

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

Overwhelmed

PART

1

TITLE

Help, I'm Exhausted

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 18:1-24



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Well, it is great to see you, Providence family. To all of who are new with us, guests, welcome. We're thrilled that you are here. It is really great to see you. The last several days, about 10 days was on the other side of the globe. My wife and I got back yesterday about 2:00 AM, so I'm a little tired. The thought of Help, I'm Exhausted is just a great title for this morning. I know that it is really good to see you. In fact, those families who are from Providence who we went to just serve, to care for them, I want you to know that they're so thankful for you. They're thankful for your sacrifice for them, for your prayers for them. The reality is that they live in a world, in the part of the world in which they live, it is an exhausting place. It's a stressful place. It's a high stress area. As a result of that, a lot of them are just really beat down. It was a joy to go to simply give them encouragement. I want to thank you for your prayers.

I want to ask you now. We're going to be in God's word, the second book of the Bible, chapter 18. If you want to head there with me, there's lots of Bibles in the chairs near you. The second book of the Bible, love Exodus. It's an amazing book. We're in chapter 18 as we start a new series called Overwhelmed. A lot of us feel that way. Sometimes we can't necessarily pinpoint why or how. We just simply know that life is broken. Sometimes in our life, we've identified what's wrong and yet we don't find a solution. Some of you, frankly, have written to me and said, "I'm just overwhelmed that you're talking about being overwhelmed." They were sincere in that of, "What are you going to say? Is it possible this time to find relief?"

I know some of you, it's really significant. There are some of you right now who are battling significant anxiety and significant depression. There are people who are going to sit in these seats who are contemplating ending their life and have been doing so. I just want you to know that there's hope for you. I want you to know that Jesus has a plan for you, that he loves you. We're starting with this idea of being overwhelmed with weariness simply because our weariness, our exhaustion, if it's prolonged, it leads to burnout. This exhaustion, this lack of rest, it contributes to so many different kinds of illness in our life. I realize back in September I talked about rest. We, frankly, haven't learned our lesson, so I'm going to take another swing at it this morning. We are an exhausted people.

You know, if you go online, and you look at book titles in any search engine, and you look at book titles under the category or under the section of spirituality, you're going to find a lot of books. One I went to, there was over 80,000 book titles that they placed in spirituality. If you just scroll through the first several pages, if you look at 50 or 60 books, what you find there is that there is an overwhelming demand within culture that book titles are aiming to meet. That demand is for equilibrium. It's for balance. It's for healing. It's for rest. We are a broken people. We live in a broken world. Even in a place like Raleigh that's so close to beautiful things like the beach, so close to the mountains, where we have comforts, we have stores, we have, in some ways, plenty, we have good food, we have good churches, we have the gospel, we have Jesus, and there's this overwhelming brokenness that fills our own city.

Last year, one of our own high schools in Wake County, 11 suicides or attempted suicides in one school. Those kids are from our neighborhoods. They're from our streets. They're like us. They're just like us. It's interesting that the church is not immune to such things. We, as a congregation, you need to know that if you're new here and you're looking around at all these people like, "Who are all these people?" we're a people who are populated with invisible illnesses, some physical, some spiritual, some mental, some emotional, some relational. We're a broken people. It's interesting that those illnesses that plague the mind tend to be the elephant in our room.

We come in here, and we sing about God's greatness. We sing about these things, and yet we know that there are furniture that's been knocked over in each of our homes because of the brokenness within our own life. We show up, and it's time to sing. The lights turn on. This happens to me. Sometimes I'm sitting there and praying while the videos is being played. All of a sudden, the lights go on. It's like, "Well, whether I'm ready or not, here we go." That's how you are as well. You come, and it's simply time. Sometimes we don't like to talk about it because it's uncomfortable. We don't know what to say about these kinds of things. Yet, what I want you to know is it's very common. I want to show you that it's very common. I want to get you into a place where maybe perhaps you would stand. I'm already standing, so this is certainly true of me, but let me just ask you this.

