



*rest for the weary*

# Sermon Growth Guide

**June 16, 2024**

**Rest in Relationships**

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**Rest for the Weary - Rest in Relationships**

**Mark 3:13-21**

**Key Verse:** Mark 3:14

He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach.

**Big Idea:** Relationships that flow from the love Jesus has for us are a source of peace and rest.



*rest for the weary*

## Foundations

From the very beginning, we are told that it is not good for us to be alone. Community is essential to understanding what it means to be human. When Jesus appointed the Twelve, we can understand the source and purpose of relationships.

Jesus, unlike other rabbis, chooses his disciples. He is not concerned with imparting some philosophical or religious system to them. He wants to give them himself. Note that verse 14 says that Jesus called them so that “they might be with him.”

We are often so concerned with the doing of discipleship, that we ignore the being withness of discipleship. And when you realize the make-up of this group of apostles, you also realize that only God could turn this diverse group of men into a new family. The only thing they share is the fact Jesus has called them and named them.

How are friendships and family transformed into life-giving relationships? We know from personal experience that our own efforts to do this, no matter how noble, eventually fail.

Only God can do this and he wants to do this. Verse 13 states the Jesus called those whom he wanted. This is explosive. When God calls you to be with him, it’s because he wants you. That is the beginning of a life filled with peaceful and restful relationships.

## Understanding God’s Word

Sometimes we skip over lists in the bible... lists like the “begats” in the Old Testament. We treat these names more like a roster than a lesson. As you reflect on those names, and what you know about them, what strikes you as remarkable about what Jesus is doing here? Read Psalm 13 together. The ancient imagery of oil and dew on Mt. Hermon is a description of being called, anointed, and given an abundant life by God. Discuss: Why is it pleasant to live in unity? Why do you think we often confuse unity and uniformity? Do you think the concept of harmony helps us to understand the nature of life-giving relationships?

## Applying God’s Word

Thomas Helwys, a Puritan who was one of the founders of the Baptist tradition, in his Declaration of Faith of the English People, wrote that the size of churches should be small “so that they may performe all the duties of love one toward another both to soul and bodie.” What are those “duties”? Why is small better than big in fulfilling those duties? Is there value in “big?”

## Witnessing God’s Word

“The church is to take those who know the hurt of the world and bring them into the healing of community...” (David Garland) Is there some small act you can do invite someone into Jesus’ family?

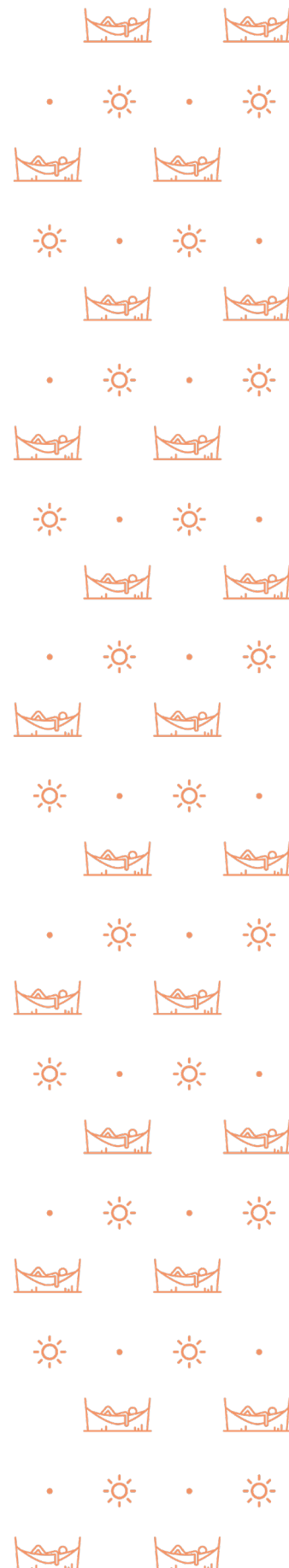
Today we want to talk about relationships. Not only Father-Son relationships, but also friendships and other relationships. Jesus calls a community together, and some He calls very close to Him. We are living in a time of loneliness epidemic. The UK has appointed a Loneliness Minister to the government. The US Surgeon General put out an advisory public statement last year on the health effects of isolation and loneliness, and the government is trying to come up with ideas at every level. In our own city, Mayor Yemi Mobolade and the City Council launched an effort to encourage 1,000 neighborhood gatherings this summer to increase social connectivity. They are up to 267 last I checked. Abigail planned a long-overdue block party with our neighbors on Wednesday. I registered it with the City. I didn't tell Abigail. I got a T-shirt.

