



“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and sustain in me a willing spirit.”

Psalm 51:10-12

“So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God; for those who enter God’s rest also cease from their labors as God did from his. Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through such disobedience as theirs.”

Hebrews 4:9-11

I do it to myself all the time even though I know better. I know that for me to be a decent functioning human being, I need to take time for myself. For me, just as my body needs sleep to rest and replenish, my mind needs silence to let me sink back into myself. Yet without even noticing it, my calendar starts filling up and then speeding up until I am so exhausted that I am operating on nothing but fumes. When I get into those states, everything starts to get to me. My emotions become raw, my patience lessens, and I completely lose track of everything that is important and centering to me. Ever been there?

For me the most difficult part of this is being able to tell when I’ve crossed the line. I’m not good at saying no to people when the list is becoming too long; I don’t always keep my hand down or excuse myself when I know that I have more than enough on my plate; and far too often I give into the realities of a world that will undoubtedly put more and more upon us. Talk about the potential for a chaotic pace of life, it was there and far too often I was signing on for it.

Well knowing that I couldn’t depend on myself to take the breath when I needed it, I finally decided I just had to schedule down time. Someone close to me suggested that I deliberately schedule time, just as I would any other important meeting or event. So now, taking baby steps, every so often I take an entire afternoon and escape. Sometimes I go to the Metroparks for a long walk; this summer it was digging my hands into my flower gardens; sometimes it’s spending concentrated time journaling or even watching “I Love Lucy” re-runs and laughing as hard and as much as I can; and sometimes it’s just being behind a closed door where I am able to read, listen to music, or be in silence and meditation. But no matter what avenue I take, the effect is always amazing. When I return, I see things more clearly, and most importantly, I feel like the weight of the world has been lifted, giving me a sense of refreshment and allowing me the true opportunity to be there for everyone else.

So, this morning I want to ask you: When was the last time you were alone? And for how long?

Today, I want to encourage you to give yourself the gift of solitude. Take the time to refresh and to regroup. Yes, even in the midst of this crazy pandemic time, take time for you! Don't put off deliberate moments where you are able to catch your breath and to re-center. Find the things that bring you relief and enjoyment and do them. Take the time to clear your hearts and your minds so that you are ready to offer the world the gift of your heart; an open agile heart. Anne Morrow Lindberg once said, "Only when one is connected to one's own core is one connected to others. And for me, the core, the inner spring can best be re-found through solitude." Were truer words ever spoken?

Prayer:

Loving God, in the height of this day we pause to rest in you. Quiet our minds that they may be still, fill our hearts that we may abide in love and trust. Help us to remember that unplugging from our daily cares makes space for us to connect more deeply with you, with ourselves, and with those we love and have yet to love. Help us to rest, and to know your peace.

Lord, You have given us much to do. Help us to remember that you do not need us to do it all. Be with us all our lives as we learn the sacred art of carrying for others, as well as ourselves.

Amen.