

REFRESH YOUR BODY

Ps. Waweru Njenga – 17 Jan 2016

“Refresh” Series

Sermon Notes



I'd like to give a special welcome to all our visitors! We're so glad you're here and can join today. Last week we kicked off a brand new series called 'Refresh'. We said that even though the natural thing to do is to rush into the New Year, this year we want to do it differently. We want to start the year by waiting on God to refresh us. You see, we recognize that in this new season, our victories (whether at home or in the office) will not come merely from human effort, but primarily through God's intervention. Last week we learnt that the first refresh secret; it's not right information, but right relationship. You can check out the sermon on our website, or you can place an order for the sermon after the service.

Hard to believe it but it's already been a couple of weeks now, since we jumped into the New Year. How many enjoyed driving in empty streets over the Christmas break? The blissful slow days of the Christmas holiday now seem far behind us. Like a tireless ex who won't take "no" for an answer, our famous traffic jams are already back with us. The rat race is firmly underway. Life is already moving at breakneck speed. There are emails to write, meetings to attend, clients to impress, targets to achieve. We dare not leave our phones off, even over the weekend, in case the boss calls. And many here work in offices where people look badly at you if you stand up to leave before 6pm! In fact that's when the boss calls a meeting!

We're all busy, busy, busy... And it's only the 3rd Sunday of the year! The next public holiday is a long way away! And like a sprinter trying to run a long distance race, many of us are already in danger of getting drained before the end of the first lap. We're the first generation where people are suffering from high blood pressure, strokes, heart attacks and other stress-related illnesses as early as in their thirties!

So instead of a question, I'd like us to begin our sermon today with a small, relaxing activity. Each of you has a skewer that you found on your seats. I'd like you to introduce yourself to your neighbor. Then each of you will pick your skewer and try to vertically balance it on your palm. We want to see who can balance the longest!

Only rule is the winner will sit while the one who fails to balance will give them a standing ovation. Are you ready? *(Give the congregation a minute to attempt balancing the skewer).*

[Preaching pastor picks a broom stick]: We are going to begin our conversation today by talking about laws of physical balance. And there are three of them. If you understand the laws of physical balance then you will easily understand the secret to balancing a pole in your hands. But even more importantly, you will know how to have a refreshed body that allows you to fulfill your purpose not just in 2016 but throughout life.

The first law of balance is that you need to have the **correct reference point** **[Put the broomstick in palm and start balancing it for a few seconds]**. Do you notice where I'm looking? As long as I look at the top of this pole, which is the correct reference point, I can balance this pole longer and steadily [stops]. Whenever you are balancing something, you have to have a proper reference point and focus on it. If I look away or have my attention drawn to something else, this pole will not balance. If I look at my hand or even at the pole, I lose focus of the reference point and I fail in reaching my purpose of keeping the pole vertical in the air.

The second law of balance is the law of **constant correction** **[Put the broomstick in palm and balance for a few seconds]**. As you look at my hand, you find that I have to constantly move it so that I have the proper

alignment of the pole. Just having the proper reference point is not enough. You have to keep making constant adjustments to keep the pole up. If the pole overcorrects on one side, it will tip over so you need to take note and quickly counter that by moving it in the same direction. If you wait too long, it will be too late! So law #1 is the correct reference point, law #2 is constant correction, and...

Law#3 is the law of **clear margins**; whenever you are balancing something, you have to have enough space around you. [Put the broomstick in palm and balance for a few seconds]. I need to create enough space around me to ensure that I can balance the pole; if I'm crowded in, and have no space around me to move, then it just doesn't work!

Now if I violate any of those three laws of balance while holding the pole, what happens? The pole falls immediately. If I do not have the correct point of reference, if I do not make constant adjustments and if I do not have clear margins around me, the pole will fall right away!

But here is the interesting thing: do you know what happens when you violate the laws of rest and refreshing? Nothing! At least it seems that way! Your life doesn't collapse immediately. Your health doesn't get affected immediately. Your family doesn't feel the pain of your violation immediately. Your mind doesn't start to show the effects immediately. This is why many of us constantly violate these laws of balance - because we do not see the effects immediately and therefore, we do nothing about it. And that is where the hugest danger lies!

