

## REST (THE JOURNEY – CH. 11)

A newspaper carried this true story titled, **Tattoo the Basset Hound**:

“Tattoo did not intend to go for an evening run, but when his owner accidentally shut the car door on the end of the leash and took off with the rest of the leash and Tattoo outside of the car, Tattoo had no choice but to run! A motorcycle officer named Terry Filbert noticed a passing a vehicle with what looked like a squirrel chasing it as fast as his little legs could go. As he caught up with the vehicle, he realizes the squirrel was a basset hound on a leash, says officer Filbert, *‘He was picking ‘em up and putting ‘em down as fast as he could.’* Filbert put on his lights and stopped the car and Tattoo was rescued but not before he reached a speed clocked by police at more than 20 miles an hour! The owner says, “It’s amazing, Tattoo is fine, but he hasn’t bothered me to take him on his evening walk for a long, long time!”

Do you ever feel like Tattoo the basset hound? You are picking ‘em up and putting ‘em down as fast as you can! US News and World Report says that: **“Americans thrive on crazy hours, fast food and high tech energy”**. Americans now sleep 2½ fewer hours a night than people did 100 years ago! Let that one sink in! It’s no wonder we are so exhausted.

And yet, as a society we’re saying “make it faster, speed it up, give me more.”

There’s actually a diagnosed condition today called Hurry Sickness. The symptoms of Hurry Sickness are as follows:

1. Speeding-Up Daily Activities – drive faster, walk faster, run errands faster, eat faster, read faster, talk faster, listen faster...even nodding faster encouraging the speaker to accelerate...“come on, get it out, talk to me man!”

The checkout line in the store...which line is shorter, calibrate how much stuff they have in their basket, wonder who is going to pull out all the coupons, that’s almost normal, but if you’re really sick, here’s what you do: you get in this line and then you keep track of where you would have been in the next line, and if that person actually gets out ahead of you, you leave that store totally depressed, like 3 minutes of my life was lost because I picked the wrong line.

Fast food is no longer fast enough so now we have fast food drive through, so families can eat the way God created us to eat – in minivans!

One Dominoes Pizza delivery driver was quoted, “I’ll go down the road and cars will actually pull over and let me through, like people used to do for ambulances!” We feel sorry for those people who need their food so fast.

2. Excessive Multi-tasking – by the way, someone once said that multi-tasking is a word we coined because “trying to do more than one thing at a time” takes too long to say so we call it multi-tasking.
3. Sunset Fatigue – we’re just too drained, too tired, as early as sunset. You don’t have to think long, or look far, to note the names of people in our society who have “hit the wall” – physically, emotionally, spiritually. People who seemed to be doing great but then things fell apart. Even Christians who were, at one time, great workers for God, but along the way something happened to them. They weren’t able to sustain the pace they were on, and now are broken down spiritually, physically, or emotionally on the side of the road of life. Marriages blowup, people are quitting the ministry. Many of these folks are, or were, “Type-A” personality, and leaders – it was like all of a sudden their body said, “No more!” For some, their motto is “I’d rather burn out than rust out!” Well, the sad truth is, either way you’re “Out”!

In the book, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, the author, in chapter eight, uses an illustration about how in the Midwest they have these brutal snowstorms and blizzards. On many farms they actually have to tie a rope to connect the barn to the house. The reason for this is because there have been many people who have died in these blizzards because the conditions were so bad they actually got lost trying to walk from their barn back to their house. Some have even died just a few feet from their house. By fixing a rope between the structures, the people are able to hang on and find their way home even in the worst of storms.

The author then says, in our lives and through all the “storms” of our lives, we all need a ROPE. In order to survive the blizzards of busy-ness, saying yes to too many things (life’s demands, meetings, plans, projects, people pleasing, long hours, your children’s events, trials and storms, etc.) Christians need a rope to anchor them home.

The greatest definition of home is our relationship with God (peace, joy, love of God, etc.). The author then said this, “I want to suggest to you that the ROPE is a commitment to SABBATH (Rest)”.

