

Stewards of God's Grace: August 2021

Stewarding our energy

How do you know when you are tired? What are the telltale signs that you need a break? Is it bone-deep weariness? Getting short-tempered? Feeling like you have nothing left to give? Not caring as much? Listening to the personal cues that tell us to take a break is critical to maintaining good mental, physical and spiritual health. Yet we know that it is not always easy to do so.

Look what happened to Jesus and his disciples in Mark 6:30-34. Jesus sent the disciples out on a mission calling people to repentance and bringing healing to many. When they returned *"the apostles gathered around Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught."*³¹ He said to them, 'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.³² And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.³³ Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them.³⁴ As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things." Jesus' attempt to go away with his disciples to discuss their mission experience and rest was foiled by the demands of the people to whom he was ministering. Instead of taking the planned break, Jesus responded to the needs of the day and gave himself to them. If that was all we had of the story it could be seen as a justification for ignoring our own needs for the sake of others. But a few verses later, Mark gives us another part of the narrative:⁴⁵ *Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.*⁴⁶ *After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray.*" Jesus is aware of his need for solitude and restorative time with God; he may have postponed his time of rest but he did not abandon it. Jesus knew the importance of self-care.



God has created us as creatures who need to eat, sleep, rest and renew. The rhythm of sabbath is woven into creation and all its creatures. Even the demands of family, work, church or community cannot override our need for rest and renewal. Our life is a gift from God and how we steward our energy determines our capacity to respond to that gift with grace and joy. Exhausting ourselves for the sake of God or others is not good stewardship. Making time in a day to pause and pray, creating space in a week to find sabbath and opening weeks in a year to rest and restore are all ways of stewarding our energy and honouring the gift of life. As Dr. Sandra Dalton-Smith says, "It's time we view rest as the gift it truly is, as something precious, holy and sacred."

We all need holidays. After all, the word holiday comes from the Old English word for holy days. Holy days of rest are what enable us to return to what God has called us to do and to be with renewed energy. Whatever the circumstances of your life, may you find some time each day to pause and pray. May you take sabbath rest and holy-days to find yourself restored by God's grace.

*To enter into a restful space, look at the photo above and find the person watching the sun set.

Written by the Ven. Cheryl Toth, Stewardship Officer, Diocese of Qu'Appelle