

The Rhythms of Rest

Rest without Rigidity series

by Bill Aumack

Have you noticed, and you probably have, that our world is full of rhythm, right? I mean, there's 24 hours in a day, seven days in a week, 365 days a year, sometimes 366. Our holidays always kind of come at a certain time, right? Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's. There's a certain rhythm to them as we come through the holidays. We might have a birthday or an anniversary. Some of us have a certain month where it seems like the whole family has a birthday or an anniversary in one month, right? For us, it's the month of May. Your months may be different, but, you know, there's that month that always shows up. And even at church, right, we celebrate Communion the last Sabbath of every quarter, four times a year, right? There's a rhythm to it. And even our very being and our very essence. If you were to hook an EKG machine up to your heart and you get that little graph of your heartbeat. They say every one of those is unique. It's like a fingerprint. There's a certain rhythm, certain cadence to your heartbeat. How we walk, there's a certain cadence. Some of us walk fast, some of us walk slow. The music that we play and sing and listen to has different beats. Could be 3/4 time, or 4/4 time, or 6/8 time. It could be fast or slow or somewhere in between. Some of the songs even change time signatures in the middle of the song. And I really hate those songs because they're difficult to play sometimes. The times we eat, right, we always eat supper at a certain time. And when you were young, that was late. And as you get old, that gets earlier. When we sleep, when we rise, even when we go to work, when we come home, even the traffic we sit in has a certain rhythm. It always slows down here, and it always speeds up over there. And this part of the freeway, I got to be in the fast lane. And this part of the freeway, I got to be in the slow lane. And you learn the rhythm of getting through the traffic. There's just rhythm all around us.

Now, of course, we've been talking about Sabbath and the rest that we can find every seven days in the rhythm that comes with that. And our message today is *The Rhythm of Rest*.

And I don't know if you've ever thought about the Sabbath that way, but this was an opportunity, a recurring rhythm to find some rest. And I'm not just talking about a nap. Naps are good, especially as your hair turns more and more white. I can nap anywhere now. You know, you ever, when you were young, you look at these old guys and say, how do they go to sleep anywhere? It's easy. Sit down, go to sleep. No effort involved at all.

But there's more to it than just having a nap, you know, I mean, we enjoy the weekends because we like having two days off, right? I don't have to go to work. I got some days off. And that's great, that's good. But sometimes we just treat that kind of the same. It's just two days off, and there's not a whole lot of difference between Saturday and

Sunday. But what if there was? What if it could be more than just another day off where I get to do my own thing?

So I thought we'd look to our example. Jesus is our example. So let's start there, right? Get out your sermon notes, get out your Bibles.

The first point we got here is that Jesus went to church on Sabbath. Right? **Jesus went to church on Sabbath.** Let's open our Bibles to Luke, chapter 4. Yes. Luke, chapter 4, verse 14. **Luke 4:14.** We're going to read part of this passage here. Everybody there?

It says Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. And the news about him spread throughout the whole, whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. He went to Nazareth where he had been brought up. And on the Sabbath day, he went to the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him.

All right, let's take a break there. Now it says that Jesus went to church on Sabbath. How often? Usually, it was his custom. Right. More times than not, he was in church on Sabbath morning. And I always just kind of took that. Yeah, great. Jesus went to church. Got it. Do you ever think about what the church service was like when Jesus showed up? Who was in charge of the church service? The Pharisees. Who hated Jesus the most? The Pharisees. Can you imagine what the Pharisees thought when they saw Jesus and his 12 disciples coming in? Oh, no, here comes that troublemaker. Jesus and his ragtag bunch of followers. They're going to create problems today. I mean, the tension in the air must have been thick, Right? They really didn't care for Jesus very much. All right, so let's keep reading here. Verse 17, the end of 16.

He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written, the spirit of the Lord is on Me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of the sight, the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the Lord, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began by saying to them, today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. Isn't this Joseph's son? They asked.

So how's church service going? Jesus stands up to read, sits down, and who's everybody looking at? Jesus. Can you imagine being the Pharisee up front and nobody's looking at you. They're all looking at Jesus sitting over there. How do you think the Pharisees are feeling? Not too pleased. But it says everybody spoke well of him. Everybody just was wonderful.

Right now, we're going to skip a few verses here. There's a section here where he talks about, basically, prophets are not well known in their own town. He talks about Elijah

and Elisha having to go outside of Israel. That's your homework to read those five verses. Let's pick it up in verse 28. So after Jesus tells that little bit. Verse 28.

