

**Matt Baines** reminds us of an often forgotten commandment among Christians and health professionals

# ARE YOU IN REST DEFICIT?

*'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. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'* (Matthew 11:28-30)

**N**o matter how well I think I understand and appreciate the need to rest, recuperate, and recharge, time and again I struggle to maintain this essential discipline. I often naively believe that I'm too busy to rest. I live in the fear of wasting time. When I haven't adequately switched off and recharged for a while, it becomes much harder to do so. The rest I need is hard to cultivate.

We live in a 24/7 'always on' society. Smartphone notifications pester us at all times. We can all find it easy to develop a 'rest deficit'.

God wrote the importance of sabbath rest into the ten commandments,<sup>1</sup> signifying how vital it is to take regular but purposeful time out from our labours. Jesus emphasised this further in both his teachings and his actions, inviting us to come and learn from him.

Firstly, to come to him means to intentionally carve out time for the Lord in our lives. This can be in worship, meditation, stillness, prayer, Bible reading, or going on a prayer walk. We are gently invited, not commanded or coerced, to come to him; it needs to be our decision.

Secondly, to learn from Jesus is to watch how he acted and model what he did. There are many accounts in the Gospels of Jesus resting before, during, and after significant decisions, healings,

and miracles. The Gospel writers describe him getting away: *'...Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed'*. (Luke 5:16) Before choosing the twelve disciples, *'...Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God'*. (Luke 6:12) Jesus chose solitude and rest over being with people to better serve people.

It's a life-giving and highly liberating thought that God did not design us to work all the time. He created us with a need for rest. When we, as we are created to, learn to tap into his rest, our productivity and overall wellbeing improves greatly.

Rest is not an optional extra. It's an essential prerequisite to living an effective, Christ-centred life. Regularly stepping back and stopping requires great faith and discipline; there will always be more work to do.

As healthcare professionals, this kind of intentional, Christ-centred rest can challenge the idea that our worth is to be found in our busyness and being indispensable.

The biblical model of rest is found in a person – Jesus. Rest is intentionally coming to Jesus as our source of life and purpose. It's learning from him, as the great teacher, following his model of habitual, intentional, regular rest, so that our areas of service are more effective, and our wellbeing is preserved.

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## reference

1. Exodus 20:8