

We've been in this series Road Rules because it's the season for road trips and vacations. I wanted to embark on this series so we could have imagery to take with us. Moses in **Deuteronomy 6:7** - Impress God's words in your hearts by "talking about them when you are at home and when you're on the road"

Isaiah 48:17

This is what the LORD says--your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is good for you and leads you along the paths you should follow."

Just as Jesus asked his disciples to follow Him, God has extended to same invitation to humans throughout history. And following God isn't done in a moment, it's a lifelong journey. And that journey comes with rules for the road, namely principles in scripture that help us in our pursuit of Christ.

This isn't self help. These are keys that should help us die to self. This is help as we deny ourselves, take up our cross, & follow Christ.

Road Rule #6 – Host a Bonfire. Make a burn list.

"Fire" by Judy Brown

*What makes a fire burn is space between the logs... a breathing space.
Too much of a good thing, too many logs packed in too tight
can douse the flames almost as surely as a pail of water would.
So building fires requires attention to the spaces in between, as much as to the wood.
When we are able to build open spaces in the same way we have learned to pile on the logs,
then we can come to see how it is fuel, and absence of the fuel together, that make fire possible.*

Jesus says that we're called to be the light of the world and He compares our lives to a flame. This poem reminds us - a flame will go out if we don't mind the space. In life, physicians would call that space "margin." Scriptures would call it "Sabbath rest."

When we forsake the space God gives us for rest, we do violence to ourselves. We suffocate our flame that's supposed to be a light to the world. As we fittingly call it in our culture in light of our theme: **we crash**.

Road Rule #2 – was about **guardrails**. Ways we avoid crashing. The commandments and accountability that helps us walk them out are guardrails.

Sabbath Rest is one of the commandments. Murder? Bad. Lying? Bad. Stealing? Bad. Sleeping with somebody else's spouse? Duh. Bad. Being a workaholic? Well... I mean we celebrate that. We like to hold up how hard we work.

Matthew 11:28-30

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.

“I'll show you how to rest” – we'll look at three ways tonight
“Unforced rhythms of grace.”

- Rhythm. *“I'll show you how to rest... work with me.”*
- Back and forth.
- Work and rest.
- Driving and pit stops

Driving tired doesn't just stink... it's dangerous.

Drowsy driving was responsible for 72,000 **crashes**, 44,000 **injuries**, and 800 **deaths** in 2013.

We crash proverbially and physically as we work. And it's far more than 72,000 annually. Some 225 million workdays are lost every year to stress and burnout.

1910- the average American slept **9 hours** a night.

Now it's less than 7. Why? Electricity. Bulbs. You no longer have to work by a candlelight.

Wayne Muller -

We can work without stopping, faster and faster, electric lights making artificial day so the whole machine can labor without ceasing. But remember: No living thing lives like this. There are greater rhythms, seasons and hormonal cycles and sunsets and moonrises and great movements of seas and stars. We are part of the creation story, subject to all its laws and rhythms

To surrender to the rhythms of seasons and flowerings and dormancies is to savor the secret of life itself.

Many scientists believe we are hard-wired like this, to live in rhythmic awareness, to be in and then step out, to be engrossed and then detached, to work and then to rest. It follows then that the commandment to remember the Sabbath is not a burdensome requirement from some law-giving deity- “you ought, you'd better, you must” – but rather a remembrance of a law that is firmly embedded in the fabric of nature. It is a reminder of how things really are, the rhythmic dance to which we unavoidably belong”

Here is this eloquent invitation to surrender to the rhythms we're subject to as part of the creation story. It echoes Jesus' invitation to *“the unforced rhythm of grace.”*

Going without this rhythm, going without rest... we crash.

We also call it **burnout**. Which is fitting. Our flame goes out because we didn't mind the space.

The poet **Judy Brown** would say we failed to mind the **space**.

Wayne Muller would say we failed to mind the **rhythm**.

Physicians would say we failed to value **margin**.

Scriptures would say we failed to value **rest**.

We see in the Gospels that Jesus didn't forsake rest. And it's most eye opening in the Gospel of Mark. Because Mark goes through Jesus' ministry at a breakneck pace. Some Bible scholars say that Mark tell his gospel in a hurry. His favorite expression is the Greek word for "**immediately**" which he uses 39 times. He even skips the story of Jesus's birth to dive immediately into his ministry.

