

iola

LIVING LIFE WELL

the Rest e-issue

Peace in safe places • Rest playlist
Colour & pray • The laundry can wait
Rhythms of rest • Lavender sugar
Bookmarks • Soul food
To be list • An everyday blessing
Feather art & more

iola is a Greek girls' name
that means 'violet dawn',
and a Welsh name meaning
'valued by the Lord'.

Dear iola reader,
you are dressed in royalty
& treasured by God.

Iola is published by Abi Partridge.

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The Rest Issue. 4th issue of iola.

Our contributors are from all over the world. For this issue we are
from; the USA, the UK, and Canada. Our spelling may differ but
beneath the words our hearts are leaning in the same direction.



As this issue is being published the world is in various stages of closure/opening up after a virus that is affecting all areas of life. It is, in some ways, a strange time to talk about rest, as we face forced times of rest from work, from socialising, from striving, and maybe even from who we think we are.

What really is rest? What are we resting from? How do I rest in a way that is most beneficial for me? What does God think about rest? Why do we feel guilty about resting? We hope this issue helps you to release the guilt and rest with your friend Jesus.

These articles are written by women that struggle to rest but know that it is God's good plan to rest from work and to rest in Him.

We hope you enjoy reading & resting with this issue, with a cup of something lovely by your side and your feet up!

Much love
Aisi



PANTONE
Will

PANTONE 18-4525
Caribbean Sea

PANTONE
Celestial

PANTONE
Faded



Artists who made iola rest

contributors alphabetically by surname



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She is also a devotional writer for The Joyful Life magazine and a host for the Widow Mama Collective on FB



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Artists who made iola rest



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Kristin Vanderlip is an Army wife, bereaved mom to her little girl in heaven, and mom to her two rainbow boys. A decade ago you could find Kristin teaching English in a middle school classroom, and now she is a freelance editor and writer. Kristin writes to help women seek the Lord and hold on to hope, especially when life is hard. She is the author of Life Worth Living: A Daily Growth Journal and Living Life Well: A Daily Growth Journal for Kids. You can find Kristin at www.kristinvanderlip.com.

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Peace in Safe Places

Allison Craig

There is a little restaurant out in the country not far from where my husband and I live. The location is interesting, almost bridging the transition of development by the freeway with an open expanse of fields dotted with picturesque old farmhouses. Some of them appear to have been abandoned, just sitting in the middle of a field. I immediately found the area so intriguing, and in a way romantic. So of course, I wanted to try eating at the quaint eatery along this picturesque road.

We would often pass it on our way to go on a hike in the nearby foothills. Every time I would request we stop to dine there, but my dear husband was very hesitant (as he is with any new restaurant). But after driving by many times, one day he finally succumbed to my begging, and we stopped in to eat. This little roadside joint instantly became one of our favorites. The environment is welcoming and cozy, and the food is delicious. As the summer heat became too much for us, we stopped going on hikes. Then we went on a vacation. One thing led to another and before we knew it, quite a bit of time had passed by

before we had been back to our new favorite charming restaurant.

Finally, when the weather cooled down, we went on another hike and stopped in for lunch. The waiter, who had gotten to know us (to the point where we didn't even have to tell him what we wanted to order) asked us how we'd been. Feeling embarrassed that we hadn't been recent customers, I muttered some apologetic excuses as to why we hadn't been in to dine lately, but that it was so good to be back. He smiled at me and commented that it was good to have a safe place to return to.

His sentiment really struck a cord with me. A safe place to return to. This was something I had felt for a long time but hadn't realized it, if that makes sense. I will explain. For my husband and I, many of our safe places have been the tiny hole-in-the-wall restaurants we frequented over the years. While we were living in Southern California, there were a few restaurants we ate at multiple times a month. A couple of them we frequented almost every week.

In one respect, the staff didn't know us at all. But in another, they knew

us better than many other people in our everyday lives at the time. They saw us during times when we were tired and worn out. At times when we were happy it was the weekend. Times of serious discussion, and times of light-hearted laughter.

When we were about to move away, some of the saddest goodbyes were to the people who worked in these restaurants. And in a way, the establishments themselves. Over the course of seven years, these eateries went from ordinary restaurants to places of refuge for us. I have so many fond memories of spending time in each of them.

A couple years later, we went back to our old stomping grounds. When we walked into one of the restaurants, the owner immediately recognized us and came over to greet us. It was good to be back in one of our safe places. We settled into our usual booth and carried on just as if we'd never left.

Reflective Questions

Are there any safe places you frequent? For example: coffee shops, a friend's house, church, or library?

What makes you feel safe in these places?

If you don't have any safe places, list a few ideas of where you could seek one out.

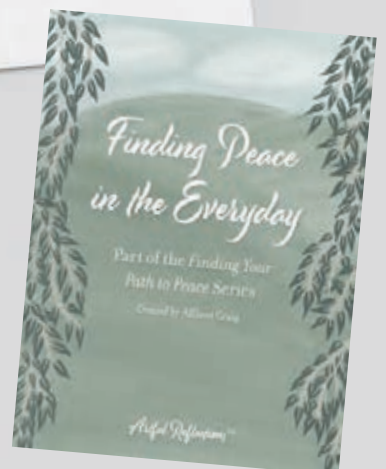
A safe place doesn't have to just be a physical location. Is there someone that you feel safe with? A friend, family member, or significant other?

Is there a way to spend regular time with this individual?



Allison Craig is a photographer, designer, and writer inspired by nature and the plants she grows in her garden. Her hope is to inspire others to see beauty in their everyday lives. Allison and her husband, Anthony, publish the Artful Reflections™ Podcast on a bi-weekly basis. Her first book, *Finding Peace in the Everyday*, was released in March 2020
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Peace in safe places is a Chapter from “Finding Peace in the Everyday”



Packing Light

Melissa Anne Smith

We recently packed up the troops and headed to the Rocky Mountains for vacation. When life got a little too full and stressful here in the lowlands of humid Texas, we headed for the hills. I anticipated cool mountain air to bathe my sore soul. What I did not count on were grueling hikes in thin air where my lungs screamed their protest. However, our youngest son rocked the mountain. The altitude did not affect him in quite the same way as it affected my body.

Yet, I didn't mind the work involved in hiking to the majestic views at 12,000 feet elevation. Instead, I was distracted from it by herding my young charge along the way, doling out snacks from my pack, or stopping for a great photo opportunity. A backpack is an amazing thing: water, snacks, camera, hand sanitizer, and a book to read. It sounds great, right?

Sort of. We ended up doing a lot of hiking in separate groups: the A group and the B group. The A group consisted of the adventurous, determined husbands and the bold, brave sons they produced. Their energy was boundless, their lungs amazingly resilient, the heights

they achieved were mind-boggling. I believe they literally hiked circles around us one day. I was happy for them, truly, but hiking to the top of a mountain is not my goal. I like to bask and savor.

Those moments of basking were sweet. The warm sun on my face and a minute or two of quiet to read. Ahhhh. However, I discovered that some of my Texas-sized stress and weariness followed me on vacation. Maybe I had packed it. Here in this breathtakingly beautiful place, surrounded by people I love, how was I still so tired? So full of care?

It wasn't until one of the last days that I discovered what plagued me. The destination was a quiet reservoir nestled in the mountains. We packed and drove up the mountain. My body was worn out from hiking. This time I simply expected lovely views and rest – except that isn't what happened.

The mountains called. The distant sound of water called. My children dropped their fishing poles and scampered over rocks and boulders faster than a herd of mountain goats. Not wanting to be left behind again, I reluctantly

followed. That's when I hit a wall. Right there surrounded by beauty and love, I plunked myself down on a rock and cried. Everything that had followed me to the mountains flowed out. Weariness, the relentless striving, the expectations, the loneliness, the sadness, the cry of my heart to be held in the loving arms of my Savior.

As I shed my backpack and left it on the rocks to follow my family, it hit me. All week I had hauled this ridiculously heavy pack around on my back to make sure my children and I had everything that might be wanted or needed for the trip. Some of it I never used. It set me off balance sometimes as I jumped over rocks. At night, my shoulders ached. I hardly thought about it at all, I just accepted my burden as necessary.

My first step on the path unencumbered freed me. I was light on my feet, balanced, hands-free. I reached my destination with little hindrance and in much less time. While I didn't have any snacks to share when I got there or a camera to capture the moment, my soul felt lighter. I was left asking myself, what am I hauling



around that no one asked me to carry? Ultimately, what is God asking me to carry on my journey?

These are questions I am still wrestling with God. This kind of unpacking of our lives requires prayer and discernment. The things I've been carrying in my daily life took a while to accumulate, and I've become accustomed to them. I have not been packing light.

I carry fear about the future. However, my fear must be unpacked because knowing the future is a burden He does not ask me to carry.

