

It's Energy

By Pastor Jake Wilkinson

If you've grown up a little bit in our church, in our denomination, you've probably had some horror stories of—this is not a good way to start—you've probably had some horror stories, like the one I'm about to tell you. I had people approach me—this was a long time ago, this was not at this church, so just FYI, a long time ago—I had people approach us saying, "There is a coming persecution and you need to be ready." And they're handing me one big five-gallon drum of rice and one big five-gallon drum of dried beans. They had a map of our city. They had things clearly marked out where more of these were hidden, and these need to be hidden wherever we were at. Can I get a stand? Sweet. Okay.

This is all too common of an occurrence, but this is something I was raised on and some of us were raised on as kind of not a doomsday prepper mentality, but as there's a coming persecution that's going to come and we have to run to the hills. You've heard this, right? And if you haven't, I'm glad you're here. This was the mentality some of us grew up with coming from our church. And I want to say that I believe that that persecution is already here. And it's actually been here for quite a while. And it's sitting in your front right pocket.

Here's the thing is I believe what better, what smarter of a way to assault our spiritual lives than for us to willingly do it? We've been talking about this—thanks David, thanks bro—we've been talking about this, we talked about this a little bit last week and just about our hurried lives, our busy lives. Last week was not about busyness; busyness is a good thing, but when it leads to—when we're so busy with things that don't matter that it leads to hurry—then it's impossible to actually love people. And I think that this is where we're at in the world that we live in. We live in the most hurried, busy, anxious world that has ever actually existed. I think we hate the sound of slavery, and we despise our past, even as a nation, because we have done that, and yet there's never been more slaves than today, and we willingly go into it.

Happy Sabbath, everybody, by the way. Here's what I mean, is that you woke up this morning and you were motivated by something. You're sitting here today. You were motivated to actually do something. There's a desire at some point. You wanted something, whether it's to be blessed or to see your friends, or maybe you just needed to be seen today. Maybe you wanted to meet with Jesus. That's what I hope we're here for today. Thomas Aquinas, an early Christian philosopher, he asked this question: "What would it actually take to be satisfied?" Did you ever ask yourself that? What would it actually take for your soul—not just your body or your mind—to be satisfied? What would it actually take?

And his response was this. His conclusion came to: it would take everything. In fact, the entire universe. In order to be satisfied, you would need to eat at every single restaurant in the Spokane, Post Falls, Coeur d'Alene area. You'd have to be at the new restaurant—there's like a few years worth of eating right there, at least. You'd be at the first in line to try the new restaurants, the biggest, most expensive house, the perfect job and on your way to working up the corporate ladder, to binge watch every show you could possibly imagine. We already do that. To be liked by everybody. To be at every event with all your favorite people, or to be with no people at all. But even then, even if you had whatever it is that you're actually seeking after, guess what? You're going to want more. You'll need more, actually. It's not just a want.

Because desire and satisfaction, it's like—do you ever have that itch inside your body and you can't quite locate where it's at? You know what I'm talking about? It's like it feels like you're in your shoulder, and so you're massaging it, and you try to massage it deeper, and you realize it's not really in your shoulder. And your whole body starts to itch, and you're like, "I can't." This is what desire is. It's an itch you can't scratch, really. Or if you

scratch, it pops up somewhere else. It's because you were actually created for it. You were created for desire, to want something. And you were actually created for desire, or to want something that is eternal. We hear it, it's cliché, we hear it all the time is the only thing that is going to satisfy you is the presence of your Creator in your life.

Hopefully that's what keeps us coming back. At some point we have to realize that we need some boundaries actually around what we want, because there is no limit to our desperation to get what we want. Our souls so desperately want something to be satisfied, and we go from one thing to the next to the next to try to scratch that. And we exhaust ourselves trying to fulfill the desire with finite things, with things that really ultimately don't matter. And then we end up, because we're chasing these things down so hard, we become exhausted. We become tired and stressed out. And this is the culture that you and I were born into. And this is the culture that we live in. We kind of know it, right? In the back of our minds, thanks. You can tell, huh? [Laughter] Yeah. Yeah, right. I need some tea.

