



PAUSE + REFLECT
SUMMER 2025

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Welcome to Summer Sabbath 2025.

In the following pages you'll be guided through 5 days of scripture meditations and devotions with prompts designed to help you stop, rest, delight, and worship the God who loves you more deeply and completely than you can fathom.

This format is meant to reflect the example that God set when He created the universe, stopped, and then marveled at its goodness! We get the added blessing of worshiping Him as we marvel at the work He is doing in and through us.

May your hearts be rooted ever more deeply in the steadfastness of God's love for you, allowing you to move throughout your days trusting Him in all things. May the peace you experience overflow to the world around you, that they might see you and "give glory to your Father, who is in heaven." - Matt. 5:16

Now, come in, and enter His rest.

Day 1: Precious, Honored, Loved

Evan Snyder

Isaiah 43:1-7, *“But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. 2 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. 3 For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. 4 Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life. 5 Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. 6 I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, 7 everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”*

In context, these words from the prophet Isaiah are intended to be deeply moving. *“But now”* (Is. 43:1) is a startling reversal of what has come to pass. In chapter 42, God had *“given up”* Jacob (i.e. God’s people) and poured out the *“heat of his anger”* for their sins and rejection. But here we find God speaking tenderly to a sinful and wearied people. He speaks words of freedom, life, and redemption to the once distant and wayward people. We see God identify himself in three specific ways: *“the Lord your God,” “the Holy One,”* and *“Savior.”*

Why does this matter?

What drives this change of fortune for God’s people? God speaks through Isaiah in these verses not as a distant, unrelatable, cosmic force, but as lover who is willing to pay any price, go any distance, to be reunited with the one He loves. The titles that God identifies Himself with (Is. 43:3) point us back to the exodus where God chose to free Israel. In these verses we see how deeply God loves His people, how faithful He is even when they reject Him. In these verses we see the substitutionary relationship between God and Israel (Genesis 22:13).

Pay attention to how the Lord speaks of His people: precious, honored, love. The syntax of these words in Hebrew are all perfect tenses which means “you were and still are” precious, honored, loved. God’s deep love for His people undergirds this entire section. Why does He not deal with us according to our sins? Simple. He loves us so much He would give a ransom to deliver us from what we deserve. We see this full and final reality in Jesus willingly dying on the cross for our sins.

The opening verses of our section show a God who redeems because He loves. Verse 7 ends our section with God, who created the heavens and the earth, intimately involved in the lives of His people. He loves no matter the cost, context, past, present, or future.

What we see is that God’s love cannot be withheld from His people. What comfort!

STOP

It's hard to rest if you don't sense safety or comfort. Allow yourself to hear God speak these words from Isaiah 43:1-7, at one time intended for Israel, now to you, personally, in this moment. Ask that you might experience, even feel God's love for you in these words.

REST

It might be difficult to rest. That's OK! You have permission right now to stop and take a deep breath. Slow down. Put this guide down and take a few deep filling breaths (in and out / slowly). God is working even in our sinfulness, brokenness, or just plain weariness. He doesn't need you to do anything. If it helps, notice in the text how often we see God say "I will" or "I give". He's doing the work. Rest.

DELIGHT

Precious. Honored. Loved. Sit with those words. Imagine the reality of God's feelings towards you. For most of us, this is hard to believe. We "know" this is true, but it can be difficult to imagine God really feels this way towards us.

Take a few minutes to write out what it feels like to hear God say you are "precious", "honored", and that He "loves you". Notice where you might sense doubt or cynicism. Remind your head and your heart that the One who formed you is speaking truth over any doubt or cynicism.

While you write these out, ask God to help you delight in His truth!

WORSHIP

"The entire life of a good Christian is an exercise in holy desire. You do not see what you long for, but the very act of desiring prepares you, so that when God comes you may see and be utterly satisfied. Suppose you are going to fill some holder or container, and you know you will be given a large amount. Then you set about stretching your sack or wineskin or whatever it is. Why? Because you know the quantity you will have to put in it, and your eyes tell you there is not enough room. By stretching it, therefore, you increase the capacity of the sack, and this is how God deals with us. Simply by making us wait, God increases our desire, which in turn enlarges the capacity of our soul, making it able to receive what is to be given to us."

- St. Augustine in a homily on the first letter of John

PRAYER

Lord, I do not always see the fullness of what you want to give me. Increase my desire for what you have to give me and my capacity to receive it so that I may see you when you come and be satisfied in you. Help me rest in the simple yet profound truth that you love me.