Like my overstuffed backpack, I carry all the needs of my family on my shoulders and in my heart. However, this can become burdensome when I do not carry this weight in Christ's strength. Through prayer and faith in the One who knows the needs of my family, I can unpack my weariness.

What I need for the journey is far simpler than I make it. And so, slowly, I am unpacking my burdens and submitting to His loving hand as He instructs me in the way to go. Whether in Houston or in the mountains, I can walk with Him unencumbered.

Whatever I must leave behind on the rocks of the path will not be missed for He gives me Christ's strength and comfort for the journey.

As I sat on the rocks that day and cried out to the Lord, He heard me. Are you burdened and heavy laden? Cry out to Him to put a new song in your mouth, to help you lose the burdens you carry, and to help you fix your eyes on Christ.

*"I waited patiently for the Lord;
he inclined to me and heard my cry.*

*He drew me up from the pit of
destruction,
out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock,
making my steps secure.*

*He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God."*

Psalms 40:1-3 ESV



Melissa Smith is living out her everyday adventures in the suburbs of Texas. She loves three things: God, beauty, and words. When she won her first camera in fourth grade, she began collecting beauty. Since then, she has captured snapshots of life: a quiet moment, a startled smile, simple joy. When she is not shuttling her teens to school or homeschooling her youngest, Melissa gathers beauty and writes on her blog framing suffering in the context of joy with Christ. She hopes to bring a slice of loveliness to her readers and point them to her wonderful, loving Savior. framedinjoy.com





Lessons from a morning glory

Tabitha Meglich

I giggle even now as I picture myself, still in pajamas, skittering across the kitchen, through the glass-sliders, down the wooden steps, and across the dewy grass, eager to catch the day's blooms unfurling in the morning light.

Our woven metal fence was a canvas of dappled green, splashed with pink and lavender that captured my imagination from the moment the first trumpet-shaped flower made its debut.

In my neck of the woods, *morning glory* is an annual vine, lasting for just a single growing season. Its journey from germination to summer's end moves through a succession of daily bloom cycles that vary from sparse to profuse: with subdued interludes when blooming slows to a near standstill.

Our lives move to a similar cadence—ebbing and flowing between vigor and repose. Circumstances are fleeting. Nothing blooms continuously.

Morning Glory's appearance in my garden coincided with a significant lull in my life. I was living in a new state far from family and friends

and acclimating to my newly-empty nest. Like being marooned in the doldrums, there was no perceptible movement in my life. I was desperate for direction and strained to hear the Lord's voice in the overwhelming silence.

Time spent tending her provided respite from the angst I battled in the waiting, but I never anticipated the lessons she would teach me.

Lesson 1: Surrender to rest

He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a remote place and rest for a while." Mark 6:31a CSB

A familiar pattern in nature is cycles of activity, punctuated by pauses—languid intervals that go by the names *hibernation*, *estivation*, *dormancy*, and *cocooning*. The essential attributes they share are decreased activity, conserved energy, and reduced output. In short, **rest**.

Selah moments are woven into the fabric of creation by design.

Being a woman wired to achieve, I am accustomed to pouring myself into all sorts of undertakings,

endeavoring to bring about a worthy outcome. I know how to strive. I am proficient at pushing harder. I know a thing or two about blooming.

Morning Glory knows something else. She is a master of the art of *un-blooming*.

Beginning around mid-day, her flowers gently collapse into tiny umbrellas, gracefully inviting the setting of the sun.

In the light of day, the garden is a flurry, a wakeful world where plants are occupied with the task of energy production and growth. Day after day, I witnessed *Morning Glory* stretch each of her petals wide-open and strain to follow the arc of the sun. But in the space between dusk and dawn, she moves to a gentler tempo.

Under the serenity of the stars, *Morning Glory* is absolved from the demands of the day and tenderly turns her attention to nourishing herself. Her focus shifts from production, flowering, and seeding to restoration and renewal. She understands that even under cover of night, life is moving forward.

As I witnessed her instinctively embrace rest, *Morning Glory* softly whispered “*surrender*” to my anxious heart. I began to understand that the Lord was creating a purposeful hush in my life—sacred space to gently draw me into His refreshing presence.

Without sweet *Selah* moments it is impossible to sustain blooming until summer’s end.

Lesson 2: Anticipate the dawn

“Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” Philippians 1:6 NIV

Morning Glory does not wait for sunrise to begin flowering. As though anticipating the dawn, she reaches toward the horizon. Her buds are poised to wake with first light.

I marveled at the innate confidence reflected in such a brave step of

faith. I found myself asking the Lord to teach me how to walk out this dichotomy with such beautiful harmony: to surrender to His rest while actively anticipating what He has in store as He works out His plan in my life.

If you find yourself in a lull, receive the *Selah* ordained for you—a gift that will not linger indefinitely.

Relish the quiet as an opportunity to replenish your soul with the Living Water found only in abiding in Him. Draw close to His heart and soak up the light of His presence.

No portion of our journey is lifeless or wasted in the hands of the Redeemer. The God who “never sleeps nor slumbers” is faithfully working even in the pause. We can trust that new buds are forming in the ‘in-between’. By faith we can actively anticipate the dawn of a new season of blooming.

Lesson 3: Don’t cling

“A time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance.” Ecclesiastes 3:4 ESV

Each morning glory flower blooms just once— blossoming in the morning and fading by day’s end. Its beauty is fleeting and must be savored in its time.

Morning glories are encouraged to produce new buds by pinching off old-growth. As I walked the fence-row pulling withered flowers that were ablaze in vibrant color the day before, I pondered the newness of life promised to those who are followers of Jesus.

Could it be that spiritual growth comes as we allow the Lord to deadhead the past blooms of our life, according to His perfect wisdom?

Watching *Morning Glory* seize each new day without reservation caused me to consider how much time I squander glancing



over my shoulder—lamenting mistakes or reliving past blooms.

I began to purpose to walk in gratitude for every bloom I have been allowed to display in my life, as each is evidence of His grace. If I cling to what has passed, I risk missing the beauty in what is currently flowering.

New beginnings must be embraced, and endings bid adieu. We must release the past to the Lord and prepare to thrive in our next season.

Lesson 4: Bloom in the moment

Morning Glory lives out the essence of carpe diem. Leaving yesterday behind, she turns her full attention to today. Each of her flowers is ‘best effort’—a splash of splendor that magnifies the Lord.

A single bloom is as pleasing to the Lord as a vine laden with flowers. He is the Creator of both and delights in His handiwork. Each task He assigns, every ordained ministry moment, each door opened by His hand—single flowers or clusters—deserve my best for His glory.

Resting in Him means trusting the Lord to direct the seasons of our

life. From bud to bloom, every step of our journey reflects His love and grace in our life. Whether we are currently blooming in bunches or sparsely, we can choose to embrace the season we are in by faith.

“He has made everything beautiful in its time.” Ecclesiastes 3:11a ESV

The most important lesson I learned from her is this: Even in the shadows, without displaying a single bloom, *Morning Glory* magnifies the Creator by simply being what He created her to be.

Our Father’s love for us is not dependent on how prolifically we bloom. He delights in us regardless of our achievements. We bring Him joy simply by being what He redeemed us to be— His beautiful Beloved.



Tabitha Meglich is known as mom, grandma, teacher, wife to a man with a heart of gold, and occasionally writer. Her true identity is ‘daughter of the Most High God’. She is a lover of nature, chaser of dreams, and pilgrim on journey toward the heart of the Father. She is currently nesting in the vast plains of North Dakota, where she seeks to capture the extraordinary in the everyday ordinary of life.

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Surrender to his rest

Shay S Mason

Does life ever feel like one big battle? Maybe it's a health problem or a family issue. Maybe you've lost a job or just can't manage to pay all the bills. Maybe you have so much on your plate that you're simply overwhelmed. Perhaps you've reached the place where you just don't have any fight left in you.

Some years ago, our family moved from Washington, DC to Oxford, England in order for my husband to pursue a degree in Theology. Our children were four and two, and I was already struggling with autoimmune disease and anxiety. We knew that the move was right. God had removed every perceived obstacle and clearly shown that this was his path for us. But it didn't make the transition easy.

I was excited about jumping into life in our new home, and I used all my energy (which wasn't much in those days) becoming involved in our children's school, our new church, and my husband's college. I joined the school parents' committee, I led a Bible study at the college, my husband and I led a church small group, and I even started a two year Theology course. I was determined to experience as much as I could

in the three years we were to live in Oxford. But I was miserable.

Every single day was a battle for me. My body never allowed for a day without pain, and it didn't help that I lacked the physical or emotional strength to manage a strong-willed toddler. I tried my best to appear to have it together; but at home with my cup of tea, there were countless hours of crying out to God. I stood on God's promises and wielded my sword against the attacks of the enemy day after day, but I had nothing left.

