

Seeking Rest and Peace with the Lord Beth Davis

Hey everybody, I'm Beth Davis. And today, I want to talk to you about how to rest when you're stressed. But first, let's pray. We entrust everything to our Lady's intercession.

Hail Mary

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Hail Mary, full of grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed are thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen. In the Name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

An Anxious Encounter

So, a few years ago, I was on a layover, a long layover in the great city of Chicago. Now I had never been there, I had only studied it on a map, planning out this very ambitious day trip. I was going to be visiting a bunch of different sites, meeting with different people, trying to discern if it was the right place for us at Blessed Is She, to host an event in that city. And so, I thought I had it all mapped out and yet once I got there, I realized my understanding of the city on the map did not actually match the actual city in my little rental car. I was coming to the end of my day; nothing had worked out. I was exhausted and frustrated and very anxious that I was going to miss my flight. I had no concept of rush hour traffic starting at 2:00 or 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon.

A Message from the Holy Spirit

So, as I sat in that gridlock traffic on one of the many freeways in the heart of Chicago land, I found myself praying and begging God to help me to calm down, to help me to get to the airport on time, to help me to have time to send my luggage. Bemoaning the fact that nothing had gone my way, and, where was He? And very interestingly in this monologue prayer of telling the Lord all of my woes, all about my stress, all about my anxiety and my foiled plans, I very gently heard an invitation from the Holy Spirit in my heart.

He said, "Lean back, lean back." And I realized, that as I heard the Lord direct me in this way, my posture was up over the steering wheel. That my back was tensed, that my hands were clenched. Even my jaw was clenched. Every muscle in my body was tense and tight. I was almost wheeling to car forward when it wasn't moving, hoping by my own strength and anxiety that I was going to somehow propel myself to that airport in time. And yet when I heard the Holy Spirit say lean back, I tried it. I physically leaned back, pushed my shoulders back, took a deep breath and I felt peace begin to return.

As I was grasping the steering wheel and praying desperately that I wouldn't miss my flight, I wondered why I didn't have peace. I was listening to worship music, I was praying. So, where was the peace? And I wonder if you've been there too? Maybe it's in a moment of real panic, real trauma or anxiety, and you're crying out to God and you're wondering, where are you? I'm asking you to help. I'm listening to worship music. I'm doing all the right things and yet the peace doesn't return. I don't feel you God. I think that we are more stressed and anxious and distracted than ever. And today, I want to offer you biblical wisdom to apply when you are in one of those situations. I want to give you the tools to lean back. In fact, why don't we start right now. Leaning back wherever you are, whether you're listening in the car or at your computer or doing the dishes with little ones running around and you're just trying to take in some good content and be encouraged in the middle of a very busy day. Whatever you're doing, I want you right now to lean back. Lean your shoulders back, take a deep breath in God's presence because He's already there. He's already with you. No striving, no grasping will make Him come sooner, He's already with you, already looking at you.

Practical Tools

So, we're not feeling the presence of God, right? And we put our shoulders back and we take a deep breath. I want to actually turn to scripture. I want to give you some practical tools to call upon the Lord and to connect again with Him in intimate relationship. Because only when we're connected to Jesus, the Prince of Peace, will our peace return. Again, and again in the gospels, Jesus implores us, "*Do not be afraid.*" He says that to the disciples as they are perishing in their own words, in the boat, in Matthew 14. In Matthew chapter six, he's talking about leaving everything to the Lord, leaving everything in your life to follow Him, a pretty scary and brave invitation, a big risk. And yet He says, "Do not worry, do not worry about your life." And so, we want to take Jesus at His word, how do we not worry? How do we not be afraid? Well, I think there is some exceedingly practical advice found in Matthew 11:28, one of the most beloved verses. In fact, we're going to read Matthew 11:28-30. And I believe returning to peace can be found in these three sentences, in these three verses.

Matthew 11:28-30

So, grab a Bible, read and pray along with me. Jesus says, "*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.*" I want today, these verses, these exceedingly comforting words of Jesus to become practical for you. I don't just want them to be sentimental and comforting in a sweet but kind of far-off way. I see in these three verses, a pattern for returning to peace. And I want to share that with you now. Starting with verse 28, "*Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens.*" Come to me. That's the first thing we do in stress, in anxiety, in panic. When fear strikes, we come to him.

Now, in the moment, when things feel very chaotic and emotionally overwhelming, it's hard to come to Jesus, isn't it? Which is why it's so important that we establish a daily discipline of prayer right now, starting now, starting in the normal day to day life that we live. We don't wait for anxiety and stress. We don't wait for tragedy to strike or suffering to come. Now we make a

daily discipline of meeting with Jesus every day of coming to him. Because even without sometimes rare suffering that comes or big suffering that comes, even without that, there are normal anxieties of everyday life. Simple stresses. Jesus wants us to come to him every single day. Every time something comes up, he wants to share it with us.

Offering to Carry Our Burdens for Us

What is a yoke? Let's talk about that. Let's set the scene a little bit. It's important to understand what a yoke is. A yoke is physically a wooden cross piece that is fastened across the neck of two animals. So, Jesus is saying he wants us to come under his yoke. Not necessarily, or not exclusively as subjects of him, but also that we might co-labor with him. He wants to take our burden on his shoulder. Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens. So we want to give up our burdens because Jesus is offering in that yoke, in his yoke, to carry our burdens for us and with us.