We started the bad rest habits as teens staying up to watch TV or in college staying up several nights in a row to read last minute for an exam. We continue them as adults, trying to balance hectic careers with a hectic social life, and later on with a hectic family life. Our society has told us that we can be all that we want to be, and have all that we want to have. And because we do not see immediate negative consequences, we soldier on with our unbalanced lifestyle. In fact, we admire people who are workaholics. It's sort of a badge of honour. We even boast about it when we apply for a job – 'an area of weakness? Well, my only problem is that I tend to work too hard!' It doesn't seem like that big of a deal to us.

But this was never God's intended design! Your creator created you to function completely differently. Please turn with me to our reading for the day... **Ex.20:8-11**. God was giving the people of Israel their new constitution. It was based around 10 moral statutes that would act as the basis for all their other laws. As you can imagine, these laws concerned the most serious issues; like murder, adultery, and idolatry. In light of that, the fourth of these laws seems rather misplaced! Let's read it together... **Ex.20:8-11 (GNB) READ**

'Observe the Sabbath and keep it holy. You have six days in which to do your work, but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to me. On that day no one is to work—neither you, your children, your slaves, your animals, nor the foreigners who live in your country. In six days I, the Lord, made the earth, the sky, the sea, and everything in them, but on the seventh day I rested. That is why I, the Lord, blessed the Sabbath and made it holy'.(Good News Bible)

Have you ever asked why God would consider rest so important that it would even come before honoring parents, or murder, or adultery or stealing? Have you ever wondered why the command about rest is the longest of the 10 Commandments? The next longest one is the one about making idols; it takes 3 verse and 82 words. But the rest command is spread over 4 verses with 99 words! Why is our taking a day of rest so important to God? Three things...

1. It aligns us to the correct reference point – [my accident story] - working so hard and feeling so needed, then finding out I'd have to stay on bed rest for 3 weeks and in a cast for 6! The worst part was realizing the job actually got done better without me!

Part of the reason we don't like to rest is that we're afraid things might fall apart without our intervention!
'What will happen if I'm not doing something productive? I might fall behind!' Or 'I might not make my targets!'

Or 'I might not make enough money in my business!' Or 'I might not progress as much in my career!' And because of that, most of us think, 'I'll rest when I've made it!'

But the interesting thing is that the Sabbath command was not given to people who had made it or who were successful. In fact, God gave the Israelites the command while they were still broke former slaves in the wilderness and he wanted them to practice it then, not just after they became 'successful'. By setting aside one day out of every seven and dedicating it to God, the Israelites were symbolizing that God was the source of all that they had. They were saying that their success and their victories had not come from their muscles or their hustles but from the favour and blessings of their Creator.

God took this command so seriously that the punishment for breaking the Sabbath was death! Imagine that! And later, when the Israelites were sent into exile, one of the things that the prophets said about them is that they had neglected to keep the Sabbath. Why was that so serious? You see, when God's people neglected the Sabbath, then they very quickly began to practice idolatry. They stopped trusting God to be their source and started looking for other ways to succeed in their own strength. You see, when I neglect to stop and rest, then I'm saying that I'm the one holding things up and if I stop holding them up, they'll crash. I have become my own reference point! I have allowed my work or my strength to become an idol. Sabbath reminds us all of that profound lesson that we knew so well in Sunday School but so often completely forget when we grow up, [sing] 'He's got the whole world, in His hands'

Ask your neighbour, 'do you truly believe that?' You see, when I rest from productive labour one day of each week, I'm saying, 'Lord, you've got my world in your hands. You are my reference point. You are my source; the one who gave me my mind, my hands, my talents and my energy. And six days with You is greater than seven days without You. In that way, keeping the Sabbath is very much like tithing. You're really saying, 'God I choose to trust in you and not in myself'. So here's today's secret for a refreshed body. **When you put God first, everything else falls into place.** Taking a Sabbath rest aligns us to the correct reference point. But also...