I remember the day I reached the end of my fight. Leaving my cup of tea on the kitchen table, I walked into the dining room, fell first to my knees and then to my face on the greenish-blue rug. In my hand I held a small wooden cross. I ran my thumb over its smooth surface and sobbed. That was all I could do. In that moment, I raised the white flag of surrender. I did not surrender to the disease or the despair, I surrendered to Him. I knew it was the only way.

Eventually, I lifted my head and looked through the glass door that led to garden. A beam of golden light

illuminated a single vine growing over the garden wall. I knew in my heart that God was speaking to me. Abide in me. I am your rest.

The truth of John 15 took on new meaning to me that day. I couldn't expect to do anything on my own strength, which was a good thing as I had none left.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. (John 15:4 ESV)

If we are truly to be his branches, then our very existence and everything we do depends upon the vine to which we are attached – and Jesus is the vine. As 19th century South African pastor Andrew Murray observed, “The life of the branch is a life of absolute dependence... deep restfulness...much fruitfulness...close communion, [and] absolute surrender.”

It's not that any of the things I was doing were wrong. Certainly we all have gifts He wants us to use. But He also wasn't expecting me to prove anything to Him or anyone else through my constant

busyness. I wasn't slowing down long enough for Him to touch my heart, even as I cried out in pain. Suddenly, I realized I didn't need to fight any longer. The battle was not mine. It was His. I had His permission, even his mandate, to rest. He wasn't disappointed in me for not being stronger, and He wasn't requiring me to sort myself out. All He wanted was my heart. As I watched the sunlight dance upon the dangling vine, I understood that I belonged to Him and in Him, and His comfort flowed through me.

It was still some time before my physical symptoms improved, and I continued to struggle with anxiety, but something changed that day. I no longer had to waste what little strength I had in fighting a battle I couldn't win. I had discovered the source of true rest. I began to understand that He goes before me and faces my enemies. He is my victory!

I love the words of
David in Psalm 68:

*"When you, God, went out
before your people,
when you marched through
the wilderness,*

*the earth shook, the heavens
poured down rain,
before God, the One of Sinai,
before God, the God of Israel.
You gave abundant showers, O God;
you refreshed your weary
inheritance."* (Psalm 68:7-9 NIV)

You and I are God's inheritance,
and He delights to go before us —
fighting our battles, refreshing our
weary hearts, and giving us rest.



Shay S. Mason is a Chicago-area native living in North Carolina. An autoimmune disease and OCD/anxiety overcomer, she is a firm believer in God's healing love. Her particular passion is helping people go deeper into God's heart. In addition to writing, Shay loves travel, music, coffee, quirky indie films, and hiking. Shay and her husband Bruce are the founders of Love Inside Out, Inc. in Raleigh and have spent extensive time ministering in Madagascar. They have two college-aged kids and a spoiled Goldendoodle. Shay is a contributor at She Found Joy and a member of Hope*Writers. Her blog The Spacious Place can be found at www.shaysmason.com.





Creativity & rest - hand in hand

Katherine Newsom

There's something about the salty air by the sea that has always caught my attention. It's always been that one thing of mine - that happy place, where I feel at peace, most attuned to God.

A few years ago, we lived just blocks away from the Pacific Ocean, and I got so much joy in walking our dog the eight blocks there and back, walking past the morning smell of Kona Coffee, crossing over the Pacific Coast Highway, smelling the salt and sand as the blue horizon comes into view. If you listened close enough in the evenings, you could even hear the waves crash at our house, those eight blocks away.

It was a remarkable gift to live there in a tiny two bedroom house, in a place where we were surrounded by gifts that inspired me: the 365 day summer sun, the palm trees lining the streets, the coffee shop and quick grocery in walking distance from the house, the sound of the ocean waves.

It was a place where my creative juices were running free as I opened the windows to let the breeze in, played worship music loud on the

tv, and let myself be free to paint... painting for friends, painting for our womens ministry, painting just because... And in feeling so comfortable there, I was also avidly writing... blogging about our trips, writing about my crafts, recording the details of our latest adventures.

I felt free to rest in these good gifts, comfortable in my place and work and school, and in return, those creative juices were running high.

Isn't it remarkable how much more of ourselves we can be, when we are comfortable in our surroundings, when we are given the freedom to learn and be?

We are all created in the image of God, and as image bearers, we create because He creates. It's wired in our DNA, to create. We would do well to learn from His example at the beginning of time - during the process of Creation.

On the seventh day, God rested. He saw that it was good - these gifts he spent six days creating... and He rested.

Create in the day, and rest. Do it again and again, then

when you are done - rest, and take it in. Create, then rest.

And rest in the presence of God.

Creativity and rest go hand in hand. By taking God's example for us, we honor Him and His design for us. We were never meant to hustle, or to do this life alone. We can create for the masses and hustle for our own image, or we can create for God and be obedient to His calling on our lives. We can follow the world and never stop until we are burned out, or we can follow God and rest in His presence, for He gives rest to the weary.

When we rest in God, we become a truer version of ourselves. For it is in the mirror of God's word that we learn who we truly are. And when we are confident and empowered in this freedom He gives, we free ourselves to be creative as He designed us. We are no longer bound by the world and the hustle and the glitz. We look to God, we look to Christ. The created mirror the Creator.

He created us. We in turn create to glorify Him and share what He has gifted us with. He also



Katie Gamble

calls us to rest in Him, and as we rest, he molds us into truer versions of ourselves, which fuels our creativity even more.

Isn't it remarkable how intertwined this becomes? In all this, we learn an important truth: we are the best version of ourselves when we are given the freedom to rest in God's truth, and create for His glory.



Katherine Newsom is a writer, podcast host, birth and postpartum doula, and childbirth educator, who lives in the gulf coast of Texas with her family. She writes on her website, Simple Natural Mama, for Christian moms who are simple and natural minded. You can find her website at www.simplenaturalmama.com or IG: @katherinelnewsom.

Lavender Sugar

Add 2 teaspoons of dried lavender flowers to 1 kg of sugar in a storage jar and leave. Use in shortbread or cookies for a sweet summer flavour.





The laundry can wait

Cara Stolen

From the window in my home office, I have a perfect view of the pasture closest to our house, where we feed our cows in the early spring. Every day, after I put the kids down for their afternoon nap, I stand at it for awhile. I've watched the snow melt and the sagebrush bud; observed the cows' bellies widen and their udders expand as we draw closer to their due dates—signs of spring and new life.

Today, I lean against the warm glass and gently massage my lower back. I look for new calves and signs of labor in each expectant cow. In theory, that's why I stand here every day: to make sure there isn't a cow stalled in labor needing help to give birth. But more than that, I like watching the calm, quiet actions of our mama cows.

Our oldest cow, 1095, gave birth to her eighth calf last week. From this vantage point, I noticed her pacing circles around the pasture and knew it was time. An hour later, she licked her white-faced calf clean and then stood to feed him his first meal. I couldn't help but grin, delighted by the miracle of life yet again.

I stretch to the side, then turn to face my desk. A stack of bills, an open day planner, two coffee cups, and a full email inbox await me. But as I start to sit, the washer chimes. I tiptoe down the hall and throw the clean clothes on our (still unmade) bed. On my way back to the laundry room, I catch sight of the kitchen, where dishes are piled in the sink and lunch remnants cover the island. I dash into the kitchen to clean up, telling myself it will only take a minute. With the dishwasher loaded and counters wiped, I head back toward the office, forgetting entirely about the clean clothes in the washer.

Glancing out the window on my way to my desk, I see 1095 and her calf making their way up the hill to the water trough. She nudges him gently with her nose, then steadies him when he stumbles on his still-new legs.

Observing other moms and babies makes me feel included. Part of. Because motherhood was created by God, and I'm filling a role he designed.

Ignoring the mountain of paperwork, I watch 1095 and her

calf rejoin the rest of the herd. As her calf lays down, she touches noses with another, still expectant cow and swishes her tail at another cow's calf, sending him back to his mom. Then she lowers to her knees and lays down beside her calf.

I pull myself away from the window and sit at my desk. Yawning, I take a sip of this morning's (yesterday's?) cold coffee, and read through my email. I respond to a few, delete others, and turn to tackle the paperwork on my left. I sort through it, tossing receipts and making notes in my planner of due dates and deadlines, but find nothing urgent. I should go fold that laundry, and make the bed. Maybe I'll even have time to clean the bathrooms before the kids wake up.

Spinning around in my chair, I look out the window one last time. The whole herd is laying down now, all the new and expectant moms basking in the long-awaited warmth of spring after a longer-than-normal winter.

1095 tenderly licks her calf's ear. I remember those early newborn days with both of my kids, but I'm struck by how little my mothering

resembled hers. While she is completely present with her baby, I behaved much the way I do now and filled every moment with laundry and cleaning and work.

