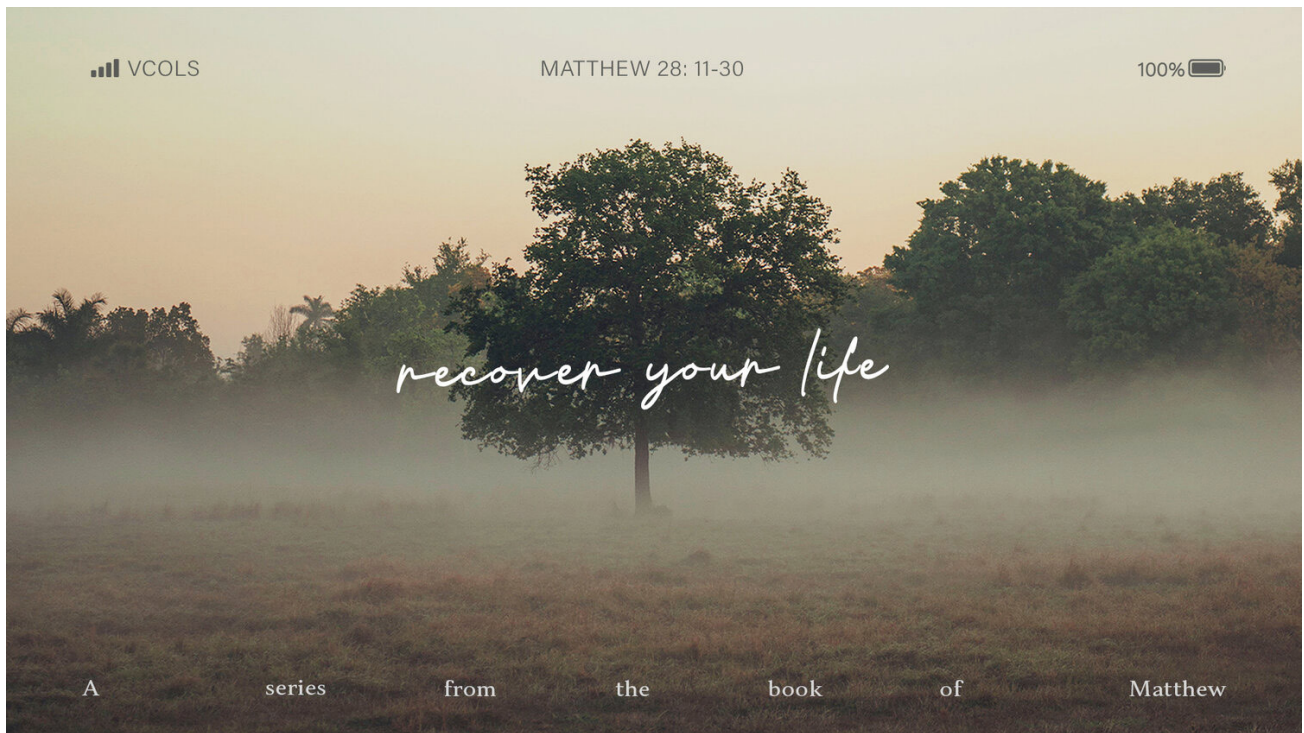


SERMON SERIES COMPANION STUDIES
FOR SMALL GROUPS



STUDY 1

Rest

SERMON TEXT: DEUTERONOMY 5:12-15; MATTHEW 11:28-30

Getting Started

If you haven't done so already, share this PDF, or the link to this study, with other members of your group.

After greeting one another, take a minute or two of silence together and offer an opening prayer. If you don't all know one another already, invite each group member to share their name.

Opening Question

How much of a priority is rest in your life?

Purpose of This Week's Study

To better understand the rest God makes available to us, and the rest he asks of us.

INTRODUCTION TO THIS WEEK'S STUDY

We're at the beginning of a sermon series about rest: our longing for it, God's design for it, and the fulfillment of rest in Christ. Today we're going to look at what God says about rest in both the Old and New Testament, and how we might incorporate rest into our lives.

Scripture Reading

Invite two people to take turns reading the following passages from Deuteronomy 5 and Matthew 11 aloud:

DEUTERONOMY 5:12-15 (NIV)

¹² "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you.

¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do. ¹⁵ Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that 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.

MATTHEW 11:28-30 (NIV)

²⁸ "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ 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.

³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

For Reflection & Discussion

1. The passage we read from Deuteronomy is a quote from Moses, specifically one of the Ten Commandments given by God to the people of Israel. Why do you think God commanded us to do no work on the Sabbath, instead of making it just a suggestion? Why does he go into such detail here, listing all who are not allowed to work?
2. Why do you think the Israelites are told to remember their past in verse 15? How does their past offer a reason to observe the Sabbath?

In Exodus 20:8, God commands the Israelites to rest on the Sabbath because he rested on the seventh day of creation. That reason isn't replaced here, but the mention of servants in verse 14 suggests that the Israelites can use the Sabbath to reflect on how they were delivered from slavery. Also, this verse reinforces that servants should be allowed to rest.

3. There are many occupations that require working on Sunday, including pastors and church employees or volunteers. How do you think God wants us to follow this commandment while still meeting the requirements of our professions?

Scripture says we should do all our work for six days and rest on the seventh; since God emphasizes rest here and not the day of the week, it's reasonable to expect that our day of rest does not have to be Sunday.

4. The passage we read from Matthew is a quote from Jesus. What is he asking us to do in this passage, and what is promised in return?
5. The literal definition of a yoke is a wooden frame that attaches animals to the burden they are to carry, like an ox pulling a cart, for example. Metaphorically, the word "yoke" is also used in the Bible as a symbol of slavery or servanthood. With that in mind, what do you think Jesus is telling us here about how to find true rest?

We tend to think of rest as simply doing nothing, but Jesus calls us to obey him even in that. This doesn't involve burning ourselves out working for him, as his yoke is easy and his burden light. Instead, we simply have to consider what kinds of rest are pleasing to God, and which are not.

6. What kinds of rest do you think are pleasing to God, and what kinds of rest does he want us to avoid? How can you best incorporate godly rest into your life?

For Prayer Ministry

- Use this week's prayer time to create space for rest. Sitting quietly before God together, open the time with the prayer below. Then spend two full minutes waiting quietly (you might consider having someone set a timer on their phone as you wait).

Come, Holy Spirit; fill this place and fill our hearts. We want to take this time to rest in you, without agenda or expectation. Please join us here and open our hearts and minds to you.

- Break into groups of two or three, guys with guys and girls with girls, and have group members pray about where rest is most needed in their lives, and how they can best achieve it.

For Further Reflection & Action Outside of Group

- Rest can mean sleep, but resting can also include activities that relax and rejuvenate you. This week, make a list of effective and enjoyable ways for you to rest.
- Write out a daily schedule for the week to come, with rest as a requirement. If you're unable to designate an entire day of rest, try to incorporate it into your daily schedule in a smaller way, like five minutes of quiet time with God.