

Rest: Reset

Sunday 3 January 2021

Before You Begin

Our hope is that this is a resource that will help us to engage meaningfully with God's word and invite us into a sense of worship, despite being unable to meet face-to-face. Use it in a way that feels comfortable and helpful to you.

A table of contents has been added to give you a sense of what will follow and allow you to move more easily through the worship elements.

Prepare

Have your Bible close by and some food and drink prepared for communion. It doesn't have to be bread and grape juice; it could be whatever is available (tea and a biscuit) to use in this symbolic time.

Get into a 'Sacred' Space

Be intentional. Sit somewhere. Have some visual representation of God (perhaps a small cross, your Bible, a symbol or image) or you might play some reflective music. Start with a few moments of silence and deep breathing.

Consider your environment

What will work for you in the space you have? If you have others in your house (housemates/family), consider sharing this time with them, each reading or participating as appropriate. You might simply reflect individually, in your own time and space. Afterwards, you might connect with others through technology to share your reflections, or an encouragement, with them.



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Call to Worship

Pat Greig

Welcome to our first worship resource for 2021. Whether you are in your home, or at some holiday destination, we do hope and pray that this worship experience will be meaningful for you and that you will take from it something that can assist you as 2021 unfolds.

Were you one of those people who stayed up past midnight on New Years Eve? – not so much to welcome 2021 but to make very sure that 2020 ended. There is no doubt that 2020 was a challenging year for all of us. Each person experienced the lockdown and restrictions differently but there appears to have been a common theme of a very real sense of loss and grief as well as significant anxiety and even fear being experienced by some. For some there were feelings of anger and for many there was a feeling of fatigue, be it from the stress of too many Zoom meetings, life just being so much harder, uncertainty of the next day and so on.

For we Melbournians, things have become a lot easier and we are feeling more optimistic about 2021. People have been flocking to shopping centres and to parks. Beaches, restaurants and bars are crowded on warm summer days. There may even be a desire to break out, to live it up, to make up for lost time and while getting back to normal is important, taking time to recover, to be re-created and re-energised after periods of stress loss and grief is also important. So I want to encourage each of you to embrace the theme for January – REST and today's theme 'Rest: Reset'.

Brene Brown, a well known writer and blogger, has suggested that it takes courage to say yes to rest and play in a culture where exhaustion is seen as a status symbol. Stephen Covey, the writer of a best seller *7 habits of highly effective people* has devoted an entire book to one of those habits: 'first things first'. In this book he emphasizes the need for relationship, for true re-creation as key elements of 'first things first' – important factors for wellbeing.

In preparing for this time of worship I came across a beautiful quote "When we rest, we nestle into the bosom of God". The image of nestling was a powerful one for me. My 2½ year old granddaughter often does just that; she nestles into my bosom and that's a very special time for us both. Resting is an act of trust. Rest rejuvenates the body and the soul and it restores and balances us.

For me, the COVID lockdown had a plus. I retired at the end of November and in many ways lockdown forced me to begin that process of resetting – so many things I was normally involved in stopped. I was forced to think about what I wanted to continue post retirement and what I needed to let go. I'm not there yet and I am hoping that in the next weeks, God will meet me in those quieter spaces and reveal to me how he wants me to use my time in the next weeks, months and years. My encouragement to you, is that you too would commit to meeting God in those quieter places and where needed to re-set.

Father God we do thank you for new beginnings: for a new year.

We thank you, that in spite of the many challenges of 2020, we got through with you by our side.

Lord, we pray that your Holy Spirit will guide us and strengthen us as we navigate whatever is before us in 2021. Give us wisdom and courage.

Lord, we ask that you will open doors and that there will be breakthroughs for those who experienced the impact of doors that closed due to COVID-19. We pray that you will give peace and comfort to any who are still grieving the losses experienced last year.

Lord we pray for healing and reconciliation for those families who experienced an increase in stress and conflict due to lockdown. Lord we thank you for those who reached out: who provided encouragement and support, sometimes in unexpected ways.

And now Lord help us all to be still and to know that you are God; to rest in you and to be refreshed and renewed so that we can be open to all that you desire for us in 2021.

