

## A Prayer to Catch Your Breath

By Max Lucado

*“Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and so that the slave born in your household and the foreigner living among you may be refreshed.” Exodus 23:12 (NIV)*

God designed time for rest to be taken daily and weekly. He told Moses and the Israelites, “Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and so that the slave born in your household and the foreigner living among you may be refreshed” (**Exodus 23:12**).

This was not a suggestion, recommendation or piece of practical advice. This was a command: *Rest!* Once a week let the system reboot. Once a week, let the entire household slow down. The Israelite who violated this law paid for the sin with his or her life.

Today the “death penalty” is still in effect, but it gradually comes from overwork, stress and anxiety. The **Bible** doesn’t see rest as a sign of weakness or laziness, but as a mark of reverence. To observe a Sabbath day of rest is to announce, “God knows what I need more than I do. If He says to rest, I will rest.” And, as we do, our bodies and minds are refreshed.

Never has rest been more important. We move at too fast a pace and our adrenaline spigots seldom shut off. Racing for late-night flights and adding early-morning meetings, we’re stretched beyond our limits. High adrenaline output depletes the brain’s natural tranquilizers and sets the stage for high anxiety. Many of us learned to associate relaxation with irresponsibility, so we might need some rewiring.

These are some tips I’ve learned to try:

- **Don’t overdo it.** Understand your limits. If you think you have no limits, then you have more than most people.
- **Once you reach your limits, stop.** Don’t work until you drop. Find a pace of life that works for you, and stick to it.
- **Maintain regular breaks during the day.** Naps are biblical.
- **Give your mind a rest from technology.** Turn off, unplug, detach from social media, news and all the tech toys that deplete energy.
- **Learn to relax.** To relax is to disengage and let go. An hour or daylong Sabbath is not the time to catch up with work. It is a time to entrust my work to God. After all, He worked for six days and then rested. The world didn’t fall apart. It won’t for me either.

God promised to supply the Hebrews with manna each day. But He told them to collect only one day’s supply at a time. Those who disobeyed and collected enough for two days found themselves with rotten manna. The only exception was the day prior to the Sabbath. On Friday, they could gather twice as much. Otherwise, God gave them what they needed, in their time of need.

Doesn't each day have its share of challenges? Some of them repeat themselves over time; others are one-day specials.

I've learned the key to tranquility and true rest is to face today's problems and no more, to treat each day like a self-contained unit. Here are today's problems. Meet them with God's strength. But I don't have to start tackling tomorrow's problems until tomorrow. I don't have tomorrow's strength yet. I simply have enough for today. And I can't cross a bridge until I reach it.

So what to do?

*Find a parking place for tomorrow's problems.* When they surface, write them down, and mentally drive them into a parking garage and leave them there.

*Don't over-stress your coping skills.* Emotional energy is finite. Give yourself permission to say, "I will solve this tomorrow. By sunrise I will be replenished physically and mentally. Every day is a fresh start, so I will start fresh in the morning."

*Shut the gate on yesterday, and don't touch the gate on tomorrow.*

You no longer have yesterday. You do not yet have tomorrow. You only have today. Live in it!

***Dear Lord, break me of the need to be busy pursuing a sense of self-worth. Make me secure in who You are and who You've made me to be, and as a result, teach me what it means to truly rest. Help me catch my breath. In Jesus' Name, Amen.***