

JUNE 2022

Practice of the Month

# SELF-CARE

"When we don't rest well, we don't  
love well."

John Mark Comer



# WHAT IS SELF CARE?

Self-Care is about nurturing and protecting the limits and desires of the body. Self-care can relate to anything surrounding rest, diet, physical activity, water/alcohol/caffeine intake, doctors' appointments, not overworking yourself, honoring God with your sexuality, etc.



# WHY PRACTICE IT?

We are whole people. Mind and body. Spiritual and physical. Immaterial and material. Yes, we were created in the image of God, but we were also created from the dust of the earth. Following Jesus is about finding the balance between these two things; by uncovering our potential and accepting our limitations. Our tiredness, health complications, and stress reveal that we are not infinite beings. We need boundaries. We need rest. We need to care for our bodies. We need to say no as well as yes. We need to know that what we can do sometimes, we cannot do all the time. For an apprentice of Jesus, this matters for two reasons...

**1.** We worship God when we respect our limits. The Holy Spirit resides in our bodies, and so when we treat our bodies well, we treat the dwelling place of God well. It's why Paul calls followers of Jesus to "offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God." Yet for some of us, we think that taking care of our bodies seems sub-biblical, non-important, or self-centered. Self-care is none of those things when our desire is to worship God, because it's all about caring for the body the Holy Spirit inhabits. Parker Palmer writes, "Self-care is never a selfish act— it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer others."

**2.** We love better when we respect our limits. Jesus' new command in John 13:34 is to love others as He has loved us. The biggest challenge for us in fulfilling this command is not understanding how to love, but setting ourselves up for success. Loving people isn't complicated, but it certainly is challenging when we're worn out, tired, or unwell. Now sometimes, our physical well-being is completely out of our control, and we have to learn how to love others in the midst of that. But other times, we do have control, and our energy levels, physical ailments, and fatigue are the direct result of our neglect to take care of our bodies. And when this is the case, it doesn't matter how much of the bible we read or how many sermons we listen to, it's incredibly hard to extend love. But when we do take care of our bodies, we set ourselves up well to love others as Christ loves us.

# WHERE DO WE SEE JESUS ENGAGE IN IT?

If you read through the gospels, Jesus did a lot. He preached, he healed, he ate with people far from God, he fished, he read scripture, he visited the synagogues, etc. In his final words, the gospel writer John wrote, “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written” (John 21:25). And yet, for some reason, the gospel writers decided to record on numerous occasions, that Jesus practiced rest (Matthew 8:23; Luke 4:16; Mark 4:38, Mark 6:30-31; Mark 7:24). Yes, he was on a divine mission, but he also knew his human limits. He knew he needed to rest and take care of himself so that he could do his ministry well.

While Jesus modeled a life of honoring his body's limitations, the idea of doing so didn't originate with Jesus in the gospels— it originated in Genesis 2, when after creating for 6 days, God rested. Rest is woven into the fabric of our creation story, and according to Jesus, that's why God gave his people a sabbath— because He knew they needed it (Mark 2:27). They needed to respect their limits, rest from work, and enjoy the pleasure of His company while doing it.



# REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How have you neglected caring for your health and body?  
How often do you exercise? What is your diet like? How much water/coffee do you drink? What time do you go to bed/wake up in the morning? How many hours do you work in a week? How might Jesus be inviting you more deeply into some area of self-care?
- What is experiencing burnout like for you? What do you do to recover? How has it changed the way you live?
- What difficulties or compulsions make it hard for you to stop? What is preventing you from practicing rest?



# SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

- **Keep a log of how much you sleep.** Are you respecting your God-given need for rest and recreation? As a disciple, ask God how long he wants you to sleep. Is it more or less? Readjust your sleeping or resting patterns for a week. What is it like for you?
- **Cultivate ways of nurturing and caring for your body:** bubble baths, massages, physiotherapy, going to the dentist or doctor, etc.
- **Create an exercise plan.** It can be as simple as getting out for a walk everyday, to training for a 5k. The point here is to be intentional about how you are caring for your body.
- **Spend time with your hobbies and people who bring you life.** Pick up an interest you left behind. It's okay to settle into downtime.
- **Practice a Sabbath.** Choose a day and length of time that you want to practice a sabbath. While we encourage a 24-hour sabbath, there are no rules here, only suggestions. If this is new to you, maybe try something shorter. Here are some suggestions:
  - Traditional Sabbath- From sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday
  - Lord's Day Sabbath- From sunset on Saturday (or sunrise on Sunday) to sunset on Sunday
  - Midweek Sabbath- Choose any day of the week to practice your sabbath
- **Attend a support group.** If you are recovering from a divorce, the death of a loved one or a deep grief, attend a support group (ie. STAIR, Emotional Rescue, Greif Care).