

RUNNING ON EMPTY, Ps.23:1-3

Stop the World I wanna Get Off #6

♦Intro:

Gotta do what you can just to keep your love alive
Trying not to confuse it, with what you do to survive
In sixty-nine I was twenty-one and I called the road my own
I don't know when that road turned into the road I'm on
Running on (running on empty)
Running on (running blind)
Running on (running into the sun)
But I'm running behind
Everyone I know, everywhere I go
People need some reason to believe
I don't know about anyone, but me
If it takes all night, that'll be all right
If I can get you to smile before I leave
Looking out at the road rushing under my wheels
I don't know how to tell you all just how crazy this life feels
Look around for the friends that I used to turn to to pull me through
Looking into their eyes, I see them running too

♦My guess is most of us have heard this hit by Jackson Browne. It's popular and catchy. But have you ever wondered why? I mean the message is lamentable, isn't it? Life is passing so fast it's like the road passing under my car. I wonder why I'm moving through life like this, and I'm worn out. The needle's hitting E. It's kinda a downer, right? Yet we belt it out for whatever reason. I think it's because we all feel it. We all feel at some point, at many points, like saying "Stop the world! I wanna get off! It's too much. I'm running out of fuel." Into this human reality comes God's gift of the Sabbath, one day out of seven to stop for worship, rest, and delight.

♦Today let's talk about all the parts of us that need refueling so that we aren't running on empty all week long. Let's look at

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God's wisdom for not just surviving but thriving. Sabbath practice was intended to fill up your tank again. Actually, there are four tanks we each have that we need to keep an eye on and sabbath rest helps every one of them.

♦1. **My Spiritual Tank:** This is our primary tank. None of our other tanks ever really fill to overflowing without addressing our spiritual tank.

♦"*Do not waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives' tales. Spend your time and energy in training yourself for spiritual fitness. Physical exercise has some value, but spiritual exercise is much more important, for it promises a reward in both this life and the next.*" 1 Timothy 4:7, 8, NLT.

♦Being godly is being spiritually fit. Your spiritual tank gets depleted in various ways. The main one being our own moral failure or sin. Much as we might like to, it is spiritually impossible to ignore sin, to sweep it under the rug, or to run from it.

Wherever you or I stray from God's commands, our spirit suffers. Jesus said in John 15...

♦"*I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing...If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*" John 15:5, 10, 11, NIV.

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♦The best way to refuel spiritually is to be in connection with God through Word and Prayer. The only way to hear from God is through his own revelation of himself, for he is higher than, and beyond mere creatures like ourselves. And the most tangible revelation we have is the Word of God, so time in the Word and prayer will restore your spirit. But please note, not as a mere performance. Often people will think of this as duty: I must spend half an hour in prayer. I've got to read at least 5 chapters in Leviticus or I haven't really been religious. The point is not to be religious. It's to be with God. To hear from and talk with him.

♦Now this is why followers of Christ gather together on their sabbath and worship God, and study his Word, and spend time in prayers together. It's the perfect day for it. But hear this, God never intended for your spirit to eat only one day a week. Remember last week when we looked at the daily provision of manna for the people in the desert? God's objective has always been to walk and talk with people as they trust him and return his love on a daily basis! That's where "quiet time" or "devotional" practice come in. Paul says we live in a spiritual war zone at all times (Eph.6). Evil powers, demons, satan himself are bent at keeping you and God apart. So keep your spiritual tank full.

♦Step one on the filling the spiritual tank is accepting Jesus Christ as God, your Lord, and your savior.

♦*"My Father has given me authority over everything. No one really knows the Son except the Father, and no one*

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really knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." 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, and you will find rest for your souls." Matthew 11:27-29, NLT.

♦**2. My Physical Tank:** Did you know your body can affect your soul, your emotions, and your intellect. We are embodied souls, with psychosomatic reality. Does any of the following sound familiar?

- ◆ *You lack the energy needed to finish all the tasks on your to-do list.
- ◆ *You feel tired but have difficulty falling asleep.
- ◆ *Your immune system is weak and you are frequently ill.
- ◆ *You experience frequent muscle pain.
- ◆ *You have come to depend on substances to give you energy (caffeine, Red Bull, energy bars)
- ◆ *You depend on substances to give you rest (comfort foods, medication, alcohol). Ie, you can't relax without them.
- ◆ If these are true of you, chances are that you are not getting enough physical rest, of which quality sleep is paramount. Poor sleep has been linked to a host of ailments: weight gain, depression, risk of heart attack, diabetes, inflammation, poor athletic performance. Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can

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do is to get some sleep! Believe it or not, this is God's desire for you! He's the kind of shepherd who "makes you lie down in green pastures", who "restores your soul" and body.

♦"*when you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your **sleep** will be sweet. Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being snared.*" Proverbs 3:24-26, NIV.

