

Reality SB
Title: Reframing Rest
Rhythms: Cultivating Your Soul in a Fast-Paced Life

January 27th, 2019

INTRODUCTION

- Happy to be here, heard tons of great things about RSB
- I bring love from RSF
- I just came from Vancouver, and it was about 30 degrees colder than here, so I am feeling the SB weather and loving exploring your city a little.
- I'm so happy to be continuing on with your Rhythms series, though I have to confess to one thing. The RSB social media this week was advertising me speaking and it said "REST - and she's good at it" And maybe some of you came and thought, they've brought in an expert. Someone who can really break this thing down. And I have to admit that I'm not good at it, and I'm actually one of the most unlikely people to be preaching this topic! I don't want you under any illusions! But maybe that means I do have something to say on this. Because I've been on a journey the last few years with Jesus and I've uncovered in my own life - and I think in the lives of most people - one of the root causes why so many of us find it hard to rest. And the good news is I'm going to share that with you this morning and hopefully some strategies on how we can really enter into a more restful life.

SCRIPTURE/MATTHEW 11:28-29

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

PRAYER

MY STORY WITH REST

As far back as I can remember I have not been one to rest well. I hated sabbaths growing up because my parents wanted to rest and I thought that was so boring. I dreaded every sermon on sabbath, or slowing down or reflection. I thought that was for the romantics, the introverts and the slow people! Rest did not seem a natural fit for me. Here's why:

Personality

- Enneagram 8, type A personality, leader, energy, I like movement, action steps,
- Visionary - I always see what's possible, restless, I didn't learn how to handle my gifting til much later in life, I didn't understand rhythms, limitations or the value of going slow with anything
- My own voice in my head told me... story of first time in the redwoods reflecting, remembering who actually does this stuff? Like this is ridiculous.

San Francisco

- Fast paced city, full of entrepreneurs, and successful people,
- Things change constantly, feel behind the ball if you don't keep up
- Apps, social media, current happenings
- Our culture conspires to seduce us into a fast pace life of activity, climbing the ladder and comparison. There are literally opportunities everywhere. And all of them "will never come around again" or feel like a "once in a lifetime" kind of thing.
- The voice of the world telling me what my life "should be", that I need to keep up, comparison,

Ministry

- Came into ministry when I was 18, I live in San Francisco, for the last 20 years I've worked in an inner city neighborhood, working with women who have experienced complex trauma, abuse and drug addiction. It's high stress, the city is fast paced, there are too many needs, at any moment there are thousands sleeping on our streets,
- For a long time I struggled with being driven by the need, too many yes' because this might be the one time they actually get into rehab or make a life change, 80 hour weeks doing ministry and counseling staff in the evenings,
- I raced around the globe and did ministry in some of the worst strip clubs and brothels you could imagine, and I did zero self care, said a quick prayer and hoped it didn't wear too hard on my heart, at times I was emotionally exhausted and spiritually dry
- The voice of need, there's always more to do, the world needs saving, it often sounds religious or like the voice of Jesus, it felt holy to be exhausted, I wore it like a badge of honor, "yeah, who has time for weekend plans I'm doing another homeless plunge or ministry outreach night"

Family Life

- I have two boys, very energetic, birth weights 9lb12 and 10lb5, so they came out like 3 month olds, no slow newborn season, these kids are very, very active and have been from birth.
- So I didn't transition slowly into parenthood. I felt out of my depth for a long time and constantly drowning. My husband and I both had growing ministries, full lives and now I was also a mom. I struggled with post-partum depression, I felt like I was never good enough, didn't know what to do when my son wouldn't eat or wouldn't sleep. I felt constantly like a failure. There was never enough sleep, enough time, enough experience or insight. I felt like I was constantly lacking something.
- The voice of scarcity

The story of my life regarding rest was a mix of all these voices, and the story felt true so I embraced it and lived into it.

My story sounded like this:

- I wasn't made for rest, I'm different, I'll rest when I'm dead.
- I just have to learn to live with the constant sense of restlessness, exhaustion that comes with my personality, or my gift or my geographical location.
- I'm a failure at rest, so I give up trying. Every attempt is a failure.
- I haven't earned my rest yet, I still need to hustle, or strive or prove myself.
- If I rest who will get the work done? Who will provide? Who will meet the needs?

