

# How to Find Rest

by Elisabeth Elliot

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*Elisabeth Elliot teaches that true rest is found in Jesus Christ, who gives us peace and relief from the heaviest burdens in life.*

**Duration:** 41:53

**Scripture:** Matthew 11:28

**Topics:** "Rest"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the search for rest and how it cannot be found in airports or vacation spots. The speaker emphasizes the importance of showing the life of Jesus through our actions, using the example of Amy Carmichael teaching high-caste women to wash feet. The speaker then highlights three conditions given by Jesus for finding rest: coming to Him, taking His yoke, and learning from Him. The sermon concludes with a personal anecdote about a conversation with a Christian woman who described the difference Christ made in her life as peace.

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## Transcript

As you can imagine, Lars and I spend quite a bit of time in airports. And there's one thing that you can always do in an airport if you haven't had the forethought to bring along good reading material, and that's to watch people. And especially in the summertime, you see families and thousands upon thousands of young people shuffling through the airports.

Many of them, I suppose the majority of families and young people, are not traveling on business, but trying to get away from it all. Go somewhere where they can have a break, where they can crash, where they can relax. But did you ever in your life see such images of total exhaustion and desperation? As you see in airports.

I mean, everybody is at their very worst. The families are bickering and yelling at each other, and the little kids are screaming, and the babies are crying, and the parents are trying to corral everybody and shut everybody down and buy everybody enough ice cream and popcorn to make them, quote, happy, unquote. And you can't help wondering if this is the end of the, quote, vacation, or the beginning, and how it's going to be when they get wherever it is that they were going.

My title today is How to Find Rest. It's not going to be found in airports. It's not going to be found in any vacation spot, except in the physical sense.

Now, I would suppose that some of you have come to this conference because you needed to get away. You needed a rest. You wanted a break, a respite, a change of scene.

You wanted to relax. And I can't help wondering where you expect to find rest. If I had an opportunity to poll this audience, I wonder what your answers would be.

What to you means real rest? Is it geographical location? Is it silence, just physical quietness? Is it getting away from work, getting away from home, getting away from the office, getting away from people that you find un-get-along-with-able, getting away from responsibility? Is there another kind of rest? And, of course, I wouldn't be choosing a topic like this unless I believe that there is. I believe that there is real rest, totally different in nature from what we've been talking about, not what the world finds. And you remember that Jesus' parting gift to his disciples was peace.

Now, he had not lived what we would call a peaceful life for the three years that we know anything about. He had been very busy, very much hounded and followed and harried by the crowds. When he tried to get away, he was very often discovered and followed.

And when he tried to get his disciples away, the same thing happened. So we wouldn't think of his life as being a relaxing one. And yet, when he was on his way to the cross, and don't forget that part, he was on his way to the cross, he said, peace I leave with you.

My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth. And the rest that I want to talk about today is one that only Christ himself can give. There is a rest, and it's rest from the heaviest burden.

Now, again, if we had a chance to ask you, what is your heaviest burden? For some of you, it's work, I suppose, just your job is the heaviest burden. For some of you, it's a relative who has become a great burden, a child who is breaking your heart, finances, health. Is there rest even in the midst of things like this? And I'm here to say that I believe there is.

And I don't believe that finances or job or health or people or any of these other things which seem to prevent the possibility of rest can really do so. I really don't think they can if we can learn what this kind of rest is. But I think the heaviest burden that any of us knows anything about is self and what goes along with self, sin.

Those are heavy burdens. And the more self-preoccupied we are and the more determined we are to find self-fulfillment and to follow our self-will and to seek self-satisfaction and to improve our self-esteem, the heavier our burdens become. Now I know that what I'm saying to you makes absolutely no sense in terms of the world, does it? But I don't suppose that very much that's said in this conference would make very much sense in terms of the world.

We're people of a different world, a different level of understanding, a different master, a different motive. And so it is to that master that we come for the rest that I'm talking about. It's a gift.

