



## Rhythms of Resting & Fasting

Scripture: Mark 2:18-3:6

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What happens when God's heart collides with man-made religious opinions? In Mark 2:18-3:6, Jesus confronts common assumptions about spirituality and invites us into a relationship that is marked by freedom, joy, and transformation.

### Jesus Changes the Way We Relate to God

**Mark 2:18-22**, 18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?" 19 Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. 20 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast. 21 "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. 22 And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins."

#### Follow Jesus, not other people's scorecards.

- Don't let someone else's spiritual routine become your source of guilt or your source of pride.
- Disciplines and personal convictions should flow from devotion not comparison.

#### Following Jesus is a balance of both feasting & fasting.

- Biblical fasting is voluntarily giving up food for a period of time so you can focus more intentionally on God through prayer, worship, repentance, or seeking His guidance. A simple place to start is fasting one meal and using that time to read Scripture and pray instead. If you are a child, have a medical condition, are pregnant, or have struggled with an eating disorder, consider fasting from screens, social media, gaming, or another distraction rather than food. The goal is not merely going without something, but drawing closer to God.
- What does the Bible say about biblical fasting?
  - It's expected (Matthew 6:16-18)
  - It's humbling (Ezra 8:21)
  - It can show repentance (Jonah 3:5-10)
  - It's for seeking guidance (Acts 13)
  - It reminds us of our greater need (Deuteronomy 8:3)
  - It's not for impressing (Matthew 6:16-18)
  - It's about holiness (Isaiah 58:6-7)
 

*"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice & to set the oppressed free & break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry & to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, & not to turn away from your own flesh & blood?"*
- **Pastor John Piper** writes, "Christian fasting, at its root, is the hunger of a homesickness for God. It is a way to say with our bodies that our appetite for God is greater than our appetite for food. It says, Food is good. But God is better."
- **Challenge:** This week, fast a meal or all three, and instead of eating, pray and read Scripture with the extra space you've created in your schedule.

#### Let Jesus transform your life, not just routines.

- We can't try to patch Jesus into our existing life.
- Following Jesus as King means he takes over all of our life.

### Jesus Changes the Way We Rest Ourselves

**Mark 2:23-28**, 23 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. 24 The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" 25 He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? 26 In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." 27 Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

#### Don't let rules become more important than people.

- Jesus never violated Old Testament commands, but He often broke man's legalistic additions to that law.
- Rabbis added dozens of extra sabbath regulations and what God intended as a blessing became a burden.

#### Learn God's heart, not just His words.

- 1 Samuel 21:1-6 is the reference to David Jesus is making.
- Jesus showed an important principle: human need is greater than religious ritual. This doesn't mean we can violate Scripture itself, just people's application of Scripture, which can vary.

#### Receive sabbath as a gift from God for you even today.

- God created Sabbath because people need rest.
- A modern Christian sabbath can involve these four spiritual principles (summarized by John Mark Comer's book, **Ruthless Elimination of Hurry**):
  - Stop — cease work and productivity.
  - Rest — receive God's gift of rest.
  - Delight — enjoy God and His gifts.
  - Worship — reorient your heart toward God.
- The goal isn't to create new rules. The goal is to create space for God.
- In a culture of constant activity, endless notifications, and nonstop hustling, sabbath is more necessary than ever!

#### Trust Jesus with your time.

- The Pharisees wanted to debate rules. Jesus wanted them to recognize the King.
- If Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, then He is Lord of: My schedule, my work, my rest, my priorities, my family, and my future.
- **Challenge:** Enjoy God's gift of a sabbath rest this Sunday and hopefully weekly. Make sure how you apply the principles of stop, rest, delight and worship are flexible and reflect God's heart. If they become a burden instead of a blessing we are doing it wrong. When done right, it becomes the sweetest day of the week!

### Jesus Changes the Way We Reach Others

**Mark 3:1-6**, 3 Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. 2 Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. 3 Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone." 4 Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent. 5 He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. 6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

#### God sees needs as opportunities, not interruptions.

#### God sees people as worth pursuing, whatever the cost.

#### His example should change the way I see people too.

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