So, we come to him every single day. I want you to set an alarm, put a calendar invite in your phone. I want you to begin to prioritize above anything else in your day, coming to Jesus every single day. Even if it's just five minutes, never despise small beginnings. Spend five minutes a day, if nothing else in prayer with Jesus. Come to him with your tiredness, with your burdens.

Taking that Rest

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." I will give you rest. Rest comes when we encounter the person of Jesus in prayer. But we've got to co-labor with him for that rest. We've got to receive it, and then we've got to take action. We've got to move with the grace, with the rest that he's offering us.

So, I want to recommend to you today, that if you need more rest in your life, which don't we all, why not make an intentional habit of taking rest every single day? What if you just wrote in your calendar one thing that you could do every day that brings you rest. Maybe it's just a few minutes of taking deep breaths before bed and pondering a mystery of the rosary. What if it's just spending time in his word or talking about it with your spouse before you fall asleep? What if it's taking a little walk after dinner or calling a friend and having a good chat? What if you enjoyed your coffee in the morning instead of scrolled the news as you consumed your coffee? I want you to get really intentional about rest. Jesus offers it to us. I will give you rest. And yet, we have to take him up on that.

We have to take measures to work rest into our schedule. We've got to get a little fierce, a little protective of that rest, that grace that Jesus is offering us. Might I suggest if you're on social media, what about taking a social media Sabbath? What about putting your phone down on Sundays? Just being with your family, being present to your friends or your roommate, to your community. Would that help you to engage more fully in the Holy sacrifice of the mass? Would you instead pick a book or take a little nap? I want you to get intentional about rest. Jesus is giving us rest, pro-offering rest. Will you take him up on his offer?

Learning from Jesus

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart." Oh, I love this. *"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me."* I want to highlight that word, learn. Resting, returning to peace, those things take practice. We learn to do them over time. So, I don't want you to beat yourself up if you're not good at taking rest or returning to peace. In the moment, I want you to give yourself a lot of grace here to learn from Jesus. Learn from him in the gospels. Learn from him as you spend time with him and feel his presence in prayer. What does that peace feel like? Get very familiar with how peace feels. It will help you to more readily and more quickly return to peace. "Learn from me."

I want to share with you just a bit of encouragement from St. Francis de Sales. He says, *"Have patience with all things, but chiefly, have patients with yourself. Do not lose courage in considering your own imperfections. But instead, set about remedying them. Every day, begin the task anew."* Every day, you can begin to rest again. Every day, you can try again. You can start again. Every day you can come to Jesus. Remember this is a process of learning, a process of growing, not perfection. This is not about doing it perfectly, doing it right the first time. No, instead we want to give ourselves a lot of grace, a lot of room.

Wanting a Union with You

That's how Jesus treats us. He gives us room. He gives us space. He gives us time. He's committed to the process, committed to us, learning to rest, learning to return to him. *"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."* The word yoke actually comes from the Latin, *conjugum* which means, together yoke. Together yoke. Do you recognize that word *conjugum*? It's related to our modern term conjugal. We're talking here about marriage. This is marital language. The yoke that Jesus is offering to bear with us. The yoke that is offering us, his yoke. There's an intimacy to it, a marital intimacy even. That's how closely Jesus wants to be with us as we walk through this life. That's how closely he wants to be familiar with our burdens, what troubles us, our stress, our anxiety. He wants us to have such a committed relationship that he uses this word synonymous with marriage. This is his offer to you today. This is the heart of Jesus in Matthew 28-30. Jesus wants to be deeply connected with you, not just on those high highs of going on a retreat or doing this lent in retreat with you. He wants this kind of union with you, with every single soul every single day.

Remember, Jesus is asking you today, you do your part and I'll do mine. Imagine that yoke pulling together, Jesus is saying, "You do your part, I'll do mine." So often we get confused about whose responsibility is whose. So, I've begun to pray, Jesus is this mine? This thing that I'm stressed about, this thing that I'm worried about, is this mine, or is this yours? And so often God helps me just by clarifying those priorities.

Bring it to Jesus

Many times, the things I'm worried about or trying to control are things that aren't my responsibility. And so, I come back to this first, I come back to verse 30, "*For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*" When something's not easy and it doesn't feel light, I bring that to Jesus. That's a tell for me. I bring it to Jesus, and I say, wait a second, this doesn't feel light, this doesn't feel easy. Is this from you? Are you in this? And if you are Lord, because he is, he's in all things, especially in our suffering, he will show us how to bear it with him. My yoke is easy, and my burden is light. He wants to carry it with you.

An Invitation

So, I want to invite you today, right now to ask the Holy Spirit, what one thing, Lord, am I owning, am I controlling, am I stressed or worried about that is actually your responsibility. I'm pulling this burden alone, I'm weary from carrying it. What's the one thing, God, that you're inviting me to divest myself of that's your responsibility and instead to receive my part? What you say.

Closing Prayer

Let's pray right now. *Come Holy Spirit, give us clarity. Holy Spirit illuminates our minds, our situation. Would you show us one thing word that is yours. One thing that you want to help us to bear that we've been carrying all alone. Thank you, Lord. Help us to lean back in your presence today. We love you Jesus. In your name we pray. Amen. Father and Son, Holy Spirit, Amen.*

God bless you friends!