If you are currently battling or know of anyone in your immediate sphere of relationships that's battling exhaustion and burnout, would you stand up? Anyone you know that's battling or maybe you're battling exhaustion and burnout. How about anybody that you know that's feeling restless, anybody in the room that's dealing with anxiety or knows anyone else who's dealing with anxiety, social anxiety, just general worry in their life? How about being depressed? Is there anybody in the room, maybe you're already standing, either you or someone you know is depressed or working through a eating disorder or an addiction or just a general area in your life where you feel guilty or ashamed and it just seems to just canvas the rest of your life? It affects your decisions. Now, look around the room. We, the broken people of Providence, say we need Jesus. That's what we're saying right now. If you are standing or if you wish you could, you are not alone. You can have a seat.

Every one of us carries a weight. You know, sometimes that weight is simply too heavy to bear, isn't it? There's an English word, and it means to bury or drown beneath a mass of something. You know what that word is? It's the word overwhelmed. That's the official definition, to be buried or drown beneath a mass of something that's heavy. What I want to do over the next six weeks, I want to look at a few different categories that plague our own body. This morning, we're going to start with exhaustion. Next week, we're going to talk about anxiety and simply that gnawing effect of being unsettled, and it just causes this perpetual restlessness that makes us more exhausted but also more unsettled.

Then, we're going to look at the fact that many of us in the room, we deal with being depressed, a sense of melancholy, a darkness. We can't maybe explain it. We don't know what to do with it. It's just always there. Then, we're going to look at the idea of the fact that you and I, so many of us, we deal with addiction of some kind. Your addiction may not be one of those that is culturally frowned upon, but every single one of us have something we draw to when we need help, every one of us. Then, the fifth week, we're going to talk about the fact that many of us hurt. Many of us deal with chronic pain or chronic illness. We know it's not going to go away, but what do we do? Then, we're going to end with shame. Many of us simply feel ashamed of what's happened in our life.

Before we start on exhaustion, what is my hope in all six of these messages? You need to know this. There's three things that I'm hoping will take place. Number one is I want to expose our brokenness. I want to address the elephant in the room. I want to say it's there. I want you to know that I'm not going to be able to do everything that you need. I have about 35 minutes per topic, and there's no way. If you know something that I don't address, just thank God you already know it and tell somebody. I'm not going to be able to do everything. I'm not, and I know that, but let me tell you something. Mental or physical illness, no matter how heavy or where on the spectrum that it falls, it doesn't separate us from the love of God and, therefore, it also should not separate us from the people of God. We should be able to come in this room and say, "I am broken." The only thing is you can not be committed to stay such. Everyone in this room is broken, and none of us should say, "But I am absolutely committed that I will not change. I will stay broken." No, we look to the Lord for hope and for healing.

The second thing is we want to expose Christ's power. His power can be put on display even if he does not immediately eradicate our illness. Some of us, we're going to be dealing with what we are dealing with until we go see him in heaven. His power is still enough, his grace is still sufficient for us for the rest of our days on this earth until he does eradicate these areas of illness from our life. Then, last is I want to expose some places of help. I want you to know something about Jesus Christ and about other areas of help. Some people will tell you that if you have enough faith in Jesus Christ, you will not need anything else. I do not believe that. This, I do believe. Faith in Jesus Christ is absolutely critical though. You may need more than growing faith, but I promise you you will not need less. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. That means that everything in this life, including our relationships, our physical illness, our spiritual and mental illness, it finds its home in God.

If we're separated from God, we're separated from the solution. Life is meant to be lived with him and not apart from him. He's made a way for us to have a relationship with him through Jesus Christ. I point you to him. As we expose brokenness, as we expose his ability and power, and as we expose places of help, I pray that you will be encouraged. Some of those places of help will be in the lobby. Some of those places of help will be on our website. In fact, there's some resources just for exhaustion that are being placed on the website under the category family care.

