RESTORING YOUR SOUL

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Allan shared on 'Looking Back to Look Forward' and then last week Ron shared that we 'Don't need new vision, the vision hasn't changed but we should take what we are doing to the next level'.

We have shared vision and from next week I will begin to unpack how we are going to move forward as disciples of Jesus and engage with the Missio Dei (mission of God) for our lives. Today is about learning to love myself enough to care for myself. We need to care for ourselves so that we are well and strong enough to engage with God calling on our lives. Our Christianity is lived out of the overflow of what Jesus is doing in us.

We have entered 2024 and while it is a New Year and we should be feeling full of energy and ready to tackle the world, the last few years have taken a toll on all of us. As I listen to people, it strikes me that many of us are living in a state of depletion. Feeling depleted is a little different to feeling fatigued. When we are depleted, even rest doesn't make us feel much better.

Our inner capacity has been drained. We have given out too much energy, spent too much of ourselves and the well has run dry. Do you feel like that?

It's not surprising that many of us feel depleted. In this time, we may have found ourselves worried about the health of loved ones, grieving losses, experiencing strain on relationships, work stresses or new financial constraints.

We may not have been able to get away for a proper rest and holiday. Social gatherings may have taken their toll. We aren't sure about how long the feeling of depletion will last.

He restores my soul! Anyone here need some soul restoration? Did you hear it? HE restores my soul!

There are so many books on health, emotional and physical health. And while we do have our part to play, HE is the One who restores our souls. If you need some soul restoration, it is found in a person. That person is Jesus Christ, the soul restoration producer…

More than ever, we need to find ways to restore our souls.

Discouragement in times these difficult times is not unusual. Throughout the Bible over and over we see examples of godly men and women who have faced difficult situations.

They can encourage us today, because the same God who was faithful to them then will be faithful to us today.

If you want to restore your soul it's helpful to begin by reading the Psalms because King David wrote many of these during the dark times in his life, and they can serve to encourage us when we are depleted, depressed, tired and discouraged.

The Psalms have a wonderful capacity to capture the reality of our human experience.

Dr. Samuel Schultz notes in *The Old Testament Speaks* (Harper and Row) that "*they express the common experience of the human race. Composed by numerous authors, the various psalms express the emotions, personal feelings, attitudes, gratitude, and interests of the average individual. Universally, people have identified their lot in life with that of the psalmists."*[1]

Because David had experienced the joy of a soul restored by God, he could write the beautiful words of the 23rd Psalm: "He restores my soul."

Psalm 23:1-6 A psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. (2) He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, (3) HE RESTORES MY SOUL. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. (4) Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (5) You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. (6) Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

He restores my soul! To restore means "to repair, To renovate, or To return to a former condition."

The soul is the deepest part of us, our spirit and innermost being. Since God is the one who made us, only He can restore us, because only He knows what we truly need to restore our souls…

"The Lord" is Jehovah God, and His names in the Old Testament reflect who is in Psalm 23. **Our soul restorer who is…**

"**I shall not want"**—Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord will provide" (Gen. 22:14)

"Still waters"- Jehovah-Shalom, "the Lord our peace" (Judg. 6:24)

"**Restores my soul"**—Jehovah-Rophe, "the Lord who heals" (Ex. 15:26)

"**Paths of righteousness"**—Jehovah-Tsidkenu, "the Lord our righteousness" (Jer. 33:16)

"**You are with me**"—Jehovah-Shammah, "the Lord is there" (Ezek. 48:35)

"**Presence of my enemies**"—"Jehovah-Nissi, "the Lord our banner" (Ex. 17:15)

[1] Richards, L. O. (1987). *The teacher's commentary* (p. 325). Victor Books.

"**Anoint my head"**—Jehovah-M'Kaddesh, "the Lord who sanctifies" (Lev. 20:8)[2]

If you are feeling depleted, when resting doesn't make you feel much better. When your inner capacity has been drained. When you have given out too much energy, spent too much of yourself and the well has run dry. You need to take some time for restoring your soul… Start reading the Psalms… and remembering WHO GOD IS!

I have a few other thoughts on how you can take time to restore your soul…

LOOK OUT INTENTIONALLY FOR MOMENTS OF BEAUTY

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He also has planted eternity in men's hearts and minds [*a divinely implanted sense of a purpose working through the ages which nothing under the sun but God alone can satisfy*]… (Psalm 19:1 (NIV), Ecc 3:11(AMP))

When we are at the coast, I wake each day and stare in wonder at the ocean. My friends and family who have lived there for most of their lives say that they barely see the sea. Family in CT… drives to work, breathtaking, he says he barely sees it each day…

One way that can be helpful is to look out intentionally for moments of beauty in the day - a sunrise if we wake up early enough to catch it; the trees beginning to change with the rain into green and then later in the year into autumn colours; the patterns in the clouds.