Trailing my fingers along the desk's edge on my way out, I catch sight of the corner of my Bible, peeking out from under a power bill. It's been a while since I've opened it—putting it off for a night I'm not so tired or during naptime after my chores are done. But that never happens, and every day my kids wake up from their naps to a clean house, clean clothes, and a tired, worn-out mom.

Why is it so hard for me to rest and let myself relax? If God created both 1095 and me for motherhood, why does her mothering look so easy and relaxed while mine looks so frenzied and exhausting? Did it take her eight babies to reach this point? Or does she just instinctively know something I struggle to accept: that God created us to work and rest?

The laundry can wait, I decide. I grab my Bible and tiptoe to the living room. Pulling a fleece throw from beneath the entertainment center, I sink into the corner of the couch and open its cover.

Thirty minutes later, I hear my son's door open. His feet pitter-patter down the hall toward me, waking his sister, but I can't help but smile. He rounds the couch with a "Hi, Mom!" and clambers into my lap. To my surprise, I'm not mad that he woke up my daughter. And for the first time in I-can't-remember-how-long I'm ready, and delighted, for them to be awake; rejuvenated and refreshed by God's word.



Cara Stolen is a ranch wife and work-at-home mama of two living in rural Washington state. She loves exceptionally early mornings, strong black coffee, and listening to her children giggle. You can find her hiding in her pantry sneaking chocolate chips by the handful, or on Instagram (@carastolen). She has been published previously by Coffee + Crumbs and Holl & Lane Magazine, and writes occasionally at www.carastolen.com.

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Rhythms of rest

Kristin Vanderlip

“Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, [Jesus] said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’” Mark 6:31 NIV

When sharp words dart from my mouth before I’m even aware that they’ve formed on my tongue. When the muscles in my shoulders grow tense and ache as though I’ve just finished lifting with a heavy set of weights. When a thick fog fills my mind with a swelling effect that throbs and causes my thoughts to lose clarity. When I suddenly realized that it’s been awhile since I’d last taken a breath. I now see these moments as hazard lights flashing neon yellow to warn me about the dangerous territory I’m expecting my mind, body, and spirit to function in. I focus in on the issue at hand: an absence of rest.

I know I must get away and rest. Not only does my body demand attention to this that I can no longer ignore, but Scripture tells me. It appears in Mark 6:31 and in Matthew 11:28 where Jesus tells me to come to Him and He

will give me rest. I know that rest is so important that God commands His people to carve out a ritual of rest (Exodus 20:8–11). But when is the last time I truly observed the Sabbath in my life?

Based on the neon yellow warning signs flashing around me, it’s been far too long.

I used to imagine the type of rest God talks about as a picturesque escape to a cabin in the woods or at a vineyard in Italy on vacation.

Near impossible, right? How do I find rest in my real, everyday, ordinary life when the schedule is unforgiving and responsibilities pile up faster than the laundry?

I must find a rhythm of rest for my soul to be well. I’ve learned to think intentionally and creatively about rest.

Now rest might come as I deepen my inhalation and lengthen my exhalation wherever I am. Sometimes I close my eyes as I breathe and visualize my breath. I mentally watch as stress and angst leave my mouth slowly and controlled. As I inhale through

my nose, I breathe in a prayer, sometimes even using this verse from Mark as a breath prayer. In a matter of 60 seconds, I have found a moment of rest.

Some days I carve out 5 minutes from my schedule and find rest as I step outside. I plant my feet in the earth and lift my gaze to the vast sky above me. Maybe I’m not surrounded by the peaceful rolling hills in the Tuscan countryside. Maybe I’m standing in my driveway in middle Tennessee. But it doesn’t matter because I’m outdoors finding spiritual whitespace (as Christian author Bonnie Gray likes to call it) and breathing in the fresh crisp air. I’m away from screens and walls and all things confining and in the open expanse of creation, near nature, near God. Or maybe I walk around the block or sit on the concrete steps of my front porch or lay down on the lush green grass. Exactly how I spend my 5 minutes outside doesn’t matter, what matters is I’ve disconnected from all that pulls at me, and I’m communing with God in His creation. And here I find my rest.

Maybe I say no more in order to protect areas of rest in my schedule. Maybe I take a 15-minute power nap on the days I find myself home despite the to-do list knocking on the door. Maybe I set limits on my screen time (and there are plenty of apps to help me do that).

Whether it's 60 seconds, 60 minutes, or 6 whole days, I find ways to tuck myself into God's presence where I focus on His promises. And when I do, I am at rest wherever I am. It is well with my soul. I'm refreshed, refocused, restored, and renewed. I'm ready to serve and love and live well.

How can you establish a rhythm of rest in your life? Did any ideas come to your mind as you were reading? Grab a pen and spend a minute brainstorming what rest can look like in your life right now. If you're unsure, maybe come return here after you've spent some time in prayer.

*Lord,
In the limitations and frailty of our humanity, we grow weary and long for relief from the busyness, the burdens, the demands, and all that pulls on us in our lives. You know this, which is why You Yourself provide the rest we long for and why You don't just suggest we rest, You give it as a command for us to follow. Yet, we don't always obey here. Forgive us. May You be with us now as we pause and still our minds and hearts before you. In this moment, as we quiet ourselves momentarily in prayer, let us be aware of You and rest in Your presence. [Pause here in the silence and stillness and take 5 or 6 deep breaths]. Lord, we come to You expectant for the rest You give. Guide us into establishing daily rhythms of rest with You. Thank You for replenishing us and strengthening us as we do.
Amen.*



Kristin Vanderlip is an Army wife, bereaved mom to her little girl in heaven, and mom to her two rainbow boys. A decade ago you could find Kristin teaching English in a middle school classroom, and now she is a freelance editor and writer. Kristin writes to help women seek the Lord and hold on to hope, especially when life is hard. She is the author of *Life Worth Living: A Daily Growth Journal* and *Living Life Well: A Daily Growth Journal for Kids*. You can find Kristin at www.kristinvanderlip.com.





An Invitation

Harriet Calfo

Take me into the loving embrace of the fields,
the warm blush of blossom,
the restorative hue of the Malus tree.

Bluebells strike the air with
stalks of blue and purple,
fading daffodils dance in the breeze.

Come with me, He says,
Dance with me, I will enfold
you in My Love, Divine, unbounded.

Let, and see.



Harriet Calfo is an artist at heart and loves capturing God's creativity through photography, art, textiles and poetry. She loves anything turquoise, especially the sea. She is a Spiritual Director and runs art retreats where she loves to see people discover and flourish in their God-given gift of creativity that she believes everyone has. Her mantra is, 'it's not about the product, it's about the process.' She is on a life journey of learning to be her true-self through Gods tender care. Her other passion is to see modern day slavery eradicated and loves being an ambassador for the amazing charity Unseen. She is blessed to live in the beautiful and inspiring Cotswolds

with her family and dog.

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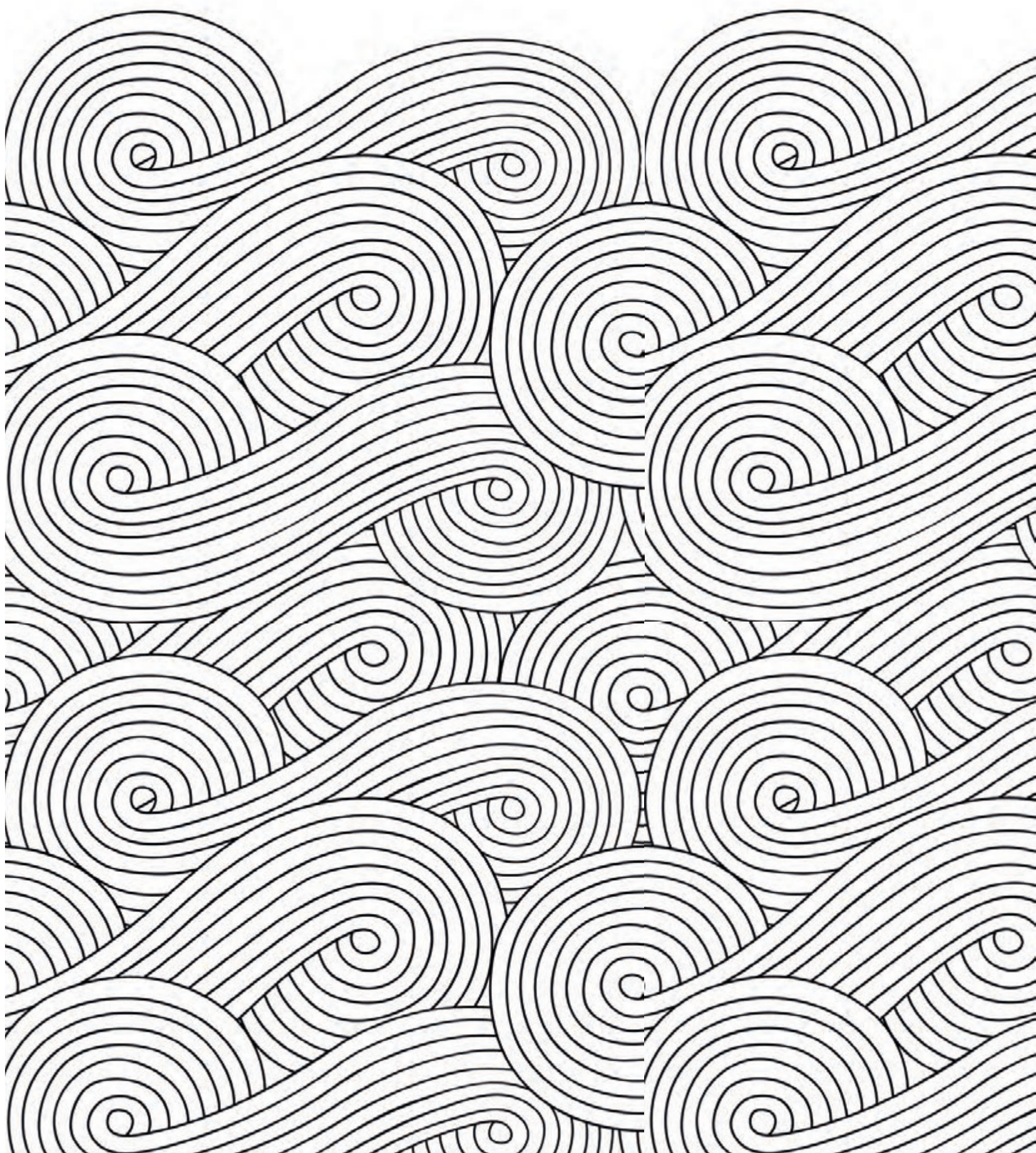
Playlists