If you want to read more about how you can think, how you can work through exhaustion, I realize that what I'm going to do in these moments will not be enough and so there is more. We want to be able to provide.

Before we begin, can I pray for us? Father in heaven, as we look at this life of Moses, this moment in the life of Moses, and we see an exhausted man and what happens when men and women are exhausted, I pray, God, that you would speak to our hearts. I pray even now that you would help us to find hope. I pray for those in the room right now who feel like this is simply filler. There's nothing and there's nobody and there's no possibility in their life to ever be able to get past what they're struggling with. Would you help them to see the strength and the size and the awesome reality that Jesus Christ rose from the dead and what that means for us as people who one day will die? We look to you in faith. Would you speak through weakness and myself? Would you give my mind clarity as I'm tired? I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

What is exhaustion? In particular, when I'm talking about exhaustion, I feel exhausted right now, but what I feel is not what I'm talking about. After I get a few days of jet lag and I get a nap this afternoon, I'm going to feel better. What I'm talking about when we talk about here, in this sermon, about exhaustion, it's what we might term in America as burnout. It's the feeling of being buried underneath a weary responsibility without hope of rest or change. In other words, those people who have such responsibilities over them, it may be a single parent, it may be someone who kids who need diapers and whose parents need diapers and they're trying to care in all directions for everyone in their life and they're looking. They're like, "There's absolutely no hope for me to ever get any rest, and there's no way this is going to change anytime soon. I just can't hold the weight of these buckets any longer."

That's what I'm talking about today, this kind of exhaustion. Its symptoms are all over the map, emotional, physical, spiritual, relational, mental. They're things like fatigue, despair, insomnia, loss of appetite, lack of concentration, headaches, body aches, shortness of breath, susceptibility to illness, emotional frozenness, anxiety, and depression. You see, God created us as really complex individuals. We have a mind. We have a body. We have a soul. We have a spirit. God has taken all four of those ropes and has fused them together. What that means is this. You mess with one of them and you mess with all of them. You stop sleeping and it's going to affect, not only your emotions, it's going to affect your relationship with God and with each other. It affects every part of who we are. That's how God made us.

We come to a life in the Bible, a real person's life, his name is Moses, had real weary responsibilities, and he couldn't see a day when things were going to change and he couldn't see a day when he could have a nap. He gets exhausted. This is what it says, starting in chapter 18 of Exodus verse one. It says, "Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel his people, how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. Now Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had taken Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her home, along with her two sons." Now, we'll talk a little bit more about why he did this, but that should be an alarm clock to every single one of us, when a man sends his family away.

He tells us the names in the next two verses. Then, in verse five, it says, “Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness where he was encamped at the mountain of God. And when he sent word to Moses, ‘I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her,’ Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. And they asked each other of their welfare and went into the tent. Then Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel’s sake, all the hardship that had come upon them in the way, and how the Lord had delivered them. And Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the Lord had done to Israel, in that he had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians.”

Then, what we find in verse 10, 11, and 12 is how Jethro just rejoiced. He just gave thanks. He made offerings. He made sacrifices. He says, “It’s so good what God did. He’s the ultimate deliverer, and he saved his people from slavery.” Verse 13, “The next day Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening. When Moses’ father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, ‘What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?’ And Moses said to his father-in-law, ‘Because the people come to me to inquire of God; when they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make them know the statutes of God and his laws.’ Moses’ father-in-law said to him, ‘What you are doing is not good. You and all 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.’

Now obey my voice; and I will give you advice, and God be with you! You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God, and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do. Moreover, look for able men of all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall then decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace.’ So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said.”

