

# **Calm in the Chaos**

## **Rest without Rigidity series**

### **by Bill Aumack**

Just before we get started today, it's the last Sabbath in October, which means it's our last opportunity to show Pastor Chris a little appreciation during Pastor Appreciation Month. So, Pastor, wave your hand. So anybody here doesn't know who Pastor is? He's back there. Let's give him a round of hand. We appreciate what he does for us. We followed your order. I didn't collect any money. I didn't do anything. You know, if people gave you stuff, it's not my fault that we twisted their arms like that. If you haven't sent Pastor a note, you've got a couple more days before October's over to do that. All right.

Have you ever felt like something was holding you back? Maybe you had something you wanted to do or something you wanted to accomplish or, you know, but there was just something holding you back? A couple examples might be you wanted to be a musician or an artist, but you felt like my lack of talent is holding me back. It couldn't possibly be your lack of practice, right? Had to be the lack of talent. Maybe you wanted to get married, but shyness kept you from kind of putting yourself out there and finding someone held you back. Or maybe you've been hurt before, and I don't want to do that again. Or maybe there's a certain job you wanted, trying to climb the corporate ladder, move up that corner office, looks maybe good, but you feel like you didn't have the right skill set or the right education, or maybe you wanted to switch careers. Been doing this, but I want to do that. And my lack of experience holds me back. Anybody experience that? One way or another. There's a lot of ways we could word that. A lot of heads shaking, Yes.

We're in our third week of our series, and today is calm in the chaos. And our modern life can easily be chaotic, right? From too many extracurricular activities with the kids, to work, to maybe having to work overtime, to family relationships, to politics, to social media, to this, to this... The list just goes on and on and on. You turned on the news. Chaos. And sometimes it even seems like chaos is the default state. Not a great place to be. So the question today is, what holds you back from finding calm and rest on the Sabbath in the midst of all that chaos?

And we're gonna do things a little bit different today. Get out your Bibles, get out your sermon notes. I've got four things we're gonna talk about. And we could have listed 500 and been here all week, but, you know, nobody wanted to do that. We got Dodger games to watch. So I'm picking four things here, and there's a bunch more we could pick. And I'm

starting with number four and working my way up to number one. Okay? And this first one is sensitive. We're diving right in the deep end, right? No checking if the water is good or not. We're just in.

Okay, so let me explain before you get out the pitchforks and the torches, okay? Number four, **family**. I got some Amens, right? And some of us, you know, we've heard stories about people who live in other parts of the world, far away, where everybody's not a Christian. And if somebody becomes a Christian, you can get, you know, kicked out of the family and shunned and maybe even threats on your life. And that's a real thing. That doesn't happen too much here in the U.S. In the U.S. we kind of just switch brands of Christianity, right? I switched from Baptist to Methodist to Adventist to Catholic. Right? And family might not be thrilled with that, but nobody really threatens to kill you over that. Okay?

Our issue is harder because sometimes we accidentally let our family obligations and issues become number one in our lives, right? Who's supposed to be number one in our life? God. We all know that, right? We've heard that. We know that's the answer you're supposed to give. It's like when you're a little kid in Sabbath school, anytime the teacher asks a question, the answer is Jesus, right? And we know that God is supposed to be number one in our lives. And sometimes we can accidentally let family become number one in our life. And sometimes it goes kind of like this. There's a family reunion on Sabbath. So we skip church to go to the family reunion. Not a problem. But then it's my niece's first birthday party. We're gonna spend all day Saturday getting ready and all day Sunday at the party for a party she's not even gonna remember, cause she's one. And then it's my auntie's 40th wedding anniversary. We gotta go to that. And then it's grandma's 85th birthday. Don't wanna miss that. And then it's. And then it's. And then it's. And then Junior's in Little League. We gotta go to some games for that. Oh, he made the playoffs. We gotta go to that. Oh, he got selected for the All Star team. We gotta travel for that. He finally gets all done that. And now it's soccer season, and pretty soon your family obligations have walked you right out the door of church, and you didn't mean for it to happen. And if we asked any of those people what's number one in your life, Little league or God, they're gonna say God.

But to use a term that I've heard Pastor been using, and I'm gonna steal. Behavior is a language, right? Your actions speak louder than your words sometimes. And I'm not saying it's wrong to sometimes miss a church function to go to a family event. Those things are gonna happen. We've gotta be careful to stay in balance.

