



rest

40 DAYS OF REFRESHMENT FOR WOMEN

WALK THRU THE BIBLE®

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Rest: 40 Days of Refreshment for Women

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Some of the devotions were previously published by Walk Thru the Bible in *Journey* magazine and have been adapted from *The One Year Daily Moments of Peace*.

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ISBN 978-1-4964-5083-8

Printed in the United States of America

27 26 25 24 23 22 21
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Introduction

Rest often feels like an elusive goal in a world that never seems to shut down—or even slow down. Given all the demands on your time, energy, and resources, does your longing for calm, quiet, and stillness ever seem unrealistic or selfish?

If so, Scripture reveals something surprising. The only source of true peace and refreshment, it shows us, is God Himself. After the disciples returned from their first ministry tour, they excitedly told Jesus everything they'd seen and done. Given how much work remained, did Jesus send them right back out into the neighboring towns? No. Instead, He told them, "Let's go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile" (Mark 6:31).

Likewise, this book is an invitation for you to spend a few minutes each day in quiet contemplation, whether it be first thing in the morning, over your lunch break, or just before bed. God made you and me to function best (and be most at peace) when we regularly take time to connect with Him through Scripture and prayer. As God told the

Israelites, “Only in returning to me and resting in me will you be saved. In quietness and confidence is your strength” (Isaiah 30:15).

Rest can be your means of connecting with God for a few moments a day. These devotions are written by women from all walks of life whose stories will encourage you to embrace the peace and refreshment that is yours when you remember and rest in God’s goodness, power, and love for you.

Each reading ends with a prayer to help you begin a longer conversation with God about the people and situations He has put on your heart. If you’d like to go deeper with that day’s topic, be sure to turn to the Scripture passage referenced in the Rest in Him section.

This book is an invitation for you to hear and meditate on God’s Word as you relax, recharge, and reconnect with Christ, the one who “himself is our peace” (Ephesians 2:14, ESV).

DAY 1

A Quiet Sanctuary

*Search for the LORD and for his strength;
continually seek him.*

1 CHRONICLES 16:11

One Sunday afternoon I headed out for a walk through a nearby forest preserve. As I started out on the limestone trail that circles the lake, I felt my body relax. My mind and heart, which had been on overdrive all week, felt lighter. In this place of calm, I began to pray silently as I watched prairie grasses bend and sway gently in the breeze. Tiny waves lapped the rocky shore. When I passed an inlet, I stopped to listen to a chorus of birds chirping from a small stand of trees growing along the water's edge.

Suddenly a rumble from above interrupted the symphony. I watched as a plane zoomed overhead, its engines drowning out the birdsong. No sooner had its sound faded than another plane emerged from the clouds, filling the air with a familiar rumble. Just twenty-five miles from Chicago's O'Hare Airport, the forest preserve was clearly in one of its flight paths.

Just minutes before, talking with God had seemed easy as I poured out my concerns and sensed Him bringing

encouraging Scriptures to mind. Now I simply wanted to finish walking the loop around the lake and head home.

When I got to thinking about how my prayer time was cut short that afternoon, I realized it wasn't all that different from my experience when starting the day with prayer. I am easily distracted. If it's not the hum of a plane engine, it's the sudden thought of a phone call I need to return or the memory of an argument with my husband. Worse, if I don't guard my heart, my prayers can devolve into a laundry list of worries.

Like those approaching planes, my anxious thoughts so easily break the calm sanctuary the Spirit longs to establish in me. However, while I can't alter a plane's flight path, Scripture tells me I can redirect my disruptive musings. I can confess and turn my worries over to the Holy Spirit. I can pray Scripture passages that relate to a concern I have for a family member, knowing God will always fulfill His promises.

Christ is still the Good Shepherd who "lets me rest in green meadows" and who "leads me beside peaceful streams" (Psalm 23:2)—even when I'm not in a secluded (or noise-free) forest preserve.

Rest Assured

Heavenly Father, when distractions and noise threaten to drown out Your voice today, draw me close and remind me of Your unfailing promises and love for me.

Rest in Him: 2 Corinthians 1:20-22

DAY 2

Nor Does He Sleep

He holds all creation together.

COLOSSIANS 1:17

She was sitting in her car seat, singing at the top of her lungs: “He is exhausted, the King is exhausted on high, I will praise Him. . . . He is the Rord . . .”

We were on our way home from church that Sunday afternoon and had just sung that song in the service. Of course, our daughter had a few of the words wrong (exchange *exalted* for *exhausted*, and *Lord* for *Rord*).

But her rendition of the song got me thinking. Who would blame God for being exhausted? Just listening to my own prayers would make an ordinary person tired. And He listens to the tiniest prayers of His children all over the world. Just taking care of and providing for my little family is a full-time job. But He takes care of and provides for everyone.

He causes His rain to fall on the evil and the good. He sees everything—all the good deeds and all the sin. He holds the universe in place, and He knits our bodies together. He calls the stars out by name every night, and He gives me every

breath I take. He had a plan of salvation for the world from the very beginning, and He has a plan for my four-year-old daughter's life.

What if He decided to chuck it all and take a nap? What if He said, "Whew. I've had enough. These people are wearing Me out. I need a break"?

Scripture tells us "he holds all creation together" (Colossians 1:17)—that means every cell in our bodies and this planet that we live on. It means that every single creature and every single human being depend on Him for survival. And it also means that He knows your name and what each day of your life is going to look like.