And the people of the synagogue were furious when they heard this. Wow, that didn't take long to have a complete 180 turnabout, right? They got up, drove him out of the town and took him to the brow of a hill on which the town was built in order to throw him off the cliff. But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

What just happened? In the blink of an eye, Jesus goes from the hero to they're dragging him out to throw him off a cliff and kill him. Just crazy. I think church services were interesting when Jesus showed up. Well, we'll leave what happened there for another sermon.

But what we know is that Jesus and his disciples went to church on Sabbath. It was their custom. That's what they did. Okay, in the last verse of this chapter says, and he kept preaching in the synagogues of Judea. It's a good lesson for us. It's good to be in church on Sabbath.

Number two, **Jesus did good works**. And this one's going to get me in trouble. All right, just diving in. Some of us come from a tradition where maybe we spent all day at church, right? You get up, you go to church, you do Sabbath school. You do church, there's lunch, there's an afternoon program, maybe there's some supper, there's an evening program. We spend the whole day at church. And you know, that's not a sin necessarily. But the Bible doesn't tell us to do that. And in fact, Jesus doesn't do that. And he's our example. Now, I know people will say we've got to study the Bible, we have to get the word into us. Yep, I agree. Studying the Bible is good. Getting the word into your brain is good.

How many have saw the movie with Denzel Washington, the Book of Eli Anybody? Couple of us love that movie. About 2010, I think. And it's for those of you who haven't seen that, it's a post apocalyptic world. It's after this big world war, the place is destroyed and part of the battle was over the Bible. People were trying to use the power of the Bible to control the people. And all the Bibles got destroyed except this one. And Denzel Washington feels compelled to take it to a certain place. And as the movie goes on, at one point he tells his traveling companion this. He says, "in all the years I've been carrying it and reading it every day, and I got so caught up in keeping it safe that I forgot to live by what I learned from it."

It's good to study the Bible and get that into your head. But at some point you have to go live that you have to go do something about that. And if we're at church all day on Sabbath, you miss a great opportunity to do good. Now, like I said, it's not the world's biggest sin to be at church all day on Sabbath. But maybe at times we wanna get out and do things. Jesus did good on Sabbath. He healed people on the Sabbath. We know of seven specific times that he healed. And then it says, and he healed many on the Sabbath, so he healed a lot of people. So let's keep going here. Let's turn down a few verses. Same chapter Luke, chapter 4. Let's go to verse 38 and 39. Now what's

happened between this is Jesus has gone to some other synagogues and stuff. So verse 38, he left the synagogue. This is not where he just got thrown off the cliff. That's a different synagogue.

And now Simon's mother in law was suffering from a high fever and they asked Jesus to help her. So he bent over and rebuked the fever and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.

Now this is really kind of interesting to me, just from an engineer point of view. And I want to know what's going on, right? It's one thing when God tells a demon to get out of somebody or when he takes somebody that's got a broken arm or a bad leg and he heals that, but he rebukes a fever. What is a fever? What, he rebuked the temperature. What did he do there? Right? But it left whatever it was. And to me, that's just kind of an interesting that Jesus had control. You know, we think of him having control of the world. He's got control over a thing we don't even. You can't really figure out what it is. I mean, our fever goes up because we're fighting an infection. Usually maybe the infection left and the fever went down, I don't know. But anyway, that always interested me that he rebukes the fever and the fever left, okay?

Now, according to the Pharisees, this made Jesus a Sabbath breaker. Notice I said according to the Pharisees, not according to the Bible, but according to the Pharisees, because they had a whole bunch of rules that they had and Jesus was breaking them. It tells us later in Luke chapter 6, it says that *the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus. So they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath*, okay? Their concern wasn't about upholding the sanctity of the Sabbath. They were seeking to undermine Jesus credibility.

But the more we look at these accusations, the more that we learn about Sabbath keeping than we might have thought. See, because the only two things that they ever really accuse Jesus of doing on Sabbath is healing and snacking on some grain when they walk through the field. That's the two things that they base that he is such a terrible person on. Okay? They didn't accuse him of doing carpentry work on the Sabbath. They didn't accuse him of fishing on the Sabbath because, you know, that was the job of some of the disciples. They didn't accuse him of neglecting to assemble. They didn't accuse him of employing servants. And we could go on and on and on about the things they didn't accuse him of. Because as corrupt as they were, they couldn't make up those blatant lies that you would be able to prove false, right? And so many people say that Jesus was this radical guy and he came and changed everything and turned the whole system on its ear. And not really, Jesus did turn the whole system on its ear. But he really wasn't that radical. Jesus did what the Bible says to do every single time. I don't know. To me, that doesn't seem that radical. Maybe to some people that's a really radical thing. But he just kept the Sabbath according to the Scripture. Not the Pharisees, but the scriptural ways, right? And they couldn't catch him breaking any of the scriptural instructions for the Sabbath. And so they were looking for other things.