We are not meant to be alone. Solitude can be refreshing, but alone is no good. Sometimes we choose to withdraw and recharge. Jesus withdrew from public view for times of connection to the Father, prayer, and refreshment. Then when He reengaged, He reengaged with great force and impact. Solitude and sabbath rest are part of a healthy rhythm of life, but so is engagement, friendship, and connection—a rhythm of relationship. Rest for the Weary means taking up the rhythm of life defined by Jesus, the way of Jesus. Jesus, who said come to me and yoke yourself up to me and learn my ways. Here is Eugene Peterson's interpretation of the passage we are focused on this series, Matthew 11:28-30: "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly." (The Message) Jesus says walk with me, work with me, "learn the unforced rhythms of

grace." When you first learn to dance it's very awkward, then the steps become natural. Part of that rhythm is the rhythm of meaningful relationships. Is it possible God wants to give you Rest in Relationships ?

"Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. (Mark 3:13) Jesus does not go it alone. Jesus is in community. Not only is Jesus in the eternal community of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but Jesus in His ministry on earth demonstrates a gathering, community, relational model. This is not a lone wolf deal. We are better together. So, Jesus chooses disciples and appoints them. He called people to him, because he wanted them. Can you acknowledge your need for friendship and community? Often people don't respond because they don't know what you need, or that you even value having them around. But when you say to a friend, "Hey, I would love some time with you. I need you. I want to hang out, I want to talk," that changes the game. People respond to that. As long as you remain isolated and stoic, nobody will drift your way. But when you ask, things change. Jesus called people he wanted.

"He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons." (Mark 3:14-15) In particular, Jesus called and appointed twelve. We even get their names, the twelve Apostles: Simon Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus (or Judas), Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot. Notice why it says Jesus appointed them. He appointed them, in the first instance, "that they might be with him." C. S. Lewis taught on Friendship as one of the Four Loves, but one that is dismissed in our times. "Very few modern people think Friendship a love of comparable value or even a love at all...To the Ancients, Friendship seemed the happiest and most fully human



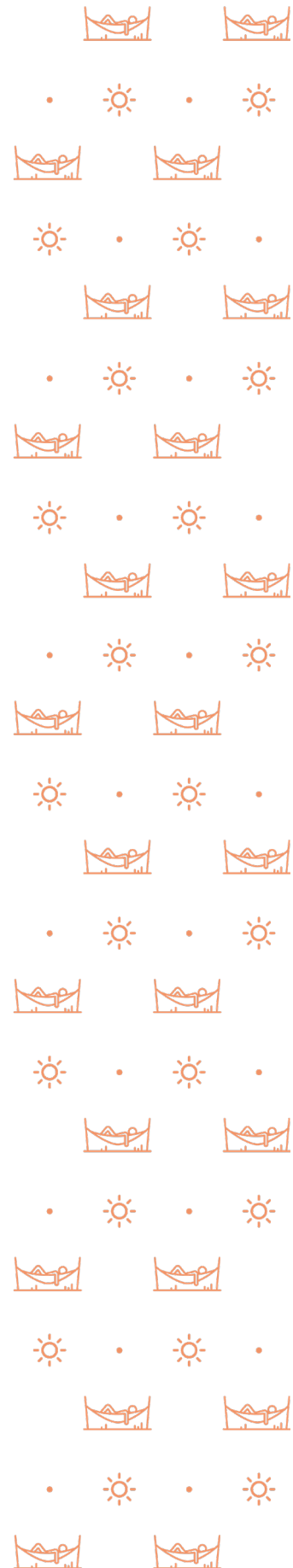
of all loves; the crown of life and the school of virtue. The modern world, in comparison, ignores it. We admit of course that besides a wife and family a man needs a few ‘friends.’ But the very tone of the admission, and the sort of acquaintanceships which those who make it would describe as ‘friendships,’ show clearly that what they are talking about...is something quite marginal; not a main course in life’s banquet; a diversion; something that fills up the chinks of one’s time.” Jesus seems to see it as part of the banquet, a main course. He calls them to be with Him. And He appoints them to go out, to preach and to exercise authority over demons—to extend His own authority in the spiritual places. The best friendships are formed in common cause, common vision, common work and shared striving.

But the rhythm of relationships is also a threat. Did you see who Jesus included? Judas Iscariot, who would betray Him. Betrayal is a risk in any relationship, and when it comes, it can be ferociously painful. For some, it is enough to stop risking relationship at all. After one or two times getting burned, why should I extend my soul and expose my heart only to be manipulated and deceived and betrayed? Some lock up their hearts in isolation. But when you do that, your heart may be safe from harm, but it will also harden and grow cold in that little iron box. Jesus included Judas. Judas is included when Jesus knows all along he will betray Him. It’s not even a risk in Jesus’ case; it is a certainty! Still, He includes him. Relationships can produce conflict, but God also uses these hard moments in our lives to shape us more into the likeness of Jesus.