But repeatedly there are *pauses* to give us glimpses into Jesus' solitude & silence with the Father. Jesus wasn't hurried. This is a man that valued naps. Who loved boating. Who would step away to pray and be in silence. Jesus wasn't pushed to a frenetic pace and crashing by his calling. (And his calling was kind of a big deal)

As Jesus said in our earlier text – I'll show you how.

MARK 6:30-34

3 things that Christ's rest shows us.

The rest Christ shows us:

KNOW WHEN TO CALL IT A DAY

One study on drivers found that a person who is awake for approximately 18 hours performs similar to or worse than a person with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.05 percent. On long road trips, nobody is superman. Nobody can operate without sleep. Don't be a hero.

But how often, as we journey through life, do we live like we need to be superman. We need to have his strength. Why? The weight of what's undone is heavy

Jesus left to withdraw as "*many people were coming.*"

What about the people who came, but too late? Or were there when Jesus said, "let's go rest..." There's a whole sermon to be preached on this...

It's no coincidence that John the Baptist is thrown in the midst. This man whose answer wasn't found in this life. This man to whom Jesus said "blessed are those who aren't offended by my ministry" – that many, but not all are healed.

Jesus knew his purpose. Jesus knew his finish line. To die on the cross for EVERYone. All, not just many, would be saved. Everyone tastes God's grace and goodness.

Eventually – giving into the weight of the undone and the demands of others and will derail your destiny. And this isn't a call to selfish living.

I don't think anyone would call Jesus selfish. Jesus died for the world!

The point is that if Jesus died for me, and He died for my family, when I manage my schedule, I can remember I don't need to. I don't need to work myself to death. I don't need to play Superman. As **GK Chesterton** said: We are "chief of creatures" but creatures nonetheless.

Knowing when to call it a day is tied to knowing our limits.

Ta'nehisi Coates – prominent author - his long form journalism, essays and books have helped shape our modern national dialogue on race. He left his position as a national correspondent with the Atlantic after a decade with the publication. In an article about his departure and the demands he'd been trying to live up to, it said:

“In the end, what looks like virtue—unbounded giving of oneself to the public—easily becomes a vice. The lesson for the public intellectual, then, is a lesson for each of us. To be faithful in our respective vocations, limits must always be observed: limits of capacity, limits of ambition.”

Practical application: Give yourself finish lines.

Many of you have jobs where you feel like:

“My work is never finished” or “My job is never done”

Advice I was handed in ministry that I've always remembered: ***“Create your own finish lines.”***

I need a daily finish line. Summer vacations serve as an annual finish line.

We need a weekly finish line. God knows this. God gave us one.

We don't rest because our work is done.

We rest because without it we'll never be at our best.

We rest because we can't do our work well if we don't.

The Rest Christ shows us:

ISN'T COMATOSE,

IT'S ACTIVE COMMUNION

In our culture we mistake activity for productivity. And we consider rest inactivity.

But we don't just need to rest. We need our rest to refuel us.

If we drive forever, we don't just run out of gas. The car does too!

“Do you rest or REFUEL? Attack recovery with the same passion as training, practice and games.”

As believers – do we refuel?

We should attack rest with the same passion as serving, outreach, and good works.

Why? Because it's as imperative as any other spiritual discipline.

Rest isn't a luxury, it's not extra credit, it's not something we do if we get to it-- it's a necessity.

Mark 6:30 - *The apostles returned to Jesus from their ministry tour and told him all they had done and taught.*

They came to Jesus focused on all they'd DONE. The tasks completed.

Jesus no doubt was so proud of his disciples. But he didn't say “good job.” He first said “let's rest.”

Vs. 31 - *Then Jesus said, “Let's go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile.” He said this because there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles didn't even have time to eat.*

For our culture this is initially counterintuitive.
Because we consider rest as **passive**. If you're truly driven you won't tap out so quickly.

Driven – the very word is passive in nature. Not driving. But driven.
We end up driven about by our business. Demands of others. The weight of the undone. The tyranny of the urgent. We're driven here, there, and everywhere by to-do lists and tasks.
Ultimately what and who is doing the driving?

Thomas Merton: *There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence... To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands. To commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to violence.*

Perhaps this reality is why the word for **busy** in Chinese is made up of two syllables = **"Heart/Death."** Taken literally, it means when you're busy, your heart is dead.