free
pretty
lock
screens



Colour & Pray





Finding rest in the storms of motherhood

Laura Rizkallah

When the word “rest” comes up among a group of mothers I can guarantee I will hear some snarky comments, see a few eye rolls and even sense some animosity among friends if one lucky momma in the group mentions she may have gotten some rare and coveted rest. Many moms just hear the word “rest” and quickly change the topic as they take a swig of coffee to wash down the reality that their heart, soul, mind and body are weary beyond words. There is little understanding of how a woman called to care for the lives of children who depend on her every waking and sleeping minute can even think about caring for herself.

We mamas make time to laugh. Play. Cook. Drive. Prepare. Listen. Schedule. Order. Clean. Organize. Fold. Hug. Wipe. Communicate. We are intentional and serious about this role of motherhood that demands us to be present and delights us with joy. But where is there time for rest?

We schedule nap time and quiet time and time outs for our children because we know without them they are not as healthy and whole as they could be. *We know the value of rest for our children, but do we know the*

value of rest for ourselves? We would love to sit and read a magazine in the sunshine of a breezy afternoon with a cup of coffee; but we find that as soon as we stop the intense movement of motherhood we fall fast asleep and awaken to “Mooooooooooooom I NEEEEEEEEED you” and we are behind schedule, in a puddle of our own drool, with no dinner made and a feeling of guilt for falling asleep.

Motherhood is intense. But rest is intentional.

“Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28 (NLT)

I read this scripture hundreds of times over my life, but as a mom I would read it (with dark circles and blurred vision from not sleeping in 15 years) and be, “YES! Jesus! I want rest! Give me this unattainable gift!” Motherhood reality however kept this promise too far away from me. I was convinced God was mocking me or that this promise was for the “without children” demographic. How was God going to give me, a mom of six children ages 2–16, this ambiguous gift of REST? Would he miraculously insert an oasis in the middle of my mess (He knows

I can’t go anywhere without a babysitter!). Would He remove the heavy load? (That didn’t make sense because I didn’t want him to remove my kids!) Send the merry maids so I can put my feet up? (Honestly, they didn’t even have to be merry..... even miserable maids would work!)”

At the age of 42 I gave birth to our sixth child. I felt like I was caught in a washing machine in a never ending spin cycle. I was in a state of delirium and dysfunction most days. My body hurt. My mind was numb. My spirit was empty. My emotions were fragile. Weary is different than tired. Tired can be fixed with a nap. Weary is an inside tired that manifests in other issues. Weary must be met with intentional rest. The literal meaning of rest as used in this verse of Matthew is:

- I. to cause or permit one to cease from any movement or labor in order to recover and collect her strength
- II. to give rest, refresh, to give one’s self rest, to TAKE rest
- III. to keep quiet, of calm and patient expectation

God gives us rest and we must permit ourselves to make space in our motherhood to receive it.

Psalm 46:10 says to, *“Be still and know that I am God.”*

If we pause our internal posture amidst our crazy, messy and overwhelming lives and allow God to have the heavy load we are carrying daily; we will find Him in a refreshing new way. In that quiet calm we get new expectation and vision for what we have been called to care for as He quietly cares for our soul. He visits us in the stillness and when we are found we are refilled with hope and vision. Vision for motherhood restores us to continue valuing motherhood. We pause. He provides.

Shabott

God Himself rested on the 7th day of creation. He looked around Him and saw that everything was very good and He paused. He set aside time to be still. I bet he looked around at all He had created and just delighted in it. In our pausing we can see the details and the destiny of all we get to be a part of. Life becomes

a duty when don't pause to look around at the delightful details God is creating in the hard work of motherhood. The Hebrew word for rest is Shabott. It literally means rest. The Sabbath was given to us as an intentional way to create space to rest in our lives. If God values rest, so should we.

Motherhood is intense. Rest is intentional. In our family we choose to find ways to stop the regularly scheduled crazy of life and delight in each other. It's intentional. It's relational. It's delightful.

We aren't losing anything by setting aside a day to rest. We are gaining peace, joy, calm in the chaos and restored vision and refilled relationships. Rest gives back what we give away. Rest is a practice that keeps us so we can keep on keeping on. Rest is not an event (like a manicure or an afternoon away with friends), it is a way of living. A rhythm. A cadence. Shabott helps us remember the rhythm so we don't get lost in the rigor.

Choosing to Shabott gives us the opportunity to restore, refuel, reflect. Wonder and ponder, dream and remember. Setting

aside a day to rest gives us the opportunity to know God, find God and recover our strength.

Storm Stopper

Another way I have learned what rest means to me as a mother of many is to learn how to trust the storm stopper and not look into the storm.

Did you ever read the story of Jesus in the storm found in Matthew 8:23-27? We find Jesus fast asleep in the midst of all the crazy whirring of wind and clatter of thunder while beating rain pounds against the boat. (This kind of noise reminds me of motherhood!)

The kind of rest that Jesus was experiencing was the kind of internal rest that trusted beyond the storm. He knew He had power over the storm and therefore could rest assured knowing the storm was temporary and would not harm him or the disciples with him. We can choose to be still and rest while life is whirling and twirling and clanging and banging around us. We can learn to abide.

Abiding is the active choice to live in God's presence internally no

matter what is happening externally. But, you say, I can't stop the storms in my life. The chaos of children. The insanity of schedules gone out of control. The furious and crazy rhythm of life and all it brings.... I can't stop it! How can I rest in it. We learn to trust the one who quiets the storms while we go through them.

In motherhood we must learn to rest in the hope of the storm stopper and not get shaken by the storm. When everything is threatening to sink our soul and flood our life boat with water we want to freak out and jump out! Jesus shows us that we can learn to be at peace in the stormy parts of motherhood because we trust Him to speak to the storm and cause it to stop. AND even if He doesn't, we can learn to rest in His power and peace as we ride out the storm. Abiding allows our soul to stay connected to the source of peace even when the situation around us has threatened to disconnect us from peace. Abiding in our source of strength, hope and power gives us an internal peace that passes anything we can understand or see in our external chaos.

As mothers we see the storms of life but we stay connected to the power source of peace on the inside so we are not shaken by the power of the storm on the outside. Rest replenishes the soul of our inner girl so we can keep pouring out. Rest was given by God to us to give back what we have given away. Resting is meant to restore our empty places. Motherhood is intense. Resting is intentional. Motherhood is a calling. You are a gift. Rest is how we protect the calling and the gift God has given your family in your powerful role as mother.

Reflect:

Quiet your heart and ask God how you can learn to insert an intentional pause into your daily life. Practice being still and waiting to hear His voice whisper life back in to your weary heart. Intentionally begin to answer the questions overleaf as you wait on the Lord to renew your strength as you rest in His power, presence and peace.



Laura is a freelance writer and sought-after speaker. Laura lives in upstate NY with her husband of 23 years and their six children.

