

The past few days many of our staff made it up to Cooperstown Bible Camp for our Fall Staff Retreat. I'm always amazed at how powerful it can be to be removed from our normal everyday rhythms, eat around a table together, and pull out a board game. The joy that laughter can bring! Of course, we looked ahead at this next year thinking about Vision, but our primary focus was on rest and replenishment. Why? Because healthy rhythms are important.

If we journeyed back to creation, we'd remember that while God has limitless power and energy, he set forth a pattern for humanity to follow. Day for work. Night for rest. And after six days of work, a day of Sabbath – to rest. And yet, I'm guessing that both the concepts of *Sabbath* & *rest* may feel uncommon to some, and confusing to most. I'll be the first to admit that I haven't rested well in this season. In fact, I was moving towards exhaustion, and I knew it. But thankfully, while I was sitting at retreat one morning, I felt the Spirit say to me, "*Seth, the rhythms of Jesus need real rest.*" What does that mean I thought? The Spirit was faithful to answer. Being a disciple isn't easy. It takes a ton of intentionality and focus, all the time. And if we focus too much on doing and not being, you're going to grow exhausted. It's true for me as much as it's true for any of you. Ok, I hear you, I thought. I need rest. But it's not just "rest" he went on to say. It's *real* rest. Have you ever noticed that sometimes what promises us rest doesn't fully replenish us? It's like saying "I need a vacation from my vacation!" Sinking into the couch to watch TV or scroll on my phone may seem like drinking water, but in effect is more like drinking salt water. It promises replenishment, but in the end leaves us thirstier than before. So, what is real rest? Real rest isn't about numbing or escaping...it's about *being*.

Remember Mary and Martha? While Jesus didn't reprimand Martha for working, he didn't reprimand Mary for choosing to simply *be* at Jesus' feet. It's true that we are designed for work. But it's precisely because we're designed for work that we need rest. God may be limitless, but we are not. That's at least in part why he gave us the Sabbath and the church. It's important to be together regularly so that together we can sit at the feet of Jesus. To find our identity, security, comfort, and purpose in Christ alone. Of course, church isn't the only way we rest. We need to get away into creation, like Jesus so often did. But like anything, rest should reflect a proper balance for whatever season we are in. Which means, our rhythms need to be constantly revisited to make sure that we're operating in a healthy way.

I invite you this Fall, to work with all the strength the Lord provides to be a disciple who makes disciples. Use every means to fulfill our Vision! But I also invite you to find real habits of rest that place you at the feet of Jesus and fill your soul.

All that said above, I would be remiss to not add anything about our current series in Daniel. The story of Daniel is all about life in the exile, which of course, was the result of idolatry (something I'm guessing we all know a little bit about). But the beauty of the story (along with Ezra and Nehemiah) is that it's in the powerlessness of the people that they start to listen to the LORD. While we may not offer sacrifices to Baal on an altar, there is much to say about all that we worship in today's culture. I'm guessing that most of us probably feel, at some level, the tension and anxiety of the election season. Commercials and ads fill our brains with policies and promises (I'm speaking politely here). And yet, we remember from Daniel 2, we must not

be impressed with human power. Only Jesus saves us. In that regard, Daniel points us to Jesus, who didn't save us in "power" – at least in the traditional sense – but rather in weakness. Meaning, his victory was not with a sword in his hand, but rather in and through his own death. God is still sovereign, and no matter the result at any election level, we still serve YHWH above all and love our neighbors as ourselves.

As I end, might I remind you, this is all fresh in my own heart. I'm right there with you. The tug in my heart – right now – is a single word: Pray. I invite you to do the same.

Following Jesus with you,

Seth