

REST AND RUNNING ON EMPTY

“His Rest in Covenant”

Teaching Guide · Ladies' Ministry

Key Texts: Exodus 31:16–17, Matthew 11:28–30, Hebrews 4:9–11 NKJV

In one line: We co-labour with God inside a covenant of love. The same covenant that holds our work also holds our rest, so we can come off empty and rest in Him.

Hesed: The Love That Holds the Covenant

- **Hesed:** steadfast love, lovingkindness, loyal covenant love. It appears around 250 times in the Hebrew Scriptures, and no single English word can hold it. Love bound to loyalty and expressed in action.
- Hesed is not earned. It has already committed itself and keeps acting on that commitment (Exodus 34:6; Psalm 136).
- Because His faithful love holds the covenant, not our performance, we can stop striving to hold it together ourselves. We rest inside it.

Lamentations 3:22–23 NKJV *Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed... They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.*

The Foundation of Covenant Is Love

- Jesus gave the whole covenant in one breath: love God, love others, love your neighbour as yourself.
- The “as yourself” quietly assumes a right love of ourselves, which includes honouring the rest God built in.
- **The order matters:** we do not start the love. “We love Him because He first loved us.” His hesed came first; ours is the response of a daughter, not a slave.

Matthew 22:37–39 NKJV *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart... And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*

Co-Labouring: The Yoke Made for Two

- **Sunergos:** a fellow worker, a co-worker. “We are God’s fellow workers” (1 Corinthians 3:9). We work with Him, not for Him at a distance.
- The “co” of co-labour is the covenant: we labour together, held by the bond between us.
- A yoke is built for two. Jesus is the other one in it; He carries the weight and sets the pace, which is why the yoke is easy. Many are exhausted because they slipped out of the shared yoke.

Matthew 11:28–30 NKJV *Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me... For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*

Rest Is Written into the Covenant

- **Shabat:** to cease, to stop, to rest. The first to rest in the Bible is God, and He was not tired. Rest was built into creation before the fall (Genesis 2:2–3).

- Rest is designed, not recovery. It is part of the original good design, not just a fix for a broken world.
- **Rest is a covenant sign:** “It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever” (Exodus 31:17). If our labour is covenant labour, our rest is covenant rest. They are twins, born of the same love.

Exodus 31:16–17 NKJV ...the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath... as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever...

The Spirit Speaks in the Quiet

- God fed Elijah and let him sleep before He spoke, and then His voice came as a still small voice, not in the wind, earthquake or fire (1 Kings 19).
- The Holy Spirit is not absent in our busyness, but busyness makes us unable to hear Him. A whisper needs a quiet room.
- **Rest is part of the assignment:** we get quiet not to step away from the work, but to hear the next step of it. “In quietness and confidence shall be your strength. But you would not” (Isaiah 30:15).

Psalm 46:10 NKJV Be still, and know that I am God.

Entering His Rest

- **Sabbatismos:** a Sabbath-rest, a settled way of living from God’s finished work instead of our own striving. “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God” (Hebrews 4:9).
- We are told to be diligent to enter that rest. Ceasing from our own striving takes real faith; it means trusting the covenant-keeper more than our own effort.

Hebrews 4:10–11 NKJV For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works... Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest...

Loving Yourself Enough to Rest

- A right love of self is not selfishness. It is honouring and stewarding the body and soul God gave you to carry the assignment in.
- **The key truth:** you cannot pour out to others a hesed you have not first received yourself. Rest is where you receive the love you were made to give away.
- Letting yourself rest is not laziness. It is loving yourself enough to be filled, so that what you pour out is His love and not just your last reserves.

Bringing It All Together

Covenant is the container of our life with God, and its foundation is love, His hesed, which came to us first. Because of that love, we relate to God as beloved daughters, not as slaves earning our keep.

Inside that covenant, two things sit side by side, held by the same bond. Our labour: we co-labour with Him, yoked to Jesus who carries the weight, and the co is the covenant. And our rest: not a reward after the work or a guilty break, but a covenant sign written in from the beginning. If the labour is covenant labour, the rest is covenant rest. They are twins, born of the same love.

This is why rest is never optional. The Spirit speaks in the quiet, so rest is where we hear the direction for the work. And all of it stands on love in three directions: we love God and so rest in Him instead of striving to impress Him; we love others and so serve from fullness, not fumes; and we love ourselves rightly, letting

ourselves stop, because a daughter who will not rest is still trying to earn what covenant has already given freely. So come off the treadmill, take the easy yoke, be still enough to hear Him, receive His hesed, and co-labour from covenant rest and covenant love, never again from empty.

Reflection

- Where have I been pulling the whole load alone, out of the yoke made for two?
- Have I made peace with running on empty and called it faithfulness?
- When did I last get quiet enough to actually hear His whisper?
- Do I love myself enough to let myself rest, or do I still think I must earn my place by never stopping?

Prayer Activation

Pray these three prayers slowly. Make the middle one a real, unhurried stillness.

Come Off the Striving

Lord, I come to You tired and honest. I have been trying to hold everything together myself, as if the covenant depended on how much I do. I lay it down. Thank You that Your hesed keeps this covenant, not my performance, and that Your mercies are new every morning. I stop striving to earn what You have already freely given, and I receive Your love afresh.

Be Still and Hear

Sit in real quiet for a minute or two before praying this. Holy Spirit, I get quiet before You. Not to perform, not to hand You a list, but simply to be with You and to listen. Speak to me in the stillness, in the whisper I can only hear when I stop. I am listening.

Take the Easy Yoke

Jesus, I take Your yoke again, the one made for two. I step back beside You and let You carry the weight and set the pace. I receive both the work and the rest from Your hand, because both belong to our covenant. Teach me to labour from fullness and to rest without guilt, as a beloved daughter and not a striving servant. In Your name I rest, and in Your name I rise. Amen.

The same covenant that holds your work also holds your rest.

Come off empty. Come and rest in Him.

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28 NKJV