We can kind of tell. We kind of know it that we're exhausted and we're tired. And then in the back of our mind, and then we know that we shouldn't be chasing after certain things, even if it's just pointless, and yet we kind of still want it. You know what I mean? We have more offered to us here in front of us every single day than kings couldn't even have dreamed about in the past. Air conditioning? It's incredible. We're sitting in a plane flying hundreds of miles an hour through the air, and we're complaining about the meal that we're getting, right? It's like an amazing modern miracle, and yet we'll find something that we're not satisfied with, right? There's a bathroom on that plane!

Here's the thing is that these things are shoved in front of our faces, and then we're told that we need them over and over and over again until, guess what? You are exhausted. Do you have any idea what a lion tamer's best tool is? A defense against the lion. Most of us think of a whip or something like that or a gun. It's not a gun. Huh? A stake? No, it's not a stake. In fact, the lion probably looks at the lion tamer as a steak! [Laughter] It's actually—where did it go? Oh, it's actually a stool. And the reason is because a lion tamer will take—as the lion is starting to act aggressive or it's starting to do anything—the lion tamer will actually take this and shove it in front of the lion's face. And the lion, because it can't focus—it's focused on too many things at once, it has four points that are coming at him at once—it actually lays down out of exhaustion.

And what do you think happens to us? We have too many things coming at us from too many angles, and the exact same thing ends up happening to you and me. If we're going over our vision statement right now as "People of Presence," and last week we covered: in order to be present, we need time, which is something none of us seem to have. We can be busy doing absolutely nothing, or we can be busy doing the good things, and the important thing is to prioritize what you're doing. Busyness isn't evil, but hurry does not allow us to love other people. That's what we learned last week.

When we're in a hurry, when we're anxious—hurry is not of the devil, hurry is the devil. I know. That was a good one. Being busy with a lack of prioritizing what you're busy with leads to hurry, it leads to anxiety and distraction and exhaustion. And when you're in this state, you cannot—it's not that you won't or that you have to try harder—but you cannot love God, you cannot be present with God, and you cannot love other people. It is actually impossible. And similarly, what we're talking about today is another thing. You cannot love other people, you cannot love God, if you are exhausted and if you are stressed out. You already know this.

We've been writing a few things down. I hope you have your cards with you. We've been writing a few things down on our note cards. I know all of you have been super faithful with this. I'm really proud of you. Some of us have put it hopefully on our screens or wherever we need to become "People of Presence." And we've started with this—this is our fourth week kind of going down this list. And the first thing is: "Where do I want to be more present?" It's an identity thing. Identify where I need to be more present in life. The second step was: "Making

one small step so you can add to your busy life." Go ahead and take a picture. That's good. We can add to our busy life one small step on how we wish to accomplish this, on how we wish to accomplish a more present life. And then: "What is something I need to remove or have a boundary with in order to be more present?"

And the fourth thing, this is the question I want to ask us today over and over again. I want us to ask ourselves: "Am I really rested? Do I have peace in my life? Or am I stressed out and exhausted?" And I already know the answer because I have the same answer to it. I'm preaching to myself today too. And this leads us to one of Jesus' most beautiful and unique invitations in the entire Bible, and it's found in the Gospel of Matthew. And it's here. It says: "Then Jesus said, 'Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.'"

And I want to emphasize the last part, because often what we do is we go, "Well, we'll find rest," and we find rest in different ways, but this is the greatest assault. I said it before. I'll say it one more time. I think the greatest assault is on our souls today in the world that we live in. I say that a lot, so they make fun of me whenever I say "in the world that we live in." [Laughter] Are you tired? Are you stressed out? That's another form of this translation. And does your soul long, yearn, and reach for rest?