The Sabbath comes from the 10 Commandments. Remember what God said in the Big 10, in the book of Exodus: “Israel, listen to Me...I’m valuable, so worship no other gods; life is valuable, so don’t murder; relationships are valuable, so don’t commit adultery; and **“rest is valuable, so keep the Sabbath.”**

Now some might object, “Wait a minute, I thought the Sabbath was Old Testament Law? We don’t have to observe the Sabbath today, do we?” Well the answer is yes

and no!

- **Because of Jesus and the New Testament teaching, we are no longer obligated to keep the Sabbath Day, but we should obey the Sabbath PRINCIPLE.**

The New Testament teaches we are not bound to any one special day, including the Sabbath, as some religious groups would have us believe (Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5,6). Colossians 2:16,17 says, *“Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ”*

It's most important that we have a relationship with Christ. He's our True Sabbath Rest (Heb. 4). But in our everyday lives it's essential that we have actual times of sabbath rest. Not Sabbath capital "S", but the sabbath principle - small "s".

The sabbath principle is built on the need to follow God's example. Long before the Law, God rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of creation (Gen. 2). By doing this, He instituted the rest principle for all of us for all time.

- **Jesus our Example** – In studying the Gospels, we are reminded how often Jesus spent time alone, sometimes completely alone, and other times alone with his disciples. His commitment to get sabbath time out in solitary places – deserts, mountains, etc. was his regular habit. *Luke 4:42, at daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place.*

Luke 5:15,16 says, *“Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.”*

Before He selected his disciples...*Luke 6:12 - Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.*

*Luke 9:2,10*

*And he (Jesus) sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick... When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves*

*Matthew 14:13*

*He (Jesus) withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.*

*Matthew 14:23*

*After he had dismissed (the crowds), he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone.*

*Mark 1:35*

*Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.*

*At another busy time...Mark 3:7, Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake.*

*Mark 6:31*

*Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."*

So Jesus is saying to all of us, it's not only okay to relax, it's absolutely essential! It's very spiritual and biblical! As a human, Jesus models to us that the secret to emotional, physical, and spiritual health is true rest. Remember, He was a man who accomplished more, and had a greater impact, than any person in history. And yet, He was never stressed and never seemed to be in a hurry.

#### ♦ **What is the Purpose of the Old Testament Sabbath?**

1. Rest/Refreshment – Ex. 23:12 *"You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but on the seventh day you must stop working. This gives your ox and your donkey a chance to rest. It also allows your slaves and the foreigners living among you to be refreshed."*
2. A Reminder we Belong to God, Ezek. 20:20 - *Keep my Sabbaths holy, that they may be a sign between us. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God."*
3. A Day of Special Worship – Lev. 23:3 *"There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is a Sabbath to the LORD."*
4. Statement of Trust – Ex. 16:29 *Bear in mind that the LORD has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. God will*

provide for our needs – we don't have to work seven days.

5. Reminder of Freedom – *Deut. 5:15 – Remember, you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.* The Sabbath rest was instituted by God after the exodus as a sign that they were now liberated from bondage. For over 400 years, they never had a day off! Sabbath reminds us that we are free people – deeply loved by God not for our work, but for who we are.

We don't have to observe a strict 7<sup>th</sup> Day Sabbath, but the sabbath day principle teaches us that . . . **We need to learn how to rest COMPLETELY.**

Often our problem is that we don't rest completely. What we typically achieve at best is a partial rest. We have become a generation of people who...

- Worship our Work
- Work at our Play
- Play at our Worship

Consider how most people spend a typical day or weekend off, running all over place, getting stuff done, involving their kids in every activity under the sun, or playing all weekend! That's not rest. All that is, is a day off work! In many cases we need to get back to work on Monday so we can get some rest! That's not right.

**We need to rethink how we spend our WEEKENDS and DAYS OFF.**

We need soul-rest. Jesus said in *Matt. 11:28,29*, "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...and you will find rest for your souls.*"

♦ **How to Rest (True Sabbath):**

- **Relax** - Slow down; take it easy, down shift. Stop the rush, performance, doing. Stop! That's what the word Sabbath means.

We should be encouraged by this. God says it's okay to stop. If it's okay for God to rest, it's okay for you and me.