It's the gift from the one who can do exactly what he said he could do. And I'm sure that by now you know what my text is, Matthew 11 verses 28 to 30. And in this particular translation it says, Come to me, all whose work is hard, whose load is heavy, and I will give you relief.

Bend your necks to my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble-hearted, and your souls will find relief. For my yoke is good to bear, and my load is light. Do you believe that Jesus has the power to

do what he says? You remember the man to whom Jesus asked this question, Do you believe that I'm able to do this? And the man, the father of the epileptic boy said, Lord, I believe.

Help my unbelief. And that's a prayer that I often have to pray. I do believe, but my belief is so limited and so tenuous and so needing to be shored up and strengthened and reaffirmed again and again and again, so I pray, help my unbelief.

And if you find it very difficult this afternoon to believe that Jesus can really give you rest in the midst of your particular circumstances, and you could say to me, well, Elizabeth, you don't know the first thing about what I'm going through. And of course that's true. I don't.

But I do know the one who knows. And I do know that it is possible for him to do what he says. This amazing, merciful, loving, human-hearted Lord who became flesh.

We have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but he was in all points tempted as we are. He says, I will give you rest. And he can do that.

He has the power to do that. But there are three conditions. And he gives you and me the power to meet those conditions.

After all, remember that he made us. He remembers that we're dust. He knows our frame.

But he made us with the power to choose. He gave us that great quality called the will, which sets us apart from all other creatures so far as we know. It's one of the attributes of our being made in the image of God.

And so if Jesus has the power to give me this rest that we're talking about, he has also given me the power to meet the conditions. And the conditions are three. Number one, come.

Number two, bend your neck. And number three, learn. Now some of you may be thinking, what in the world has this got to do with the theme of this conference, proclaiming Christ? Just yesterday, we were driven here from Atlanta by a young couple, and Lars was sitting in the front seat with the man who was driving, and I was sitting in the next seat with the wife and the children were in the back.

This was a comfortable little van. And the wife and I were talking, and we were talking about the difference Christ makes in a person's life. And she was telling me how she became a Christian when she was in college through a fellow student.

And she said, I noticed this girl, and there was something different about her. And I said, can you describe it? What was this difference that you noticed? And she said, peace. And I can't think of anything that ought to be more obvious in the people of God than his peace.

Because it is something which is so totally lacking in almost everybody else. You really don't see very many people who show that there's any peace in their faces. And you don't know very many people, I dare say, who aren't Christians, who bring peace into a room when they come in.

And yet, I know a number of people like that. Christians. And so, when we talk about proclaiming Christ, we heard this morning, and I'm not going to try to pronounce the Bible teacher's name, Dr. H. He was talking about the necessity for us to proclaim Christ, which of course is our theme in this conference.

And we're not all apostles, we're not all prophets, we're not all teachers. But we are all vessels in which the living Christ wants to make his abode. And through whom his peace, his love, his joy should become obvious to the world.

And I'm sure all of us would agree that it really doesn't make a whole lot of difference what people say if their lives don't back it up. As the saying goes, your behavior speaks so loud I can't hear what you're saying. And those of you that listen to me only on the radio, you have formed an opinion of what kind of a person you're listening to, I suppose.

And I'm not going to ask you if the face fits the voice, because I've had some horrible experiences myself hearing a voice and imagining this beautiful person that would belong to it, and it turns out to be anything but. But you really don't know anything about me except what I say. The great question is, what should you like to live with? Where does the rubber meet the road? And it's what we are that proclaims most loudly our Lord Jesus Christ.

When Amy Carmichael was a missionary in Japan, she was there for just one year before she went to India, and she went everywhere preaching by interpretation. And a Japanese man came to her one day and he said, we have heard your preaching, can you show us the life of your Lord Jesus? And years later, when she had been a missionary for many years in India, an old Indian came to her and he said, we have heard your preaching, can you show us the life of your Lord Jesus? And the whole purpose of the Donover Fellowship that Amy Carmichael founded in South India was to show in ordinary, everyday, down-to-earth, humdrum living, the life of the Lord Jesus. And in the Donover Fellowship, there have never been any paid preachers.