He said to "take my yoke." That's a wooden beam that goes across your shoulders on the back of typically an oxen. And so it is actually sabbating—this is what we call it, or keeping the Sabbath if you're not familiar with the Seventh-day Adventist tradition—is it literally means to just stop. It means to rest. It means to stop, cease everything that you're doing, and actually just stop. And he says this is actually going to take some work, and we'll talk more about that in just a little bit.

But the direct context in which Jesus is giving this is he's talking about the religious leaders that have given strict rules about how to do that. Like they wouldn't even be able to carry their wallets because it would be a sign of buying or selling on Sabbath. So they'd like throw it in front of themselves and they'd go pick it up. And then they throw it in front of themselves. It's like, you guys, just be real! [Laughter] Thankfully, our denomination has never struggled with legalism around the Sabbath or anything. We make all these rules that people couldn't do anything.

And he goes on to actually break the Sabbath in the religious people's eyes. And he and his disciples, they go into this grain field and they start rubbing pieces of grain in between their hands like this, which was like a direct contradiction to the Old Testament where they're not supposed to be picking up manna on the Sabbath, if you've ever read this story. And I think he does it intentionally. Then he heals a man with a withered hand. What a terrible thing to do! Who would do that? Heal somebody. [Laughter] At least he wasn't swimming! They could have crucified him right then and there. And if that joke didn't make sense to you, you are blessed far beyond you realize.

Seventh-day Adventists have a rich heritage of this thing we call Sabbath. And I will say that we've prided ourselves and we beat at our chest on "knowing the truth." And I will say this: that I think we're some of the poorest people at actually practicing it. We really just make a miserable day—a beautiful day miserable. And especially to us as kids growing up. I remember—this was again a long time ago, like 10-plus years ago—I remember going to some people's house. I was a youth pastor over in Portland when my wife was in nursing school. And I remember going over to some people's houses and they had VHS—this is dating me, wow—they had VHS movies, okay, stacked basically to the ceiling. And you would sit there, but then they had these couches, and it was towards a blank wall because you weren't supposed to look at the VHS movies because we looked at the VHS movies and we start talking about the movies and we wouldn't be focusing on Jesus. And so we sat there for like five hours. Just blank. Sometimes, most of the time actually, in complete silence. It was not the funnest day of my life. In fact, it was scarred in my memory as something that was just like: this is

what legalism actually looks like. We're trying to just save ourselves, and we're making ourselves completely miserable in the process.

We've lost the joy of this time. We've lost the joy of what rest could be, of what rest actually is. It's not staring at a blank wall. It's the difference between a religious observance for the sake of saving ourselves versus the accepting of a beautiful opportunity that's handed to us to stop and have a life-giving force renewed back into our soul. Do you want that?

We need to literally stop. But how can we? How can we stop when we have—the average person on a daily basis has between four and 10,000 advertisements shoved in their face? And 5,000 is like a conservative estimate. Those of you in marketing, you all know this and it's your fault! [Laughter] You know this better than we do that most of it is just like white noise to us. It doesn't really matter. It falls to the wayside. But the fact is, is lately it has been intensified because we have these things called algorithms in our little phones. And social media has just amplified this to where now it knows exactly what you want, it knows how you want it, and it's going to serve it to you on a platter and say, "You need this," over and over and over again. And finally, you're just like, "Fine, I'll buy the shoes." Eduardo! [Laughter]

But here's the thing: it shoves it in front of your face, and it says just like the lion tamer thing and we almost become exhausted. And we call it retail therapy, right? But almost all of it—almost every—don't, I know, I do it too. Just know I'm with you, okay? Almost all of it, almost every single advertisement that you see—I would say around 90%, I haven't done research on this—is actually offering you Sabbath. Sabbath. Think about this. The cruise in the Mediterranean—that's what it's offering you. Your next vacation, whatever it is. Aromatherapy, the shower steamers—eucalyptus peppermint—turning your morning rush into a ritual. You have to have that! If you don't have that, how are you... I just don't know how you're going. The smart meditation headband—it tracks your calm so that you can stress about how calm you are! [Laughter] Or organic adaptogen powder with reishi and maca root—it's bottled resilience for like 200 bucks a scoop. A massage gun, or a neon sign that says "Breathe" because we need a glowing reminder for \$120 to receive oxygen to our body. You have to have that!