Laura's desire is to connect her audience with God. Laura's speaking and writing has inspired and impacted thousands to connect with God over the last 15 years. Laura writes bold, beautiful and brave words that stir your heart. Every word, spoken or written, invites you to live the crazy amazing life of love, hope and faith you were born for. Laura writes and speaks the truth of God's Word passionately. She believes that a girl and the gospel are a powerful force God uses every day to turn ordinary into extraordinary. Laura believes that every woman can live her purpose, pursue her passion and IGNITE the world with the power and love of Jesus Christ.

Visit the movement of women pursuing purpose, passion and power @ www.readyssetgogirl.com

*Questions
to help you
find rest for
your soul:*

How can you set aside a day you and your family can practice Shabbat? What does that look like practically?

What stormy situations can you stop focusing on and start focusing on the power of the storm stopper?

Where can you intentionally insert a pause (even if it is just 5 minutes a day) so you can intentionally be still and know your God.

*My presence will go with you,
and I will give you rest.*

Exodus 33:14

...es to
ng. We can make the best
e worst of it. I hope you make the
of it. And I hope you see things that
le you. I hope you feel things you have
er felt before. I hope you meet
ple with a different point of view. I
e you live a life you're proud of.
ou find you are not. I hope you have
courage to start all over again.

F Scott Fitzgerald









How In The World Can We Find Rest For Our Souls?

Tara Dickson

My oldest daughter was only 2 weeks away from delivering our first grandbaby when her world exploded over night. Details too horrible to share came to light and she would soon become a single mama.

A little over a year later we were just about to ring in the New Year when my husband's words became very confused and he couldn't walk up the stairs. One trip to the ER later and a mass showed up on the CT scan.

Jobs are lost, pandemics hit, loved ones walk out the door and we are left grasping for rest for our souls. If we have learned anything of late, I think we could say, "Life is not something we can control." Any measure of peace from thinking we could was false sense.

Taking a walk changes my physical perspective and acts as the reminder I need to shift my internal one as well. I move and breathe and rest my eyes on what I pass. I find the beauty in each detail; the line of the roof, the church bell, the date stamped in the side of the building. Or, I catch the eye of a passerby not looking away in discomfort, but smiling directly at them to watch their surprised delight.

One day, I found myself alone, my feet finding the path my daughter and I always walk together. Nearing the end of the walk I paused to snap a picture

of "my spot." It's this lovely place where the creek wanders, and the water trips across the rocks making its own kind of music. The birds can't contain their delight and they join in the chorus. It was early evening and the sun was sinking casting shadows beyond the tree trunks while the sunlight shimmered on the leaves in a sort of dance. I sighed.

It was an exhale of all the things, and my Savior brought this truth to my hear: Daughter you do everything to produce something, as if you need to prove your worth to me.

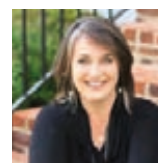
It took a moment for that to sink in. But it was true. Even the moments I chose to rest my eyes were to produce more energy so I could work harder. I couldn't remember when I did something just for the sheer delight of it. Even my walks had to be a certain length to qualify as "exercise."

Our Lord doesn't call us to criticize us but to call us to a higher place. You know it's so much easier to see the world around us when we are on top of a hill and not stuck in the trenches.

So, I'm sharing that calling with you friend. He is not a respecter of people and the freedom he wants for one daughter is the freedom He wants for all his daughters.

He is calling us to a state of rest! Not the absence of a job, but a place free of striving. It's a place where we spend time with him because we long to know that the secret to rest is being still, and knowing who is God. It is He and not I.

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls." Matthew 11:29



Tara Dickson is a recent widow and mother of 4. She began her writing journey after her husband went to

Heaven following a brief battle with brain cancer. What began as a way to testify of God's goodness during her season of suffering, quickly turned into a passion to equip both children and adults with a hope in Jesus to carry them through hard times. She makes her home in Franklin, TN.
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An exercise in rest

Abi Partridge

Were you ever made to do that trust exercise at in drama lessons at school or perhaps at a youth group or for team building at work? You know the one - where you stand in front of someone and have to fall back and they catch you? I'm sure I've done the exercise before but I can't remember a specific time. I guess I was always caught, otherwise I probably would have remembered falling to the floor, along with my feelings, pride and trust.

I do remember though, a time where my trusting brother had his head cracked open after a boy at primary school pulled his chair out from beneath him when he went to sit. A cruel trick that ended with a bloodied head, a trip to A&E and stitches. I expect my brother remembers it more than I do.

I remember the times when trust was broken more than when it wasn't. Maybe because I have been lucky to grow and live among trustworthy people.

I've been realising how it takes trust to rest. When we go to sleep we trust that no one will break into the house. (A little extreme, I know, because you probably don't think about that before you fall to sleep.)

A more mundane example perhaps; when I sit down with a cup of tea and a magazine, I trust that there is nothing that needs to be done right now in that moment.

When I take a bath with a book to read, I have to trust that no one will berate me for leaving the washing up till later or even until the next morning.

I have to trust that the lounge at the pool side will not break when I sit on it. (Maybe even more so when I've eaten nothing but croissants for breakfast all week!)

Leaving things undone, taking time to sit and not *do* means trusting that it is ok to rest. That I myself, and others will give me grace. This is in both small things like when taking time to put my feet up, but also when it comes to big life things.

In big life things like when I believe I can figure it all out and that my ways of work, parenting, paying the bills etc, depend solely on me and what I can do. I am not resting in my trust that God is who he says he is.

When I rest in God's presence, when I listen to what he is calling me to step into next, I am trusting that he will provide, that He knows best and that He is good.

When things go wrong I have to trust that he will make all things right. I have to surrender control in order to rest. Strangely, or maybe not so strangely, there is huge freedom in that trust. There is ultimate rest. It's no longer up to me. I can do the next thing, take the next step knowing that God is right there with me as he prompts and leads.

As rest requires trust, trust equals rest. Easy to write but a life time to learn. I'm learning to trust by practicing an exercise in rest.



Abi delights in creating places of peace & beauty for others. She loves encouraging women in their creativity.

She is a creative at heart, designer by trade and lives in the Oxfordshire Cotswolds with her three children. She writes, designs, and publishes iola and loves it!

She drinks coffee in the morning but earl grey tea in the afternoon and takes photos of flowers like they are going out of fashion.
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The Orphan Beach - book excerpt

Laura Thomas

“Life is spiraling out of control for pediatric nurse, Juliet Farr. Heart-broken, grief-stricken, and experiencing a crisis of faith—now she is the prime target for a crazed killer.

When her ex-boyfriend, detective Max Bennett, returns to work the case in the Oregon Coast, he knows sharing the truth behind their break-up will destroy any possibility of a second chance together.

A manuscript, a maniac, and a mother's love propel Juliet's flight to a beach in Mexico as she desperately pursues hope and healing. Will she ever find freedom from the ache of abandonment? And when a troubled soul chooses Juliet as his perfect victim, can Max prove his love for her by risking his own life? Or will Orphan Beach be the end of their story?”

Excerpt taken from Chapter One

Juliet Farr dropped a single white rose onto the coffin, her entire body numb. Frozen. And not merely because she stood windswept on a rugged bluff overlooking the turbulent Pacific Ocean. She inhaled a ragged breath.

How had life deteriorated beyond recognition in less than a year? Wrenching her eyes from the harsh reality before her, she gazed out over the gray-green expanse of water through a blur of tears. She shivered. Dead inside.

Juliet stepped back and stumbled. A strong hand cupped her elbow from behind. Max. She'd recognize his aftershave anywhere, all musk and forest. His protective touch was another reminder of what she had lost. She pulled away.

Not now.

The bitter late-November wind whipped in from the ocean causing hair to obscure her vision as it flew in her face like a red tornado. She

buried her chin in her mother's scarf. It still smelled of lavender.

“Juliet, would you like my coat?”

Her body tensed at the warmth of his whisper in her ear. That deep, rich voice which she had missed more than she cared to admit over the past six months. *Six months.* What was he doing back here? Today of all days. She straightened her shoulders and juted her chin without turning around.

“No, I'm fine. Totally fine.”

Liar.

No way was she fine. Everything would be different now. Colorless. Time slowed as she clung onto each second of this dreadful day, not wanting the farewell to finish. Gentle murmurs hung on the frigid air. She glanced around. Only a handful of family friends hovered at the graveside now. How long had they even been standing here? Most had paid their respects and left already. Some had disappeared straight after the church service. But how could she leave her mother?

Bella sniffled beside her.

“What now?” Juliet held out her right hand, and Bella clutched it in silence. As friends, they had been through more than most. Could Bella sense Juliet’s heart fragmenting at this moment? Would she send Max on his way?

Do I even want her to?

Max squeezed Juliet’s arm with a feather-light touch and a fire ignited in her belly. Part desire, part distress. She spun around and watched as he paced toward the parking lot, head bent against the elements. Or perhaps bent in shame. His hair was a little shorter than she remembered. It looked good. She closed her eyes for a moment.

“Want me to invite him back to The Lighthouse with us?” Bella’s voice was gentle.