**May today be a day that we can lean in and rest in the truth
that God deeply loves us.**

Day 2: A Heart at Rest

Melody von Kahle

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say[a] to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." - Psalm 91:1-2

I'll assume many of us have experienced something like the following - you wake up early, maybe even before the sun (you over-achiever), your eyes open and your mind is flooded with the things that the day will hold. You mentally prioritize a growing to do list, sort through family obligations, feeling a pit in your stomach over pressures from work, unfinished laundry, grass that needs cutting, costly home repairs, sports schedules, end of year school parties, doctor's visits, relationships that have been neglected, bills that are late, unresolved conflicts, health and wellbeing to maintain - the list goes on. The mental load that comes with daily responsibilities (most of which are really good things!) can be crushing.

Now, add into the equation loneliness, sickness, broken relationships, betrayal, death, disappointment, depression, anxiety, sin, mental illness, financial crisis, family disfunction - any other hurt you can imagine - and you might just be thinking it'd be better to stay in bed. At some point we've all had similar seasons. It's easy to feel the weight of responsibilities and obligations, and as humans, we are prone to worry. But when things get a little too heavy, what to we do with all that weight? Do we bear it alone, or do we take it to the one who holds our lives in His hands?

I felt this acutely this past year juggling daily life and a new baby that wouldn't sleep. More than a few times, I thought that if I could get just sick enough to be admitted to a hospital for a few days, then I could get a guilt free break from it all (I wish I were joking.) I was in an internal spiral. The anxiety, overwhelm, and worry I was feeling was actually a diagnosis of the condition of my heart, a heart that believed that I was responsible for making sure everything and everyone was ok. Looking back, I can see how God was using this time of darkness to reminded me of how much I needed Him. I had forgotten who I was in Christ and God was using this season of exhaustion to remind me. As I prayed and tried to realign my thoughts and expectations with what God wanted for me, a lightbulb (aka Holy Spirit) moment happened.

I began to understand that God wanted me to have a heart at rest, not in the absence of my hardest moments, but in the presence of them.

I had stepped out into the power of the elements that left me feeling helpless and inadequate. I was not resting in the promise that He was my refuge, or trusting Him with my worries, my family, or our future. I was believing a lie that I was my own god in this storm. What a bleak and hopeless reality that would be! As my perspective shifted, through the work of the Holy Spirit, my heart began to experience peace. Feel free to ask my husband, Peter! He will tell you this is an ongoing situation, with daily ebbs and flows, but with a trajectory of hope.

What is the simple truth that God wants to remind us?

It's this. We have a kind, loving Father who longs for us to let go of our false sense of control, to find security in His perfect plan and to find rest in the middle of the mayhem. He wants us to know this - *"I am in control and have always been. Take up residence in my shadow. You are not enough. But I am enough. Come and rest in me."*

We should make every effort not to allow busyness to be the norm. We all need margin in our lives to rest and find refreshment. But the reality is that we can't always change our circumstances. However, in our busiest seasons we have a choice to make about how we manage those moments. May we operate from a place of resting and trusting in the God who is in complete control. He so longs for us to have hearts at rest.

STOP

Stop for a minute. Take a look at your life. Grab a pen and make a list. When have you experienced a storm? Maybe your storm has lasted years, maybe weeks. Maybe you're in one right now. What were the prevailing thoughts that occupied your mind? Were they of self-doubt, shame, guilt, anxiety, pride, worry? Rather than push the thoughts away, listen and let them reveal the condition of your heart. Pray this scripture as you pause and reflect:

Psalm 139:23-24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"

Any areas that come to mind expose where your heart needs to trust God the most. Ask Him to show you what lies you are believing that keep you from trusting Him with your situation.

Now take time to listen. After a moment, write down whatever rises to the surface and keep the list for the next section.

REST

We all carry burdens, which is why Jesus says to us in Matthew 28:11, *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* What an incredible invitation. The God of the universe, your Creator, wants to carry your burden. That list you wrote down? What would it look like to hand it over to the God who longs for you to rest in His provision and plan? Nothing is too big for Him and nothing is a surprise to Him.

Do you believe the words of Jesus, that not only does He not condemn you for having a burden, He wants to carry it for you?

Jesus Christ Himself is the rest we so desperately need, baring the burden of sin on our behalf and giving us abundant life. When we trust in Him and believe His words, we can rest in the truth that the most loving and merciful Father is walking with us. Like finding a cool shade on a hot day, take a minute and rest from your relentless thoughts. Rest your tired heart. Dwell in the refreshing promise that you are not in control (this is a good thing!). God is in control and He loves you completely.

Let go. Stay here for a while - you probably need it.

