

## Week 9 Day 6 | *Running the Race: The Breaks*

The general wisdom for running a race used to be simple: don't stop. The clock is running whether you're running or not, so until you cross the finish line, keep running.

The scientific knowledge in recent years has changed for all but the most elite runners. Studies show that walking one minute for every X minutes/miles you run can actually decrease your overall time, not increase it. Those brief rest periods give your muscles a much-needed break, letting them recover slightly in between the miles you're accumulating. It's also the ideal time to replenish lost fluids.

Rest periods give many people the ability to complete the race at a faster pace than would otherwise be possible. Rather than running on empty toward the finish line, you have some fuel in the tank to finish strong. Not only can you improve your run time, you'll enjoy the race more if you're not struggling throughout it. The same thing applies to your overall fitness plans.

When you engage in a fitness journey, especially when starting from scratch, periodic rest is needed. Rest keeps you healthy, injury-free, and consistently improving, and helps you enjoy the process. At least one rest day is needed each week, sometimes two or three.

Not all rest days are created equal. A day off may mean the complete absence of exercise, or it could be recovery-type workouts known as "active rest." These workouts are more focused on stretching, flexibility, breathing, mobility, and overall recovery. You're keeping your joints, muscles and ligaments loose, getting the blood flowing, and giving the body time to heal and refuel.

Your level of fitness and the intensity of the program you're doing determine how much recovery you need. Every four to six weeks, a full week of rest or active rest will be appropriate for most people. Your body can do some amazing things, but it just wasn't designed to go nonstop. Inadequate recovery leads to inadequate performance and results. Proper recovery, however, will improve your body's overall functioning with both your workouts and your day-to-day workload.

Rest breaks will also improve your spiritual conditioning. In fact, we need to refuel not just periodically, but daily. Spending time in the Word, in prayer, in praise, and in meditation with our Creator refuels us. We have examples to follow in the Bible that demonstrate this. David, a man after God's own heart, spent regular time with his Creator. Psalm 5:3 says, "In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly."

Daniel is another example from the Old Testament. He was in the daily habit of spending time with God. Daniel 6:10b says, "Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before."

For the best example of how important it is to refuel spiritually, we once again turn to Jesus. God's own Son would often spend time alone with His Father and did so for a number of different reasons. He communed with the Father before choosing His apostles. Luke 6:12–13 tells us, "One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles."

He spent time alone with God both before and after performing miracles, such as in Matthew 14:23 and here in Mark 1:35, "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." Because He was performing miracles often, He was frequently surrounded by crowds. Yet in spite of their needs, He prioritized time alone with God:

*"But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."*

—Luke 5:16 (NIV)

Yes, Jesus was in constant communion with His Father wherever He went, but He also spent time alone with God. No crowds, no disciples, no apostles, and no family. If the Son of God needed time alone with His Father, how much more do we need it?

Time spent in the solitude of His presence is time we can get to know God and to hear from Him through His Word. We can't hear from Him if we're not spending time with Him. Not just that—think about how incredible it is that He wants to spend quality time with you. He wants to have you all to Himself. What a privilege!

Remember, to honor Him with our bodies we must first honor Him with our hearts. Doesn't matter if you call them "quiet times" or "Devotions." Doesn't matter if you do them in the morning or at night. Whatever combination of Bible reading, praying, singing, journaling, or meditating you choose, spending time alone with God needs to be a non-negotiable, daily activity. They're just like rest days in an exercise program, walk breaks in a marathon, or sleep at night. They'll help you function better, grow spiritually, and enjoy the blessing of His regular presence in your life.

Finishing strong requires refueling often. There's no better rest break than one spent with the only One who can truly renew your strength.

*"But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."—Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)*

### Prayer

*Father, thank You for wanting to spend time with me. Will You forgive me when I choose something or someone else over a rest break with You? Please help me develop a deep affection for the time we spend together. Amen.*

### Meditation

My breaks with You help me finish strong.

### Daily Spiritual Exercise

Physical rest is not only needed, it's not only healthy, but it's biblical.

Today, read aloud Isaiah 40. As you do, you will be reminded that spiritual rest, communing with the Father and being still, is not only needed, it's not only healthy, it's not only biblical, but it's a gift. Time alone with our God is a gift that satisfies, refuels, and rejuvenates the soul. A gift that equips you to honor your Creator. A gift that enables you to persevere in the race.