“No. I can’t deal with him.” Juliet turned back around and peered down at the lowered coffin. “Not today. It’s hard to breathe, let alone think clearly. Today is about Mom.”

“That’s understandable. One day at a time.”

“I seem to remember giving you the same advice not so long ago.” Juliet lifted her eyes to the deepening gray clouds, pregnant with rain. “It was one of Mom’s favorite sayings. She always had the best advice, didn’t she?”

“The best.” Bella’s voice cracked. “I can’t believe Pippa’s gone.”

“It feels like my entire life

just crumbled. Like I’ve been abandoned.” Juliet sucked in a sob. “Like God doesn’t even care.”

“Oh, Jules, He cares. More than we can ever imagine. You’re hurting—of course, you’re hurting. Pippa was your mother. But you know you have me, don’t you? You’re the sister I never had. There are lots of us who think of you as family, who love you. We’re all here for you.”

Juliet looked over her shoulder, her long hair swirling around her head. “What about Max?”

He stood next to his car—presumably a rental from the police station—arms folded across his chest and feet planted hip-width apart. His gaze roamed the cliffside area, but he was particularly fixated on the graveside gathering. On her. Warmth radiated from her cheeks.

“What’s he even doing here all of a sudden, and why is he watching me like that?”

“Perhaps he came to pay his respects. I’m sure he’s concerned about you.”

Juliet shook her head. “After all this time? No. Something’s wrong. I know it.” A shiver ran down her spine as she angled her body to face him. “I’ve seen that serious detective look before. It’s the one he gets when circumstances are out of his control and trouble’s brewing.”

She wiped her damp cheeks with chilly fingers and scanned the area. A few hikers made their way toward the trails, and her mom’s remaining

friends headed to the parking lot. The graveyard was almost empty now. All appeared peaceful.

“Maybe he’s working on a case.”

“Here in Florence?”

Bella grunted. “Stranger things have happened.”

“True.”

Bella had experienced more than her fair share of drama in their sleepy seaside town.

“I simply don’t have the mental capacity to deal with anything else. Especially Max.

I’m running on fumes as it is.” Juliet squinted. “But now I’m curious.”

Bella put an arm around Juliet’s shoulders. “Try not to worry. It may be nothing.”

“It’s something.” His body language was on full alert. Juliet sensed her own muscles tense in response.

“Your teeth are chattering—let’s get you warm. Adam went ahead to get the jeep started up, and the others will be waiting at The Lighthouse. Do you think you’re ready to go?”

Juliet nodded. Only the two of them were left on the clifftop. Surrounded by cold gravestones and the harsh sound of waves crashing behind them, the bleakness of her future hit her with force. She would go back to The Lighthouse for awhile, allow friends to offer comfort, but then she would have to go home alone.

To a new chapter navigating grief and loss and loneliness.

Bella shivered beside her.

"I'm sorry to make you stay this long. You must be freezing, too."

Bella smiled. "I'll stay as long as you need me. I know you don't want to leave." She tucked her chin deeper into her black, woolen scarf.

"But I have to, don't I?"

"At some point, yes. But you can always come back and remember."

Juliet pressed a hand to her heart. She could do this. She would always have her memories...

A familiar ringtone drifted on the wind from the direction of the parking lot, breaking Juliet's moment of peace. Max's phone. She watched as he answered and ran a hand through his hair. He pinched the bridge of his nose as he listened to whoever was on the line. Not a good sign.

He pocketed his phone and strode over to where Adam was parked. They exchanged words and then Max turned on his heel and marched toward her with purpose.

"What on earth?" She felt each heartbeat pound in her chest as she watched him. His face was etched with pain and something else... fear? Time slowed again as her feet anchored in place. She couldn't have moved if she wanted to.

"*Juliet.*" Max's raised voice held an edge. "Juliet, we have to leave. Now."



Book excerpt for The ORPHAN BEACH

A Christian romantic suspense novel by Laura Thomas
(Published February, 2020
by Anaiah Press)

Website: <https://laurathomasauthor.com/project/the-orphan-beach/>

Amazon: www.amazon.com/Orphan-Beach-Flight-Freedom-Book-ebook/dp/Bo84TMVLQ8/



A published Christian author, Laura Thomas writes heartwarming encouragement for your soul. She has three Christian romantic suspense novels published, as well as a Christian teen fiction trilogy, marriage book, and middle-grade novel. She is published in several anthologies and writes devotionals, articles, and stories for magazines and online, and shares musings on her blog.

Laura is a chocoholic mom of three, married to her high school sweetheart. Originally from the UK, they live in Kelowna, British Columbia as audacious empty-nesters.
laurathomasauthor.com



Meander with me

Noreen Sevret

As the early evening sun made its way through my back yard by the river, I took a deep breath as I slowly walked with my husband and our two dogs. The day had been full, and my mind was tired. As we walked, I listened to the evening sounds and felt a covering of rest within.

The sounds of the birds drew my eyes upwards toward the blue cloudless sky, and I simply stood there with my face lifted up, glimpsing the blue beyond the treetops above me. I asked God, “Is this what it feels like to rest, Lord? I surrender to the rest this brings to my soul; what I feel inside as I notice what You have made.”

I look out a bit further and see the river flowing gently past the land I have called home for the past 27 years. It is a place of rest I find here under these trees and beside this river. I crouch deeper to get a better view of the many wildflowers growing between the lens of my camera and the large tree that has broken off in the distance.

We found a swarm of honeybees tonight way up in one of the trees and stood watching them work

away; probably honeybees from our neighbor’s bee hives. I heard the voices of children playing together in the neighbor’s yard next door, their laughter sweet music to my ears, and the sound of a lawnmower in the distance up river.

The rest I feel in this place gives me a fresh perspective on what it means to find rest. I feel it when I walk away from the work and the many things that tug at the corners of my mind. In my tiredness, I find God is waiting for me. He knows that what He made will refresh me and give me rest that I need. It’s a rest that is a gift for the weariness of my heart. A time to let Him speak to me in the way I need Him to now. It’s a time to surrender the reality of the rush and walk into refreshing rest for my mind.

It is here that my strength is renewed, much like King David refers to in Psalm 23:1-3, *“The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name.”* NLT

I find a refreshment here by the river and in the early evening sun. I know I walk not only with my husband but with God as well. As we meander back toward our home, the evening sounds are restful and are like a sweet hush to quiet the noise of the day and provide strength and rest for my soul.



Noreen Sevret lives on a picturesque river in Upstate New York with her husband and their son. She has a passion for finding beauty in unexpected places from behind the lens of her camera and writing about how God speaks to her heart through that picture. She facilitates journaling classes at her church. Noreen enjoys spending time with family, writing worship songs, playing the piano, reading, participating on book launch teams, going out for coffee with friends, and going to beautiful places in NYS and beaches in NJ with her husband. She also works as an office manager and writes content for her companies FB page. www.noreensevret.com, IG: @writerbytheriver.



*The Lord is my shepherd;
I have all that I need.*

*He lets me rest in green meadows;
he leads me beside peaceful streams.*

*He renews my strength,
He guides me along right paths,
bringing honor to his name.*

*Even when I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid,
for you are close beside me.*

*Your rod and your staff
protect and comfort me.*

*You prepare a feast for me
in the presence of my enemies.*

*You honor me by anointing my head with oil,
My cup overflows with blessings.*

*Surely your goodness and unfailing love
will pursue me
all the days of my life,
& I will live in the house of the Lord forever.*



To be list

Remember a moment where you were completely attentive.
Describe what your senses were perceiving.
(eg. breeze in your face, smell of coffee, muscle aching)

How often did you have moments in which you did nothing today?
How did it feel? What did you think about?

What is your automatic response to a moment of
doing nothing? What does that feel like?





Rest in the middle of stress!

Charlotte Osborn

The word stress is much used in our 21st century vocabulary. It was first used by Dr. Walter B. Cannon who studied and taught in the Department of Physiology at Harvard University, USA. In 1915 he became interested in the physical reactions of his laboratory animals when they felt they were in danger.

While studying digestion in his animals, Dr. Cannon noticed that physical changes in the function of the stomach would occur when the animal was frightened or scared.

The *'fight-or-flight'* response, also called the *'acute stress response'*, is an automatic reaction to a potentially dangerous situation. Our brains react quickly to keep us safe by preparing the body for action. The result of these natural reactions produce symptoms, which can negatively affect our bodies and minds.

The Oxford English Dictionary describes one of the definitions of stress as; *'A state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances.'*

Whilst the word: 'stress', is relatively recent, the realities of its meaning have been part of everyday life since almost the beginning of time.

There are many factors that contribute to the stress of human life;

Painful and difficult physical and mental health conditions,

Loss and pain caused through relationship breakdowns

Work and financial pressures,

Traumatic events which shake our world,

And at the time of writing: an unexpected global pandemic - Covid-19.

