

Rest

Welcome to our reflection for Church without Walls

Here are some ideas of how to use these reflections:

Pray that God will lead your thoughts.

Sit comfortably, take a few deep breaths and relax.

Let your mind wander as you read the reflection. Write down your thoughts in a notebook. If you are busy, try and pick out something to take with you in odd moments during the day.

You may wish to memorise the Bible verse. Write it out and stick it up somewhere.

Bible Verse

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Matthew 28: 28-29



What is rest, actually? I ask this not because I have never experienced rest but because it has a number of varied associations - with people who have died, - ‘rest in peace’ -, with sleep, - ‘does she get enough rest?’ – and with doing less so that body and mind can take a break. As body and mind take a break, there may be space for peace to enter in – for Jesus to give rest to the soul.

With it being Lent we hope to be able to set aside time to be with God but this isn’t always easy. What gets in the way?

First, there’s life – we have lots to do.

Then there's habit – we are so used to activity and busyness that it can be difficult even to sit down without remembering something essential that needs to be done first. The body will twitch and fidget, wanting to get on the move again and perhaps check your phone for messages. What happens when the screen is taken away?

Then there's guilt. We feel there are more important things to do; people and commitments that need our attention more. Is it selfish to rest?

There's also the brain. You might close your eyes but then the brain may kick in with its own agenda and a constant stream of thoughts.

Our reactions are like the layers of an onion which need to be peeled away. Ignoring the layers doesn't help, nor does getting frustrated with oneself, but I think that acknowledging each of the layers in turn and giving them to God does. This takes time. At first it may take most of the time you have set aside.

In our Bible verse, Jesus speaks of us being weary and burdened. In order to bring those burdens to him, you may, though not necessarily, decide to work out what you're carrying – even making a list of your burdens. You may be surprised to find that some of your concerns are quite repetitive and have less substance than you thought. Others of course are heavier and go deeper too.

Perhaps all these things seem like hard work and not rest at all but they do help clear the way for you to rest in God's presence, even if that doesn't happen all at once

You might practise deep, steady breathing as you sit, breathing in calm and trust in God, breathing out anxiety, pressure, fear and uncertainty.

The picture above is of a beach by Skara Brae in Orkney. It's a beautiful, peaceful, uncluttered place and one which I remember and can return to mentally with ease. If you have a place which feels similar to you, returning there as you sit and simply breathe may help you to sense God's presence with you. Or perhaps there's a Bible story which has particular meaning for you, into which you can enter easily, sense Jesus' presence and hear his words to you.

It's good news, I think, that even as we can develop habits of busyness and exhaustion, so too we can develop habits of rest and peace.

Jesus says,

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Lindsay Farley