

HOLDING THE LINE

A Five-Part Men's Bible Study

Session 3 — Learning to Rest in His Grace

Main Passage: Matthew 11:28–30

Supporting Scripture: Genesis 2:1–3; Isaiah 40:28; Psalm 46:10; Philippians 4:6–7; Proverbs 3:5–6; 1 Peter 5:6–7

Main Idea:

Rest is not weakness. Rest is an act of trust. We stop because we trust that God can keep the world turning without us, and we surrender control because we finally admit that it was never ours to begin with.

OPENING

Last week we talked about standing your post.

God has entrusted things to each of us.

Our marriages.

Our children.

Our work.

Our integrity.

Our responsibilities.

We have a section of the wall to build and defend.

But there is a danger in that message if we don't understand something else.

A man can become so focused on responsibility that eventually he begins believing:

Everything depends on me.

If I don't fix it, nobody will.

If I'm not there, everything will fall apart.

If I don't worry about it, who will?

If I don't control the outcome, something terrible might happen.

That sounds like responsibility.

Sometimes it even looks like responsibility.

But eventually responsibility can turn into something else:

Control.

And control is exhausting.

Because we're trying to do a job God never gave us.

1. EVEN GOD RESTED

Read Genesis 2:1–3.

Creation is finished.

The heavens.

The earth.

The land.

The sea.

The animals.

Human beings.

Everything God intended to make had been made.

Then Scripture says:

“And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.”

God rested.

But we need to understand something.

God wasn't tired.

Isaiah 40:28 tells us:

“The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary.”

God didn't rest because His strength ran out.

God rested because the work was complete.

And in doing so, He established a pattern for us.

Work matters.

So does rest.

There is a time to build.

There is a time to fight.

There is a time to work.

And there is a time to stop.

If the God who does not become weary established a pattern of rest, what makes us think creatures who do become weary can ignore it?

Sometimes we act as though stopping is irresponsible.

“I can't take a day off.”

“I can't turn the phone off.”

“I can't stop thinking about work.”

“I can't leave this until tomorrow.”

“I can't step away.”

Why?

Who was running the world before you got here?

And who will be running it after you're gone?

You matter.

Your work matters.

Your responsibilities matter.

But you are not God.

That should humble us.

It should also be incredibly freeing.

2. JESUS INVITES TIRED PEOPLE TO HIM

Read Matthew 11:28–30.

Jesus says:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Notice what He doesn't say.

He doesn't say:

Try harder.

Carry more.

Get tougher.

Figure everything out.

He says:

Come to Me.

But then Jesus says something interesting:

“Take my yoke upon you...”

A yoke is used for work.

So Jesus isn't offering a life without responsibility.

He's offering a different way of carrying responsibility.

That's important.

Christian rest isn't laziness.

It isn't abandoning your family.

It isn't neglecting your responsibilities and saying:

“God will handle it.”

Jesus still gives us a yoke.

There is still work.

There is still responsibility.

There is still obedience.

But He says:

“My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Maybe some of the weight we're carrying feels unbearable because some of it was never ours to carry.

3. SOME THINGS ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Session 2 was about this.

You have a post.

You have responsibilities God has actually placed in your hands.

You are responsible for your actions.

Your words.

Your effort.

Your preparation.
Your integrity.
Your obedience.
How you treat your wife.
How you raise your children.
How you conduct yourself at work.
How you respond when you're wrong.
Whether you tell the truth.
Whether you forgive.
Whether you pray.
Whether you show up.
Those things belong to you.
Grace does not excuse us from responsibility.
But there is another category.

4. SOME THINGS BELONG TO GOD

You are not responsible for everything.
You cannot control tomorrow.
You cannot control another person's heart.
You cannot force your children to make good decisions.
You cannot make somebody forgive you.
You cannot control whether somebody likes you.
You cannot guarantee your business succeeds.
You cannot guarantee your marriage never faces hardship.
You cannot prevent every tragedy.
You cannot rewrite yesterday.
You cannot know everything that will happen next year.
And you cannot control the final outcome of every situation.
Yet we spend enormous amounts of energy trying.
We worry.
We manipulate.
We replay conversations.
We imagine every possible outcome.
We create backup plans for backup plans.
We try to anticipate every possible problem.
Then we lie awake at two o'clock in the morning trying to solve something that hasn't happened yet.
That's exhausting.
And sometimes the reason we're exhausted isn't because God gave us too much to carry.

It's because we picked up things He never handed us.

5. WE GIVE IT TO GOD—THEN TAKE IT BACK

Most Christian men know we're supposed to give our burdens to God.

1 Peter 5:7:

“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”

So we pray.

“God, I'm giving this to You.”

Then fifteen minutes later:

We're worrying about it again.

Planning around it.

Trying to control it.