Remember a couple weeks ago we talked about being way over there, way over there. We gotta stay in balance and not let those things accidentally build up on us. Okay, let's look and see what the Bible says. Let's go to **Luke 14**, see if I can still find anything in this new Bible here. Luke 14. Starting at verse 25, *large crowds were traveling with Jesus. And turning*

*to them, he said, if anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, even their own life, such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.*

And he goes on to talk about, if you want to build a tower, you're going to count the cost and make sure you have enough money to do it. If you're going to wage war against another king, you're going to strategize and make sure you have some chance of winning this war before you start it. Right? And it ends with, in verse, the end of verse 35. *Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.*

Wow, Jesus just said you're supposed to hate your parents. That's what it said. You read it? I didn't make it up. And by the way, there's other examples where it says that we're not going to look at all them today, but you can do the homework later. How do we deal with that?

Now, I don't speak the original languages that the Bible was written in. Most days I barely get by in English, so. But I was looking this up and this word 'hate' that is used here, it's a decent translation from the original language into ours, but the original word had more nuanced meanings. It's like us and the word love, right? Because I love hot dogs and I love my mother. It's not quite the same, right? And so this word hate that they have, it could mean hate like we understand hate. I hate my enemies or whatever. I hate the Raiders or whoever Your team isn't. Right, Whatever. Right, we understand that. But this other understanding, we don't have a good word for that in English. And it kind of translates into something kind of like, if you're not for me, you're against me. Right? And Jesus is saying, if you've put your parents or your brothers or sisters or even your own life before me, you're not worthy to be my disciple. It's not hate. Like, hate your neighbor. Okay.

But that's kind of interesting, right? Who is number one in your life? Not just because you know the right answer, God, but because he really is number one in your life. And there's a lot of nuances there. And we could spend a lot of time here, but we need to be intentional about who is first in our life. We get off track pretty easy. And like I said, missing church once in a while to go to a family reunion is not a sin. At least I don't think it's a sin. But we need to be careful to stay on track, because I've watched it happen in this very church. And people that aren't here anymore because they got so involved in doing other things, so it can happen.

All right, the next one is a lot easier. So you can put away the pitchforks and the torches now. All right, number three, **possessions**. Possessions. And if you've been around church at all, you know, we're not supposed to love money or make idols. And we get out of balance and we make idols out of our possessions. And it's not that we're worshiping them,

but we spend so much time chasing them and so much time trying to earn money to acquire them that they become more important than God.

All right, you've got your Bibles open. Let's go to Mark. Mark, chapter 10. And this is a story that we know pretty well, I think, if you've been around church at all. **Mark 10.** Let's start with verse 17. By the way, this story is recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and they read almost exactly the same. But we're going to read from Mark 10 today, starting with verse 17. *And as Jesus started out on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. Good teacher, he said, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Why do you call me good? Jesus answered, no one is good except God alone. You know the commandments. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You should not steal. You should not give false testimony. You shall. You should not defraud. You should honor your Father and mother, teacher, he declared, I have kept all these since I was a boy. Jesus looked at him and loved him. One thing you lack, he said. Go and sell everything you have. Give to the poor. And you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me. At this, the man's face fell because he went away. Sad because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. Than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God. The disciples were even more amazed and said to each other, who then can be saved? Jesus looked at them and said, with man, this is impossible. But not with God. All things are possible with God. Then Peter spoke up and said, we have left everything to follow you. Truly, I tell you. Jesus replied, no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields or for me. And the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age. Homes, brother, sisters, mother, children, fields, along with persecutions. And in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.*

Now, I love it where Jesus loves him. He stopped and looked at him and loved him. And that line, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. I had read somewhere years ago that there were small gates in the city walls, right? The city had the big gate that they would lock at night to secure the city and then there were small gates that, like, one person could squeeze through and that they called those the Eye of the Needle. I don't believe that to be true anymore. There were small gates in a lot of cities. Those gates did exist because they're easily defendable. If an army comes and they're coming through the gate one at a time, well, you just stand there with a sword and, you know, poke them. When each one comes in, you know, it's easy to defend. So those gates did exist so that you could come and go at night. But we have no archaeological reference that they were ever called the Eye of the Needle. Some of them had names. It was the Gate of Joseph or the Gate of this, or

it's by a lake, so it's called the gate with that lake name. They're not called the Eye of the Needle.