DELIGHT

I hope you are feeling a sense of refreshment. Take another look at your life with pen in hand. Reflect on when the Lord has shown up and proven himself faithful.

The quickest path to a heart at worship is a heart that remembers the goodness of God.

Look how He has been forming you into the image of Jesus! What a joy to dwell in confidence that God is not finished with you! Does this help you trust that He will do that same in future storms? Do you find yourself delighting in the truth of scripture, finding strength and security in Christ? I hope so!

WORSHIP

In light of how the Lord has ministered to you during this time of reflection, write down some practical ways you can worship him with your life and actions today or this week. One of the most obvious ways (but not the only way) is to spend time in His presence, delighting in His nearness. Don't forget Psalm 91:1-2 that says that the one who dwells in the shelter of the most high will abide in the shadow of the Almighty!

Make space to dwell in the comfort of his presence. Spend time praying, reading, worshiping Him, with a thankful heart that is glad! Remember His works, trust His plan, and share with those around you how He has cared for you.

Let the following scripture be a description of your life dwelling in His shadow:

Psalm 9:1-2ESV, *"I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds. I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High."*

Day 3: Walk

Steve Matson

Today, stop the harried default we live within and slow to the deep, powerful rhythms of the Ancient of Days.

“Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time. And he walked with God.” - Gen. 6:9 “Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.” - Gen. 6:8NIV

I could take this text in many directions. I have a predilection to wax theologically, but here choose to reflect pastoral...Many of us (including me as offender number one!) struggle with the tyranny of the urgent, the hyperventilation of the moment. Both in the world at large and inside the church and our faith lives as well. For His sake and our own well-being, God calls us to slow and go deeper.

Note in the text that Noah walked—he did not run or hurry. He also did not dawdle. Which suggests intentionality on both ends. Also, Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people and finding favor with God.

And by the way, this biblical characterization of Noah falls smack in the middle of a culture of depravity that drove God to the point of annihilating his good work humanity—except now for a remnant.

Noah **chose** a cadence different than the world around him.

Why does this matter?

I have long been struck by the frequency of the imperative tense of scripture. Be still. Be strong. Be joyful. Be holy. Love one another. Etc. etc. etc.

We are not victims. God imbued us with his image, at the core of which is our freedom to transcend our circumstances and make choices. Of course, the clarity of those choices is sometimes muddled by a variety of factors, including sin, inherited dispositions, forces outside our control, the realms of spiritual darkness, and so on.

But still, we retain that God-given agency that He expects us to utilize constructively both to His glory, and aligned with that, our own well-being. Our ability to exercise good choices is both a vote of confidence from God in us and means to put Him first.

Thus it is with pace—in all its manifestations: physical, emotional, spiritual. Noah took the time to pace himself with God. Not outrunning God, getting ahead of his courings and inviting all the existential anxieties of lostness. Not apart from God, and His purposes and protections.

Not lagging behind Him, and losing site of His good intents. And the result? Noah cultivated righteousness. And in doing so found God's favor.

Righteousness and well-being take time. And pace. Hurried and harried mitigates it.

And by the way, the meaning of Noah ("**noach**" in Hebrew) is...rest.

STOP

Oswald Chambers in his devotional classic "My Utmost for his Highest" writes that, in terms of rest and peace, we should strive to have the character of Christ. That in being "Steadfast, Calm, Steady and Strong." What a beautiful picture of our Lord as he fully embraced the trials and exigencies of our earthly life. And what a succinct model for us to aspire to. With God's help.

Today, stop the despotism of fretting and doing. Slow down. Decide to do so. Be intentional. You have more of a God-given capacity to do so than you realize.

REST

Think about Noah. He had an Ark to build, and to shoulder the mantle of human legacy. But Noah walked through the day. With God.

My wonderful career-missionary-father-in-law once reassured me that God has given me enough time in each day to accomplish what he would have me accomplish. And to let go of the rest. We are not going to lose God's favor if we do not get to the bottom of our to-do list each day.

Many who know me and my career in management consulting also know one of my favorite maxims: Do (and think!) less, *well*, rather than more, *poorly*.

Rest in that realization.

DELIGHT

Remind yourself from Psalm 139 that you are fearfully and wonderfully made. Inherently. As you are, not because of what you hurry through and attain. Practice good narratives today. Slow down to articulate and hear them. At the end of the day, you are graced into God's embrace.

WORSHIP

Look up the old hymn “In the Garden.” Listen to it if you can. Visualize you are in the garden walking with God.

*“I come to the garden alone,
while the dew is still on the roses,
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear,
The Son of God discloses.*

*And He walks with me, and he talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own,
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.”...*

PRAYER

God, thank you that we can walk together this day and always. Measure my steps in time with You. Amen.

