



## Next Steps

### Invited by Jesus

[Matthew 11:28-30](#) :: [Listen to Sermon](#)

Rest. Most days I crave it. Life as a father, a husband, a friend, a pastor and whatever else is needed in the moment often leaves me stretched thin like too little mayonnaise on a piece of bread. My body drags along, propped up with coffee, adrenaline and drive. What I really want is a nap or at least a few moments to call my own. Yet, such is not to be. They call it a life-stage. Wishes of strength and knowing nods from those ahead of me on the journey of life tell me that others have traveled this road and have survived. But when I look deep in their eyes I can see that the very thing I so long for is what they long for as well. We are kindred spirits. The life-stages come and go, but the pushing always seems to remain. Rest is elusive. It flirts with us as we steal a moment here and there. It may drop by for a visit—I call them vacations—but it never stays. It always seems to wave a fond fare-thee-well. It smirks at us from the corners of our mind. Its shadow is always just around the corner, but when we round it we discover that rest has departed. Rest is an elusive sprite, always flitting here and there, just out of reach.

That rest is such a pressing desire for so many of us makes Jesus' invitation to rest all the more attractive. Here is a fellow who offers the very thing we long for. He doesn't just offer it but he claims to have cornered the market. If we want rest we can find it in him, only in him. When I listen to what Jesus is offering, I realize that Jesus isn't offering me a nap. He is offering me so much more. He is offering me a new sort of life, a life that has always been meant for me. He is offering me a life free from the very things that stretch me thin. He is offering to share with me his own life. My first reaction is to shout, "sign me up." But before I get to be a card-carrying "rest" member, there's one thing I have to do. I have to surrender. I have to give up the life I have for the life Jesus offers me. You see, rest—sharing in his life—is dependent on me shedding the very life that keeps me from finding rest. I won't find rest by approaching Jesus and saying, "Give me rest." I don't find rest by approaching Jesus and saying, "Give me yourself." I find rest by approaching Jesus and saying, "Here I am."

I don't know about you but that last statement is pretty hard for me. I am more than willing to take Jesus into the life I am already living. That is easy. I still get to call the shots. Jesus doesn't want to be part of my life. He doesn't even want to be all of my life. He wants me to be part of his life. He wants to have all of me. Honestly, that's hard because giving up control, giving up my very life means I have to

trust completely that Jesus has my best interests at heart. I have to believe that he will care for me like no other, that he can lead and teach me to live in ways that bring me rest. I find a bit of solace in knowing that I am not the only one who has ever struggled with this. Jesus encouraged his audience to give him themselves by noting that he was good, that he was gentle and humble, that he had their best interests at heart. As I tell myself that Jesus is good, really good, as I train my mind to believe that he has my best interests at heart, I am learning that I can give a bit more of myself to him. I am able to move from making Jesus a part of my life to handing over my life to him. You know, as I do, rest doesn't seem so elusive. It doesn't flit here and there but it sits as a gift waiting for me in the arms of Jesus.

A fellow traveler,

Blake  
Spiritual Formation Pastor

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## My Next Step

**We encourage you to consider doing the following as a way of handing off faith to your family. . .**

- **Sit with God:** Jesus offers life to those who will surrender their lives and come to him. Often we approach Jesus and ask that he be part of our lives. One of the ways we can learn to surrender is by sitting with Jesus. This month, consider adding a time of silence to your times of family prayer. You might do this at your times of offering thanks for meals. When you pause to pray, begin with a few moments of silence in order to sit with Jesus. You might encourage your family to simply sit for a moment and imagine they are sitting in the presence of Jesus. One way to help younger children with this practice is by adding an extra place-setting for Jesus at the dinner table. After sitting with Jesus for a few moments, proceed with your prayer of thanks. As we sit with Jesus, we learn that it is more important to be with him and offer our lives to him than to rush to him and ask him to be part of our lives. We also open the door for him to speak to us and teach us about the life he offers.

**We encourage you to consider taking the following next step on your faith journey. . .**

- **Practice Surrender:** Jesus offers us rest if we will surrender to him, making our lives a part of his rather than the other way around. The reality is that surrender is hard. It doesn't come naturally. We have to train ourselves to surrender to Christ. Often our ability to surrender is rooted in believing that God is trustworthy. This month, consider offering the following prayer to God. "Father, I know that you are good and loving. I surrender to you." Offer this prayer as you rise and as you lie down in the evening. Seek to offer this prayer as you go about your day. You might say it as you move between appointments or tasks throughout the day. You might consider journaling about your experience, the feelings you have as well as how the attitude of your heart changes. At the end of the month review your journal and offer thanks to God for the way he has worked in your life.