Replaying it.

Imagining it.

Manipulating circumstances around it.

Then we pray again:

“God, I'm giving this to You.”

And twenty minutes later we take it back.

We can spend years doing this.

Sometimes we're fighting God for control over something we never controlled in the first place.

Think about the absurdity of that.

We're wrestling something out of God's hands so we can put it back into ours.

Then we're surprised when it's heavy.

There is a difference between concern and control.

Concern says:

“This matters to me.”

Control says:

“Therefore I must determine the outcome.”

Those aren't the same thing.

6. TRUST DOESN'T MEAN YOU DON'T CARE

Sometimes men resist surrender because surrender sounds like giving up.

It isn't.

If your child is struggling, you care.

If your marriage is hurting, you care.

If your business is in trouble, you care.

If someone you love is sick, you care.

If your future is uncertain, you care.

God isn't asking you to become indifferent.

He's asking you to trust Him.

Proverbs 3:5–6 says:

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.”

That means there will be moments when we don't understand.

There will be moments when God's plan doesn't look like ours.

There will be moments when we've done everything we know to do and still don't know how the story ends.

That's where trust actually begins to mean something.

It's easy to say:

“I trust God”

when everything is going according to plan.

Trust becomes real when we can say:

“God, I don't know what You're doing, but I know who You are.”

7. BE STILL

Psalms 46:10 says:

“Be still, and know that I am God.”

That may be one of the hardest commands in Scripture for some men.

Be still.

We want to move.

Fix.

Build.

Fight.

Solve.

Plan.

Do something.

Sometimes action is exactly what God requires.

Next week we're going to talk about that.

But sometimes God says:

Be still.

Why?

“And know that I am God.”

Not you.

Me.

There's humility in rest.

Rest says:

The world can continue without my involvement for a little while.

Rest says:

God is working even when I'm not.

Rest says:

I don't have to understand everything tonight.

Rest says:

This problem will still be there tomorrow, and that's okay.

Rest says:

I can sleep because God doesn't.

8. WORRY FEELS LIKE WORK

This is worth recognizing.

Worry can make us feel productive.

We think:

If I'm thinking about the problem, I'm doing something about the problem.

Not necessarily.

Sometimes you're just exhausting yourself.

Philippians 4:6–7 tells us:

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

Then comes the promise:

“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Notice that Paul doesn't promise:

Every problem disappears.

Every prayer gets answered exactly the way you requested.

Every situation immediately makes sense.

He promises something different.

Peace in the middle of uncertainty.

That's grace.

Sometimes God changes the situation.

Sometimes God changes us while we're standing in it.

9. REST REQUIRES TRUST

Anybody can rest when everything is finished.

Biblical rest becomes harder when things remain unresolved.

The bills aren't all paid.

The conversation hasn't happened.

The diagnosis hasn't changed.

Your child hasn't come home.

The business problem isn't solved.

The relationship isn't repaired.

You still don't know what happens next.

And God says:

Rest.

That's where rest becomes an act of faith.

You're saying:

"God, I've done what belongs to me today. What remains belongs to You."

That's not irresponsibility.

That's recognizing the chain of command.

There are things under your authority.

And there are things above your pay grade.

Wisdom means knowing the difference.

10. MINE TO CARRY — GOD'S TO CARRY

This week, we're going to make this practical.

Take a sheet of paper.

Draw a line down the middle.

On the left write:

MINE TO CARRY

On the right:

GOD'S TO CARRY

Under Mine to Carry, you might write:

My actions.

My effort.

My preparation.

My attitude.

My integrity.

My words.

My boundaries.

My obedience.

My repentance.

My forgiveness.

My response.

Then under God's to Carry:

The outcome.

Tomorrow.

Other people's opinions.

Other people's hearts.

Other people's choices.

Things outside my control.

The past.

Things I cannot change.

Questions I cannot answer.

The timing.

Then look at those two columns.

Which things in God's column do you keep reaching across the table to take back?

Because those may be the things wearing you out.

11. REST ALSO MEANS ACTUALLY RESTING

We shouldn't spiritualize this so much that we forget something obvious.

Your body needs rest.

God designed it that way.

You need sleep.

You need periods when you're not working.

Your family needs time when they aren't competing with your phone.

Your wife needs your attention without sharing you with everyone who can send you a text.

Your children need memories of you being present, not simply memories of you providing.

There will always be another email.

Another customer.

Another project.

Another problem.

Another opportunity.

Another dollar to make.

Eventually we have to decide:

When is enough enough for today?

Rest doesn't happen accidentally.

If you don't protect it, something else will consume it.

Sometimes you have to shut the door.

Turn off the phone.

Go home.

Sit down.

Be present.

And trust that whatever didn't get finished today can survive until tomorrow.

