

Week of January 11-15

SOUL REST

Scripture Reading: Read Matthew chapter 11

In his book, The Overload Syndrome: Learning to Live Within Your Limits, Richard Swenson rightly observes that we are a nation of the “hardwired and dog-tired.” We are over-stressed and under-rested. The 24/7/365 lifestyle (or rather death-style) has caught up with us and it is leaving in its wake a trail of burned-out folks. It’s also damaging our relationship with God, with our families, with each other and with ourselves.

Yet, it’s not a new phenomenon created solely by the 21st century networked culture in which we live. The following excerpt, entitled, “Time of the Mad Atom,” appeared in the 1949 Saturday Evening Post and is credited to a Virginia Brasier:

Our era is “the age of the half-read page, the quick hash and the mad dash, the bright night with the nerves tight, the plane hop with the brief stop, the lamp tan in a short span, The Big Shot in a good spot, the brain strain and the heart pain, the catnaps until the spring snaps...the land where the fun’s done.”

What a far cry from what Jesus offers us at the end of Matthew 11, when he declares: *“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. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

To a 1st century audience, overwhelmed with life under Roman rule, burdened with lifeless regulations and rules taught by the Pharisees and teachers of the law, eking out an existence the best they could, Jesus offers a way out. He offered soul rest to weary souls. To a 21st century audience, overwhelmed with a difficult economy, worrisome world events, busy schedules and just plain life, Jesus still offers soul rest.

The way out comes by accepting Christ’s yoke (a familiar 1st century image when animals were regularly yoked for service). His yoke is a yoke of discipleship but not a burdensome one, like that of the Pharisees. It is an easy yoke and a light burden, for the one who gives it is both gentle and humble in heart. Yet, it is a yoke, for Jesus calls us to submit to his kingship and to live out kingdom principles through the power of His Spirit. In other words, the kingdom is not a free-for-all to do as we please but it is freedom for all to do as he wills. Such life does not require us to be “on” 24/7/366 (an extra day because 2012 is a leap year!) but to do what he calls us to do... it’s a freedom to rest in what Jesus did for us at Calvary and a freedom to have Jesus live out his life through us. It’s welcome rest for weary souls.

Action Step: Find some time today to just sit for 10 minutes and rest in the Lord’s presence. Reread and meditate on Matthew 11:28-30.

Prayer Focus: That the Lord would teach you how to rest moment by moment in Him

Take-a-way: *Soul rest comes to those who solely rest in Jesus!*