♦ The same posture that makes for good sleep makes for good sabbath rest: trusting enough in God to rest your body and your soul. Your soul wasn't made to run on empty and neither was your body!

♦**3. My Emotional Tank:** Most of the time we need physical rest before we can even deal with emotional rest. But it helps to be aware that there is also such thing as emotional exhaustion. For instance, if someone has been chewing you out daily at work, you may have plenty of sleep but be emotionally exhausted. Your emotional tank may be empty if you start to feel numb, stop caring what other people say or even think; become irritable and "fly off the handle" more easily with people in a completely different situation; very little excites you, and you may feel a lack of enthusiasm even for things you used to enjoy; you find it hard to concentrate or focus. Psychologists speak of both distress as well as eustress. But bad stress and good stress are both emotionally taxing. Did you know having a birthday party can be

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stress, (a eustress, or depending on who comes and how old you are it could be distress, I suppose)? Getting a new job. Getting a promotion. Going on a vacation. Even though these are generally considered good things, all of these can tax you emotionally depending on your personality type. You need to be aware of when you are emotionally tired even if it's for good reasons. This is another reason why the sabbath practice can be such a blessing. God means for us to live in fulness and joy. So he commands us to regularly stop, rest, worship, and delight.

♦Many of the Proverbs address emotional exhaustion. Can you relate to any of these?

- ◆ "Better a meal of vegetables where there is love than a fattened calf with hatred." Proverbs 15:17, NIV.
- ◆ "Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife." Proverbs 17:1, NIV.
- ◆ "Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife." Proverbs 21:9, NIV. (That's emotional stress!)

♦The point is, every human needs their emotional tank topped off to overflowing if we are to be healthy, let alone people healthy enough to pour out love on other people. Again, you can't give what you don't have.

♦Why is it that so many people never even stop to think about their emotional tank? Well it is hurry, and busyness that block our own awareness that our emotional tank is dipping down by

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the ugly E! The tyranny of the urgent often preempts our actually dealing with our feelings. We don't have time to feel, or think about them in the rush of our hurried lives. Production becomes our god to the detriment of real life. And so again, practicing a sabbath day brings with it the blessing of down time, time to notice what's going on inside. This cannot happen without slowing.

♦The striking thing about emotions is, they always come out of us one way or another. Better to have them come out in healthy ways, don't you think? Most of the time when we are dark, rebellious, or vindictive to others, it's arising from our own empty emotional tank, or maybe one full of tainted fuel. The first course of action in filing our emotional tank, oddly enough, is to pour your heart out to God! David does this in the Psalms all the time which is why, I think, they are so popular.

♦"So many enemies against one man--all of them trying to kill me. To them I'm just a broken-down wall or a tottering fence. They plan to topple me from my high position. They delight in telling lies about me. They are friendly to my face, but they curse me in their hearts. I wait quietly before God, for my hope is in him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honor come from God alone. He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me. O my people, trust in him at all

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times. Pour out your heart to him, for God is our refuge."

Psalms 62:3-8, NLT.

♦God wants to hear our pains. He wants to absorb our hurts. He doesn't want us to carry them with us. Practicing a day of rest brings with it the time to ponder our own emotions and bring out our stuff with a God who cares.

♦**4. My Mental Tank:** Do you find yourself forgetful? easily distracted? accident prone? procrastinating? Could be that the warning light on your mental tank has come on. The brain is a powerhouse. Believe it or not it needs stimulation. But there is a difference in the intellectual stimulation of work, and the intellectual stimulation of play or rest. You can read, for example, for a class, or to prepare to manage your office. But that is nothing like reading a novel on the beach. Still, sitting on the beach is one type of rest, maybe not mentally, while dancing through another world in a book on that beach can stimulate your mind in a whole other way. Either way, you are a creature that bears the image of God. You have a mind built to think. And God is equally concerned about your mental tank being full. Listen

♦"And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice--the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a

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new person by changing the way you think." Romans 12:1,
2, NLT.

♦**Conclusion:** You have probably notice that I haven't said much about how we can use our sabbath to fill these tanks. That's next week, so you'll want to catch that. What I'm trying to show today is that we are not God. We need refueling and in his wisdom God has provided a life practice that gives it to us.

♦But before we're done, has it occurred to you why running on a full tank is important? In fact, our goal is greater than that.

Running on an overflowing tank is the best way to live. An overflowing tank has something extra to give to other people! No one running on empty can really minister to anyone else. Love flows best in people who experience plenty of it. When David praises God as his shepherd he points at this.

♦"*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.*"

Psalms 23:5, 6, NIV.

♦That's how the Good Shepherd takes care of us! And that's what we need. But it takes lying down in green pastures, walking along still waters. Sabbath is setting aside one day in seven to refuel with God so that you have overflow to live in. So most importantly if we are not at peace with God, no other true peace

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is possible. So start with this: because of Jesus Christ, true reconciliation with God is possible for you.

♦“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” Romans 5:1, NIV.