2. It gives space for constant correction – In the command, God points the Israelites back to the creation story. As Exodus 31:17 puts it, *'in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.'* Now clearly God didn't rest because He was tired! Isaiah 40:28 tells us *'he never grows weak or weary'*. So how was God refreshed? I suggest to you that it's because He took the time to pause and evaluate. The bible says God looked at all He had made and He said it was very good. One of the purposes of regularly slowing down one day each week is to do some self-examination. How did I live this week? Did I love God and love people? Did I make good decisions that I will not regret? Are there areas in my life that need some correction now? As we evaluate our week, we are able to plan the week ahead and ensure that we're not just working hard, we're also working effectively, and most importantly moving in the direction God wants us to move. Remember, **when you put God first, everything else falls into place.** Taking a Sabbath rest aligns us to the correct reference point and gives space for constant correction. And finally, it...

3. It creates clear margins – we live in a fast paced life – in a society that makes productivity and "success" the top priority. Inspirational books challenge us to 'be all you can be' and 'live life to your fullest potential'. We want to fill our schedules and to work to capacity. And yet when we look at God's word, we see a different way of living altogether. When God led his people to freedom, He created margin in every area of their lives. Verse 10 included them, their children, their workers, their animals and even foreigners living among them: EVERYONE was to rest one day out of every seven. Not every once in a while but every week. God was so keen about this that every year, they were to take a break for a year and trust God to supply their needs. Why was this? One of the reasons was God wanted them to leave clear margins in their lives. Yes, they were to work diligently, but not to the extent that they failed to trust God to provide for their needs.

[Carol's story] – we were working so hard that she had a meltdown and couldn't continue on! We had to stop everything right there and take a few days off. At that point we sold our business and she stayed home for the next few years helping raise our kids until they all joined school. It's a decision we never regretted!

As a generation, many of us are pushing ourselves to the absolute limit, moving at a hectic pace and living under constant stress. Apart from our busy jobs, many of us have a full school schedule and are trying to run homes as well. Because everything still looks intact, we are not aware that we are setting ourselves up to one day have nothing in common with our spouse, or to be estranged from our kids or for lifelong health conditions and even premature death! And the root reason is because we don't trust God's command. We have this sneaking suspicion that if we don't look after our own things, nobody will. That's why the Sabbath command is by far the most disobeyed command by Christians!

Think about it, which other God is so generous that he'd make a rule like this? I command you to rest and to energize yourselves and to connect with your source of life every week! And what type of people would resent this command more than any other command, and see it as a burden? And sadly, I suspect that many times, God sees us and says, 'fine, you want to do this on your own strength, then have your way!' And we rob ourselves of the refreshing and the strength that could have been ours, if we did it God's way and not ours.

Tell your neighbour, **when you put God first, everything else falls into place!** SO HOW DO WE PUT GOD FIRST? How do we apply this message? This series is not about adding information but positioning us for what God wants to do. That's why we're going to be doing something practical each week to ensure we apply the message. So here's your homework. For the next four months, I want you to observe a Sabbath; a day when you will not engage in productive activity, but allow God to refresh you. For many, it's going to be Sunday but it could be any other day, if that's what works for you. Remember Jesus said, 'man was not made for the Sabbath but the Sabbath was made for man!' I would encourage though as much as possible, for it to be the same day each week.

What will you do on the Sabbath each week? Whatever you do should help you do three things; rest, reconnect with God and reenergize. So, #1: get enough sleep! At some point, refocus your spirit through worship [if its Sunday, don't just come to church because that's what Christians do but come to reconnect with God]. And then do something that energizes you. Is it going to coffee with friends, sitting alone at a park, reading a book, taking a walk in nature, riding your bike, relaxing with your kids, listening to music, baking a cake, playing an instrument – whatever it is that energizes you! [some of us don't even know what energizes us so this will be discovery!]

Last week we introduced the altars. Let me invite you to stay behind today if you need to spend some time with God. Some of us may need to confess not trusting God, or neglecting the relationships He has given us because of fear of being left behind, or mistreating your workers and not letting them rest. Some may need to pray for courage to speak to your employer about letting you honour the Sabbath. Some may need to reconcile because you've neglected relationships. Some may need to bring the baggage of media addiction and workaholism to God.

LET'S PRAY...