Amen

Still

Hide me now
Under Your wings
Cover me
Within Your mighty hand

When the oceans rise
And thunders roar
I will soar with You
Above the storm
Father You are King
Over the flood
I will be still and know
You are God

Find rest my soul
In Christ alone
Know His power
In quietness and trust

When the oceans rise
And thunders roar
I will soar with You
Above the storm
Father You are King
Over the flood
I will be still and know
You are God

Dwelling in the Word

Pat Greig

Rest can be experienced in a range of ways. One of those is dwelling in the word.

As you prepare to read our bible reading for today, I would invite you to adjust your position so that you are sitting or lying in a comfortable position.

Take some time then to be aware of your breathing. As you breathe in and out..... Notice the gentle rise and fall of your chest..... and abdomen.

Notice that your breathe is slightly cooler as you breathe in and warmer as you breathe out. There is no need to control your breathing in any way. Just let the breath breathe itself.

Now be aware of your thoughts. Just notice them, acknowledge their presence and let them go like passing cars.

Now in a space of stillness, allow your mind to dwell fully in the word as you read the scripture passage for today.

Bible Reading: Isaiah 61:1-4 (NIV)

Read this reading slowly, dwelling in the Word.

The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.

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It Is Well

Grander earth has quaked before
Moved by the sound of His voice
Seas that are shaken and stirred
Can be calmed and broken for my regard

Through it all through it all
My eyes are on You
Through it all through it all
It is well
Through it all through it all
My eyes are on You
And it is well with me

Far be it from me to not believe
Even when my eyes can't see
And this mountain that's in front of me
Will be thrown into the midst of the sea

So let go my soul and trust in Him
The waves and wind still know His name

It is well with my soul
It is well with my soul
It is well with my soul
It is well it is well with my soul

CCLI Song # 7021972

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Message

Penny Martin

Welcome to a new year. Today's story is from Mark 6. It's such an interesting chapter: the forest of Mark 6! Some context for today's reading... This is a busy chapter – full of action, activity, mission and work. Jesus is:

- Busy in his hometown – gone to the synagogue, tried to teach and heal, but mostly met with unbelief and resistance
- Sending out the twelve disciples on mission – sending them out, teaching, helping, encouraging them

- John is beheaded – John who Jesus would have grown up with, almost like a brother. John is brutally beheaded and killed.
- Feeding the 5,000 – but before this...we have the verses from today

‘The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.’

Phew!

In the midst of work and frustration and grief Jesus invites his friends into an important and life-giving clearing of rest.

FINDING CLEARINGS... the importance of clearings has never been more significant. In bush walking/exploring we need safe places after bashing through the undergrowth and trees. Clearings are a space to:

- Stop in safety
- Check equipment
- Get your bearings again – check maps and directions
- Tend to wounds
- Eat and drink
- Rest with the perspective of safety and space

Wedged between two powerful stories are these three very illuminating verses. Grieving the despicable beheading of John the Baptist, and facing a crowd of eager listeners – Mark includes these brief verses as a reminder of what it means to be human, to be in grief, to be in need of a break – “come away... and rest awhile” says our compassionate saviour Jesus.

The fact is, that it is in our rest that God actually equips us for his Kingdom work in the world. You are invited this month to reflect on what has been and press into the various facets of rest that we will be exploring over January: resetting some things, retaining some important learning, releasing some things that we do not want to hold anymore, reconciling and remembering - all are significant as we prepare ourselves for a new year.

Let us take some precious time to reset – to be able to focus on the work of the Kingdom before us (represented by the gathering crowd) – can we do the same?

Will you take this time, as we step cautiously into a new year, to take full possession of God’s gift of Sabbath renewal and rest? Let it bring you back to life. I hope you will. For now, and evermore.

