

Rest with and Rely on God

Mark 6:30-46

Scripture calls us repeatedly to rely on God and to rest with God. These activities work together. In times of quiet with God, we remember that we are limited, finite creators. We are reminded that God is God and we are not. We return to the truth that we were designed to live in reliance on God and not on ourselves. The perspective that comes to us as we sit in quiet changes how we face the challenges in our lives. We begin to find ourselves moving through our busy days with deepening awareness of God with us in all things and a growing capacity to rest in and rely on God for the provision, strength, wisdom and peace we need in each situation. Henri Nouwen described this interplay between resting and relying on God in *Making All Things New*.

Although the discipline of solitude asks us to set aside time and space, what finally matters is that our hearts become like quiet cells where God can dwell wherever we go and whatever we do. The more we train ourselves to spend time with God ...the more we will discover that God is with us at all times and in all places. Then we will be able to recognize him even in the midst of a busy and active life. . . Thus, the discipline of solitude enables us to live active lives in the world, while remaining always in the presence of the living God. *

GROUP DISCUSSION. What kinds of solitude tend to restore you the most?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. What barriers get in the way of you finding time to rest with God? What might help you to remember to rely on God rather than yourself as you face the demands of each day?

In the text for this study we meet Jesus and his followers in the midst of their busy lives. We see them seeking a time of solitude and having trouble making it happen. We also watch as Jesus teaches his disciples to bring their limited resources to him so he can multiply them for the benefit of others. *Read Mark 6:30-46.*

1. What do you picture as you read the opening scene in this text (vv. 30-31)?

2. What thoughts and feelings do you have about Jesus' call to the disciples to get away with him to a quiet place and rest when there were so many people needing attention?

3. What benefit would there have been for the disciples in getting away to rest in quiet with Jesus at that moment?

4. What value have you experienced in finding a way to get away, if for even twenty minutes at a time, for rest and quiet with Jesus?

5. After a short time alone in the boat, Jesus and his disciples are again swarmed by a crowd (vv. 33-34). Put yourself in the disciples' place. What might it have been like to witness Jesus' compassionate response to the people?

6. Put yourself again in the story as one of the disciples concerned about the crowd getting hungry as it gets late in the day. What anxieties might you have experienced as this story unfolds?

- as you realized how late it was getting
- when Jesus tells you to feed the crowd
- when all you have to bring Jesus is a few loaves of bread and two fish

7. What kinds of experiences have you had with this kind of concern and sense of inadequacy in your own busy life?

8. What does Jesus do for the disciples in response to their distress about the enormous gap between the size of the need and their limited resources?

9. What is the significance of Jesus involving the disciples in providing nourishment for the crowd?

10. What kinds of experiences have you had with learning to rely on God in the busyness of life?

11. This is a story of great need, inadequate resources and of God providing in an unexpected way. What difference would it make in the whirlwind of your life to more fully acknowledge your need and inadequate resources?

12. We learn in verses 45-46 that Jesus did get a time of solitude and the disciples did get a time apart from the crowd. How might carving out times of solitude help you?

How might you build this practice into your life, even if you have to persist in trying to make those times happen?

Thank God for inviting you to rest in times of solitude with God and for teaching you to rely on God in the midst of responding to life's pressing needs.

Now or Later

In a time of quiet, allow yourself to rest with Jesus. Slow your breathing, release some of the tension in your body and let the loving presence of Jesus be with you like a soft light. Talk with Jesus about all that is going on in your life. Talk with Jesus about your concerns, your wonder at watching God work, whatever is on your heart and mind. Then sit quietly for a few minutes, resting in Jesus' presence. Be aware of anything you sense the Spirit saying to you.

Daily prayer: God, I ask to rest with you today, even as I rely on you to do what only you can do. I offer myself to you with all my limits, asking that you will be my Provider, my Strength, my Wisdom, my Peace today.