Day 4: Gentle Forgiveness

Evan Snyder

Psalm 103:8-14, “8 The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. 9 He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; 10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. 11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; 12 as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. 13 As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; 14 for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.”

When I was young, I remember I took a toy from a doctor's office. I was at home playing with this action figure and my mom asked me, “Where did you get that from?” Even though I was young, I remember feeling the heat around my neck and the coldness in my hands. I knew I was in trouble. My mom put me back in the car and we drove all the way back to the doctor's office and I had to apologize and return the toy. I went in and told the receptionist that I had taken the toy, and I asked for forgiveness. I remember her leaning over the counter, smiling at me, and handing me a lollipop. Moral of the story - steal toys so you get treats. Just kidding! I remember being so surprised at not only being forgiven but being given a treat! I was not expecting that.

In Exodus, we find God's people have sinned horribly. The golden calf ordeal, in which the people of God turned to idol worship, was a monumental failing. God's wrath, we're told, burned against them.

Exodus 34:6 says, “The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.’ ” These are almost the exact same words the Psalmist uses in our verses today. What we see in these short verses is the stunning mercy of God to forgive.

Why does this matter?

God is not like us. We harbor bitterness and resentment when wronged. These verses show how different God is than us. God, though wronged, does not treat us as we deserve, nor does He harbor bitterness or demand repayment for our sins (Ps. 103:10). God is gentle in forgiveness and is our loving Father (Ps. 103:13-14). The psalmist is seeking to awaken his (and our) minds and affections to feel the gentle forgiveness that God gives to those who love and fear Him. Once again, we are consoled by a God who forgives when we do not deserve it and knows us better than we know ourselves. What a kind father who knows us as deeply as He does, yet cares for us and forgives us (Ps. 103:14-15). That's far better than any lollipop, isn't it?

STOP

Can you think of a time when you hurt or wronged someone? What was it like to ask them for forgiveness? Anxious? Ashamed? Hopeful?

Now, how do you think God feels toward you when you ask Him for forgiveness? Allow yourself to hear God speak these words from Psalm 103:8-14 to you, personally, in this moment. Ask that you might experience God's gentle forgiveness towards you in these words.

REST

Sabbath means that "it is finished." To rest is literally to know that Jesus has done everything we could never do for ourselves. On the cross, Jesus cries out that His people can rest because we are no longer slaves to sin. We do nothing. Jesus did it all. We have been forgiven!

Be still and quiet.

Take 2 or 3 deep filling breaths.

Then take 5 minutes to be quiet, not thinking about your to-do list today or anything else. Just sit in the peace and stillness of you doing nothing with Jesus over you declaring "It is finished."

DELIGHT

Compassionate. Gracious.

Give your attention to those words. Imagine the reality of God's feelings towards you even in your sinfulness – or on your worst day! Delight yourself in God's compassion and grace towards you!

"God has established a created order full of excellent and good things, and it follows naturally that as we give our attention to those things we will be happy. That is God's appointed way to joy. If we think we will have joy only by praying and singing psalms, we will be disillusioned. But if we fill our lives with simple, good things and constantly thank God for them, we will be joyful, that is, full of joy... The decision to set the mind on the higher things of life is an act of the will. That is why celebration is a Discipline. It is not something that falls on our heads. It is the result of a consciously chosen way of thinking and living."

– *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster

WORSHIP

Go outside and take a walk (short or long). As you walk, notice your surroundings and take in all that God has created that you can enjoy. Walk (literally) in the freedom of God's peace and presence with you. Give thanks as you worship for the loving kindness of our forgiving Father!

Day 5 | Love that Moves

Justin Winthers

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”

— John 13:34 (ESV)

Pastor Evan recently asked the elders, “How are we as Christians to understand God’s love?” It’s a simple question—but it’s not a small one. After our meeting, I stayed struck by the question.

We often hear phrases like, “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8), or “*Love is patient and kind*” (1 Corinthians 13:4), or “*Faith without love is nothing*” (1 Corinthians 13:2)—but how do we define it in a way that compels our lives?

What does it mean to love someone the way Christ has loved us?

I was deeply challenged in asking myself if I’ve settled for a passive, comfortable version of love that asks little of me and risks even less.

Let me offer this possibility: Love, in its truest form, is sacrifice with the expressed desire that another would know God. Not just feel better... Not just be helped... But know Him... Be reconciled to Him. Move past my own emotions and fears, to a primary concern that they walk as His child.

