

3 Soul-Strengthening Ideas for Summertime Renewal

Summer is my favorite time of the year. Schedules slow down, days are longer and it feels as though some of the pressures of life lift just a bit. For me, it's a sacred season of rest, renewal and refreshment.

As I've been meditating on this, I turned to Psalm 62. It has long been one of my favorites. David wrote, "Truly my soul finds rest in God" (Ps. 62:1a, NIV). David's words give us a glimpse into the type of intimacy he enjoyed with God. In God's presence, David felt relaxed because he knew he was fully known and deeply loved. He knew he could just rest and enjoy the presence of the Almighty without having to worry if he measured up.

Another verse that has drawn my attention this summer is found in the book of Isaiah. The prophet writes, "This is my resting place, let the weary rest" (Isa. 28:12b). The Hebrew word for "rest" here is *menuchah* (Strong's #4496). This is the same word used in Psalm 23:2, where David writes that God leads him by quiet waters of *menuchah*, waters of stillness.

In the place of rest, our striving ceases, and our anxiety quiets. Our worries are soothed, and we settle down to enjoy God's presence. In the place of *menuchah*, we let go of the need to perform. All to-do lists are quieted. All tasks brought to a halt. All action plans are laid down under the comforting presence of God.

I first internalized the truth of this when journeying through breast cancer. For months, I didn't have the energy to do anything. I remember thinking, *I am not doing a single thing that's valuable right now*. It felt like all I did was lie on the couch and listen to my kids. Read my Bible and pray.

Hardly anything noteworthy. But I clearly remember the Spirit of God whispering to my heart, “Becky, just let me love you. Relax.”

I’ve got to be honest. That was tough. But as I settled into God’s love and let go of the constant need to perform, I felt rest like I had never felt before. The question is: How do we become intentional about rest without something horrific like cancer entering the picture? As you look at the summer stretched out before you, I believe there are a few intentional choices you can make to find renewal.

Here are just a few ideas:

Change up your daily time with God. Rather than practicing the same spiritual disciplines you always do, change it up a little. Take your face time with Jesus outside. With the sun coming up earlier, you could spend a few minutes outside, praising God for the beauty of His creation. Or you could take a worship walk and spend your walk praising God for all His goodness. You could take one portion of Scripture to focus and meditate on. One summer, I spent the entire season in John 15. Another summer I focused on Colossians 3, and one time it was Psalm 84. Take a passage and simply soak. Read it. Circle key phrases. Underline strategic thoughts. Meditate. Be intentional to listen to what God is saying to you through that passage. Slow down. Take your time and consider what God might be speaking to you.

Practice self-care. I used to think the practice of self-care was sinful. After all, doesn’t the Bible teach us to be other-focused? But then I began to take a closer look at the life of Christ. I realized that Jesus practiced self-care. He slept, He ate, He escaped the crowds for time alone with the Father, and He spent time with His close friends. If Jesus needed to practice self-care, how much more do I? In another psalm, David wrote, “He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul” (a, MEV). Let me

ask you: What refreshes your soul? A quiet walk? Coffee with friends? A good book? In order to find refreshment this summer, practice self-care. Maybe at the beginning of each week pencil some self-care into your calendar. If you're not intentional, it won't happen!

Create the space to savor beauty. Our souls were created with a need for beauty. God the master Creator made a beautiful, colorful world. I believe that because we are designed in His image, we need beauty in order to keep a positive attitude. Summer is the perfect season to treat your soul to beauty. Go to an art museum and explore the paintings. Visit a new area and explore the beauty of that city or country. Pull out your color pencils and watercolor paints. Gaze at the mountains. Collect flowers. Walk the beach. God created our world for you to enjoy! Allow beauty to revive your soul this summer.

Let me end this blog post with a blessing written by my friend Susie Larson:

"May you cultivate a lifestyle that allows for times of replenishing rest, powerful prayer and thoughtful consideration to what God is saying to you in this season. May you push past the clutter and treat yourself to some time and space to rest and hear what God is saying to you today." {eoa}

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