LIVING INTO A STORY

In his book *The Soul of Shame*, Curt Thompson writes:

"Each of us lives within a story we believe we occupy" - Curt Thompson

What Curt is saying is that whether conscious or not, we all see ourselves as a character within a story. And that story is written by countless voices. Like the voices I listed above, but you also may have your own very nuanced narrative about rest based on your family, personality or life circumstances. Some of these stories predate us, they were handed to us by family, they are generational habits or beliefs. "In this family we're workaholics... or we don't take vacations... or we work ourselves into the ground because it's all on us to make something of ourselves and succeed... or we're just not very good at this...or this family is a mess and if I slow down I'm going to have to deal with that.." So many variations of story.

Our common Story

And though every story is nuanced, most likely some aspect of it will be made up of common components we all struggle with. And these components take a huge toll on our lives and our ability to rest.

Over the last three years I have hosted a number of day long retreats on the theme of rest, and talked with over 200 women on this subject. During these retreats we spend time unwrapping some of what I'm talking about today. Three key themes appeared when I asked women to share about their stories, what they believe about rest.

Those key themes are:

Scarcity
Restlessness
Exhaustion

Let's look at each of those for a moment.

Scarcity

Many of us wake in the mornings and first thing we think is “I didn’t get enough sleep” and we end the day thinking “if only I’d done more”. We see life through a lens of never having enough - time, resources, energy or never doing enough. It begins to define our outlook on life.

We begin to expect to be without, we feel frantic to hold on to what we have, we’re driven to get more stuff because there’s a low-grade sense that if we don’t grab it now we’ll lose it. How many times have we said yes to an opportunity, because we’re afraid it won’t come around again?

But scarcity runs deeper than that. The voice of scarcity says there is not enough, and you aren’t doing enough - and it says, **you are not enough**. You are lacking, you are a failure, you don’t have what it takes. There’s something missing here.

And the scarcity drives the wheel of fear. It keeps turning. No time to slow down, we need to hustle, we have to act now, do something. We have to prove ourselves, get enough, do enough and prove we are enough. So we’re always moving. And this leads to a **restlessness** that so many of us live with.

Restlessness

We’re deeply uncomfortable with stillness. With quiet. We try meditation or prayer and 2 minutes in we’re like so fidgety, so agitated. We reach for our phones incessantly to break silence. We get bored when we try to rest and within a few minutes we give up.

Restlessness is characterized by ceaseless activity, constant movement, unease, resistance to a slower pace, **inability to be present**, lack of intimacy in our relationships. Agitation, fretful, imagery is of a constant “stirring” (like a mixer), no rootedness, no deep and lingering connection.

The fruit of restlessness is the inability to be present, to cultivate intimacy and put down roots. We’re always moving - internally, and sometimes expressed externally - looking for the next thing, **addicted to movement and activity**. We don’t want to be shallow, but intimacy requires we stay put - day in and day out - and that doesn’t seem to be an option for us.

We’re completely at a loss when God has us in a season of remaining and not doing anything radical in our lives. We’re asking for the breakthrough and when God says just stay, remain, wait - we’re like “I’m out of here. I’ll make my own breakthrough!”

Exhaustion

And so we keep moving, and yet we’re so weary. And the answer would be to slow down, but slowing down is so uncomfortable, so we keep moving, but we’re so tired. Overcommitted, drained and feeling empty more days than we fill full. We’re fatigued, discontent, sick and drained. Physically yes, but at an even deeper level - in our soul.

Our souls are weary. We're dragging into each day, every event and every relationship. We might experience a quick shot at church, but the majority of the time our souls are tired. If I asked today how many of you feel like your soul is at capacity, a good chunk of you would answer yes.

Or, you might say. I don't know. And isn't that the truth? We move so much, we're so tired we become dull to what it means to feel alive and energetic.

Chiropractor Story - Have you ever noticed that until you stop and slow down, you have no idea how fast you've actually been going? Or what hurts, or where or why? And wherever we got it from, whatever voice spoke it over us, we think this is our lot. Scarcity. Restlessness. Exhaustion.

Come to Church

Then we come to church and hear this scripture from Matthew, Jesus saying "come to me and I will give you rest" and we have one of three responses:

1. Jesus isn't serious, these are just kind words - then we have to wrestle with how to decide when He is or isn't serious? What does this mean for scripture as a whole? This poses a whole new set of questions about what we can believe.
2. This is for some people only - then we have to wrestle with who and why? Why are some not chosen to rest. Does God play favorites?
3. This is an invitation from Jesus, for everyone, but I'm just not able to access it - most of us probably connect with this option. We believe scripture, we have a sense that God isn't playing favorites (at least that's what we're told), but we feel so guilty and ashamed because we're just not able to receive His rest. These words aren't a reality for our lives.