“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” — 2 Corinthians 5:20 (ESV)

I’ve been wrestling with the realization that I can believe all the right things and still live a life that points no one to Christ. I can cling to truth while avoiding people. I can nod in agreement with sound doctrine but stay silent when someone near me is drowning in sin, pain, or confusion. That’s not Christlike love. That’s self-preservation. And here’s the hard truth: when I hold back what God has given me, I’m not just failing to help—I might actually be in the way. My fear might keep someone from hearing the truth. My silence might keep them from seeing the cross. My comfort might become their stumbling block.

That’s not Christlike love. That’s self-preservation. And here’s the hard truth: when I hold back what God has given me, I’m not just failing to help—I might actually be in the way. My fear might keep someone from hearing the truth. My silence might keep them from seeing the cross. My comfort might become their stumbling block.

Remember this: Those dead in sin don't wrestle with it—they indulge in it (Ephesians 2:1–3). They celebrate it. They build their identity upon it. We don't grieve sin or long for righteousness apart from Christ. That kind of heart only comes from Him. So if He's made us new, if we've truly experienced His mercy and grace, then our hearts will desire and our lives will be aligned to point others to it—not hide it.

STOP

“Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!” — Psalm 139:23–24 (ESV)

Ask...

- Where have I been withholding love?
- Where has comfort kept me from compassion?
- Where has fear quieted my faith in you Lord?

Ask Him to show you, gently and clearly. And as He reveals, let His mercy wash over you. Let Him fill you again, so that His love doesn't stop with you—but flows through you to others who need it most.

You are loved not because you love well—but because God IS love... it's who He is! Let that truth stir your affection for the God that saved you and loves you, and compel you to lovingly share this truth with those around you.

Settle into a quiet moment with the Lord. Invite Him to search your heart—not through the lens of guilt or shame, but with a spirit of humility, trust and a willingness to be known by the Almighty.

REST

“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

— Romans 5:6–8 (ESV)

Rest in this wonderful truth:

- God's love for you is not contingent on your ability to love others.
- He loved you while you were His enemy (Romans 5:10). While you were dead in your sins (Ephesians 2:1).
- Before you could offer anything, He offered everything.

Set a timer and meditate on Romans 5:6–8:

DELIGHT

“We love because he first loved us.” — 1 John 4:19 (ESV)

Think back through your spiritual journey. Who did God use to embody His pursuing love in your life?

- Who first told you about Jesus, even when you didn’t want to hear it?
- Who stayed when you were difficult, rebellious, or indifferent?
- Who challenged your comfort and called you to deeper obedience?
- Who sacrificed time, resources, or reputation so you could see Christ more clearly?

Write their names down. Thank God for them.

Delight in how His love moved through ordinary people to reach you—not through their perfection, but through their willingness... their desire that you would know and walk with the same God that saved them.

Ask God for the Holy Spirit-driven courage to be that person for someone else.

WORSHIP

“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.” — 2 Corinthians 5:14 (NIV)

True worship doesn’t terminate inward. It moves us outward. When we truly see Christ—bleeding, dying, rising for sinners—we cannot stay passive. His love compels us.

In that same conversation with the Elders, I was moved when Pastor Steve offered this about sharing truth when it’s hard: Biblical love bears three marks...

- It’s cruciform — shaped like a cross, willing to die to self.
- It’s redemptive — seeking eternal good over temporary ease.
- It’s relational — drawing others not just into friendship, but into fellowship with the Living God.

What does it mean to love someone the way Christ has loved us? Does someone come to mind as you’ve read through this devotional? Perhaps it’s someone you’ve avoided, or someone God continues to place on your heart? In an act of worship of God, do these three things:

- Pray for them daily. Ask God to soften their heart and give you divine opportunities to share the Gospel.
- Reach out. No script. No pressure. Just presence.
- Ask one meaningful question—and really listen. Let your love and desire for them to know God through you be tangible.

You’re not their Savior. Jesus is. But you may be the vessel by which He displays His love. Pray that God would use you in this way.

PRAYER

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.” — 1 John 4:11–12 (ESV)

Lord, your grace and love overflow. Stir in me a desire to give from that overflow—so that others may know you, walk with you, and be reconciled to you. Use me as your willing servant. By your Spirit, fill me with a deep longing for all to know the God who saved me.

To God be the glory, in the matchless name of Jesus Christ, forever and ever. Amen.

WELL DONE.

You've completed the 2025 Summer Sabbath week of reflection and meditation.

Our prayer is that the rhythm you've practiced this week does not end here but continues with you, shaping your life as you carry with you a heart at rest in the love that God has for you.

Thank God for the work He is continuing to do in you!

We love you, Grace Hill Church.

Now, go and rest.



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