What I want to do first, I want to show you three truths about what God wants to do in each of our lives, areas that he wants us to address, but, before, I want to give us the context. We just landed in Exodus 18. Some of you, you don’t even know what Exodus is and you don’t know what happened before then, so let me tell you. The whole story, it begins with verse one of Genesis. It says that in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. He created us in his image so that we could have a relationship with God. Then, tragically, mankind sinned against his one and only instruction given to us. He emphasized the bounty of his generosity by saying, “You can eat of all of this,” but he said, “This one over here, this is going to be destructive for you. I love you so much, so I’m protecting you. This is not for you.” They looked at what he had given them and what he had withheld, and they concluded that he was not on their side.

They sinned and broke fellowship. What the Bible says is that when we severed our relationship with God in our sin, we also brought a tidal wave of brokenness over the world. Romans chapter eight seeks to describe this tidal wave this way. It says that the very earth itself is trembling under the weight of our sin. Then, he goes on. In verse 23 of Romans eight, he says this. He goes, “And we ourselves groan inwardly as we await the day of our final redemption.” What does that mean? It means that when we sinned against God, our universal sin created such a weight that it creates brokenness not only for the globe upon which we live but also within the heart, our heart. You see, the Bible does not say that there’s a direct link between something you have done in your past and the current illness that you’re experiencing, whether it’s physical or emotional or spiritual, but what it does say is this. We’ve all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. That universal collective weight is creating disorders and illnesses in all of our lives even though they’re different in each and every one of us.

In this tidal wave of brokenness, it was going to come over the earth, God and his love said, “But I’m going to send a rescuer.” Chapters later, he comes to a man named Abraham. Abraham wasn’t earning anything with God because he was bowing down, worshiping rocks. He didn’t know any better. God says, “I love you. I’m committed to you. I’m going to bless you. I’m going to make you into a nation. From your nation, from that nation, you have no kids right now, but from your descendants will come the rescuer of the whole world.” Israel is formed, the nation, just as God had said. Then, you know what happened? In time, this nation of people, it began to grow so big, and they were living in Egypt, and they became slaves. They became slaves for 400 years. God heard their groaning, and so he sent them a deliverer, and his name was Moses.

Moses came, and you have to understand Moses was not the final rescuer, but he was a type. He was an example of what the final rescuer would do in all of our lives in all the ways that is necessary. We’re all slaves to sin. We’re all slaves to death. We’re all slaves to our own selfishness. Moses comes. You know the story. He goes to Pharaoh, “Let my people go.” He says, “No, I don’t think it’s a good idea.” God rained down his power upon them through numerous plagues. Eventually, there’s this thing called the exodus, which is when they’re exiting Egypt. I want you to think about what’s happening. What we know in terms of an estimate, it’s a conservative estimate, is that Israel would have had, at this point in time, about two million people. Every single one of these people have lived their entire life within slavery in someone else’s systems. What you have is two million freed slaves following Moses into the desert without a map, without laws, and without any systems like public health. No one has identified where go to the bathroom, and there’s two million of them camping together in a big sandbox called the wilderness.

Think about that for a second. Some people, they walk out their tents, say, “You know, I think this is a good place right here to go to the bathroom.” Neighbor said, “This is not a good place for you to go to the bathroom. You need to go somewhere else.” There’s no systems of how to work. There’s no systems of commerce. There’s no systems of justice. There’s no systems of government.

Moses wasn't the king. He was just the guy that went before Pharaoh, and he said, "Let my people go." Now, he's walking in front of two million people. "I guess we're going to go with him. All right. Let's go." They go out to the wilderness. It's stunning what takes place. Four months in, they get to a place called Mount Sinai. In Exodus 20 is when God gives them the law. They don't even have it yet, but God is meeting with Moses. He's instructing him. Moses is trying to instruct the people.

When they get to Sinai, it says something really interesting here in Exodus 18. It says, "And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brings his wife and kids back because Moses sent them away." Now, the fact is we don't know all that took place here. Maybe it was good terms. Maybe it was spring break, and they're like, "I'm really busy. I really can't go, so why don't you take the kids down to the farm in Georgia? You guys hang out. Things are really healthy still. I'm going to stay here and work. You go." Maybe that's what it is, but I don't believe it is. I think there's a reasons and context is primarily as well as words tell us something else was happening. It appears that Moses hit a low point in his personal life and did what exhausted people do.