Now, there was a popular saying at the time that people would say it's as impossible as putting an elephant through the eye of a needle. And apparently Jesus took that saying and kind of contextualized it for the Middle East because there's no elephants in Israel, and said, it's as hard as a camel to go through the eye of a needle. He's using hyperbole, right? Because it's impossible if you try and do it. I can't do it. It's impossible. There is no way to put a camel through the eye of a needle, okay?

Now, Jesus is not saying that everybody has to be destitute to be a Christian. You have to sell everything to be a good Christian. But this gentleman had a problem with what was number one in his life. And what was number one is wealth. And Jesus said, well, if you can get rid of the wealth and make me number one, you don't have to be poor. There were lots of rich followers of God in the Bible, right? But you can't let those riches come first. It's God has to be first.

Don't let your possessions and the work required to obtain them and keep them keep you from finding rest on the Sabbath.

Number two, we work our way down. **Positions or public acceptance.** These kind of the same positions might be a work position, right? We talked about this. You want to work your way up. I want that office in the corner that comes with the big check and the stock options and the company car. Right? And so we work overtime and extra time and nights and weekends and Sabbaths and Sundays and anytime we can put more work in so that we can be ahead of the other guy and get that promotion.

And it doesn't always have to be work. It could be just public acceptance for something. Maybe you want to be the leader of the PTA at your local school or the leader of the HOA in the neighborhood. Maybe you want to get into some city politics and you're going to be a council person in your local city council. Maybe even it could be a church leader. What? Being a church leader can be a problem? They can be. The Pharisees had problems with it because they weren't in it to teach the people. They were in it for the position and the money. Unfortunately, I haven't figured out how to make any money out of this position yet. So apparently I'm doing it wrong.

Remember the story of Nicodemus? We're not going to look it up today, but I put the references there on your notes. You can look it up. We hear about Nicodemus three times in the Bible, and that's it. The first time there in John 3 is when he comes to Jesus at night and he has a question for Jesus, right? And Jesus tells him, hey, you've got to be born again. And he says, how do I do that? I can't get back in my mother's womb. And Jesus very gently

corrects him. Look, you're a teacher. You're supposed to know this. And he corrects him and guides him. But Nicodemus comes in the darkness at night. Nicodemus was a Pharisee. He was one of the Jewish ruling class. And the Jewish ruling class didn't like Jesus all that much. So he had to sneak around.

In John 7, this is when the Jews are starting, the Pharisees are starting to get pretty serious about going after Jesus. And they're in their courts and they're talking about, we got to find Jesus and kill him. And Nicodemus says, wait a minute. Do our own laws convict somebody without even hearing from someone? Don't we need to listen to him and hear what he has to say? He kind of stands up for Jesus a little bit. Not a lot, but a little bit. And then John 19, we know is at the end of Jesus life, after he's been crucified, that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea get Jesus' body down and bury him before Sabbath. And we see a man who goes from the cover of darkness to saying a little something, to being so bold as to go to Pilate. And everybody was watching them take down the body of Jesus and bury him.

We don't know what happened to Nicodemus. He's not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible. We have no records of him in any archaeological, reliable archaeological papers or documents that we found. I suspect it was hard for him to continue his work as a Pharisee, but maybe we see a man who grew and learned a little bit, who started out as being more concerned about his position, but ended up in a spot where he was willing to put that aside for God. And it gives the rest of us a little bit of hope. Amen.

Don't let your positions keep you from God.

Number one. The biggest reason or the biggest thing that keeps us from God. Numero uno [me], right? I'm worried about me. I'm worried about what we're going to eat tonight. I'm worried about whether the Dodgers are going to win or not. I'm worried about all kinds of stuff. And hopefully somewhere in there, I'll try and figure out if I got a minute to think about God. Does that sound like we're putting God first in our lives? Not really. Not really.

If I'm the problem, that must mean Jesus is not the problem, right? So how do we find Jesus? Do you remember when the Bible says, behold, I stand at the door and knock. Where is that? Where is that? Revelation 3. Let's turn to Revelation 3. Now in Revelation 3, John is in vision and he's getting visions. And the angels talking to him about the different churches. And there's a message to each of the churches. This is prophecy. We also understand now that these are not just the local churches, but churches through time. And so Laodicea is the last church, and it's the church of the last days. We live in the last days. We are the church of Laodicea. So let's see what the angel says to Laodicea. Revelation 3:14. *To the angel of the church in Laodicea, write, these are the words of the Amen God, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are*

*neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other. So because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I'm about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, I am rich, I have acquired wealth, I do not need a thing. But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire so that you can become rich. And white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness and and salve to put on your eyes so you can see. To those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. Here I am. I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person and they with me. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious, and now sit with my Father on his throne. Whoever has ears, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

Have we heard that before? Whoever has ears, let them hear. If it's repeated, what do we know? It's important. Jesus says, I stand at the door and knock. What does he want to do? Come in? He wants to have a relationship with you. But he's waiting for permission from you. Not me, not pastor, not your parents, from you. You are the only one that can control that and can do that. And sometimes we can be blase about the Sabbath. We're neither hot or cold. We're too busy acquiring wealth and doing our own things. We think we got it made. But Jesus says, I stand at the door and knock. And he's waiting for permission.