Now, remember, this group just shortly before was dragging him out of church to a cliff to murder him on Sabbath. So murder is okay, but heaven forbid you heal somebody or eat a couple grains, right? Jesus sheds a glaring light on their hypocrisy, right?

But good works isn't really just good enough. Because sometimes some of us have been caught in the battle of good works, right? It's like, oh, no, it's my turn to serve at church this week. I don't want to do it, it's so horrible. Or, oh, why did I sign up to go help at my school for half an hour today? I don't want to do it, right? If you're doing good works and your heart and your spirit's not into it, is it doing you any good? Sometimes we try and do good works because we think that, you know, if I do enough, I'm getting credits. God will have to let me into heaven because, man, was I good once He remembers all the times I did that stuff, Jesus. And we know salvation by works is not a thing, right?

So good works alone is not enough. You have to do more than that. And Jesus did more than that. **Jesus saw and loved people**, right? Jesus saw and loved people. Turn over.... We're going to stay in Luke, but let's turn over to chapter 13. Luke, chapter 13, verse 10. This is another story where Jesus heals on the Sabbath. Luke 13:10.

On a Sabbath, Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues. Where have we heard that before? It was his custom, right? And there was a woman there who had been crippled by a spirit for 18 years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. And when Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, woman, you are set free from your infirmity. Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath. The synagogue leader said to the people, there are six days for work, so come be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath. The Lord answered him, you hypocrites. Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath, untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water. Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, who Satan has kept bound forever 18 long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her? When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.

Right? Again, the Pharisees try to bring their own rules they'd established up to the level of the Scriptures, and Jesus wasn't having anything to do with it. But look at what Jesus says there, right? He points out that healing isn't breaking the Sabbath, but it magnifies the meaning of the Sabbath. Should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, who Satan has kept bound for 18 long years, be set free on the Sabbath from what bound her? I don't know about you, but can you imagine spending 18 years bent over? You can't even see where you're going. So you try and get your head up. Now your neck's cricked. 18 years. My back hurts and I've been this way for 18 seconds, right? This was an issue of freedom and rest, not work. And this helps us understand. When Jesus says, remember the text? We read it last week in our small groups. *My yoke is easy and my burden is light*, right? Sometimes that's hard to understand. But the Pharisees are piling all this heavy stuff on the people. Don't do this, don't do that, don't do this, don't

do that. And it was a big burden. And Jesus says, my burden is easy. You don't have to. Don't worry about all that stuff.

Now, The Pharisees had 39 things that they had identified that you couldn't do on the Sabbath. 39 doesn't sound too bad. Except each of those 39 things could be used thousands of different ways. For example, it was not good to hunt on the Sabbath. Shouldn't hunt on the Sabbath. And that seems kind of reasonable, right? Don't gather food on the Sabbath. We learned that in the desert with the manna, you gather your food before Sabbath. But see, now you can't swat a fly and kill it, because that would be hunting. Wait a minute, right? That mosquito that just bit you can't do that [smacks arm to kill mosquito]. Do you see why this was such a burden? You wouldn't even know what rule you were breaking, because they could make them up as they went along. And Jesus says, hey, we're not doing all that. We're not doing all that. His way is easy. He doesn't have that big burden. Okay. All right.

So that's well and good. But I don't think any of us here have the ability to miraculously heal people on Sabbath. And if you do, my back hurts. I'd like to talk to you after church. So what do we do? How's this a good example for us? I want to tell you two things that I kind of do. And this is what works for me. And if this doesn't work for you, or if you would do this differently, that's okay. This is not the only way to do it. This isn't the best way to do it. It's the way I do it. Okay?

So one of the things I do is I try and look at something and say, is this taking me towards God or away from God? Okay. If I'm worried about, you know, should I do this activity on Sabbath? Does this take me towards God or away from God? And sometimes that's pretty easy to determine, and sometimes it's not. Because we have a lot of things in our lives that we don't think of as either taking us to or away from God. Work or school are two great examples. I don't think about my work taking me towards God or taking me away from God. Now, you might have certain jobs that would fall into that category, but for the most of us, it's just work or school. I'm just going to school. So is that taking me towards God or away from God? I don't know. Right. So I still might not know what to do about it.