That is he economized on his priorities. Typically, the first priority that we economize when we're exhausted is the ones that are going to be the most forgiving to us. That's our family. Second clue we have that this probably wasn't a healthy thing that he sent them away is the word sent. There's different words that you can translate the English word sent, and this one means to dismiss or parting gift. This is like, "Hey, you came over to my house. You're leaving. Let me give you this. I'm going to send you this chocolate. I don't anticipate it's coming back." This is the word that's used when it says, "And Moses sent her away with his two sons." Then, of course, we have the context. You got this exhausted man.

Maybe one day she came to Moses and said, "Moses, what you're doing is just killing us. It's killing me. It's killing our marriage. It's killing our kids," and he said, "I tell you what. Why don't you just go to your dad's and take the boys with you?" I don't know if that's exactly ... I don't know why they left. I don't know how long they were gone, but what I do know is Jethro goes, "No, this isn't happening. I'm taking them back," and so he does. Jethro shows up. Now, this is really funny because my father-in-law's sitting right down here in the front next to my boys. I've never greeted my father-in-law, I've never bowed down and kissed him like Moses did with Jethro, but isn't it interesting that the Bible doesn't say that Moses kissed his wife? Listen, if it's spring break, you send the family to father-in-law, mother-in-law, and they come back, kiss your wife when she gets back. He doesn't do that. He kisses his father-in-law. Kind of weird, but whatever. We'll just go with that.

Jethro is so wise, isn't he? He starts asking all kinds of questions. Then, he starts rejoicing at all the wonderful things that the Lord had done. Then, you know what he does? He follows Moses to work the next day. He goes, "Let me see your operation. Bring your father-in-law to work day." He goes out and, bam, it hits. He sits down. Lines form. Two people come up. "She ate my chicken." Can't you see it? That's not in the text.

That's just me throwing stuff in there. "She ate my chicken." She's like, "No, I didn't eat your chicken. I got my own chickens. I ate one of my chickens." "No, you don't have a fence. Your chickens are all over the place." Next family comes up, "I am convinced that this man's sons pulled the pegs out of my tent, and now it's flat." "He did not do that." They're just going at it.

Think about this for a second. You have two million people camping in the desert without any laws, and everyone who has a dispute with one another lines up next to each other at the beginning of the day, waits in the hot sun in the desert in order to have an opportunity to argue before Moses, one man. Moses, I just can see him sitting on his chair. He keeps looking around at people, "How long is this line?" I think this is when those hand grippers, you know, I think Moses is just like, big vein in his forehead, he's like, "I can't stand this." Jethro looks at all this, and he says something really important. He says, "What is this you are doing?" Let me translate that, "Stop it. This is crazy. What are you doing?" Moses responds like all exhausted people do. He defends what's hurting him. He defends what is unsustainable. He says, "Look, I sit down. A line forms. That's how it goes around here. I judge, and then I instruct."

Let's get into a few principles. The first thing is this. What can we learn here? First is this, is that God invites us to address our heart's assumptions, our assumptions that cause exhaustion. If God were to ask those of you who are really tired today, "What are you doing?" how would you answer that? Would you defend it or just say, "You know, you're right. I have no idea why I'm doing this"? A lot of us, we've read books. That's why there's 80,000 titles. It's because people are looking for help. We've looked for help in so many different places. The reason that our solutions typically fail is because they first try to address technique before they address the heart.