And most of you are rolling your eyes, but some of you are laughing because we fall for this stuff. But alcohol advertisements, video games, advertisements about cars—think about cars for a second. Most of the—like a lot of the car commercials are like, "Get away. Do your job, make your job easier. Take a load off." It's Sabbath, you guys! Because advertisement people recognize something that we don't often, is they recognize this is the deepest desire of your soul: to rest and to be at rest and to find some rest from the chaos of this world. And they're marketing it to us every day over and over and over again. "This is the thing that you need to actually have peace." But you don't actually need the next trip to Hawaii—well, maybe that one. And like a ceremonial matcha whisk, just because that kind of sets the tone. And I like tea.

But we don't need any of this stuff. And we're sitting here on a—if we feel assaulted right now, it's okay. I feel assaulted as well, emotionally. And we sit there on our phones and we look at other people resting and living their best lives and saying, "We need this stuff." All the while, we have time on our hands to actually be resting. You don't need stuff. What you need is to stop needing stuff. You need to stop needing more and to be content. And I promise us that there is one way you can actually be content in this life: and that is through a relationship with your Savior. That is through a relationship with your Creator and to have your soul actually find rest. This is what He's offering.

Sabbath is not just a time during the week. It is a literal 24 hours or even during the day, but it's a person. Go read the book of Hebrews. It is Christ Himself. That we try to work over and over again, and we overwork ourselves. I know who I'm talking to—you guys are a lot of high achievers in this room. We overwork ourselves, and it's because we want rest, actually. It's for good reasons, but you'll never get it. And I'm not talking we

shouldn't be hardworking people. We absolutely should, because that's what actually makes rest worth it. What I'm actually saying is that you will need rest, and often we think that more harder work and more work and achievement can somehow get us there, and it just can't. At least not that part of it.

I would be tentative to call what we call the Sabbath a "day off" because we tend to think of our days off when we need to get all the stuff we didn't get on our days on done. The things that we missed, or we go play Call of Duty for 10 hours, or watch the news for too long or at all. Or we spend the day on our phones relaxing. And I'm not saying this to be condemning in that way; I'm just saying that you're not actually finding rest when you do that. You're actually assaulted. We're finding more assault on our souls when we do this. And then what we try to do is we try to go back to work. We try to go back to our routine and we realize that our tank is still on empty. You know it. I know it. I feel it, and you feel it.

It's like when talking about our phones—it's like when most of us plug it in every night. Why? What's that? Because it's on like 6%, right? And if you ever forget to plug in your phone, you know that panic that you wake up with and you're like, "I have phone calls to make. I have Zoom calls to be on. I have all..." The list goes on. And this is where most of us end up, is that we're like barely in the green or we're probably still in the red, like that 20% if you have an iPhone. This is where we actually start our weeks from. This is where we start and we don't actually rest enough to actually get that full charge back up to 100%.

And let me say that our love is incredibly limited. Our ability to love God and love each other and even ourselves is incredibly limited because we have a lack of energy. Now, I'm not the best person at loving other people, but I feel like I can fairly do it well. I know I can't do it at all when I'm stressed and really tired. I can do it fairly well—my wife might argue against this—when I'm not stressed or well-rested.