Oceans

You call me out upon the waters
The great unknown where feet may fail
And there I find You in the mystery
In oceans deep my faith will stand

And I will call upon Your name
And keep my eyes above the waves
When oceans rise
My soul will rest in Your embrace
For I am Yours and You are mine

Your grace abounds in deepest waters
Your sov'reign hand will be my guide
Where feet may fail and fear surrounds me
You've never failed and You won't start now

And I will call upon Your name
And keep my eyes above the waves
When oceans rise
My soul will rest in Your embrace
For I am Yours and You are mine

Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders
Let me walk upon the waters
Wherever You would call me
Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander
And my faith will be made stronger
In the presence of my Saviour

I will call upon Your name
Keep my eyes above the waves
My soul will rest in Your embrace
I am Yours and You are mine

CCLI Song # 6428767
Joel Houston | Matt Crocker | Salomon Ligthelm
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Communion

Have some food and drink prepared for this time

If you would like to you can view the communion video via Facebook [rngwd.com/fby](https://www.facebook.com/rngwd.com/fby) or use the following reflection to take communion in your own way today and after, consider who you can call to have a chat as you would on a Sunday morning after a church service.

Welcome to this time of Communion. Today our theme is Rest: Reset.

Pat Greig

During lockdown, I joined a large cohort of individuals who were making sourdough bread. As I have thought about this, I can see the process I've engaged in as something of a metaphor for Christian Life.

The jar of starter was given to me by a friend from church. It came with some handwritten instructions and a bread sample. It was then my job to feed the starter to keep it alive and thriving. A good loaf of bread required the starter to be at optimum level. That necessitated me feeding it, then waiting until it was at least doubled in size. The flours for the bread were then carefully weighed and just the right amount of water and starter mixed together before being added to the flour. This is followed by a process of mixing and stretching and proving that can last more than 12 hours before the loaf is ready to go into a very hot oven for the final rise and cook. The success of the process is measured by the amount of oven spring that occurs and the look of the 'crumb' when the loaf is cooled and cut in half. We've enjoyed some beautiful bread and some mediocre loaves and I'm never sure from one bake to the next what the loaf will be like, but I keep on going because the hope of a great loaf is always there. I've joined a sourdough bread makers Facebook group and members are very encouraging. There's always someone to offer helpful hints to members who are needing assistance and to share a recipe. A couple of months after I began making bread, my friend accidentally threw out her starter. We quickly worked out that there was a point where our 5km bubbles intersected so I was able to take her some more starter.

When I first accepted Jesus as my Lord and saviour, I needed feeding. That feeding happened in many ways: in a Christian Endeavour group. In my personal quiet time, in conversations with Christian friends and family, in camps etc. When I wasn't getting regular feeding, my connection with God lessened. As I look back I can see a strong relationship between the level of feeding and the quality of the 'bread' of my life. Just as I was able to give my friend a new batch of starter when she accidentally threw hers out, we can encourage and help give new life to those who might be struggling in their life journey and in their walk with God.

Jesus knew the importance of being fed (by his word) in order that his followers be salt and light in the world. In my favourite Bible translation, Jesus, in John 15, repeatedly says to His disciples, 'stay joined to me'. As they stayed joined to him, he promised he would be joined with them and they would be able to do his bidding. Jesus also realised that 'staying joined' would be easier if there was a tangible reminder and so when he shared that final Passover meal with his friends, he used two samples, common foods as symbols to help his followers remember him. Bread and wine.

In Luke 22 we read 'Jesus took some bread in his hands and gave thanks for it. He broke the bread and handed it to his disciples. Then he said, "This is my body which is given for you. Eat this as a way of remembering me". After the meal Jesus took another cup of wine in his hands then he said "This is my blood. It is poured out for you and with it God makes his new agreement."'

And that agreement was the forgiveness of our sins and the promise of eternal life.

Father God,

We thank you for the depth of your love for each one of us. As we take this bread and drink this cup, we remember your sacrifice and commit again to a life of walking with you.

Amen.

We invite you to eat and drink in remembrance of Him

January Update

Brendan Petty

Acknowledging that we're as geographically scattered as ever before this summer, we will be providing a broad range of ways to connect in with worship and communion, which will inevitably each be smaller gatherings. We'll be producing pre-recorded worship videos, paper church, communion reflections (pre-recorded on Facebook) and also opening the chapel for the worship video, communion and the chance to chat with others over morning tea. We will be serving communion again, in sealed single-serve cups to minimise handling as we re-engage with this practice together.

Connect cards online

Click this link or enter it into your web browser rngwd.com/connect.

We love to know that you have been able to connect through worship today. Please click on the link (or enter it into your web browser) to our online connect cards letting us know which ways you have been able to worship, and if you want to let us know how we can praying with you.

Thank you!