A UK-wide survey in 2018, found that almost three quarters of adults (74%) have at some point felt so stressed that they felt overwhelmed or unable to cope.*

Whilst doctors might not have had as much physiological and psychological understanding before 1915, they used different words to describe it. 'Stress' isn't a word that appears in the bible, but we read plenty about its companion - 'troubles'.

Jesus said to His followers in John's gospel,

"In this world you will have troubles. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

God's answer to overcoming human troubles and stress was to send His son Jesus as the Saviour of the world. God promises His Rest that affects our heart, mind and body in our daily lives. Knowing and experiencing God's REST is the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Over recent months we have faced some serious stress and trouble through the Coronavirus. I have found myself crying out to God for His help in the challenges we face both personally and globally. Although we may have found that our daily lives have changed pace during this time, I have realised that physical rest doesn't always equal rest in my heart or mind.

The REST that the psalmist writes about in Psalm 62 is different from our human understanding of the word.

'I find rest in God; only he can save me.'

The key to finding genuine, and lasting REST, has nothing to do with relaxing on holidays (although they are excellent and important!) True REST is found in God, regardless of what our circumstances may look like at any given moment.

It is interesting to note that in both the words stress and troubles, we can find letters which spell out the word REST. They are hidden in the middle of S-TRES-S and surrounding our TR-OUBL-ES.

I've had to do some 'de constructing' of the stress and troubles and let God re-order 'His truth in my heart, mind and body.

Like working out an anagram, I needed to see the letters from a different perspective. I had to lose two big 'S's' from my *stress* mindset! He's turning my *S-tres-S* into His *Rest*.

The 'S's' I had to lose from STRESS were my **Self** and my **Striving**. I had to surrender my *Self* to God again, release my *Striving* and trust that even in the difficulties and challenges, He was working out His plans and purposes for me.

This is a daily choice to surrender

my '**Self** and **Striving**' and receive God's gift of **REST** in His grace and love.

The last spoken words that Jesus said to His disciples were that:

He will be with us always, until the very end of the age. Matthew 28:18

Whatever stress or trouble we are facing, He is there with us and His promise of REST can be found.

**<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/news/stressed-nation-74-uk-overwhelmed-or-unable-cope-some-point-past-year>*



Charlotte Osborn is an evangelist at heart and she's passionate about sharing the good news of God's love & hope with the world. She is a speaker & event facilitator who seeks to encourage others to find creative ways to share their own stories.

As a qualified nurse, she runs her own home care business, supporting people through the many changing seasons of their lives. She has 3 fantastic grown up children who she counts as friends and she lives in the beautiful Cotswolds UK with her equally fantastic husband! www.livemovebe.org.uk





To make your own feather art

Abi Partridge

You'll need: a hammer, small flat headed nails, square of wood, paint, embroidery thread, printable feather template from abipartridge.co.uk/printable-templates

Paint your wood a colour of your choice, leave to dry.

Place the feather template in position on the wood, hammer nails up the centre spine of the feather and the edge tips, through the paper template to the wood. When finished, remove the template by tearing the paper away.

Using an embroidery thread the colour of your choice, tie a length around the bottom tack of the feather spine and fasten with a small knot. Wind the thread around each nail up the spine. Wind thread from the nails in the spine out to the nails on the edge and back. If your thread ends, make a small knot and then use a new length.

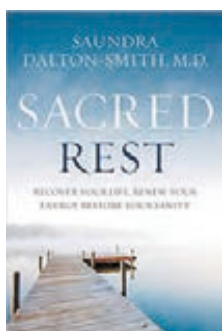
Once you are happy with the look of the feather you can place a small dab of clear glue on the knots or any visible loose ends.



*He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge*

Psalm 91:4

Books on Rest



Sacred Rest

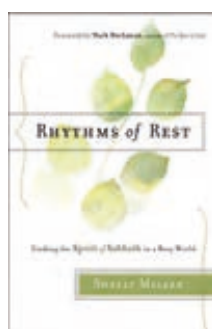
Dr Sandra Dalton-Smith

How can you keep your energy, happiness, creativity, and relationships fresh and thriving in the midst of never-ending family demands, career pressures, and the stress of everyday life? In *Sacred rest*, Dr. Sandra Dalton-Smith, a medical doctor, reveals why rest can no longer remain optional.

Dr. Dalton-Smith shares seven types of rest she has found lacking in the lives of those she encounters in her clinical practice; physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, sensory, social, creative. A deficiency in any one of these types of rest can have unfavorable effects on your health, happiness, relationships, creativity, and productivity.

Sacred Rest combines the science of rest, the spirituality of rest, the gifts of rest, and the resulting fruit of rest. It shows rest as something sacred, valuable, and worthy of our respect.

By combining scientific research with personal stories, spiritual insight, and practical next steps, *Sacred Rest* gives the weary permission to embrace rest, set boundaries, and seek sanctuary without any guilt, shame, or fear.



Rhythms of Rest

Shelley Miller

Sabbath-keeping not only brings physical refreshment, it restores the soul. God commands us to “remember the Sabbath,” but is it realistic in today’s fast-paced culture?

In this warm and helpful book, Shelly Miller dispels legalistic ideas about Sabbath and shows how even busy people can implement a rhythm of rest into their lives – whether for an hour, a morning, or a whole day. With encouraging stories from people in different stages in life, Miller shares practical advice for having peaceful, close times with God. You will learn simple ways to be intentional about rest, ideas for tuning out distractions and tuning in God, and even how meals and other times with friends and family can be Sabbath experiences.

Ultimately, this book is an invitation to those who long for rest but don’t know how to make it a reality. Sabbath is a gift from God to be embraced, not a spiritual hoop to jump through.



Invitation to Retreat

Ruth Haley Barton

We are not always generous with ourselves where God is concerned. Many of us have tried to incorporate regular times of solitude and silence into the rhythm of our ordinary lives, which may mean that we give God twenty minutes here and half an hour there. And there's no question we are better for it! But we need more. Indeed, we long for more.

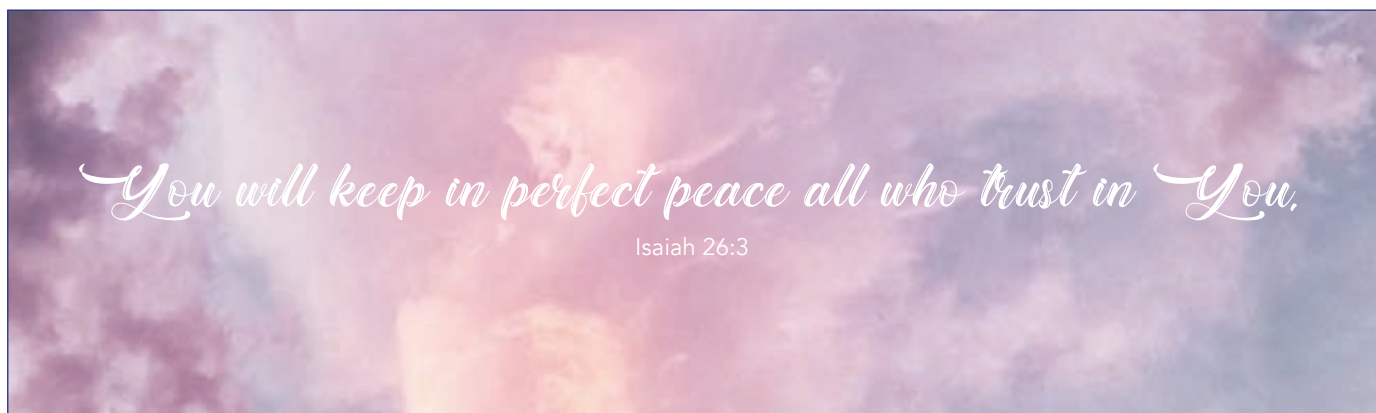
In these pages Transforming Center founder and seasoned spiritual director Ruth Haley Barton gently leads us into retreat as a key practice that opens us to God. Based on her own practice and her experience leading hundreds of retreats for others, she will guide you in a very personal exploration of seven specific invitations contained within the general invitation to retreat. You will discover how to say yes to God's winsome invitation to greater freedom and surrender.

There has never been a time when the invitation to retreat is so radical and so relevant, so needed and so welcome. It is not a luxury, but a necessity of the spiritual life."



Bookmarks

cut out and keep



Fill in the balloons with all the things you want to let go of.



An everyday blessing

*May the sun rise on you
with peace in its arms,
& the wind's warm whisper breathe
love's rest in your soul.*

*May your body rest
on a pillow of feathered grace,
as the swallows dance for you a song of freedom.*

*May soft petalled beauty refresh your eyes,
& the sweet fragrance of the Spirit bring you to life,
and may you know that all is well.*

HE RESTORES
MY
SOUL