Those who preach are those who, first of all, practice. Nobody preaches who is not also one who practices in the ordinary, common life of the Donover Fellowship. And those of you who know anything about it know that the Donover Fellowship is the care of small children.

And the care of small children involves a whole lot of very humdrum, implacably repetitive jobs, doesn't it? You mothers, you fathers know what I'm talking about. Amy Carmichael gave up itinerant evangelism in order to wash diapers and fix formulas and walk the floor at night with little babies. And those who worked with her, many of them high-caste women who had never done work in their lives, had to learn, essentially, to wash feet.

And Amy Carmichael never ceased to remind them that our Lord Jesus took a towel. So it's no good proclaiming the gospel verbally unless we can show the life of our Lord Jesus. And he gives us a formula right here, three simple but not always easy conditions, which if we fulfill, he will give us rest.

And I want you to notice that at the beginning he says, come to me, you who are overburdened and weary, and I will give you rest. And then he tells us three things to do. He's already told us the first, come.

Two more things to do. And then he ends by saying, and you will find rest. So here we have that wonderful duality of our cooperation with the grace of God.

God always gives us something to do. In every miracle that Jesus performs in the New Testament, people had to do something. The servants had to fill up the water pots before he changed water into wine.

Peter had to get out of the boat by himself before he was able to walk on the water. The man with the withered hand had to stretch it out. The disciples had to bring five loaves and two fishes.

It was something to do. And that does not in any way negate the sovereignty and the grace and the omnipotence of God. It is in his omnipotent wisdom that he has arranged things so that you and I have to do something.

And if there's anybody sitting there thinking, well, I've been praying to the Lord for rest for years and he's never given me any. I don't know where this comes from. Well, maybe you miss the fact that there are three conditions to be fulfilled.

The first is that you must come. And what does it mean? That simply means that you must present yourself to him. Come to me, you who are tired and overburdened.

Is there anybody in this room who is not in some degree tired? Tired and perhaps overburdened. You know the old gospel hymn, what a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry what? Say it again.

Everything to God in prayer. Do you carry everything to God in prayer? Probably not. We forget that God is interested in the tiny things.

You know, George Mueller, who was a great man of prayer, said, if a parcel comes in the mail and you haven't a knife or scissors with which to cut the knot and you struggle to untie the knot, pray that God will help you to untie the knot. Does it ever cross your mind to do a little thing like that? Now, this last week I was doing one of those jobs that I can never do anytime except in the summertime because of the schedule that we keep. But it's a wonderful, pleasurable job, but it takes a lot of work.

I'm making albums for my grandchildren from ancestor pictures from way back. I've got stuff from 1765 and 1840. Anyway, I'm trying to do one for each of my grandchildren, and so far there are six.

Number seven is expected in December, and who knows, there may be 12. I just have one daughter now. She's only 36, so I don't know how many grandchildren she may produce.

But I got a little flustered trying to figure out whether to put this picture in Walter's album or this one in Christiana's album. And since I've only got one picture of the great-great-great-great-great grandfather, I have to choose. So all these little things, and I just suddenly thought, now the Lord's interested in this.

It's such a triviality compared with some of the work that I think I have to do. So I just said, Lord, help me. Help me to put the pictures in the right places.

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. Lars and I had a most incredible experience a few weeks ago. One of our radio listeners had been writing all these amazing letters with the most flamboyant envelopes you've ever seen in your life.

I don't know what the postman was thinking. She addressed on the outside of the envelope with great stylized roses and all sorts of things to the wonderful Elizabeth Elliott, to the marvelous Elizabeth Elliott. We've got several of these in a row.

And finally she called and Lars had several conversations with her and she begged and implored us to have a meal with her. And so we did. And we did not know what we were getting into.

We knew it was going to be an interesting evening. And it was an absolutely fascinating evening. And this dear woman, whose name was Jean Giro, had quite a checkered past.