I remember a couple weeks ago, it was at that 10% waking up moment, and I'm going, "This is not good." I remember it was a super late night, it was a super early morning, and I'm driving my wife to work. And we have this moment where we're sitting in the car, and I'm driving, and we had a—well, I won't tell you what type of car I was driving, because I don't want you to make fun of me, but we're sitting there—it was a Cybertruck. [Laughter] So it was a loaner. It was a loaner! It wasn't our vehicle. Yeah. And we're on our way. I'm driving her to work. And on the way, I remember we have this moment where we have this opportunity to have this connection. And I remember I tried so hard to ask good questions, and they came out flat. And I remember I tried so hard to even listen. And all I could think about was getting back to my couch at the office and sleeping until like 8 o'clock in the morning. That's why I have a couch, by the way!

But here's the thing, is that we simply cannot—I cannot love people. I can't do what I really want to do when I'm that exhausted. It's impossible. And I talked about this a little bit last week. The average, before the light bulb was invented—do you remember? The average person slept how many hours? 11 hours. And the average person today? Seven hours. Yeah, some of you are like four, right? Because that's what it feels like. And this is, again, assaulting on ourselves as humans. And if this was like a thing from the beginning, and if God has to rest, how much more do you think you need it? And we live in a 24-hour culture where we have to get more done, where pressures are mounting, and yet Jesus has this offer, like: put boundaries on your life. I'm offering you what you truly want, and it's right here.

It is why I have a couch, by the way, because I love naps. In fact, when I'm well-rested, I come in here, and if I'm not well-rested or if I'm exhausted from morning meetings or whatever we're doing, I take a nap. And I know what you're thinking is you're jealous that I have a couch in my office and you wish you could do that at work, right? Well, would you like to change jobs? That's what I thought. [Laughter] When I'm well-rested and when I actually feel good and we're going into evening meetings, I'm far more available to other people to listen, to be there. I don't want to beat the dead horse, but I want to emphasize the fact that, man, we just

forgot or we never learned actually how to do this well, whether it's sleeping or spending time with Jesus, whatever it is.

Well, maybe I hope that we're convinced today, a little bit, that we need to do this better. Do more, right? Do more resting. Do it harder! Do it better! We need to do resting better. And that's—chill out, your type A, if that was your response. And you're asking like, "Well, what do I do? How do we actually do this?" We've lauded a 24-hour period from the time of Friday to the time of Saturday when the sun goes down, and it's never changed. I believe that there is a literal Sabbath, the Sabbath, it is 24 hours a day.

But for some of us, that doesn't work. And if you want to question me, again, let's switch jobs and let's see how well you rest on Saturday. Pastors, people in the medical field, we have camp workers here that make sure there's food provided. We have other food workers here that we love very much that also come here and work. And a lot of people in service areas that are service-oriented towards other people that have to—there's people at work right now just so there's lights on in here. It's because of you! You're forcing them to work! [Laughter]

But here's the thing: is we have to realize—can we get outside of that for just a second and recognize that you just simply—if it doesn't work for you, it doesn't change the day, but you still need time to stop. You still need time to rest and you have to figure this out on your terms. It is between you and Jesus. And people will try to put things around your life and religious people will try to say what you should and shouldn't do, and just don't listen to them. We need to find space to sleep or to take a nap. To socially rest—I believe that we all actually need isolation moments within our week. There's also moments where I need social rest, where there's other people that pour into me as much as I pour out to other people. We all need that. Spiritually resting in the work of Jesus, that the world will go on if I don't do the next thing.

And I know what some of you are thinking: "But what if I miss out on something?" I have no doubt that you will. But I will say this, that I want us to ask ourselves over and over again this week is—when we find ourselves not being ourselves, ask yourself: "Am I rested?" Ask yourself: "Am I in a place where I feel the peace and contentment not just of Jesus, but as my human needs?" You are limited as a human being and you're blessed because of that. I know you don't want to admit that, and neither do I.

But as you practice doing this and resting and stopping during the week, I want us to do a little experiment. And there's no right or wrong way, again, to do this. But after you attempt something, ask yourself afterwards: "Am I rested? Am I closer to Jesus after this?" There was a little old lady that wrote something, and she said, "If your teaching or your doctrine does not make you a loving, more charitable, kind person, then your doctrine or your teaching has become a curse to its hearers." I will say that I believe this—we've done a good job of that historically. And it's time to right the ship.