Now, you've seen packs of dogs in these races. These are amazing races. These are amazing dogs. There's a little shot of one right here so you can see it. Well, the lead dog is really important because the lead dog sets not only the pace but also the direction for the rest of the dogs. This is why I'm saying this. Now, listen very carefully. Let's take that down because you're not going to listen to me while it's up. It's just too cool. Isn't it? There. Now you'll listen. There we go. That's better. Listen to me carefully. Our heart and its assumptions is the lead dog that sets the pace and direction for the pack of all of our decisions. That lead dog, which is our heart and its assumptions, it sets the groove by which we say, "I must decide within this rut because I'm not aloud to think about anything outside this rut." What I want you to know is this. There are more options if your heart had true assumptions. You don't have to live like this anymore.

You see, a burnout life is often pulled by faulty assumptions. We start thinking, "I'm infinite." We would never say that to other people, but we live it. How do we live it? We live like, "I can neglect my body, and my soul will not suffer." It's not true. We think of ourself, we have this savior complex. We say, "You know what? I am indispensable. No one can do it but me."

I'm the only one." Let's put it in real terms. Let's talk about my funeral. Now, as far as I know, I'm not dying. Well, actually, I am. We all are, but I'm pretty healthy right now. I don't know when it's going to happen, but, you know what, one day I'm going to die. You know what this congregation is going to do when I die? Some of you will be sad. You're going to care for my family. You're going to try to encourage Tabitha. You're going to give her a hug. Then, the reality is you're going to eat some potato salad and then you're going to hire a new senior pastor. That's what you're going to do. You know why I know that? It's because that's what we do. Life goes on.

You know in your job where you absolutely are convinced that you are the one that they can not work without, you're indispensable? You know what? You die, they're just going to hire somebody else. You leave, they're going to hire somebody else. Yet, isn't it amazing how many times I, even in this environment, I know this is true, I think, "It's got to be me." It doesn't have to be me, but this is what we do. We say, the lead dog, my heart makes this assumption. It makes this rut and all the rest of the dogs, all the other decisions were forced to say you have to decide within these confines, but you don't. Some of us, we say, "I am what I accomplish. My identity is wrapped up in what I can earn, what I can make, what I can do." Many of us are exhausted because we haven't found our identity yet in what Jesus has already accomplished. Jesus Christ came to this earth, and he lived a righteous life. Then, he died for our sin. Three days later, he rose from the dead. He accomplished what we can not.

He says, "If you'll trust in me, if you'll believe in me, if you'll admit you can not save yourself, you'll trust me, confess me as Lord, I will forgive you of all of your sin and bring you back into a right relationship with God." This is what Jesus does. There's so many of us who build our identity, even spiritually, on what we can accomplish, and it's already been accomplished for us. So many of our decisions are driven behind a dog that is a faulty assumption. We say, "I must do this. I must do this." It's already been accomplished. Jesus says, "It is finished." When he was on the earth, he says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." What Jesus is saying here is this. He's saying that the lion's share of our exhaustion comes from a choice to carry a yoke that God did not give us to carry.

Whether you like it or not, you're wearing a yoke right now and so am I. Some of us, we don't really know what a yoke is, so let me show you a yoke. This is an ox, two of them, and that wood up there, that's the yoke. It's what you put around an animal so that you can pull heavy loads. You can direct their strength to do something. Jesus says this. He goes, every single one of us, every single morning, we instinctively reach over and we put on a yoke. It's what makes us ox-like. Just put my head down and keep walking. This is how we live. Just put my head down and keep walking. We're wearing this yoke. Jesus comes and he goes, "I want you to identify what that yoke is because I want you to take it off because I have a better yoke for you."

You see, Jesus, this is so important. You see, Jesus' invitation is not a life without restraint. It's a life under his loving restraint. That's why he says, "Take that yoke off, and I have a yoke for you to wear," but his yoke is so different. It's so light that it actually gives strength to the rest of our life. It gives hope to the rest of our relationships. The reason is because his yoke takes his promises into account. Consider two promises. Psalm 121 verse three, he says, "He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber." You see what that says? It says that God's watching over you, and he doesn't take a nap from 2:00 to 4:00 when we're all exposed to evil. He doesn't go off and while he's sleeping, it's like, "Earth, good luck because I'm going to take a nap." He says, "No, no, no. I'm always there. I'm always protecting." What does that allow us to do as people who are frail? Psalm chapter three verses five and six says, "I lay down and slept. I woke again, for the Lord sustained me."