She was a tall, very imposing woman. She'd been a model and you could tell just in the way she moved and her dress and her makeup and all these things. But she had become a Christian.

She had been a drug addict at one time. And she said this thing. She said many things I'd love to quote.

But one of the things she said was, if you're on drugs and it's costing you \$20,000 a month, it's not enough. And you've got to have \$30,000 a month. We were talking about how people get into horrible lifestyles of stealing and all that sort of thing because of drugs.

And she knows from firsthand experience, she said, nothing will ever be enough but Jesus. And this woman was so exuberant and so full of Jesus that the whole restaurant was just stunned. I mean, we were sitting there and she didn't care who heard her.

And everything was praise the Lord. And Elizabeth thanked Jesus for this. And her arms were going like this and everybody in the restaurant was just bum-fuzzled by this dear lady.

Well, she had been tired and overburdened in her lifestyle. And she had found satisfaction. And she couldn't say enough about it.

When the waitress came over, everything the waitress did, oh, thank you so much. Thank you, Jesus. And on her way out, she gave tracts to the waitress.

She stopped and talked to the manager of the restaurant. We had to wait for her outside because she was witnessing to the manager. And of course, everybody in the place wanted to know what in the world she was talking about.

Well, when you get to the end of your rope, if you don't think of it before that, certainly by the time you get to the end of your rope, you need to come to Jesus. And how can I bring all my sins and griefs to him who will bear them unless I come? I can't bring it unless I come myself. And so I come to Jesus and let him have all the sins and griefs and carry literally everything to God in prayer.

And if you feel diffident about that and hesitant and think, oh, well, surely God's not interested in untying a knot or putting pictures in an album. If that's something that you have to do right now, God's interested in it because God is the God of the atom. He's the God without which you couldn't take another breath.

You couldn't take another step. That is the God who speaks to us and says, come to me. All you who are tired and overburdened.

And I will give you rest. And it is my very necessity, my very weakness, my very helplessness that qualifies me to come. Think about that.

You know, there isn't any way that you and I can qualify ourselves. It is the fact that we are helpless. And we come to him and say, Lord, give me that which you have made me need.

And God made us to need himself. As Augustine said, Oh, Lord, thou hast made us for thyself. And our hearts are restless until they rest in thee.

Now, what has God made you need today? It is your need that qualifies you to come. It is your helplessness. Can you meet that need by yourself? Of course not.

Are you strong? Do you need nothing? You remember the condemnation of the church in the book of the revelation. You think that you are rich and wise and powerful. And you don't know that you are poor and miserable and wretched and weak and helpless.

We need him every hour. Brother Lawrence, that marvelous monk who, when he went into the monastery to serve God, was amazed to discover that he was to serve God all his days in the kitchen. And it was Brother Lawrence who wrote that marvelous little book, or it was conversations with Brother Lawrence that were recorded and became the little book called Practicing the Presence of God.

And Brother Lawrence was just as happy to pick up a straw from the ground for Jesus' sake as he would have been if God had put him in the scriptorium where the educated monks sat and copied the scriptures in beautiful illuminated manuscripts. In the midst of the pots and the pans and the demands of everybody running and rushing through the kitchen and asking for that. And I imagine the kitchen of a monastery was not very different from any other kind of a kitchen except that it was a whole lot bigger than most of our kitchens and a lot more people making more demands.

But it was in that place that Brother Lawrence practiced the presence of God. And Ruth Graham has a sign in her kitchen, divine service conducted here three times daily. Do you think of it that way? Do you? Pick up the straw for God, wash the dishes for God, wash the diapers, make the formula, feed the baby, wipe the little runny nose for his sake.

Come to me. Now the second thing that God gives us to do about it besides coming is to bend our necks. Now what is this yoke under which we are to bend our necks? I'm sure most of you have seen the kind of yoke that goes across a human being's shoulders and you carry two buckets.

But then there's the yoke that goes across two oxen and it takes two oxen working together. And I think most people believe that that is the yoke that is referred to here the yoke I believe is the yoke that Jesus himself bore. And he wants to bear that with us.