- **Rest and Renew** - Do things which can cause you to be at rest with God – things you really enjoy that energize you. Sleep in (get caught up on sleep - Americans are suffering from sleep deprivation), go on a hike, do a favorite hobby, read, watch a good movie, take some extended time with God.

A good goal for those who have two days off work is that one day be a more protected Sabbath and the other day dedicated to errands, important duties/

responsibilities (but not necessarily restful), and other “honey-do” stuff.

If we build some nothingness into our schedule we will be much more productive in the long run. The story is told of the group of wagon train pioneers who came out to Oregon from St. Louis. In order to beat the winter, the majority of the group decided to travel every day (7 days a week). They believed in the importance of a Sabbath, but they thought it best to skip it under the circumstances. But, there was another part of the group that decided to keep a Sabbath day of rest and even though their journey was long, they kept their conviction that a day of rest was vital. Well, guess which group arrived first in Oregon? The group that observed the Sabbath! God’s ways are always best!

➤ **Rejoice –**

(This is where we bring the Lord into our rest through prayer, thanksgiving, and praise) A Sabbath is a great opportunity to delight in the Lord and reconnect with the joy of the Lord. It’s also a great opportunity to enjoy God’s wonderful creation. The bottom line is Play and Pray.

➤ **Reflect –**

1. Contemplation of God - Prayer, time in the Word, pondering God’s love...Psalm 46:10 says, *Be still and know that I am God* and Isaiah 40:30,31 reads, *But those who wait on the LORD will renew their strength. They will mount up on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.*

This requires Solitude and Silence – quieting the voices (inner and outer) to attend to God and hear from the Spirit.

The greatest people in the Bible and all throughout history understood the importance of solitude – a time to pull away, get perspective, instruction, and guidance from the Lord.

2. Evaluation of Self – Through rest and contemplation, you are in a much better position to see things and attitudes in yourself that need to be dealt with and corrected. This is why many people don’t want to be alone because then they have to face reality: “I’ve found the enemy and the enemy is me!” They really need time alone for reflection and evaluation, but they don’t want to deal with what’s really true. So they stay really busy, keep the radio on, keep the people around, so they don’t have to deal with themselves.

A couple of good, but painful, questions: Why am I in such a hurry? What is it that is driving me to be so busy? Maybe my hurry sickness is an indication of a heart sickness. Maybe the problem is...

- a. **Pride** - I'm the one who has to do everything - only I can do it right.
- b. **Lack of Trust** - I'm not sure I can trust God - I have to work seven days.
- c. **Accepted by others** - I can't say NO to anybody because of what they might think. If I work real hard I'll impress people and make a name for myself.
- d. **Sense of Worth** – My identity is wrapped up in my accomplishments, so I keep my schedule jammed full of stuff so I can feel better about myself.

Thankfully, our worth is based on Jesus and our relationship with Him. God made you, loves you, died for you, and as a Christian we are accepted in eyes of God. That's where our worth is found, but if we confuse worth and work we're always going to be trying to do more, work more, schedule more, prove more, please more, hurry more. We will always be driven, but never satisfied.

A great first question for any Christian counselor or physician dealing with sick, hurting, or troubled people is to ask them, "Are you taking a sabbath - a true Christian sabbath?" Are you holistically refreshing yourself? Only God knows how many physical, emotional, mental and spiritual problems are directly and indirectly related to the lack of a sabbath (holistic rest).

So take a **Weekly sabbath**. Take a day once a week or take a couple of half days to rest. Give yourself the permission. It's God's gift to you. Sort of like the boss calling you on Sunday night and saying, "Take tomorrow off. Don't come in. It's on me!" You would take it! It's the same with the Lord. He says "enjoy it"! He wants you to... it's a gift.

➤ **Two more types of "sabbath":**

- 1. Extended sabbath – get some extended time of rest – multiple days.
- 2. Mini-sabbaths – throughout the day, take a couple of times to quiet your heart before the Lord. And be sure to start each day quiet before the Lord with some quality time of prayer and scripture reading/journaling.

Remember that our true Sabbath Rest is Jesus (Heb. 4). He is our ultimate rest. With Him we have forgiveness of sin. No more attempts to work your way to heaven. You are accepted – ALL by his grace through faith.