

GROW. PRAY. STUDY.
First United Methodist Church- Weekly Study Guide
“equipping people in becoming deeply committed Christians ”

June 7-12: “Rest” [God's Recreation - A Summer Journey Thru the Psalms]

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30

“How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise. For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than live in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord God is a sun and shield; He bestows favor and honor. No good thing does the Lord withhold from those who walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, happy is everyone who trusts in you.” Psalm 84:1-4, 10-12

Our lives are chaotic and spent going from one activity to the next. We spend our time juggling our responsibilities and wishing somehow we could find time for some rest. The truth is, we just don't have time to rest!

Did you know God created us in such a way that we are better when we make rest a part of our lives. When God created the earth and everything in it, rest was a part of the plan. Why then, if God took time to rest, do we think we don't need to rest? We can only reach our potential as disciples and children of God when we are living in the image of the one who created us....and part of this image is rest. This week we will focus on God's plan for rest in our lives. We will take a look at what the scriptures have to say about Sabbath and rest and how to apply it to our lives today.

Monday Read Genesis 1:1-2:3.

These verses might have been used as a hymn or liturgy in ancient worship, in praise of God's activity, in addition to a reflection on the origin of the universe. Notice that for each day God first speaks creation into existence. Next, God makes what God intends, and finally God calls God's creation good. What does God say about the seventh day? What does God do? Notice God blesses and makes holy time rather than things. What does this say about God's priorities? How should we honor the work/rest rhythm in which God orders life? This week, whether it is a morning, afternoon, or entire day, surrender to a quality of time when you will not be disturbed. Notice how you respond to its absence.

Pray the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer

Tuesday Read Exodus 16:5, 22-26

How did God allow rest to be possible for God's people? Read Exodus 16-27-28. What did the people do? Why is it often hard to imagine that God will provide for us? Read Exodus 20: 1-11. Keeping the sabbath holy now comes from God in the form of a commandment. Notice that we are also commanded for the rest of those for whom we are responsible.

Pray the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer

Wednesday Read Leviticus 25:1-55

This is a long reading for today, but it is important because the principle of the weekly sabbath is now extended to a sabbatical rest set for every seven years for the land and what it produces. The principle is extended once again to seven seven-year cycles after which is to be the jubilee year. Once in the lifetime of every generation what one lost in debt could be recovered. The law also prevented capitalistic monopolies. Love and mercy toward one's neighbor lay at the heart of the jubilee law. Today intentionally let go of a grudge or forgive a debt. Pray a blessing upon the person to whom you extend forgiveness.

Pray the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer

Thursday Read Luke 6:1-12

To many people at the time of Jesus, the letter of the Sabbath law was more important than the spirit of the Sabbath law. In fact, the religious leaders of the time, the Pharisees, had 39 categories of activities that they felt violated the restriction against working on the Sabbath. Jesus made it clear that responding to the directive of God, to love and care for those in need, was greater than adherence to human-made interpretations of God's law. What is your attitude toward those in need? If your convictions prevent you from helping certain people think about re-examining your convictions in response to the example of Jesus.

Pray the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer

Friday Read Hebrews 4:1-11

While we don't know who the author of the book of Hebrews was, we can tell by reading this book that the concept of Sabbath rest continued on past the death and resurrection of Jesus and into the life of the early church. The directive in verse 11 encourages us to be intentional about appreciating and appropriating the provision God gave us for Sabbath rest. It is in the periods of resting and waiting that God has the opportunity to reshape and re-direct and reform us into the people He wants us to be. Think about what you need to rest from and what God is calling you to rest into today instead of following your usual pattern of prayer. Give some prayerful thought to the next step that God is calling you to take on your journey of faith. Could the next step be to learn how to rest and wait in His presence?

Pray the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer

Saturday Read Psalm 23

Today you will be reading the passage we will use in worship tomorrow. Pray that God will open your heart and prepare you for a powerful worship experience as we come together tomorrow as the body of Christ.

I invite you to pray the following prayer:

Dear God,

As I read this passage today help me do so with an open heart, sincerely listening for your voice in my life. Use this passage to prepare me for worship tomorrow. As I read it help me to set aside my own agenda and my own desires so that I may come to worship tomorrow prepared to be molded by you as I continue my journey to becoming a deeply committed disciple of yours. In Christ's name I pray, AMEN

Here at FUMC we believe part of becoming a Deeply Committed Christians is praying daily. If you find yourself struggling with what to say, we suggest you try praying Wesley's Covenant Prayer.

A Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low by thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven. AMEN