It's the will of the Father. Take my yoke upon you. And it's not as though Jesus is taking it off his shoulders and handing it to us.

It's the other half. And he says, bend your neck under this same yoke under which I bend my neck, the will of the Father, because he had only one purpose in life. My meat, he said, my food is to do the will of him who sent me.

I have food to eat that you know nothing about. He said to his disciples when they came and said, you haven't had anything to eat. And so he says, come and try to get your neck under this yoke now.

Bend your neck to the will of the Father. Now, how did Jesus bend his neck to the will of the Father? Well, by living in company with the Father and by doing exactly what the Father asked him to do. And over and over and again, Jesus reminded his people, his disciples, I'm not speaking my words.

I speak the words my Father speaks to me. I'm not doing my work. I'm doing the work that I see my Father do.

It's not just any ordinary life that I'm giving you. I'm giving you abundant life, the life that the Father gives me. Everything he did was the will of the Father.

Lo, I come in the volume of the book it is written of me to do thy will, O God. And those common duties that we've been talking about, is it the will of God for you wives to cook your husband's breakfast? Well, I would certainly suppose the answer is yes. And it might be the will of God for you husbands to cook your wife's breakfast once in a while.

But whatever the ordinary, routine, humdrum, common, down to earth, little things that God has given you to do, it is in doing those for his sake and with his yoke, in his yoke, for the sake of the Father that we are going to find rest. People make all sorts of demands on us, don't they? And as my dear friend Betty Thomas of Alabama says to me, she says, you know, God loves you and everybody has a wonderful plan for your life. And most of us discover that it isn't quite possible to do all the things everybody would like for us to do.

God has a wonderful plan for everybody else's life. So how do we sort them out? And one of the questions that I suppose is asked of me more than any other, one of the top questions, would be, how do you set priorities? I have a radio program to think about, I have books that I write, I have the newsletter that Lars mentioned, and I do iron shirts and I clean the bathroom and I go to the grocery store and I cook and we do all those things. We don't have household help except a young seminary student who lives in the house and he does do the vacuuming, the dusting downstairs, and he does a lot of other things for us, but generally speaking I do most of the housework and somehow I have to fit those things in, don't I? How? What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.

And I spread it out and I say, now Lord, you know that the bathroom is dirty, you know that the shirts need to be ironed, you also know that there's a deadline for the newsletter and you know that I have a radio program five days a week. Which do I do first? Well, the rule in our house when I was growing up was you never get your dessert until you've eaten your spinach. And we always ate the spinach first.

So I take the spinach, whatever's the toughest job, I don't relish very much. That's what I do first. And I have to admit that I do love housework.

And some of you may be offended by that. I've made some women very angry by saying I happen to be one of those weird ladies who loves housework. But are there some of you here that love housework? May I see two or three hands? Look at that.

Isn't that wonderful? Isn't it a blessing to think that God gives us ordinary work to do? To me it's a tremendous blessing. Just, oh, two weeks ago, I guess it was, a little more than two weeks ago, I fell and hurt myself in such a way that Lars had to do some of the housework. And it made me feel terrible not to be able to do it.

And he did admit that it gave him a certain degree of appreciation for the amount of time that it takes to do the things that I wasn't able to do anymore. It was just a very brief experience, a small experience, but a reminder of the blessing of work. So I say, Lord, help me to sort them out.

Help me to choose to whom to say no and to whom to say yes. And ladies and gentlemen, I do want to say that I do believe with all my heart that it is always possible to do the will of God. It is always possible to do the will of God.

Nobody can prevent you from doing the will of God. When Paul was put into prison, he was not prevented from doing the will of God. He was prevented from doing what he thought God wanted him to do, which

was preaching in the open air.

But he did the will of God in prison. It is always bearable to do the will of God. It is a burden not too heavy.

God will never give us more than we can bear. And it is never unbearable or too heavy. And he gives us strength for the task and a task suited to our strength.