Walk in your garden and just take time to look closely at the intricacy of a flower, a fruit tree, the birds sitting on your bird feeder.

And when we notice a moment of beauty, we pause and allow ourselves to savor it as a gift from the one who created it. Our soul restoration begins…

FIND AN OASIS to pray

But he (Jesus) would withdraw to desolate places and pray. And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (Luke 5:16, Mark 1:35, Mat 6:6)

A great way to find an oasis, is to slow down and take time each day to pray. But not just to pray, find a place that you go to pray. A quiet spot in the house, in your garden, a chair you sit on.

I have a beautiful candle that I light, and I sit quietly in a comfortable chair…Why not light a candle and sit with a line of scripture or poetry and see what it stirs in you.

[2] Wiersbe, W. W. (2004). *Be worshipful* (1st ed., pp. 94–95). Cook Communications Ministries.

Worship music can be a powerful doorway into prayer. We may simply want to become aware of God's gaze resting on us. When we become aware of His loving Presence with us, when we hear the miracle of His gentle whispers, our soul restoration begins.

CREATE SOMETHING

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. (Gen 1:27, Col 3:10)

We are created in God's image, and as such we are creative beings. Think of a person standing looking over a river-and wondering how they could get to the other side. They imagine a bridge, begin to design it, build it and it is there for people to use…

One of the most powerful conduits of restoration is creating something. This can feed us with new energy and with a strong sense of partnering with God. The process also demands all our focus and can give us a worry-free zone.

For me a large part of this is writing, I love writing, I find it restorative. Daily I cook, I find standing in the kitchen dreaming up new recipes to treat my family with deeply cathartic.

For you it could be planting something, trying a new recipe, writing, or playing with paints (you don't have to be artistic!)

But as you enter into the creation of something your soul restoration will begin.

HAVE FUN

The best you can do with your life is have a good time and get by the best you can. The way I see it, that's it--divine fate. Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." (Ecc 2:24, Neh 8:10)

One of the first questions I ask married couples who are struggling in their relationships is, "When last did you have fun together?" and that leads to what do you do for fun as a couple. Sometimes I have to go as far as scheduling some fun events for them to do together to build their relationship up again.

But as an adult, let me ask you the same question. "When last did you have fun?"

Play can be helpful. What did you enjoy doing as a child? Blowing bubbles, curling up with a good book, or doing a puzzle with a friend?

For me, CHIP CHECKERS with Mands, and fun with her… I have fun with friends, but sometimes when I need some soul restoration, I pack my fishing rod in the car and drive out to Brookwood or some place like that, on my own, and spend some time in nature, catching fish, and catching my breath.

Movement allows us to feel alive, whether it is going for a walk or run or dancing to a piece of music, or fishing.

When you have fun, you feel alive and your soul restoration can begin…

BE GRATEFUL

Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do you see what we've got? An unshakable kingdom! And do you see how thankful we must be? Not only thankful, but brimming with worship, deeply reverent before God. For God is not an indifferent bystander. (1Th 5:18, Heb 12:28 MSG)

I don't know about you, but gratitude does not come easily for me in daily life. It is much easier to focus my attention on the broken fridge, seized pool pump, the flat tyre, the price of petrol, the dire state of our economy, and the pain in my knees. Make no mistake I am grateful to the Lord for all He has done and provided for me, for my wonderful family, my home, my work that I love, and the amazing life we have. But it is so easy in the daily grind of life to miss all that and grumble about all the difficult stuff. I believe we need to become intentional about gratitude…

Gratitude helps to fill the well. Taking time to remember people, places and experiences for which we are most grateful.

Expressing our gratitude, for example, by writing a letter of thanks to someone whose life has touched ours, can also be a profound experience.

If we intentionally cultivate gratefulness in our lives, this is the place your soul restoration can begin…

If you are depleted and need restoration, you may want to pause and notice what you need to fill the well.

- **READ THE PSALMS**
- **LOOK OUT INTENTIONALLY FOR MOMENTS OF BEAUTY**
- **FIND AN OASIS TO PRAY**
- **CREATE SOMETHING**
- **HAVE FUN**
- **BE GRATEFUL**

In this moment let's pause… Ask yourself, "How can I open myself to receive the gift of my soul's restoration from God?"