

DEEP ROOTS BEARING FRUIT



# 2021 SUMMER 5-WEEK SERIES ADULT STUDENTS

**ALFRED STREET BAPTIST CHURCH**

Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley, Senior Pastor

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## JUNE-JULY LESSONS - ADULT STUDENTS

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**August 8, 2021**

**Lesson 1**

**Rest in Creation**

**Genesis 2:2-3 and Hebrews 4:9-11**

Genesis 2:2-3, NIV

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Hebrews 4: 9-11, NIV

9 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; 10 for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. 11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.

Genesis 2:2-3, NRSV

2 And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

Hebrews 4:9-11, NRSV

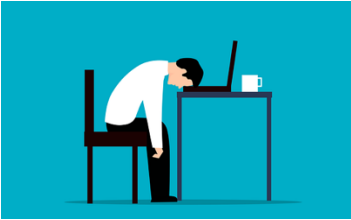
9 So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God; 10 for those who enter God's rest also cease from their labors as God did from his. 11 Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through such disobedience as theirs.



## Opening Video and Questions:

Watch the opening video: GENESIS Creation of the World - NLFC

Reflect on the images below. Describe what you see. How do they make you feel? What do they bring to mind? How do you believe they connect with today's lesson?



## Examining the Story:

Genesis 2:2-3 tells one of two creation narratives that appear in Genesis. The seven-day creation narrative has been pivotal to theological discussions and debates throughout the church's history. In the story, God rested after finishing God's work. The story also tells of God's protection of us. God's protection is partly why we can rest from our work, too. In fact, God always is our protection. Therefore, the rest that we gain should lead to a practice of worshipping God.

Church Father Chrysostom put it like this "You see, in saying at this point that God rested from his works, Scripture teaches us that he ceased creating and bring from nonbeing into being on the seventh day, whereas Christ, in saying that 'my father is at work up until now and I am at work' reveals his unceasing care for us: he calls 'work' the maintenance of created things, bestowal of permanence of them and governance of them through all time. If this wasn't so, after all, how would everything have subsisted, without the guiding hand above directing all visible things and the human race as well?" Homilies on the Gospels 2.17.

What did rest for God look like? Did this mean slumber? Did this mean resting from the work of creation? How can God rest and be omnipresent? What is rest when you are God?

We also can explore humanity's propensity to resist rest, especially in the Western world. Work and overworking often elicit great pride, but they can cause great harm as well. These types of questions and their implications are why this narrative continues bring important discussions.

**Breakthrough:**

1. I wonder what are some different ways that God speaks to us when we rest.
2. I wonder how God wants us to balance working hard and resting.
3. I wonder what rest looks like to God.
4. I wonder how God can be glorified in my rest.
5. I wonder how I can shift my perspective on rest if it's a negative one to a positive one.

**Discussion Questions:**

- How can we keep our hearts, minds and souls connected to God so that we hear when God is commanding us to rest. How might we interpret the virtue of working hard within the context of obeying God's call to rest.
- How can we be models of people who obey God's command to rest? What are the most effective ways to rest without pushing people away who desire to spend time with us?

**Life Application:**

Brainstorm and share ways that we can incorporate sabbath rest in our daily lives.

# Rest

How have you traditionally read the lesson's story?

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How do you see the importance of rest in the story?

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What inhibits or distracts your ability to rest as called for in the story?

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What steps or actions will you take in response to this week's story?

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## **Conclusion:**

Today's story explores what God did through creation and God's example of resting. The story helps us to ask how can we rest. How might worship be part of our practice of rest? God calls us to practice a sabbath day when we intentionally stop our work, and rest in God's creation and protection. Hebrews 4:9-11 states, "So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his or her works as God did from His. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience."

**Prayer:**

*Dear God, everything that You create is magnificent! From the stars, to the sea, to the land and the mountains, nothing that You create is without wonder. Thank You so much for allowing us to see You in all Your creation. Thank You for loving us so deeply that You would save us from ourselves, that You would love us when at times it is hard for us to love ourselves, for never turning Your back on us although we disappoint You daily. You mean the world to us. Lord, help us to find rest in You because in You we are safe. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.*





**August 15, 2021**

**Lesson 2**

**Rest in Relationship**

**Psalm 23:2-3 and Exodus 33:14**

Psalm 23:2-3, NIV

**2** He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters,  
**3** he refreshes my soul.  
He guides me along the right paths  
for his name's sake.