He proportions it. And the day that I fell, the verse that came in my reading that day in the Psalms was from Psalm 16, verse 5, the Lord assigns my portion and my cup. And I took that specifically on that day because it was the thing that was uppermost in my mind to mean my portion of pain.

I needed to learn the lesson of pain on that particular day. He assigns it. And he gives me the strength and the grace and the joy exactly proportioned, measured precisely to whatever that particular day holds or that particular job.

And the last thing which we must do if we want to find the rest is learn. Take my yoke upon you, the yoke of the will of the Father, and learn of me, for I am gentle and humble in heart. And you will find rest for your souls.

And I don't believe that there is any question, any perplexity, any impossible situation in which we may find ourselves that God will not give us an answer for if we will be gentle and humble in heart. And this is where we have to really get our necks under that yoke and learn what it means to be gentle and humble in heart. And Janitor's Constuart in her book, Prayer and Faith, wrote this, if we do not understand, if we cannot make up our minds, if we have no courage to undertake or to bear, if we feel ourselves at a deadlock, and some of you may be in exactly that position today, the remedy will be to humble ourselves, to lay our heads in the dust before God and become the servants of others.

Lars and I have had several phone calls from a very neurotic young woman in California who is one of those people for whom no answer will do. She's got a thousand academic questions that have nothing to do with anything very practical in the spiritual life. And after talking to her and trying my very best to be patient and understanding and sympathetic with all these perplexities and trying to answer every question that she gave me, I finally threw up my hands and I said, I want you to quit asking questions, to hang up this phone and to go downstairs and do something for your landlady.

She told me that she lived with somebody else. Janitor's Constuart says, to become the servants of others, then all will become clear as if by a newly created light possible, as if by a miracle. And just this last week I heard another of those absolutely stunningly heartbreaking stories of a Christian leader in a Christian, in a visible place, who has decided to divorce his wife, not for scriptural grounds at all, but because they can't get along.

It's not working. She always wants her own way. So what else is new? And of course if I could hear her side of the story, which I haven't heard, I daresay she would say, it's not working, he always wants his own way.

Learn humility, gentleness. And of all the absurdities that seemed at the climax that had really brought them to the point of no return, made them decide that they were going to see a divorce lawyer, was that on a particular weekend this young man had planned a hunting trip and on that same weekend a very close friend of the young woman's was getting married. And so she wanted to go to the wedding and she did not want to go by herself and her husband was definitely going hunting.

Now can you imagine? Somebody has got to give, but nobody did. Nothing to do but divorce, that's all there is to do. Learn of me.

For I am gentle and humble in heart. And you will find rest for your souls. There is no perplexity that cannot be answered if these three conditions will be fulfilled.

And you can fulfill them. Because God in his mercy, our gracious God is there to provide the power, the strength. He has given us the will to choose to come, to choose to bend our necks, and to choose to learn.

To refuse to learn is to bring upon ourselves ever heavier and unbearable burdens. The deepest unrest that any of us can know anything about is whether we recognize it or not, a longing for God. Lars and I have a friend who is one of those pitiful women who really believes that her life consists in the abundance of things that she possesses.

And the more up to date they are and the more like Susie's they are, she has a friend named Susie and when Susie gets new carpets then she has to have new carpets and when Susie gets a mink coat then she has to have a mink coat. And if Susie is going to buy a new house then she has to buy a new house. And this pitiful woman does not know that no house in the world is ever going to satisfy what is wrong with her, which is hunger for God.

He satisfies the longing soul and filleth the hungry soul with goodness. I don't know why you came to Kilauea, but I would hope that during this week, in addition to perhaps physical rest and change, which are good things, that you will also have learned something about a rest that is beyond any other kind that the world knows anything about. A rest that cannot be interfered with by any circumstance or any human being on earth.

The rest that Christ himself can give. All that can fill my heart or your heart is Christ and he made us to live with him. He wants us to live in company with him.

And that's what I'm going to be talking about tonight, living in company with him. Remember these verses that I've given you begin with, come to me and I will give you rest. Take, learn, and you will find.

God bless you.

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