Then he tells us David wasn't in this stress-free environment. He says, "I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around." This is the context. David, he's got an army outside. They all want to kill him. Yet, it's late, and I'm tired. I can't go to sleep though because this is all me. I'm indispensable. I'm infinite. No, what does he do? He goes, "You know what? God has made a promise. He has made a promise that he's always going to watch over me. One way or the other," this is what he says. He goes, "If I wake up," he says, "it's because he's sustaining me anyway. I'm going to go ahead and lay down. I'm going to go to sleep knowing that, one way or the other, the Lord's going to protect my life and he's going to protect my future." This is what the yoke of Jesus does. It compensates for his promises in and over our life. I want to ask you: If God Almighty came to you and you said, "God, I'm just so tired. I'm so tired. I'm so tired," if he asked you, "What is this you're doing?" how are you going to answer? Are the assumptions that you're operating on, are they taking into account the promises of God?

The second thing is this. God invites us to address our priorities, these priorities that order our lives. Jethro comes to Moses, and he says, "Look, what you're doing is not good," and the word good there can also be translated kind, orderly, or desirable. He looks it, and he goes, "This is not going to work. This is not desirable for anybody." You see, friends, listen to me. Nothing in God is chaotic and nothing that he created thrives in chaos. 1 Corinthians 14:23 says, "God is not a God of confusion but a God of peace." Jethro comes to him, and he goes, "Look, Moses, know your role. Know your role and do that role and enlist other people to help with the other areas. Then, you'll be able to endure, and the people will be able to go home in peace."

Can't you hear Moses' first impulse, his first thought, "When am I going to have time to build a judicial system? Don't you see how long the line is?" Listen to me. The line will always be there. They're not going away. Whatever's in your line is not going away, so you have to do something. I want to encourage you to live by priority. You see, what went sideways with Moses is that Moses assumed a role that distracted him from his primary purpose. He comes to him, and he goes, "Look, Moses, you have been positioned by God to serve as their representative before God. These people are going to sin, and when they do and God wants to kill them, you're the one who's supposed to pray to God to say, 'God, have mercy,'" which is exactly what he ended up doing. He goes, "But you're down in the weeds. You're making decisions about chickens. You got to stop this."

Other people can do this. You don't have to have this savior complex."

What can we learn? I believe it's this. In every sphere of our life, we need to identify the three or four things that align with our gifts that must be done for our family or the organization or our workplace to move forward that nobody else can do because they don't have the authority to do it and give yourself to those. This is critically important for me in my role. I have to identify, I have five. There are five things that I say I'm going to do these five things and I'm not doing anything else. You know what? Every single day, there's the temptation to do something else. It happens every day. I used to think that great leaders were those leaders who are great at everything. I've come to learn this, that our fully exploited strength, the more central to our life purpose than our marginally improved weaknesses, because however you improve your weaknesses, they'll never become stronger than your strengths.

Ephesians five says, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best of the time." Let me encourage you with four different things of what I do when I'm looking at my priorities. The first thing is this. Look at God. Examine God's word. What does he say is most important in how we spend our time? A second thing is this. Evaluate your priorities. What are you giving your time to? what are you spending the lion's share of your prayers, your creativity, your thoughts trying to accomplish? Third thing is this. Eliminate hurdles. Eliminate distractions. Some of you have asked, "Hey, Brian. Can we have lunch on Thursday?" The answer is always no. You know why? Because on Thursday's when I pull away and I say, "I have to study for Sunday." Some people, "I don't understand, but I need this. This is so important." I realize. I want to help, but I can't help Thursday.

