

LIFT SERIES

This series was also sparked by a **Eugene Peterson** passage in *Running with Horses* as he was bird watching at his Montana home and birds were pushing their chicks off a branch to fly...

There are so often many areas in life where God is pushing us into new life, new levels of maturity, or flying instead of sitting or standing... but we cling to branches.
He calls us to giving, but we cling to our resources and security.
He calls us to fasting, but we cling to our contentment.
He calls us to reaching, but we cling to our comfort zone.

None of the latter items are bad things, but when we cling to them as God calls us forward, we live with what Eugene Peterson calls “**untried wings.**”
Growth that is stunted. Potential that’s untapped. Purpose not fully realized.

I’m not sure there’s a more prominent or printed verse about wings than Isaiah 40:11-13:
*He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless.
Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion.
But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength.
They will soar high on wings like eagles.
They will run and not grow weary.
They will walk and not faint.*

Qavah [kaw-vaw’] – to wait, look for, hope, or expect.

David uses the word repeatedly in the Psalms when he speaks of waiting on the LORD.
The implication is counterintuitive:

Wait and you will soar. Rest and you will fly. Propel yourself by learning to press pause.

But here’s the thing: ***we don’t like waiting.***

Waiting for us is as counterintuitive for us as it is for those young birds to let go of their branch and fall toward the water... not knowing they will soar.

And so often the reason forsake pressing pause, resting, and waiting on God, it’s because we cling to the branch of our own efforts. Our striving.

And we live with untried wings of rest.

The result? We become rest-less. A people without rest.

A culture that binges on being busy produces **BURNOUT**.

A recent Gallup study of nearly **7,500 full-time employees** found that **23 percent** of employees reported feeling burned out at work very often or always, while an additional **44 percent** reported feeling burned out sometimes.

For this reason **225 million workdays** are lost every year in the US related to stress and burnout, and burnout accounts for an estimated **\$125 billion to \$190 billion in health-care spending** each year and has been attributed to type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, gastrointestinal issues, high cholesterol and even death for those under the age of 45.

Maybe you'd think its rooted in technology.

After all the invention of light bulbs and illuminated screens means we can forsake sleep with ease, which is why in **1910** the average American slept **9 hours** a night, and the center for disease control and prevention recently found that **1 out of 3** of us don't get **7 hours**

Why is that survey being done by the center for disease control?

Because a lack of sleep – literal physical rest – does damage to our bodies.

But this isn't because of recent technology.

In the writings of **Blaise Pascal** – a 17th Century Mathematician, inventor, theologian, and Renaissance Man- in observing the 17th century culture around him, he stated:

“Take away their diversion and you will see them dried up with weariness... it is to be ushered into unhappiness as soon as we are reduced to thinking of self and have no diversion.”

He said elsewhere – *“I have discovered that all the unhappiness of men arises from one single fact, that they cannot stay quietly in their own chamber.”*

Restlessness isn't a recent phenomenon.

It goes back to our earliest history.

It goes all the way back to Genesis.

Restlessness is rooted in **the Fall of man** as we're about to look at.

Finding a solution is about more than **health**.

It's about our **holiness**.

Rest is part of what makes us whole and holy.

We make all kinds of excuses to not rest.

One excuse I hear from all kinds of well meaning folks: *“The devil doesn't take days off.”*

My first thought is always - *‘Why is the devil your role model?’*

Jesus modeled for his followers, and he modeled for us- that we need rest.

Even God almighty in all infinite power, with no need for rest, models it for us with the 7th day.

What was the first holy object in the history of the world?

Not an object. Not a location. But a space in time. The 7th day. A time of rest that was holy.

“God blessed the 7th day and made it holy.”

Rest is holy. We need rest to be whole and holy.

Psalm 19:13

*Keep back Your servant also from **presumptuous** sins; Let them not have dominion over me.*

MSG – keep me from stupid sins, from thinking that I can take over your work.

You could argue that the Devil's first sin was one of presumption. Ascending. Taking over.

And the temptation the Devil presents to Adam and Eve was based on the same presumption:

Be like God.

And it shouldn't surprise us when the same impulse is within in us,

even when its hidden behind a “work ethic,” a “busy schedule” or a “full calendar.”

But we see the roots of our restlessness even more evident in their son: CAIN.

“I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth.”

It says he went East of Eden and settled in the land of Nod (which means wandering)
The very name of the city speaks to his spiritual condition. **Wandering.**

Wandering in the movies and literature has a romantic vibe to it.

Romantic wandering has a home to return to.

Restless wandering is a homeless wandering.

