you. Amen.*

—Flo Harvey

*BIBLE READING: Jeremiah 30:17a*

Studies have shown that busyness and related stresses are physically unhealthy to humans. Even animals and plants seem to respond negatively to stress. Left unchecked, stress can contribute to high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, and diabetes. It can also play a part in the development of stomach ulcers, hair loss, auto-immune diseases, and more. An overwhelmed body falls apart under the constant pressure of busyness.

Christ recognized the need for resting our physical bodies. Mark 6:31 says, “Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, [Jesus] said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’” Our Creator knew that coming and going without proper rest and nourishment would take a toll on us physically.

Today’s challenge is to evaluate our current physical health. If you have health concerns you believe may be symptoms of stress and busyness, try to eliminate at least one item from your schedule, or one responsibility from your to-do list. Decrease your burden, and your physical body will thank you.

*SONG: There Is a Balm in Gilead*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, these physical vessels we inhabit require rest. Remind us of that often and enable us to make choices to care for our bodies. Amen.*

—Flo Harvey

*BIBLE READING: Psalm 62:5–8*

As Christians, we believe our spiritual lives should be satisfying, full, and active. But busyness chokes out vital time and energy we have available to invest in a thriving relationship with God. Busyness can crowd out prayer, communion, and Scripture reading to a point where there is little left to feed a thirsty soul. Our spiritual lives begin to wither away.

David often cried out to God for rest and time away with God to renew his spiritual health. In Psalm 55:6, David laments for wings of a dove, so that he might fly away to a place of refuge and be at rest. In Psalm 37:7, David reminds us to “be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him.”

Your life may be different, but when I am busy and over-scheduled, I long for the refuge of time to rest—to wait and be still, to truly breathe in the goodness of God, creation, and the people who walk this journey of life with me. I thirst for it like a traveler long-lost in the baking sun.

Be intentional today to go to your calendar for this week and either eliminate an obligation of lesser significance or establish a scheduled time to rest and sit quietly with the Lord. Be faithful to keep that appointment and allow God to show you what truly needs to be included on your to-do list. Your soul will drink deeply.

*SONG: Sitting at the Feet of Jesus*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: God, we pray today for deep, overflowing spiritual rest; the kind that only comes from time spent with you. Amen.*

—Flo Harvey

*BIBLE READING: Romans 12:2; Colossians 3:2*

Mental health is a major concern in our society. People talk about the mental toll of our fast-paced lives and the struggle to find ways to cope. Depression is on the rise, suicides are more common, and we pass each other in the hall and on the street with barely a smile or a nod. We keep pushing until something gives, and we are certain we are losing it.

The practice of rest and margin in our schedule gives us the gift of time and space that cushions our mind. It creates room for our mind to process and cope with the pressure the world bears down upon us. A rested mind, body, and soul are better able to navigate the obstacles of life. We make fewer mistakes, we don't lose things as often, and we can be present and think with more clarity. The days when I have too many commitments, I lock my keys in the car, lose my phone, or misplace my wallet. My schedule falls apart, I spend more money, at night I am a mess—wondering if I have a mind at all.

Today, take a few minutes to evaluate what aspects of your busyness are most harmful to your mental health. Examine why and seek ways in which you might accomplish what most needs to be done so you will feel less mentally overwhelmed. Then put those ideas into practice. A mind less hindered will better serve us and our Lord.

*SONG: Burdens Are Lifted at Calvary*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Dear God, we ask that in your mercy, you would calm our minds and ease our worries. We lay all our mental mess at your feet, knowing you are to be trusted in all things. Amen.*

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*BIBLE READING: Isaiah 40:31*

Lately, I have struggled with an array of overwhelming emotions. My husband had breast cancer surgery and radiation. Doctors say his aorta is enlarged, and he has had several micro-strokes that have punched holes in his vision. Often, especially at night, the emotional toll of all this floods over me. Trying to be emotionally strong for him while feeling completely freaked out with all the what-ifs and uncertainties for him and our family—one minute I would be angry, the next strong and determined, then I would cry while driving.

Emotions are crazy things, and relate closely to our minds. In Matthew 11:28–29 Jesus says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” He speaks of a sweet, emotional rest—one that is deep and wide where any worry, disease, or problem can be lifted. In my dark places this Scripture was light unto my path.

Whatever your emotional struggles today, I ask you to take the time in your weariness to speak to the Lord about it and give it to, and leave it with God. When the weight of your emotions comes back (and it will), give it to God again. Let your mind and emotions rest in the capable arms of the One who controls the universe. There’s no better place to rest.

*SONG: Be Still My Soul*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord Jesus, often, our feelings and emotions run away with us, leaving us exhausted. We ask that you might help us to remember that you are in control, and we can rest in that. Amen.*

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*BIBLE READING: Isaiah 30:15*

In the hustle and bustle of busyness, I find life to be loud, fast, and exhausting. As a result, peace, silence, and communion are in short supply. It is difficult to listen. The sound is so deafening that only the urgent and clamorous break through to our dulled ears. We are pushed along at break-neck speed at the whim of urgency.

In this kind of environment, it is difficult to hear God leading us, or to discern God's still, small voice. There is no rest to allow us to be settled. I believe this grieves the Holy Spirit. God's greatest desire is to build a deep relationship with us, but we know in our hearts that busyness hinders depth of relationship. There is no depth to a relationship without an investment of time to listen and learn. So we have shallow, ineffective relationships, with little to no faith and trust. And we wonder why.

My challenge to you today is to put on some new hearing aids. Test those urgent and clamoring things to see if they truly require the best of your time, mind, and soul. I believe that they are usually cloaked in deception and are *not* that important. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). God is always speaking to us, but we can't hear if we don't listen. God will let us know what is truly urgent and what is not. Make time and listen.

*SONG: Speak, Lord, in the Stillness*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, our greatest desire is to be in communion with you, but often the most important is pushed back to the least. Call deeply to us, Lord, that we might come away with you more often. Amen.*

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*BIBLE READING: Psalm 80:3*

I really struggle with everything I have talked about this week. I tend to be a Martha, believing that there is some salvation in work and service. My heart knows that is not true, but my head fights it like a pro. The inner war is fierce, completely draining my mind, my body, and my soul, leaving me defeated. Deep in my inner being is a part of me that thirsts for so much more: to go deeper, wider, and more fully—to take time to sit at my Savior’s feet and drink in God’s presence.

Even as I write this, I get choked up with the thought of it! Rest, restoration, peace, and stability—just what I need, what we need. In our souls we know it to be true. My challenge to myself and to you is to be intentional about discerning what the Lord desires for us concerning a busy and over-scheduled life. Pray for God’s leading and don’t be afraid to say “no” to something or someone. (This is one of my biggest struggles.) Take time for rest, prayer, and silence in your schedule. Take a nap, read a book, spend quality time with family and friends. It is from these that gratefulness, joy, peace, and love spring forth.

So take a deep breath or two, clear the clutter of busyness from your mind, and allow your soul some much needed rest. You will be blessed, my friends.

*SONG: Revive Us Again*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Jesus, revive and restore us. Pour out your love and mercy on us, that we might find rest and deep relationship with you. Amen.*

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