God's not playing some game of hide and seek. Remember, he says, seek and you shall find. Not seek and maybe you'll find. Seek and you might get lucky. No, if you seek, you will find. Okay? And that's actually in the Bible a couple of times. It's in the Old Testament twice and it's in the New Testament twice. But it's the same story, so it's kind of in the Bible three times. Matthew 7:7 says, *Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be open to you.*

God wants you to find him. He wants to be found. He wants to be a part of your life. He doesn't want to add chaos. We are the ones that make it hard and add to chaos.

One last text. Isaiah 58. Let's go to Isaiah 58. We're going to cover this in our small groups. I don't want to talk about it too much because we're going to talk about your small groups. Let's read Isaiah 58. Now, in Isaiah 58, actually most of Isaiah, the children of Israel are in trouble. They've drifted away from God. They're having all kinds of problems again. And God is talking to children of Israel through the prophet Isaiah. Okay? And this is what he says in Isaiah 58, verses 13 and 14. It says, *if you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day. If you call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord's holy day honorable. And if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find joy in the Lord. And I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.*

What are we supposed to do with the Sabbath? Honor it. To not follow our own desires, but to chase God's desires. Have you ever thought about that? What does God desire? I bet it's not a Dodger win tonight. Now, there's nothing wrong with rooting for the Dodgers, okay? But is that God's ultimate desire? I don't think so. And that's hard when my team is in and you want them to win. Right? What does God desire?

What was the original sin in heaven? What did Lucifer do? It was kind of his pride, right? I think that I'm as good as God. Another way to say is, I don't need God. I can do my own thing. I should be part of the Godhead, right? Numero uno. When we are busy chasing what we want instead of what God wants, what are we doing? Looks an awful lot like that Original sin. I don't need God. God said, I should be doing this, but I'm thinking this looks a whole lot better. God said, why don't you do this? And I said, more fun over here. That looks hard. That looks fun. Let's do that. And you're saying, I don't need God. I've got it covered. I can do it myself. And every time you say that, I think it ends in pain and chaos.

**Reflection. Is your Sabbath a time of calmness or of chaos? Does your Sabbath look like every other day of the week or does it look different?**

**Challenge. Prayerfully consider what is causing chaos and keeping you from finding calmness in Jesus. Then start eliminating those things.**

Seems easy. It's going to take work. What are those things that are causing the chaos in your life? Start learning how to deal with those, how to not let that bother you on something. Most of us need work. I don't think any of us are independently wealthy, right? So we need to work, and that's going to cause some amount of chaos. Learn to put that aside. You may be in a family relationship where there's problems, a spouse or another family member, and it's going to take a while to deal with those issues. Learn to put them aside. There may be lots of things going. There may be health issues. There's so many things that can be going on that you can't solve. They're not entirely up to you, and they cause chaos and they bring hurt and pain. But on Sabbath, can we learn to let him be for a minute? Because you know what? That problem's still going to be there on Sunday. You can pick it back up then, right? It's still going to be there. Learn to eliminate those things just for a little while and concentrate on the things that God wants.

And some of you are going, like, I have no idea what that is. You've got to come back. Because we're going to continue to talk about that.

Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father. Lord, in a world filled with the chaos and the mess that we have and the things going on, and it just seems like there's no end to the misery and the pain and the frustration, and we just want to scream, Lord, help us to find some calm. Help us to find you. And to be willing to give those things over to you because you said that you



would carry them. Help us to turn those over. Help us to identify what those are and to release those to you so that we can concentrate on. On spending some time with you and being with you and being more like you. Because if we can't be with you for a little while here on earth, how are we going to spend eternity with you? Lord, we love you so much. We want to be like you. And we struggle sometimes just accidentally getting off course. Lord, show us the way. Help us to find some calm. Help us to find you. Be with us now. In Jesus name, amen.