

# Rest: The Best Gift

Marti Wibbels, MS, LMHC

Sometimes our cheery “Merry Christmas” smiles conceal stress, exhaustion, and time pressure. How can we find rest during a season that routinely delivers just the opposite? In Scripture, “resting place” indicates a state of safety and comfort, a status of being revived or still. Jesus said, *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light* (Matthew 11:28-30, ESV). God offers respite from life’s demands; He will freely give us authentic comfort and joy as we rest in Him.

Merriam-Webster defines *rest* as: 1) Repose, sleep: a bodily state characterized by minimal functional and metabolic activities, 2) Freedom from activity or labor, 3) A place for resting or lodging, 4) Peace of mind or spirit, and 5) A rhythmic silence in music.

God offers the perfect gift of “rhythmic silence” so we can enjoy life. Imagine music without rests—it would be chaos! To help us discover **how to rest**, let’s learn how to apply seven of the many types of musical rests to daily life:

- 1. Whole note rest:** take a vacation! If you can’t go anywhere, have a staycation. Read books, watch Christmas movies, spend time with loved ones. Catch up on your sleep. It’s important to turn off all devices [phones, laptops, iPads] two hours before bedtime. Avoid dramatic movies two hours before bed, too, because they cause activation in your brain that can prevent REM sleep (for more information, see <https://tinyurl.com/4chv6hd5>).
- 2. Half note rest:** when you can’t take a vacation or don’t have time for a “staycation,” find a half-day and do something relaxing. Whether staying at home and playing games, going to a nature preserve, driving to see Christmas lights, simply enjoy being with your family or friends. Time together is a limited opportunity. Be creative!
- 3. Quarter note rest:** look at your calendar and choose a day to quit work early (or begin late)—whether at an office or at home—and make it your goal to simply have FUN! Ask other family members for creative ideas of what they’d enjoy doing together—something different from what you do every day. You could even use your “quarter note rest” to catch up with an old friend.
- 4. Eighth note rest:** how about a power nap? Even if you only have 7.5 minutes (that’s 1/8 of an hour), it can transform the rest of your day.
- 5. Sixteenth note rest: pause** and observe those you love and **be present**. This pause, however brief it is, can transform relationships. Instead of filling up a composition with increasingly brief rests, most composers simply double the tempo to cut the length of notes and rests in half. Isn’t that what we do? Life is busy, so we double the tempo of our days. We could **lengthen our rest** and take time to think, meditating on God’s Word, praying, and planning with purpose.
- 6. Dotted rests:** A dot following a rest increases its duration to one and a half times the length of an un-dotted rest. We could add “dots” to our days by simply pausing to **listen to one another**. “A meaningful silence is always better than meaningless words” (attributed to Pythagoras).



7. **Rests with a fermata:** the exact length of the rest is up to the musician’s discretion. In life, too, the exact length and type of our rest is a personal choice influenced by our responsibilities, preferences, and situations. [This musical section benefited from Michael Lubben’s expertise...thanks, Michael!]

Rest is so important to God that He rested “from all His work” on the seventh day of Creation (see Genesis 2:2). **The word “rest” appears over 300 times in the Bible.** Jesus modeled rest to His disciples when *He said to them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while’* (Mark 6:32, NASB).

***In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety*** (Psalm 4:8). But what if your life has interruptions—challenges at work, rushing to children’s events, caregiving for a family member with chronic illness, etc.— that prevent you getting needed rest? Like all mothers of toddlers, our daughter Amy’s days have continual interruptions. She says “It seems like I can’t get enough rest whenever I go to bed. **But when I focus on resting in the Lord, I feel refreshed in Him.**”

**The Lord empowers us to live beyond our challenges and concerns.** 2 Corinthians 12:9 explains, *And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.* However, living in God’s power is not an excuse to ignore legitimate needs for rest—whether those needs are spiritual, social, physical, mental, or emotional.

**Choose rest instead of restlessness.** Elisabeth Elliot said, “Restlessness and impatience change nothing except our peace and joy. Peace does not dwell in outward things, but in the heart prepared to wait trustfully and quietly on Him who has all things safely in His hands.”

Instead of focusing on our own needs and problems, we can **help the helpers.** According to “The 36-Hour Day,” seventy-five to eighty-five percent of all care of the elderly or disabled is provided by family members. Let’s notice these hidden heroes. Ask God to show you how to **give the gift of rest to others.** Sometimes simply listening without judgment can provide needed relief; other times, we can offer practical help such as dusting ceiling fans, cleaning a refrigerator, babysitting, or running errands—or pay for several hours of cleaning from a local service provider.

To experience a life of rest, we can **quit being perfectionists**—whether baking, decorating, trying to find the “perfect” gift, or “doing it all.” When we’re perfectionistic, we’re not trying to be *like* God, we’re trying to be *God*. A classic Christmas carol begins with, “Joy to the World, the Lord is come, **let earth receive her King...**” Instead of trying to control Christmas, we can relax, focusing on God’s Perfect Gift, Jesus. Making Him the Lord of Christmas, we’ll calmly sense God transforming our thoughts, actions, and attitudes.

***Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the Lord*** (Psalm 27:14, NASB). *Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired. They will walk and not become weary* (Isaiah 40:31).

**God provides rest and peace in a turbulent world.** Jesus said, *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid* (John 14:27). Make time to listen to Him.

Don’t wait until tomorrow; begin resting in God today, enjoying His perfect love. Read Psalm 103, John 3:16, and Romans 8:31-39 to see how much **YOU are loved.**