And the truth is so many of us have heard so many sermons on sabbath, and rest and slowing down. I mean, if you grew up in church like I did sabbath message was on annual rotation. And I spent more of those messages feeling guilty. Feeling ashamed. This warm invitation from Jesus becomes another weight. And unless we deal with why that keeps happening the norm for our souls will be weariness and exhaustion.

So why does that happen? Why aren't these words as freeing to us as they should be? What's getting in the way? What robs us of accessing this gift of rest?

SHAME / THE VOICE OF THE ENEMY

Brene

In 2012 Brene Brown gave a dynamic TedTalk called Listening to Shame. It was an overnight hit. To date it's had over 10 million views. The huge interest proved that it resonated with so many. It elevated shame as a normal topic of conversation. Brene

speaks of the “unspoken epidemic” of shame. Just to be clear an epidemic is a disease that is spreading and out of control. This is her definition of that disease, of shame:

“Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging”
-Brene Brown

Shame vs Guilt

Sometimes we confuse shame and guilt. So let’s clarify those two.

Shame is different to guilt. Guilt focuses on behavior, but shame focuses on self. Guilt says that behavior was bad, shame says you are bad. It’s deeper narrative, hooked into our deepest sense of self.

Later in Curt Thompson’s book *The Soul of Shame* he says:

“ To be human is to be infected with this phenomenon we call shame.”

Shame is a Storyteller

All of us deal with shame, it’s part of being human, and yet we are so rarely aware of it. And the reason for that is the nature of shame. It resists the spotlight, it does its best work in the shadows. It doesn’t want to be seen. The power leaves when shame is exposed, so staying hidden is how it is preserved.

And shame is not haphazard, it is very strategic, very intentional in how it works in our lives. You only have to sit down and talk with enough people, deeply about their lives to see the threads to shame, to hear the story of how it has attacked, robbed and unraveled their sense of self.

Shame has a story to tell for our lives. It is attempting to communicate - whether by feeling or with words - something very specific. And what is it communicating? Like Brene said,

That we are flawed and unworthy of love and belonging.

My very first memory is when I was three years old at preschool. I don’t remember much, but I remember being embarrassed in front of the group. I felt shame. I felt like something was wrong with me. For so many of us we can recall similar times. Times when shame spoke a story about who we are. So where does this come from?

LIES

Shame’s Story is a Lie

The thing about shame is that it’s not telling us a true story. It’s a lie. It isn’t speaking God’s truth about our lives, and Jesus is very clear about where lies come from.

In John 8 Jesus is speaking to Jewish people who dispute who He is. He tells them about His father, God, and then makes a claim that you have either one of two fathers. Either God in heaven, or the devil. He isn't messing around. He's calling out spiritual truths. Either you're with God and listening to His voice, or you're hearing another voice. And He then explains to them who the devil is and what he does:

SCRIPTURE

John 8:44

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

The Enemy - Lies and Destruction

Two clear things we learn about the devil from this passage, he speaks lies and he's for our destruction. He's a liar and a murderer. Let's be clear this morning, lies are a story that is false, deceptive and misleading. Murder is to take life. The enemy is set on telling you a story about your life, every aspect of your life, for your death. To rob you of life.

Sometimes we envision the devil on our shoulder, telling us little lies, nothing that harmful. But we need to understand how this works. The lies of the enemy are complex, web like, telling a story, reinforced again and again. He is no respecter of age, he doesn't care if you are three years old or 30. He'll take every opportunity to spin a tale about you, your life and what is possible. And if those lies are not confronted, countenanced and dealt with before long we have a narrative that runs deep in our hearts. And all of the lies are designed to tear you down.

The lies may come disguised in culture, our internal narrative, well meaning people.

Destruction

Don't be confused this morning, the enemy doesn't want to just slow you down, trip you up or annoy you. The intention he has for your life, for your family, is destruction. And the lies of shame have a very specific strategy to destroy you. Isolation, inadequacy, silence, walls and defenses, fear - all of these are fed by the enemy. And one of the loudest voices is shame.