Psalm 23:2-3, NRSV

**2** He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
he leads me beside still waters;<sup>[a]</sup>  
**3** he restores my soul.<sup>[b]</sup>  
He leads me in right paths<sup>[c]</sup>  
for his name's sake.

Exodus 33:14, NIV

**14** The Lord replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

Exodus 33:14, NRSV

**14** He said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."



## Opening Video and Questions:

Watch the opening video: Psalm 23 Spoken – The Lord is my shepherd.

Reflect on the image below. Describe what you see. How does it make you feel? What does it bring to mind? How do you believe it connects with today's lesson?



## Examining the Story:

Psalm 23 reflects on the story of David and his view of God as a shepherd. David alludes to God knowing how to make his sheep rest when they are tired and drained. The psalm also describes the relationship David has with God in times of chaos but, more importantly, how rest is centered in that relationship.

The psalm helps us to know that God wants us to “lie down” so that God can restore our soul after it's tired. God knows that rest is an important aspect of our life. God also is concerned with ensuring that we have a good place to rest. God is concerned both with ensuring that we rest and making us rest in a location that is conducive to peaceful rest.

Exodus 33 shows that while Moses was expressing anger, frustration and confusion, God stressed the importance of rest. The story highlights how seriously we all should take the command to rest.

### **Breakthrough:**

1. I wonder how I might center God during rest.
2. I wonder how I can discern God's call to rest.
3. I wonder how my relationship with God affects my ability rest.
4. I wonder how I might learn to worship God through rest.

### **Reflection Questions:**

- How might we communicate the importance of resting to the world, when it consistently pushes us to work more days and longer hours? How can we resist the urge for unhealthy striving in a capitalistic society and instead embrace rest so that we can nurture our relationships with God?
- How might you use meditation and reflection to help you center rest in your daily life? What other techniques can help you to make rest a part of your daily schedule?

### **Life Application:**

Reflect on a time when you felt most at peace with God. When have you felt that your relationship with God was at its most vibrant? That time could be now or in the past. How peaceful did God make your environment, life, and rest during that time? How might we use rest to help us maintain a vibrant relationship with God?

# Rest

How have you traditionally read the lesson's story?

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How do you see the importance of rest in the story?

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What inhibits or distracts your ability to rest as called for in the story?

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What steps or actions will you take in response to this week's story?

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## Conclusion:

In Psalm 23:2-3, we see lots of metaphorical imagery for the peace, harmony and rest that we can have in our relationships with God. Being in an intentional relationship with God is full of benefits. Through this relationship, we find peace, security, wisdom, favor, and so much more. This is why finding rest in God is a no-brainer. With God, we are safe. So how could we experience unease in the safety of God?

However, we are human. So, at times we allow worry and dismay to enter our space with God. The results can negatively affect us in lot of ways. Restlessness is one result when we allow worry to overpower our belief in the safety that we have in God.

**Prayer:**

*Dear Lord, You are such a gracious God and we are amazed that You would desire to be in relationship with us. The creator of all that is holy would choose to call us friend and would sacrifice Himself for our good, His love that is beyond measure. Thank You for Your grace and mercy and thank You for all that You do for us, both seen and unseen. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*



**August 22, 2021**

**Lesson 3**

**Rest in Responsibility**

**Mark 2:27 and Psalm 91:1**

Mark 2:27, NIV

**27** Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

Mark 2:27, NRSV

**27** Then he said to them, “The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath;

Psalm 91:1, NIV

**1** Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High  
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

Psalm 91:1, NRSV

**1** You who live in the shelter of the Most High,  
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,



## Opening Video and Questions:

Watch the opening video: Sabbath

Reflect on the images below. Describe what you see. How do they make you feel? What do they bring to mind? How do you believe they connect with today's lesson?



## **Examining the Story:**

The story teaches us that Jesus and the Pharisees had different interpretations of the Sabbath. The Pharisees critiqued Jesus' disciples for what they considered work on the Sabbath. Jesus responded with a lesson about the Sabbath. Jesus taught that He is the Lord over the Sabbath. Therefore, we ought to keep him at the center of Sabbath to ensure we are observing it properly. The story shows that we can be intentional about Sabbath yet still miss why it was created.

We aren't to neglect work by over-resting or resist working six out of seven days of the week. We were not made for Sabbath. Rather, we are expected to produce using the blessings we receive. However, we also are to take intentional time to stop producing and focus on rest. Our rest should glorify God by ensuring that God remains our focus.