That’s why even the city Cain settled would be named “Nod,” which means “wandering.”
So many in our land named America live the same way.
We’ve settled into our home with the white picket fence in a good school district for the kids.
And yet we’re restless.
Our culture is rest-less in the truest sense of the word.

And a culture that binges on busy-ness produces **BURNOUT.**

The church isn’t immune. Its very leaders experience it.

20% of all pastoral resignations are due to burnout.

If there was a Mount Rushmore for pastors and preachers, **Charles Spurgeon** may be on it.
In 57 years, Charles Spurgeon accomplished 3 lifetimes of work. Every week he preached 4 to 10 times, read 6 meaty books, revised sermons for publication, lectured, edited a monthly magazine. In his spare time, he wrote about 150 books. Spurgeon shepherded the largest Protestant megachurch in the world (he knew all 6,000 members by name), directed a theological college, ran an orphanage, and oversaw 66 Christian charities.

But what most don’t talk about with Spurgeon – he spent the last third of his life out of the pulpit while he recovered from depression, anxiety and multiple physical ailments.

He himself connected his sickness and depression to over-work.

We hold up the accomplishments but fail to mention the cost.

As Mark Batterson once put it:

“you can do the work of God at a pace that destroys the work of God in you.”

We all feel this restlessness at some point. It may not be the same story of burnout.

But there’s a theme almost universal in all of us, place we all arrive at:

the end of what you can accomplish.

It may not look like a burnout story. It may spark a midlife crisis. It may cripple a marriage.
In healthy ways it can cause us to pivot, delegate, or loosen our grip as we recognize our limits.

Cuss in **“Managing Leadership Anxiety”**– burnout is more a matter of ***anxiety & relational isolation*** than workload. What does that mean? Rest is not just eliminating work.

But for many that’s our definition of rest. Not working. Doing nothing. Drifting. Vegging out.
You can’t just reduce workload and reduce burnout. You need to increase relationship.

In Abraham Heschel's essay on the Sabbath, he says of the word for rest in scripture: *"Menuha" which we usually render with "rest" means much more than withdrawal from labor and exertion, more than freedom from toil, strain or activity of any kind. Menuha is not a negative concept but something real and intrinsically positive.*"

Rest isn't just unplugging.

It's plugging into God.

You can do rest wrong, just like you can handle a phone wrong...

Cell phone - have to plug it in to charge it

Oh man, it's about out of battery... I can turn it off, but it doesn't charge it

It doesn't charge if you don't plug it in.

But that's how many of us treat rest. I'll just do nothing. Unplug.

And that's a facet of rest, sure. But it's an incomplete picture.

Rest isn't an absence of all things.

It's plugging into God.

As Heschel said, it's not a negative concept but something intrinsically positive.

He said elsewhere:

"Labor without dignity is the cause of misery.

Rest without spirit is the source of depravity."

Look at David's rest when he stayed home from battle that was the birthplace of adultery, murder, and more.

You can do rest wrong.

It's not just putting down. It's picking up. It's not just unplugging. It's plugging in.

Otherwise we'll never truly experience the renewal we need on a soul level.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:58 – *always give yourself fully to the work of ministry.*

The Q is - What do you picture when you imagine giving yourself fully?

At first thought that's high energy, high octane, take the hill and charge forward 24/7.

But in actuality that's not a recipe for giving yourself fully.

That's a recipe for fatigue and burnout.

Rest is part of giving yourself fully because a tired you isn't worth much.

Without rest you'll never be at 100%, giving of yourself fully.

The world doesn't just need rested workers in the workplace.

The world needs rested Christians.

Our command to love people – when you're tired you do a crummy job.

The Great Commission, to make disciples and change the world- it starts with "go" but our tired bodies too often reply with "no."

The world needs rested Christians.

Application:

Create finish lines: Weekly sabbath. Daily finish lines. Yearly finish lines to rest for longer periods of vacation if possible. We need to repeatedly take breaks from a life of perpetual output, to remind ourselves that God is in control and Jesus died for all our needs so we don't have to kill ourselves filling our calendar.

Because for some of you this may come off as pretty practical, but it's deeply spiritual.

We're all waiting on someone to look us in the eye and say "that's enough."
YOU are enough. You don't have to strive anymore.
It's OK to stop.

God reminds us this every time we rest.
The Gospel is that we aren't saved by works or work. It's by grace through faith. Not by works.
So we can pause and rest in God's grace.

It's why resting gives us wings like eagles.
It reminds us the weights we carry we can leave on the ground.

You don't have to be a restless wanderer.
Come home.
That's the good news of the Gospel.