You are flawed and unworthy of love and belonging.

Shame and Rest

And then we wonder why when we come to a place of silence, reflection, rest, why we struggle. Why we can't turn off the voices. Why we're so uncomfortable with what might pop to the surface if we truly take a sabbath, or slow down or turn off our phones.

Shame is the enemy of rest.

Where is shame at work in your life this morning?
How is it stealing your rest?
What has it told you about your life, what's possible, Jesus' words?

Good News

The good news is that there is another story. A better story, and this one is true. There is a voice longing to be heard above all other voices. A voice of love, and hope and peace. A voice that comes not to shame, but to free us.

INVITATION TO LIVE INTO A DIFFERENT STORY / THE VOICE OF JESUS

Just a couple of chapters later that this passage about the father of lies, Jesus tells us about another voice. The voice of the good shepherd.

His Voice over all Voices

"Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."

- John 10:1-5

Jesus Speaks

Now we need to stop here for a moment, because this is so key for us accessing rest - and not just for rest - but for the whole Christian life.

Jesus speaks. He speaks often and in a variety of ways.

Now you might have grown up in a church that rarely emphasized this truth. Perhaps avoided it. But if you look through scripture from Genesis to Revelation you will find a God who out of the gate shows Himself to be a communicator.

He's Not a Stranger

Jesus clearly says He calls them by name. He leads them out. He goes on ahead of them. And His sheep know His voice. He is not a stranger. There's intimacy here. Jesus knows your name.

He's Chatty

He's not short on words, He's not silent. In fact I refer to Him as a talker. He's chatty. Any good parent is. We want to connect with our children. And not just to bark orders, or give discipline, but to communicate love, to partner and live life together. He's

communicating very personally. Notice how even in reading this scripture scarcity influences our perspective. We think He's scarce in communicating with us, but He's not. His voice is abundant, extravagant and it's telling us a story about who we are.

We Need to Hear This Story

We need to hear this story. We need to hear truth. Otherwise we will continue to live into our common story of scarcity, restlessness and exhaustion.

If you are here today and you've always believed God speaks to some and not to others then I need to break the news to you that this has been a lie of the enemy. If you feel like the promise is for others, that you can't recognize Him, that somehow you're one of the unchosen ones, the enemy has been playing that trick on too many for too long. It may take time and intentionality to learn to recognize His voice, but the promise is for you. The promise is for you.

And what is He speaking over you? He's saying:

Matthew 11:28 "come to me and I will give you rest and you will find rest for your souls."

Come to me. Come to me.

Shame has us believing the very opposite. Shame says you can't come to Him, you're not good enough, you've failed. It says intimacy is a fallacy, you'll never experience it.

Jesus always confronts our shame. For the purpose of healing and freeing us.

The enemy knows that if he can isolate you, keep you at a distance you'll miss the most important part of accessing rest. Come to me.

The come to me part is really important. It's not an aside. It's not a "hey dude, come here I wanna holla at ya!" It's literally COME TO ME. Meaning, in me is where you'll find rest. And in relationship with me, through intimacy, through hearing my voice speak a better story for your life, a more true story.

And this is the story He speaks over your life.

I have redeemed you, I have paid for you and for your life.

I purchased your rest on the cross. Meaning the lies of shame are void and null. All your past efforts, all your struggle, or the shame you're hauling around. That's mine now.

You are not made worthy by your activity, your capacity, your efficiency, your hustle. Neither are you unworthy because of your failure, your struggle, your restlessness or anxiety.

I make you worthy. My blood. That means rest is a gift that I give. Rest is the inheritance of my children.

Our First Position

We need to hear this story. Because the other stories, the other voices, they are so loud. We need to hear our Shepherd saying that rest is now our starting place, it's our first position.

No longer are we here trying to attain rest. No, we have rest. We start there because of Jesus. And this changes everything. Suddenly we're not trying to grasp for something that slips between our fingers, we already have it. I don't know your story, I don't know how rest is in your life, but your access to rest depends nothing on you, and rests solely on him. It's not based on what I've done, or what I've accomplished but on what He has done, and what He has accomplished.

Prophetically Declare

What if we practice rest (sabbath, margin, daily office etc) not to attain it, but to **prophetically declare that we already have it?** To declare that we are purchased by a God who makes it possible for us to rest? To shake free from the lies of the enemy, from the voice of shame, and enter into a place of deep intimacy.