Remember, God is never asleep at the wheel. He's in charge of all that's going on around the globe, and He never takes a day off.

Rest in the truth that God is fully aware of all that is going on in your life. He is tireless in His pursuit, protection, and provision for you.

Rest Assured

*Father, thank You that You will never leave us or forsake us.
We can relax in the knowledge that You are sovereign over all things, even our very next breath.*

Rest in Him: Colossians 1:15-20

DAY 3

When Answers Don't Come

*All of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ
with a resounding "Yes!"*

2 CORINTHIANS 1:20

Tears filled Gayla's eyes as the leader of her prayer group spoke of her daughter's years of rebellion. Ten years passed before God drew her back and restored her to their family. The leader's final comment struck hard. She said, "I have discovered that God doesn't always tell us yes or no when we pray. But sometimes He says, 'I have a better plan.'"

Gayla pondered those words as she considered her own circumstances. Her family had had its share of problems over the last year, causing division and angst in their household. She'd asked God to restore her family, but it hadn't happened. God seemed unresponsive to their circumstances, and she'd begun to lose hope.

God, Gayla prayed, forgive me for not trusting Your goodness and believing that You still hear me, love me, and have a better plan. Thank You for all the ways You sustain and carry me. Help me to be faithful as I wait for You to accomplish Your work in our lives.

Sometimes our lives seem to be littered with “unanswered prayers”—the healing that didn’t happen, unreconciled relationships, the home that was foreclosed, the great job that eludes us. Even in those times of waiting or closed doors, we can know God has a better plan because we know His character. He is good, wise, loving, merciful, and compassionate. He is the One who has “a future and a hope” for us (Jeremiah 29:11). His plan is to develop in us the character of Christ and draw us near to Him, however He chooses to do that.

There are times in our lives when we must determine to bow before Him in surrender and run to Romans 11:33, which declares, “Oh, how great are God’s riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!”

Rest Assured

Father, help my unbelief. Give me the faith to trust You even when the answers don't seem to make sense.

Rest in Him: Psalm 86

DAY 4

In the Details

Your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!

MATTHEW 6:8

Recently I found myself walking briskly through the airport, trying to work off some nervous energy. As much as I enjoy traveling, I'd taken this long nonstop flight before and knew it to be a stressful experience. In the hours leading up to it, I'd mentally prepared myself to navigate one of the world's busiest airports and endure a long-haul flight alone.

I wonder how experienced the pilot is, I'd thought hours earlier. I hope he's competent.

That thought was still in the back of my mind when I reached my gate and learned that the plane was running late. Joining the crowd in the waiting area, I plopped myself down and struck up a conversation with the uniformed flight attendant beside me.

One by one, other crew members arrived and came over to where we were seated until the entire flight crew, pilot and copilot included, had joined the conversation. They were happy to tell me about their line of work, and since I was well

acquainted with our destination, I answered their questions about the area. As the pilot took coffee orders for the crew and insisted I add mine to the list, I thought back sheepishly to my earlier cynicism.

So began the best commercial flight I've ever been on. Other passengers regarded me with growing curiosity as the crew greeted me by name and kept a friendly eye out for me over the hours. Technically, I traveled alone that day, but in reality, I had company nearly from the moment I cleared security until deplaning.

Sometimes it's easy to see God in life's dramatic moments, when the stakes are high and the impossible looms. But He is no less real or evident in the little things. My travel concerns, while not earth-shattering, still weighed on my heart, but God already had the details worked out in a way that surpassed what I could have come up with. Isn't that just like God, to take such an interest in our lives and leave His fingerprints in the details? Only He could orchestrate that level of detail, using the nuance of each moment to show His care and control.

Rest Assured

Thank You, Father, for the way You show Yourself in the details, knowing and arranging circumstances long before they even cross my mind!

Rest in Him: Psalm 8

DAY 5

Knowing His Will

*For the LORD grants wisdom!
From his mouth come knowledge and understanding.*

PROVERBS 2:6

Leah attempted to stifle the familiar feeling of anxiety threatening to overtake her. She longed to be obedient to God, but sometimes it seemed truly difficult to know His will. She wrestled with so many decisions, and she knew this anxiety could not be His intention for her. Now she had been offered an exciting ministry position requiring increased responsibility and an extra time commitment.

“Oh, God,” she cried out, “how can I know what Your will is for me regarding this?” Even as she prayed, she recalled a discussion with her friend Bonnie about seeking God’s will.

Bonnie had said, “First I read Scripture and then I pray, asking God to speak and help me hear. Then I ask godly friends for counsel. I see how the opportunity fits with my passion and gifts. I also remember God often calls me to work that requires His power to keep me dependent on Him. I then ask Him to confirm what I’m thinking and hearing.”

Leah remembered the words from Psalm 94:19: “When

my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Your consolations delight my soul” (NASB). She relaxed, knowing God would show her what she needed to see.

Today’s culture offers a multitude of choices. Our lives are bombarded with decisions, from what to eat, wear, and drive, to where we’ll live and work, to whom we’ll marry. We could become immobilized just anticipating choices and their outcomes. For Christians wanting to serve and please God, making these decisions can be especially difficult. But remember that we serve a God who “is a wonderful teacher” and who gives “great wisdom” (Isaiah 28:29). We can turn to Him through Bible reading and prayer, and He will direct our paths.

Rest Assured

Father, You are my Wonderful Counselor. Thank You that You will direct my path and order my steps for Your purposes.

Rest in Him: Proverbs 2:1-6

