



Don't Run on Empty

Focus Verse:

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

(Matthew 11:28, ESV)

Have you ever heard someone describe their weariness or fatigue as “worn to the bone”? Maybe you’ve been there yourself. You are weary, running on empty, worn out, and ready to drop. It’s just not a good place to be.

What is weariness? According to the KJV Dictionary (<https://av1611.com/>), it is defined as:

1. The state of being weary or tired; that lassitude or exhaustion of strength which is induced by labor; fatigue.
2. Lassitude; uneasiness proceeding from continued waiting, disappointed expectation or exhausted patience, or from other cause.

We live in a fast-paced and stressful society, but weariness is not a new problem. The Bible tells us about the lives of several who experienced periods of weariness. By observing how they responded to those difficult times, we may learn valuable lessons to help us through our struggles.

TWO WEARY PEOPLE

Although I’ve read John 4 many times through the years, I had not noticed how the passage speaks of Jesus being weary. When we consider the miles He walked (some estimate at least twenty each day), the constant press of the crowds, and the hours He spent teaching and ministering, His fatigue is understandable. On the particular day mentioned in John, He was travel weary.

“Jacob’s well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.” (John 4:6, ESV)

Physically tired and hungry, Jesus rested beside the well at Sychar as He waited for His disciples to return with food. It reminds me once again that the Lord understands our every situation. In His humanity, He experienced the same things we do each day—including hunger and fatigue.

As Jesus waited, a woman came to the well to fill her waterpots. Noon was not the usual time for women to visit the well, but she chose an hour when others were not typically present. Although Scripture does not tell us this, I suspect she was also weary. However, hers was a spiritual exhaustion from a life of disappointments, bad decisions, and the guilt of sin. We will never really know all she may have endured.

TYPES OF WEARINESS

Just as the weariness of Jesus and the woman He met at the well resulted from different causes, our weariness might differ significantly from what a friend or coworker is experiencing. Our lives are all different, and so are our struggles.

A young mom with a colicky baby becomes weary with sleep deprivation. Someone with a difficult job becomes weary of the pressure to perform well or to keep up with an impossible workload. A caregiver feels drained by physical, emotional, and financial needs. A single parent struggles with the emotions and stresses of “doing it all” that an empty-nester or someone who is not a parent will not understand. Someone in ministry may be weary from the constant need to help others. (Note: Some cases of extreme fatigue may be caused by a medical condition that requires professional care.)

Let’s admit it. Even the strongest of us will face times when we are “running on empty.” Weariness is not a respecter of persons. It can affect anyone.

Life Reflection:

Have you experienced times of extreme weariness?

Was the cause physical, emotional, or spiritual?

Even if it were physical or emotional, how did this weariness affect your spiritual well-being?

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO ME?

What can we do to counteract weariness? First, we should determine its cause. For a moment, let’s focus on the signs of spiritual fatigue. These three questions may help you understand what is happening.

1. Am I relying on my strength and abilities instead of God’s strength?
2. Am I attempting to fulfill every need I see rather than discerning what God means for me to do?
3. Am I taking time for self-care, or do I ignore the signals my body is giving me? Weariness takes a toll when we do not receive the rest we need.

Moses would have quickly burned out while leading the Israelites had it not been for his father-in-law's sound advice. Exodus 18:14-23 tells us the story. Moses was trying to meet the people's needs single-handedly, which was unsustainable. Jethro advised him to share the load with other capable men.

"You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone." (Exodus 18:18, ESV)

Moses was doing the work God had called him to do, but he was driving himself to exhaustion by attempting to do it alone. We can do the same while working for the Lord. Whether it is pulpit ministry, children's ministry, music ministry, or any other active role, we need balance. A saying you may have heard says, "You can't pour from an empty cup." If we have exhausted ourselves to the point of being physically and spiritually depleted, we have nothing left to pour out to others.

Life Reflection:

Have you ever experienced burnout in working for the Lord?

Did you drop out of that ministry or find rest and renewal?

Have you achieved a good balance between work, rest, and leisure?

REFRESHED AND RENEWED

How can we overcome our weariness? If we are overwhelmed and exhausted by the load we carry and tired of being tired, consider these steps to rest and renewal.

Set realistic expectations on what you can do. If you skip this first step, you may be setting yourself up for burnout. What are your strengths and weaknesses? Are you setting higher expectations for yourself than what God asks you? Give yourself grace. Remember the parable of the talents? The master's expectation was different for each servant. What God asks you to do will differ from His plan for me.

Do not isolate yourself. It is so easy to pull away from others when we are going through a trial or are overwhelmed with all we need to do. Elijah went into the wilderness alone, sat under a broom tree, and prayed to die. That was not the answer to his problems. Isolating ourselves only makes us feel worse. We need the encouragement of others when life gets tough.

Share the load. When we reach out to others and ask for their help, we are not showing weakness. The beautiful thing about being part of the body of Christ is that God intends us to work together and support each member. Our gifts and abilities complement each other.



Seek godly counsel. When you find your life getting out of balance, acknowledge it and seek advice on how to find balance. Your pastor, a wise friend, or a mentor may help you view the situation from a different perspective.

Take time to be grateful. Spend a few minutes each day thinking grateful thoughts. What good things is God doing in your life? What kindnesses have you received from others? It's amazing how our attitude shifts and our spirit lifts when we count our blessings.

Look to God for strength. He is the ultimate source of our rest. Psalm 23 tells us that our Shepherd will lead us to rest. *"He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul"* (Psalm 23:2-3, NKJV).

"For I will satisfy the weary soul, and every languishing soul I will replenish."
(Jeremiah 31:25, ESV)

Life Reflection:

Do you find it difficult to ask for help from others when your load grows too heavy?

What advice would you offer a friend who is weary and struggling?

Do you take time for self-care? If not, why not?

Do you look at life with a spirit of gratitude?

Additional Scriptures to Encourage You:

Psalm 55:22

Isaiah 40:29-31

Matthew 11:28-30

Galatians 6:9

II Thessalonians 3:13

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