And then we get a glimpse into how things are going in Jesus’ family. You can’t pick your family. You can pick your friends; you can pick your nose; but you can’t pick your friend’s nose...and you can’t pick your family. “Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples

were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, ‘He is out of his mind.’” (Mark 3:20-21) His own family didn’t understand Him. They accused Jesus of being out of step, antisocial, non compos mentis. Family is not always the easiest thing to navigate. Jesus suffered difficult family dynamics among his own brothers. Jesus drew the disciples near and made family of them, but He did not discard His biological family or disassociate from them. He held on to them even when they were trying to shake Him off. Relationships are meant to be a blessing. We need relationships. We were not meant to go it alone.

Today is Father’s Day. I listen to a podcast called “Dad Tired.” The host, Jared Lopes, actually traveled with Abigail years ago for TOLI when he was still a film contractor to take footage of the ministry, and he visited us in our house just after he wrote the book called “Dad Tired.” He had four kids all under six years old. The title is accurate. I like the podcast, and a few weeks ago he had a guest who encouraged every father to take what he called the seven-question challenge, seven questions you could ask your children or grandchildren to go deeper in your relationship. They apply to mothers too. Want to know what they are? Believe me you don’t. Here goes: (1) What do you think is most important to me? Our actions speak louder than words. What does your child think is most important to you? (2) If I could wish for one thing for you, what do you think it would be? What does your child think you want out of them? (3) What do you think I love the most about you? (4) What are ways that I show you love that mean the most to you? (5) What are ways that I could show you better that I love you? You might not be giving love in the way your child receives love. (6) What’s one thing that I have done that you will do differently as a parent? Yikes. Finally, (7) What’s one thing that I have done that you will do as a parent?



I do like these questions. You would have to be pretty bold to actually go through them. I bet some of you will! To be honest, I think my kids would run out of the room screaming, but I do like the questions. They make us think about the impact of our parenting, and particularly you dads today. The role of the father is under attack. There is no question we live in a time when men, fathers, fatherhood, masculinity itself are all under attack. Just watch commercials and shows go by. Is the dad competent or incompetent? Smart or foolish? Then there is the drumbeat against toxic masculinity. Yes, men can do terrible things and accountability is necessary, but boys need to know there is such a thing as a good man. You boys need to hear that being a man is a good thing. God intends for you to grow up to be a good, godly man! There is such a thing as a good, godly man. The world needs good men. Fatherlessness is also an epidemic and the void it leaves in a heart can have far-reaching consequences. Children raised without fathers are statistically much more likely to suffer poverty, succumb to drug and alcohol abuse, drop out of school, and suffer physical and emotional problems impacting those around them. If you are a dad or a granddad today, I just want to say, stick with it! Keep it up! You are important.

But for all of us today, what is Jesus calling you toward in relationships? Is there something missing? Have you said to your friends that you appreciate them lately? That you need them and want them around? Jesus cares about our relationships with others. It is God's desire that our relationships are a place of blessing and rest. Rest in relationships means taking on a rhythm. Tonight, I fly out to meet with a dozen pastors who have become friends, other leaders who face the same kinds of struggles and worries I do. We've been getting together for eight years. I look forward to our time each year. An annual rhythm. Some parents have a weekly call, or a daily check in with kids.

Some friends keep in touch with set, intentional rhythms. Life Groups create a rhythm of relationship. Every week or every two weeks, we come together. I love hearing about Life Groups, Bible Studies, pie gatherings, circles of friends in this church who know each other by name, pray for one another, search the Scriptures together and try to live the Christian life. Some have been meeting for decades. We'd love to help you start or join one. What rhythm of relationship do you need to find rest in relationships?

Relationships can be rough, but Jesus can get in the middle of your most trying relationships. It may take time. Sometimes it takes a lifetime, but He can use even the most difficult relationships in your life to shape your heart. Jesus makes rest in relationships possible. How can Jesus call Judas close even when He knows he will betray Him? How can Jesus call Peter close knowing he will deny even knowing Jesus when Jesus is arrested? How can Jesus call Thomas close knowing Thomas will doubt His resurrection until He offers His wounds into Thomas' hands? Because Jesus died for them all. Jesus makes forgiveness possible. Without that grace, all relationships are transactional agreements—do for me as I do for you. With the grace of Jesus, relationships can provide rest we need.