Psalm 91 helps us understand that we stay in tune with what God wants for our lives by abiding in the Almighty. God knows the type of rest and protection we need. Therefore, we must observe the Sabbath with Jesus at the center so that we can gain the rest we need for each time and season.

## **Breakthrough:**

1. I wonder how I might improve my sabbath practice.
2. I wonder how I might incorporate sabbath into my work schedule.
3. I wonder if I actually have to sleep on the Sabbath.

## **Reflection Questions:**

- Reflect on the importance of resting responsibly. What are some methods that help you center God in your rest as a form of worship?
- When and how do you dwell in the secret place? If you haven't designate a time, how will you try to do so in the upcoming week?
- Has God been Lord over the Sabbath in your life? How or why not?



## Life Application:

Think of a time when you found rest in your spirit. Where were you, and what were you doing?

# Rest

How have you traditionally read the lesson's story?

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How do you see the importance of rest in the story?

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What inhibits or distracts your ability to rest as called for in the story?

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What steps or actions will you take in response to this week's story?

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## Conclusion:

The Sabbath is a moment to rejuvenate our souls. During Sabbath, we center God in our day of rest rather than the traditions of people. We also must challenge ourselves to avoid becoming law-abiding oppressors regarding the Sabbath. Jesus Christ opposed any outlook on the Sabbath that oppressed others.

## Prayer:

*Dear God, Your instructions are for our safety, security, protection and benefit. So, we thank You for instructing us to be intentional about our rest. You call us to rest not only for rest's sake. Rather, You call us to use our rest as a form of worship to You. You want us to center You in all our rest, especially on the sabbath. Lord, continue to assist us in being intentional about rest when we live in a world that only desires our productivity. We are more than our work, so thank You for helping us to see that our worth is in You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.*



**August 29, 2021**

**Lesson 4**

**Rest in the Storm**

**Mark 4:35-41**

Mark 4:35-41, NIV

**35** That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." **36** Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. **37** A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. **38** Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

**39** He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!"

Mark 4:35-41, NRSV

**35** On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." **36** And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. **37** A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. **38** But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" **39** He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead

Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

**40** He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

**41** They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

calm. **40** He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?”

**41** And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”



## Opening Video and Questions:

Watch the opening video: Jesus Asleep in the Storm.

Reflect on the images below. Describe what you see. How do they make you feel? What do they bring to mind? How do you believe they connect with today's lesson?



## **Examining the Story:**

In Mark 4:35-41, we encounter a moment when Jesus' disciples are caught in a fierce storm. The storm frightens the disciples so much that they fear that their lives are in immediate danger. So they look for the only person that they believe can help them: Jesus Christ. Although they appear to go to the right place for help, they also appear to come to Jesus in an inappropriate posture. Instead of a petition of help, the disciples give an accusation.

Indeed, moments like these can cause us to panic and act irrationally. Our normal behaviors can escape us. We can recover when we remember that life's storms don't last forever. All storms—natural and otherwise—eventually end. So, we do not need to panic or despair. We can keep fear from controlling our thoughts and minds. How? The key is to continue to trust in God. As we do so, we can maintain our peace during chaotic circumstances.

## **Breakthrough:**

1. I wonder how I might train myself to rely on my faith in God during life's storms rather than react with panic or fear.
2. I wonder how I might fortify my faith so I will not question whether God cares about me and my loved ones during stormy times.
3. I wonder how Jesus was able to stay in the boat during the storm without worrying.
4. I wonder why the faith of the disciplines failed during the storm.
5. I wonder how I might develop the discipline to rest during chaos.

## **Reflection Questions:**

*Exercise:* Complete the exercise at following the video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8vkYJf8DOsc>.

- How can we incorporate deep breathing daily in order to reduce stress and anxiety?
- What are other ways in which we can find rest during life's storms?

**Life Application:**

Reflect on the stormy times of your life. Recall how you reacted. Did you question God’s care for you? What helps you to maintain trust in God’s care for you? How might you develop rest during chaos? What steps might you take to move towards rest instead of anxiety or fear?

**Rest**

How have you traditionally read the lesson's story?

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How do you see the importance of rest in the story?

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What inhibits or distracts your ability to rest as called for in the story?

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What steps or actions will you take in response to this week's story?

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**Conclusion:**

In the lesson’s story, Jesus’ disciples question whether Jesus cares whether they might die during an intense storm. Jesus does not immediately address their concerns. Instead, He calms the waves and the disciples’ nerves. After the calm, Jesus asks the disciples, “Why are

you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” While the disciples were worrying, Jesus was resting. So what causes us to sometimes become reluctant to believe that God will assist and calm us during a stormy season? How might we desire to react instead?