I've seen a lot of your pictures. I follow you on social media—I know I just got done talking about that! I know, but I still look at it. And I love watching how I see you guys out hiking and out doing things. What if we took like a 24-hour break from technology altogether? Heresy, I know, right? [Laughter] What if we did it? The world would fall apart, wouldn't it? If 24 hours seems to be too extreme at first, be good to ourselves. We don't go to the gym and look like Isaac overnight, okay? If you tried to lift what Isaac lifts overnight, you would tear something and never go back and cry yourself to sleep. And then you'd have to go see one of our physical therapists and probably get sick! Okay, you get it, right?

And the idea is that you don't just jump into this going, "Okay, we're going to cut off everything and it's going to be the best day ever for 24 hours." If five minutes is all you have, then take it. If 10 minutes or an hour or four hours—and if that's the time that you get, we're all in different boats—but take it. Rest, have time set apart, spend time with Jesus, spend time in the quiet, because this world does not do that. Focus on what makes your soul rest. And I'm gonna say this: that you should learn to, and it should be a thing where you actually

learn to enjoy it. You're like, "Oh, this kind of feels good." It's like, yeah, that's kind of the point! It may even start to feel a little addicting. And let me just tell you, there's a difference between addiction and dependence. And I absolutely want to be dependent upon rest in life. Rest with Jesus, rest for my soul, rest for my body and my mind.

And I know, I know. "What if you miss out?" FOMO is real, isn't it? When you make time for one thing, you have to say no to all the things that you think you really want. There's a book called Essentialism by Greg McKeown, and he states this. He states, "Essentialists, focusing on the most important things, see trade-offs as an inherent part of life, not as an inherently negative part of life. Instead of asking, 'What do I have to give up?' ask, 'What do I want to go big on?'" And I think we should go big on rest.

I think that we should go big on actually being spiritually, emotionally, and even physically healthy, because that's what we are actually founded as as a church. That's what's actually going to make us more loving and lovable human beings. I believe that when we put the most important things first—when we put our relationship with God, presence with God, presence with each other, and presence in our community—and we make that the primary thing of our lives, we say everything else is gonna come secondary to these things. And when we put those things in place, the other things will fall away. And you'll cry, and we'll be upset, and guess what? You're gonna be healthier, and you are gonna be a more happy, more fulfilled, more purpose-filled human being, because that's what you were designed for. That's what I was designed for.

Let's take back the reins that we've lost. Let's take back the energy that has been stolen from us and continually sapped out of us by our jobs—I know, we have to work. We do. We should work. It's good. By our jobs, but specifically by the things that continually take our attention and our energy and our time that just aren't that important. Have a boundary with them, and let's start putting the most important things first because we will find satisfaction.

I'm going to leave us with this, that Eugene Peterson, in his paraphrase on the Bible, on the very text that we actually just looked at, he said this. He says: "Are you tired? Are you worn out? Are you 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."

Does that sound good to any of you? Let's have a word of prayer.

Jesus, that is the longing of our souls. It feels impossible, Lord. It feels like we are going to paddle up a waterfall. And I think that the only way to do that, an impossible thing, is to be with you, and there's plenty of room in that boat. Help us, Lord. There are things that we want that are just not even good for us, that are distracting us from the very depths of our soul of what we truly want, and what we want is to be rested in you.

What we really want is heaven, Lord. We want this place where we don't have to go through all the chaos of life and broken relationships in a broken nation and all this stuff that we're watching today. We don't want that, Lord. We want to break from that. I pray that we regularly take time to be with you, to be with each other, Lord, and even to be with our community and that we might start the healing process that we so desperately need, and that starts with rest.

Thank you, Jesus, for this promise. Thank you also for instruction and boundary around the world that continually saps our energy and takes from us without giving back. Thank you that you give us what we need. In Jesus' name, amen.