12. GRACE MEANS YOU DON'T HAVE TO EARN EVERYTHING

There's another kind of control men struggle with.

We like earning things.

We understand transactions.

Work harder.

Get stronger.

Learn more.

Make more money.

Become better.

Produce results.

Then we bring that same mentality into our relationship with God.

We begin believing:

If I pray enough...

If I behave well enough...

If I work hard enough...

If I serve enough...

Maybe I'll finally be good enough.

But grace destroys that equation.

You cannot earn grace.

That's why it's grace.

Your salvation isn't based on your performance.

Your identity isn't based on your productivity.

God's love isn't something you clock in and earn by the hour.

There is tremendous rest in finally understanding:

I don't have to prove my worth to God.

Christ has already done what I could never do for myself.

And when a man begins understanding grace, something changes.

He can work hard without believing his work determines his worth.

He can fail without believing he's worthless.

He can succeed without believing he's God.

And he can rest without feeling guilty.

DISCUSSION

Take your time with these.

1. Why is rest difficult for men?
2. Do you ever feel guilty when you're not being productive? Why?
3. What responsibility are you carrying right now that legitimately belongs to you?
4. What burden are you carrying that actually belongs to God?
5. When you give something to God, what usually causes you to take it back?

Fear?

Impatience?

Pride?

Distrust?

Habit?

6. What are you currently trying to control that you don't actually control?

7. Where has worry convinced you that you're being productive when you're actually just exhausting yourself?

8. When was the last time you intentionally rested without feeling like you needed to justify it?

9. Is there something unresolved in your life that you need to be able to say about tonight:

"I've done what belongs to me. The rest belongs to God."

And finally:

What is sitting in God's column that you keep reaching across the table to take back?

SCRIPTURE TO CARRY THIS WEEK

Matthew 11:28

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Psalms 46:10

"Be still, and know that I am God."

1 Peter 5:7

"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

These three verses give us a simple progression:

Come.

Be still.

Let it go.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE — PUT IT BACK IN GOD'S HANDS

Complete the Mine to Carry / God's to Carry exercise.

Be honest.

Then choose one thing from God's column that you have repeatedly tried to control.

Every morning this week, name it specifically in prayer.

Not:

"God, help me with everything."

Name it.

"God, I'm giving You _____."

Then add:

"Show me what belongs to me today. Give me the courage to do that faithfully. And give me the faith to leave the rest with You."

When you catch yourself taking it back—and you probably will—don't beat yourself up.

Put it back.

Again.

And again.
And again.
That's part of learning trust.
Then choose one deliberate period of physical rest this week.
An evening.
A morning.
A Sabbath period.
Turn the phone off if you can.
Don't work.
Don't solve anything.
Be with your family.
Go outside.
Read Scripture.
Pray.
Sit quietly.
Rest.
And when your mind tells you:
"You should be doing something..."
Remind yourself:
God is still God while I'm sitting here.

CLOSING THOUGHT

You have a post.
Stand it.
You have responsibilities.
Handle them.
You have work.
Do it well.
But don't confuse faithfulness with control.
You cannot control every outcome.
You cannot fix every person.
You cannot prevent every hardship.
You cannot carry tomorrow today.
And you were never asked to.
Somewhere along the way, every man has to learn to say:
"This belongs to God."
Then leave it there.
You may have to say it a hundred times.

You may have to surrender the same thing tomorrow.

That's okay.

We're learning.

Because rest isn't simply stopping work.

Rest is trusting God enough to stop trying to do His job.

Do yours faithfully.

Let God handle His.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father,

We admit that we like control.

We want to know what's going to happen.

We want to fix the people we love.

We want to protect our families from every hardship.

We want our plans to work.

We want answers.

And sometimes, Father, we fight You for control over things that were never ours to control.

Forgive us.

Teach us to recognize the difference between responsibility and control.

Show us what belongs in our hands and what belongs in Yours.

Give us courage to handle our responsibilities faithfully.

Give us wisdom to know our limitations.

And give us enough trust to place everything else into Your hands and leave it there.

When we take it back, remind us to surrender it again.

When worry keeps us awake, remind us that You are still awake.

When we think everything depends on us, remind us who created the heavens and the earth.

Teach us to work hard.

Teach us to stand our post.

But also teach us to stop.

To be still.

To rest.

To trust.

Thank You for grace.

Thank You that our worth doesn't depend on our productivity.

Thank You that we don't have to earn Your love.

Thank You that Jesus carries what we cannot.

Tonight, Father, help us say:

I've done what belongs to me. The rest belongs to You.

And give us the faith to mean it.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

NEXT SESSION

Session 4 — When Faith Requires Action

There are times when God tells us to be still. There are also times when we've prayed long enough, prepared long enough, and waited long enough—and the next act of faith is to move.