**Prayer:**

*Dear Lord, thank You that no storm changes the fact that You always care about our lives. You are with us through happiness and hardships. Whenever we forget this, please send Your Holy Spirit to help us remember. Thank You for Your mercy and grace. Without them we would be in continual chaos. We acknowledge that You desire for us to thrive and be strong in the face of opposition. So, we thank You for the strength that You give us to persevere. We are beyond grateful that when we are weak You are strong. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.*





**September 5, 2021**

**Lesson 5**

**Rest in Community**

**Mark 6:30-31**

Mark 6:30-31, NIV

**30** The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. **31** Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

Mark 6:30-31, NRSV

**30** 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.



## Opening Video and Questions:

Watch the opening video: The Feeding of the 5000.

Reflect on the images below. Describe what you see. How do they make you feel? What do they bring to mind? How do you believe they connect with today's lesson?



## **Examining the Story:**

Mark 6:30-31 describes a time when Jesus' disciples had finished teaching and preaching before a large crowd. Preaching and teaching was indeed a community effort, one that took incredible focus, time and love. The disciples had not even eaten after all this work. So it is understandable that the disciples would be exhausted. After seeing that the disciples were tired, Jesus instructed them to rest and fellowship together.

Jesus instructs them to gather together and go to a quiet place to get some rest. What is important to see is that Jesus instructs them to gather and rest in community, something that we rarely practice as adults. Usually, we rest individually. However, Jesus shows us that we also need rest as a community.

## **Breakthrough:**

1. I wonder how my community might practice rest together.
2. I wonder what benefits there might be in resting in community.
3. I wonder how communal rest might be practiced in the church.

## **Reflection Questions:**

- Reflect on a time when you and others engaged in hard community work. It might have been a time of teaching, preaching or other work. Did you and your colleagues rest together afterward? If so, what ways did your group rest? How did you feel resting in community?
- How might we consider rest as something that we do in community?
- How might we be intentional about developing regular communal time to rest?

- How might we lead communal rest in our homes and with our friends?

**Life Application:**

Identify a community or communities in your life. List names of people you feel safe and comfortable with in those communities. List ways you might rest in community with them. Pick a day to practice one of the things on the list. How might we rest in community right now?

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# Rest

How have you traditionally read the lesson's story?

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How do you see the importance of rest in the story?

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What inhibits or distracts your ability to rest as called for in the story?

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What steps or actions will you take in response to this week's story?

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**Conclusion:**

As members of a faith community, we work hard together. This important work glorifies God and shows how much God moves collectively. However, at times our work tires us out completely. The lesson's story shows us that when our work is finished, we should rest not only as individuals but also as a community.

**Prayer:**

*Dear God, what would we be without the gift of community? Your infinite wisdom shows us that it is not good for us to be alone. You want us to live in communal harmony because You are a communal God. We thank You for the friends, family, and loved ones that You have bring into our lives. We continue to thank You for those who are now with You in glory. And we praise You for those who are yet to come. Lord, continue to be our rock and our shield, our shepherd and our sustainer. Keep us close to You because there is no better place to be. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.*



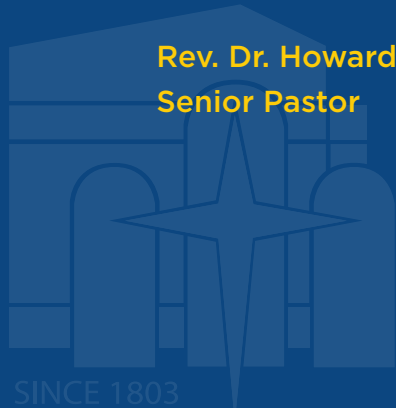
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Alfred  
Street  
BAPTIST CHURCH

parents went to Jerusalem every year at the  
five years old, they went up to Jerusalem accor  
ished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus  
mother did not know it,<sup>44</sup> but supposing Him  
ney, and sought Him among their relatives and  
y returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him.<sup>46</sup> Now so  
the temple, sitting in the midst of the teacher  
And all who heard Him were astonished at His  
n, they were amazed; and His mother said to His  
a father and I have sought You anxiously." His  
st of the Passover.<sup>42</sup> And when He was ten  
the custom of the feast.<sup>43</sup> When they had finish