

## Lesson 2

# YOU REST

### Episode Summary:

Mary Magdalene experiences her first day of freedom after Jesus rescues her. She prepares to host her first Shabbat dinner (*Shabbat* is pronounced “Shuh-baat” and is the Hebrew word for Sabbath). We see four very different observances of Shabbat, one with each of our main characters, which illustrates how desperately each one of them needs the rest and peace only Jesus provides.

### Key Verse:

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.” (Isaiah 43:2)

### Additional Verses:

Exodus 20:8–11; Matthew 11:28–30

### Episode Theme:

In the previous episode, we saw Jesus deliver Mary Magdalene from a life of torment. This time, we see her in her right mind and peace-filled. When Nicodemus asks her about her transformation she says: “I was one way, and now I’m completely different, and the thing that happened in between was Him.” On the other hand, Simon and Andrew are anything BUT peace-filled as they struggle to financially survive the Roman occupation.

## Opening Discussion

*Open by reading the following:*

### “Shabbat”

Typically we equate sleep with rest. While our eyes are open, we go a hundred miles an hour, often measuring the value of our days by how much we can accomplish. Good days are busy ones full of going, seeing, doing, exploring, conquering, and completing. And then at night, when we’re no longer physically capable of doing all the things, we stop for a moment to “rest.”

Exodus 20:8-11 instructs that the Sabbath was and is to be a day of communal observance that God's people do together, primarily marked by abstinence from work—though that's not all it's about. Having a day off each week is a perk, for sure, and God built it into His system because He's gracious to His creation and intimately in tune with our needs. We *need* a day off to hit the reset button, to attend church, and to spend time with people we love—because of course we do. But none of that compares to God's primary intention behind the commandment.

Stick a pin in that.

## Discuss the following question as a group:

**What is the origin of Sabbath-day rest?** (*Hint, hint ... God created space in our schedules for peace and rest, both physically and spiritually.*)

WATCH THE EPISODE TOGETHER.

## Discussion Questions

As a group, read through the “Wellspring of Rest” section and discuss the following:

### Wellspring of Rest

The Jews of first-century Israel weren't much better off than their wilderness-wandering ancestors. They were living in their own country but under oppressive Roman occupation and rule. Their continued observance of the Sabbath served as a reminder that God had always been faithful to provide for the needs of His chosen people, but they still longed for relief from their circumstances.

Yet according to Isaiah 43:2, relief and rest don't necessarily come from circumstances being removed. Rather, they come from God's presence, no matter the circumstance.

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you ..."

**Mary Magdalene** experienced Jesus's rescuing power in her life. But being freed from her demons didn't automatically remove her difficult circumstances. No doubt she still had painful memories, relationships that were strained or broken, and consequences that came from life gone awry. But also, she had Jesus.

No wonder she ended up becoming one of His devoted followers, exchanging the roof over her head for a tent, and familiarity for a whole new kind of wilderness wandering. She had found the kind of rest that only comes from communing with the Creator, and she wasn't about to lose His presence.

**Nicodemus** had built a decent life for himself. But while good behavior, success, and money have the power to make life easier, they don't satisfy the soul. Neither does a works-based religion. Adherence to the Sabbath as God commanded was a good thing, but only if it resulted in gratefulness for and worship of the Creator. While Nicodemus's *Shabbat* gatherings would've been the most ritually respectful – no doubt there was significant emphasis placed on proper observance of OT law – rituals have the potential to distract from proper observance of God's presence.

**Matthew** had found a way to benefit from the Roman occupation, and as a result, he likely wasn't invited to many *Shabbat* dinners. Relational fallout would've been unavoidable, though perhaps for a time he was able to ignore the loneliness that came with the tax-man territory. But striving after personal gain leads us away from our Creator – away from any hope we have of experiencing true rest and peace.

**Simon** might've been among those most ready for God to intervene in Israel's difficult circumstances. Overwhelmed by financial hardship, he likely struggled with impatience – maybe even his faith. Perhaps he wondered when God would relieve Israel's suffering and restore their freedom. Perhaps he wondered if God still cared about His chosen people at all – wonderings that would've made *Shabbat* remembrances painful and confusing.

In any case, Mary is again the example we should aspire to follow. She wasn't striving to obey a commandment in order to earn God's favor; she knew she'd already received His gracious and unmerited favor. Instead, she was eager to set aside time to remember her Creator, the One who knew her by name – to enter into His presence and celebrate what He'd done and what He would do. Compared to Nicodemus's *Shabbat* dinner, Mary's was humble and imperfect, but far more glorious.

### Discussion Questions

1. **When it comes to practicing your own Sabbath-day rest, which character do you relate to the most and why?**
2. **Psalm 46:10 says, “Be still, and know that I am God.” How would meditating on God have impacted Mary's healing process? Nicodemus's priorities? Matthew's striving? Simon's impatience or confusion?**
3. **Keeping the Sabbath is most obviously marked by not working. But God's primary intention behind the commandment is to spend the day like Mary did—to enter into His presence. What needs to change in your schedule or in your mind-set to rest the way God intended?**
4. **Read Matthew 11:28-30 as a group. Jesus's promise in these verses is reminiscent of the promise in Isaiah 43:2, in that Jesus doesn't say there will be no responsibilities or hardship (“yoke” or “burden”). Instead, He stays with us and provides a way through. How does knowing that impact the way you feel about or respond to your circumstances?**

5. **Fill in the blank: God is with me in \_\_\_\_\_.**

Close by reading from the following:

“Jesus Is Present”

“[Jesus said,] ‘ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’” (Matthew 11:28-30)

Jesus doesn’t instruct weary, burdened people to sleep more, caffeinate more, or take a vacation. Instead, He invites us to come to Him, and when we do, He provides us with rest. While we can rest our bodies anytime, we choose, *soul rest* only happens in the presence of our Creator. The One who knows the number of hairs on our heads (Matt.10:30; Luke 12:7) and keeps track of our sorrows (Ps. 56:8). The One intimately aware of our unique challenges and all the ways He’s going to use them for good (Rom. 8:28). The One who loves us enough to be our rescuer—in spite of our sin and struggle—knowing what it would cost Him (Rom. 5:8). And the One leading us through water and flame to the Promised Land of heaven, where there will be no more fear, pain, or strife (Rev. 21:4).

In His presence, we experience provision and peace and rest that supersede hard things—because of who He is.

## Prayer Focus

**Give** thanks to God for the soul rest He offers through Jesus. Give thanks to Him for daily provisions like food, clothes, shelter, and friends. **Thank** Him that His presence allows you to endure and overcome hard circumstances this side of eternity. **Ask** Jesus to teach you more and more how to rest in His presence. **Tell** Him how excited you are for the perfect and pain-free rest that awaits us in Heaven.