You have to do this. You have to pull away and say, "You know what? Certain days have to be given to certain things." Another distraction I have to pull away, in particular because sometimes just the weight of so many different people and what you guys are wrestling with, it creates a restlessness within my own heart. I have a hard time sleeping at night. One of the things I used to do is I'd pull out my phone when I couldn't sleep. I'm just sitting there looking at the ceiling, and so I'd look at Facebook and let me see what all the people are doing. This is amazing. We've already identified that social media releases a neurochemical called dopamine, which is like an explosion of joy, really small. It's like a micro explosion that causes us to struggle to fall asleep. The last thing is excel in a few things. Identify what those few things are to you and do that.

The third big point here is this. God invites us to address one another in order to help one another. Have you ever thought that Moses probably thought Jethro was going to show up and look at what he was going to do and say, "Wow. My daughter sure did marry up. All these people, they all want to talk to him. Look how important he is"? Instead, he's sipping his sweet tea over in the corner saying, "Well, bless his heart. How about that?" I want you to watch something. It's really important. Not only did Jethro have the courage to speak into Moses' life, but Moses had the humility to listen. It says he listened to Jethro and did everything that he told him to do. He could have bowed up like so many of us do.

He could have said, “Look, Pops. I recognize you got this massive shepherding business with like four employees that happen to be your biological children, but I’m Moses the deliverer. I sit down and lines form. You’re going to come in here, and you’re going to tell me how to run my show?” He could have said that, but he didn’t. He listened, and he said, “You know what? That’s really good advice.” We need each other. Proverbs 15:31 says, “The ear that listens to a life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise.” Have you ever thought people need you just as much as you need them? We can not live this life in isolation. Let me end with just a few thoughts before we sing to the Lord.

The first is this. Let me encourage you to rest in his accomplished work. It is not a small thing that after six days of good work God created us and our first full day of being alive after him telling us, “I have a work for you,” he says, “Now, before you do any of it, I want you to rest in my finished work.” This is the gospel over and over again. Religion says work for your rest, and Jesus says, “Rest in my work.” You can trust Jesus today. He may not take away your chronic pain, but he will give you grace to deal with it until he does. The second thing is let’s rest from our unfinished work. As you examine God’s word and your priorities and your strengths and your hurdles, and you excel in a few things, don’t forget to rest. God tells us, “Six days you shall labor and do your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath to the Lord.” Think about this in terms of a scale.

Just imagine the density of rest, and it requires just one day of it to counterbalance six days of work. If you fail or refuse to take advantage of that one day of rest because you are indispensable, then you actually double up your emotional need by working another six days before you can try to do it again. Just trust him and rest. The third thing is this. Let’s help one another rest. We all struggle, so let’s be honest about this struggle. In fact, if you’re exhausted today, I want to encourage you to go out to Next Steps. Over the next six weeks, there’s actually people out at Next Steps who are there specifically just to pray with people. You may not have a friend that you can pray with, and there’s people out there who just say, “Look, I don’t know all the details, just let me pray for you.” Let’s be the kind of hospital that God intended the church to be, a place that’s trustworthy and kind and compassionate, integrating of hurting people, helpful, understanding, and not shaming. The reason is because God said, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

Let me pray for us. Father in heaven, we thank you for your kindness to us, a kindness that leads us to a place of repentance. We confess to you, Lord, that our repentance in this way is really strange because we would all confess that rest is a really good thing. Yet, we don’t do it. I ask that you would address our hearts, address our priorities. Would you help us to address one another? Would you help us to respond that when someone address us and tries to speak truth into our life, would you help us to be teachable? I pray, Father, that you would give us a measure of comfort with what lies ahead knowing that nothing can separate us from your love. We thank you that you get to draw near to you now. As we sing and as we give, we pray, Father, that you would be glorified in all of these things. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.



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