So then I go to level two, and level two, I like to imagine that I won the cosmic lottery. You ever heard of the cosmic lottery? No, of course not. It only lives in my head. The cosmic lottery is kind of like Powerball, except that you get to spend... Instead of winning a bunch of money, you're going to get to spend the day with Jesus. So if I won the cosmic lottery and I'm getting to spend the day with Jesus, would I do this activity with Jesus if he was here with me? Okay. And so if I won and Jesus come and hang out with me for me, I probably wouldn't say, hey, Jesus, grab a paintbrush. The trim on the house is looking a little rough. We're going to paint today. That's not what I would do if Jesus was spending the day with me. Right. I might not say, hey, Jesus, let's hop in the car. I got a bunch of errands to run. You know, my. My favorite show dropped on Netflix and I had to binge watch it. I'm a little behind, so we got to go to the pharmacy and the bank and this and that. I probably wouldn't do that if Jesus was hanging out with me for

the day. I mean, I wouldn't even do that if one of my friends was hanging out with me for the day, let alone Jesus. Right?

So what are the things that I would do if Jesus were hanging out with me? And if I'm brutally honest, why not? We've been honest so far. If you're old like me and you grew up in a pretty conservative church, you probably remember things that you weren't supposed to do on the Sabbath. Most famously, don't swim on Sabbath, right? You can wade, but don't swim. I've never been able to figure that out. Why from my knees down are so unholy that they can get wet. And everything from my knees up is so holy that it can't get wet. I've never been able to figure out what the reason is for that. And I can see me and Jesus hanging out in the pool on Sabbath afternoon, having a good time, chatting. I bet Jesus does a mean cannonball, right? I think that's okay. You may feel differently and that's okay, but for me, that's okay. Now, growing up as kids, we lived in rural areas. We rode our bikes everywhere. We did things. And on Sabbath, we were often encouraged not to ride our bikes too much because that was just like what we did all day, every day. It wasn't making the day special. Of course, as a kid, the only part I heard was, don't ride your bike. Why is this a sin? Right. Nowadays we would think that it's a perfectly fine activity to get together and ride our bikes, you know, down the river to the ocean or whatever.

So some of the things that I was traditionally taught I think do fine. If I win the cosmic lottery, I would do that with Jesus. I'd go on a bike ride with Jesus. Now, I might not enter a race, okay? I don't know how Jesus is going to ride a bike in that robe thing. But, you know, we'll figure it out, right?

So that's how I use to try and figure out how can I do and what can I do on Sabbath, and how do I take advantage of this rhythm of rest? So what are some of the things you could do? I've got a few ideas here. We're not going to go through a whole big list, but, you know,

- you could serve at church, right? It'd be a great way to spend Some time on Sabbath in an existing ministry, maybe you've got an idea for a new ministry. You and your friends want to start some new ministry. It'd be great.
- Some of us may volunteer at some other charity. We're going to go to the mission or the soup kitchen or whatever. It's good stuff. Some of us, you know, may want to do some other things.
- If we looked at what we see on our social media sometimes, maybe we could use some ideas from that. You ever seen people go out and offer free hugs? Why not go out and offer free hugs? Go to where the people are going to be. Go to Santa Monica or the mall or the park. Wherever people are going to be, offer free hugs. Who knows what may happen?
- Get a shirt that says, need prayer question mark. Tap me on the shoulder and see who taps you on the shoulder.
- Get a couple chairs and a little card table and set up a little thing that says, want to talk? I'll listen and just listen.

Connect with people. Jesus saw and loved people. How can we see and love people? Maybe you've got a neighbor that is difficult. I have a neighbor that's difficult to love. And every time I see him, Lord, help me to be loving, okay? And love your neighbor not because you want to invite them to church. Maybe that'll happen, but you love your neighbor because Jesus asked us to love our neighbors, not to manipulate them into coming to church. And they're going to see through if you're trying to manipulate them to get them to church, versus really loving them. Love your neighbors. Love people. Seek people. Love the people.

Reflection. Does the rhythm of Sabbath rest cause me to feel burdened? Or do I feel joy and freedom that real rest can provide? I'm just gonna throw this out there. If the Sabbath makes you feel burdened, you've been taught to do it wrong. And that's a shame. The Sabbath should never be a burden. I don't think Jesus ever woke up and go, oh, no, it's Sabbath today. I can't imagine that we shouldn't do that either.

Challenge. Try to find something you can do to help someone else on Sabbath. You might not be able to heal. I can't heal. I know how to work a Band-Aid. If that's the kind of healing you need, that's the level I'm at. But there's other things we can do to help people. Amen.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, help us to find ways to love our neighbor. I believe with all my heart, Lord, that when we find ways to love, that will bring a rest that a nap can never bring. That will make us feel good and make us feel rejuvenated because we are operating the way you designed us to operate. Lord, help us to find those things. Help us to have the courage to step out and do something different, to make a difference in somebody else's life. And maybe they'll ask us, why are you doing that? And we'll get to say, let me tell you about my friend Jesus. Lord, we thank. We're so thankful for the example that you left us. Help us to be brave enough to follow it. Be with us now. In Jesus name, amen.