Practice Who We Are and Our True Story/ FAITH

If rest is ours because of Jesus, through relationship with Him then rhythms and practices - all become declarations of our identity rather than tasks we have to check off.

In fact what is more prophetic - more declaring of God's finished work - than taking a day off in the busiest season. In stepping into faith and saying, the story of my daily life is one of failure or feeling overwhelmed or feeling exhausted, but my real story is that rest is my inheritance. So I'll practice it. As a declaration. As a reminder. As warfare. It disarms all the other stories, all the lies, all the voices.

Story: I'm British, sometimes I like to do things to remember who I am in my core. I eat British food, watch British tv, and sometimes I pull down the heavy fire safe lock box in my closet, pull out my passport and glance at it. It brings back memories, helps me reconnect with who I am. At my core. That's exactly what rest does. It's like pulling out a passport and saying "oh yeah, this is the real me. And this is what people like me do. And I don't need to earn it. And I need to resist all the voices that tell me I'm not good enough, "I'm not far enough along in my career, that my personality disqualifies me, that I've failed so many times before." None of that changes my identity.

Turn Our Attention

Sometimes we need to pull down that fire safe lock box, open it up and remember who we are.

Rest is the opportunity to turn our attention to Jesus. To hear His voice. To remember who we are. To declare. To disarm all the lies.

Sabbath

Sabbath is a great practice to turn our attention.

Dr. Dan Allender who is the professor of counseling at Seattle Pacific, in his book titled Sabbath writes:

"Sabbath is not about time off or a break in routine. It is not a mini-vacation to give us a respite so we are better prepared to go back to work. The Sabbath is far more than a diversion; it is meant to be **an encounter with God's delight.**"

An encounter with God's delight. Chris said last week that one encounter with God will change us. Sabbath is a way of creating space for us to experience that delight.

Delight disarms unworthiness.

Nothing neutralizes shame like bathing in God's joy, pleasure and affection.

We take one day a week. Or sometimes an afternoon, or a few hours. Or it changes every week because you have kids and they have soccer or ballet or both... or you have work commitments and travel....don't get so caught up in the logistics that it invites the voice of shame back in. Simply find some space to encounter God's delight and do it often.

Pockets to Pause

One of my main ways to rest is to find pockets to pause. For some of you right now, tackling a sabbath feels like climbing a mountain. So this is something I want to leave you with to practice this coming week. Pockets to pause.

How I pause:

- Early morning - at some point, before I pick up my coffee and open my laptop, even when work time is short and I have so much to do, I pause, for 2 or 3 minutes, I slow down, I remind myself that I'm not earning my rest later, I have it right now, I'm working from rest not towards it.
- During transitions, car rides, breathing, pausing for a brief moment, outside my kids school,
- In the shower, I'll stand there a few extra minutes and just turn my attention to Jesus
- Sometimes I schedule longer pauses - this last week, I took 20 minutes at ocean beach.
- What I love about pockets of pause is that it integrates rest into my day. So rather than just running ragged, waiting til the end of the day or sabbath, it reminds me during the busyness of who I am.

As we close out this morning, let's ponder on a couple of questions.

Closing Questions

1. Reflect on your own narrative of rest. What is your story of rest? What voices have influenced the story you believe?
2. Where has shame shown up in your attempts to rest? What does it sound like?
3. What could pockets of pause look like in your life? Where could you practice these?

CLOSING PRAYER/ PROPHETIC WORDS

Liturgical Response Time During Closing Worship

We're going to practice pausing and turning our attention to Jesus. We're going to take 30 seconds to pause, to be silent and rest. And then we will turn our attention to Jesus. (30 second pause)

Scripture is clear that we are His children and that He speaks to His children. And so often we don't know how to initiate a conversation with God. We find ourselves simply in a posture of "speak God", but what I find helpful is asking a question. So that's what we're going to do today. In a moment I'll read a question and then I'll ask you to take about 10-15 seconds to listen. We don't want to spend too long because then we start judging, second guessing and dismissing. What we want to do is expect God to speak to us. Remembering that His voice is kind and loving. That it always aligns with scripture, always draws us towards Him. He's not aggressive, He's not here to punish. Remember this is an encounter with His delight. Because what Jesus speaks is going to confront our shame and invite us into intimacy. That's what he wants to do.

So as our eyes are closed and our heads are bowed, here's the question:

Jesus, what do you think of me?