What I'm not saying? Work is bad.
Work is the other side of the rhythm of God's grace.
Work gives us life and purpose. It's God's good gift, to shape creation. To serve one another.
But to be hurried and busy can cause "heart death." To neglect the space suffocates the flame.

Like a dead battery, we need a new charge. Rest is just that.
It's not comatose. It's communion.
Rest isn't merely unplugging.
Rest is plugging into God.

And while it's important to remember *why we rest*. To recharge.
But I'd argue that it's equally important to remember *why we recharge*:
Rest isn't recharging so we can go back to being Superman.
It's reminding ourselves who superman really is. We aren't Superman. We're Jimmy Olsen.

Ps 46:10 – "Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted..."

We receive a call to be still. Why? To put God in his proper place.
The world will go on just fine when I stop to rest. Why? Because it's in God's hands.
Rest reminds us. In this way rest isn't some form of laziness, it's worship.

"I will be exalted." - Sometimes when we're finally still we realize what else we've exalted.
We're jolted by what we find sitting on the throne of our heart. Sometimes when I stop "doing" and simply listen to my heart, I realize that am not anchored to anything. I become aware that my very identity has become synonymous with activity.

Recently **Anthony Bourdain**, the beloved chef, travel personality, & documentarian committed suicide. In the articles I read on his life, one made a profound statement:
"Bourdain freely acknowledged that part of the reason he continued to work at such a frantic pace might have been a fear about where his mind might go if he ever sat still"

When we “be still” as Psalm tells us something profound happens.
Sometimes it shows us that being a workaholic can operate as the white noise we use to drown out unwanted emotions and our soul’s cry when it lives under the tyranny of lesser gods.

God gave the Israelites the command to rest at Sinai because they’d lived as slaves under the tyranny of Pharaoh. For generations. It had become their identity. *Work work work.*
His point? You are not a doing machine. You’re a child of the King.
God doesn’t want you to simply get work done.
He wants you to delight in Him, as He delights in you.
To step into communion.

He wants our rest to be more than a self-induced coma. He wants our rest to be communion.

The rest Christ shows us:

Leads to selflessness, not selfishness.

One way my generation has come to value unplugging is through what we call: “**Self-care**”
My generations spends twice as much as boomers on self-care such as workout regimens, diet plans, life coaching, therapy, and apps to improve personal well- being.
It has created a **\$10 billion** dollar self care industry.

Pros – And increase in self-awareness. An increase in emotional intelligence.
Trap – self-care that goes unchecked flows into self-absorption.

Christians should absolutely practice self-care.

But we should always remember - A faith that is solely inward focused is out of focus.

We aren’t called to be navel-gazers. We aren’t called to be absorbed or consumed by self.
Self-care is important, but it isn’t the end game for Christ-like rest. Compassion is.

Christ-like self-care leads to selflessness, not selfishness.

Caring for ourselves equips us to care for others.

This passage in Mark flows right into the feeding of the 5000...

How else does rest play a part?

Stillness is a prerequisite for presence

It turns out when you have time to do what our culture would call nothing-- walking around with your toddler, chatting with neighbors, we actually get to know the people around us.

You know... the people God is calling us to bless. That doesn’t happen when we live at breakneck speed and our only moments are escapes into exhaustion

Reaching people doesn’t have to be work. Sometimes it flows from rest...

We see reaching as outreach, service projects, drives and distribution...

Sometimes it’s more simple: slow down. Be present.

You’ll recognize the people around you that need to be fed what you have.

There's work for us to do.

Jesus ascended and commissioned us to make disciples, to share the Good News.

But God isn't filling resumes for the Messiah. He already died for the world.

We don't have to kill ourselves striving to save it.

We have to rest. The world needs rested Christians. Refueled Christians. Energized Christians.

Perhaps one of the ways we will burn and shine brightest in a culture of burnout is to live counterculturally – REST.

One of the ways we fail in that calling?

Neglect space. Suffocate the flame.

Lose margin.

Lose rest.

Help us to hear the invitation to rest that you gave your hard working disciples...

How often at the end of the day do you measure a day by its production relative to a to do list?

Not how close you felt to God

Not the people you impacted

Not the things you learned

Help us to give up our “artificial urgency” and stop living under the tyranny of the undone.

Help us to be still and know.

Help us to remember.

All you did on the cross.

You died for us. To save us completely.

We don't have to kill ourselves trying to play our part.

We can rest in the finished work of the cross...
