

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Al Denson Show and for tuning in every week to our program. My prayer for you is to be encouraged in your daily walk with Christ through the words of this booklet. Our hope is that in turn you will tell others of what God is doing through our ministry to youth and parents on TV. I am convinced you will not find another program on any network anywhere that deals with issues today's youth and their parents are facing, and provides answers from a Godly perspective.

In addition, we would love for you to help us by going to our web site at www.aldenson.com. Here you can write to us, order additional material like this booklet, check out all my music, have a daily bible study, and stay up to date on the ministry. You can also send us a prayer request and questions for the TV show. But more importantly, please continue to be in prayer with us as we work together to help those that are in need.

Thanks for watching and God Bless!

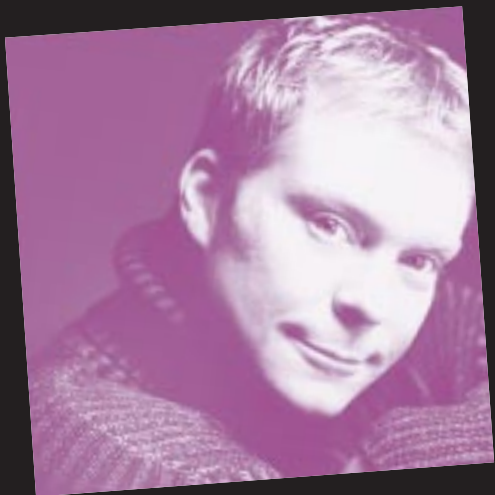
Sincerely,



An Outreach of Celebration Ministries

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Rest In A Restless World



Most artists create for only a brief moment in time. That phenomenon was once known as “15 minutes of fame”. Yet even in a fickle world, there still emerge a talented few that transcends time and trends. With nearly 15 years as a major label recording artist and seven hit

albums to his credit, Al Denson is that kind of artist.

But the attention and acclaim his artistry has brought him over the years are anything but the routine rewards of worldly success. Rather, they are the fruits of a life of purpose and passion, and a mission that has always reached far beyond merely making music.

The millions of young people Al has performed for, befriended, counseled, consoled and clowned around with in his career already know that. And thousands more are finding out every day.

This past year has seen Al expand his efforts to a global audience through the reach of his daily syndicated television production, “The Al Denson Show.” “You’ve got to reach out to people where they are with the most powerful means and this form of media allows you to build trust and a rapport,” says Al. “This has all been so amazing. I can’t imagine what lies in store when the Lord finally calls me home, but I don’t have to wait for heaven to receive rewards. I get them every time a kid comes up to me and says, ‘I heard what you said, and I accepted Christ.’ You can’t ask for anything more or better than that.”

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The “Young And The Restless” is more than the title of a popular soap opera. It is a description of the culture in which we live. Ours is a restless society made up of restless people who are moving faster than at any other

time in history. As a culture, we are more stressed, anxious, dissatisfied, and unsettled than any other generation which has ever lived. We are doing more and enjoying it less. As a whole, we are more unhealthy physically, emotionally, and mentally than those who have come before us. Why is this? Perhaps in part because we have ignored what God has to say about rest. Just as it

happens when we disregard any of the principles of the Word of God, disregarding the value of rest will bring about disastrous consequences in our lives.

God designed rest to be a necessary part of our lives, yet many people today are so obsessed with activity that they even have a negative attitude toward the very word. Rest, they believe, is only for the weak, the lazy, or for those who have no life. At best, rest is only valuable if it makes them able to do more for a longer period of time. This is the mind-set of those who know nothing of eternity. They are only living for the “here and now” so they feel the need to cram their lives

full of as many activities and experiences as they possibly can. This attitude is sad but understandable among people who have no relationship with God, and therefore, no eternal perspective. However, for Christians to be

stressed-out, frantic, activity-addicts is a sin.

Unfortunately, too many of us are living our lives in exactly the same hurried way the world does. As a result, the world sees little of the impact of Christ in our lives. We attempt to do more than we are capable of accomplishing, so we are always behind schedule and always playing catch-up. Instead of eliminating

things from our lives, we simply turn up the speed. In the restless, reckless, fast-paced society in which we live, people are almost always in a hurry. This constant state of stress has become a way of life for many of us, and it can lead to very serious health problems.

The stress caused by our hurried lifestyles is not the only thing destroying our health. Inadequate sleep is a big contributor, as well. The National Sleep Foundation reports that adult Americans sleep an average of just seven hours a night when they need eight to ten hours each night to be healthy. In a 1998 survey, 23 percent of adults admitted that they had fallen asleep while driving in the last year.

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There is scientific evidence that too little sleep will not only make us unhealthy, but also clumsy, stupid, and accident-prone. God gave us sleep as a love gift to recharge, replenish, and refresh us; yet, the “movers and shakers” of this world are trying to convince us that sleep is a necessary evil and a waste of time. When we combine chronic stress and a lack of sleep, we have a deadly duo that will not only destroy the quality of our lives, but also has the potential to be fatal.

In Genesis 2:3 it says, “God blessed the seventh day and made it holy” because that was the day He rested from His work. God didn’t rest because He was tired—He rested as an example for us to follow. From the beginning of time, rest has been important to God. He gave it His blessing and declared rest to be holy. Patrick Klingaman, in his wonderful and insightful book, *Finding Rest When the Work Is Never*

Done, said that when God gave the Ten Commandments to His people, it was to be a sign to the world of the covenant that exists between God and His chosen ones. Yet Christians who would never think of violating God’s commandments not to steal, murder, or commit adultery have no trouble ignoring His commandment to rest. As Christians, we have been adopted into God’s chosen family and keeping the Sabbath holy by observing a day of rest should be as important to us as the other nine commandments.

Religious groups have added a lot of dos and don’ts to the third commandment, but according to Scripture, there is only one thing we are told to do and that is to gather together for worship. The only thing we are told not to do is to work. In Leviticus 23:3 the Sabbath is referred to as “a day of sacred worship.” That means that one day a week we are to gather with other believers to worship God. The Jews celebrated the Sabbath on the seventh day, which on our current calendar is Saturday. First century Christians added an assembly to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus on the first day of the week. Several centuries

later, Christian churches combined the two into a Sunday Sabbath. The important thing, however, is not which day we worship, but that we do observe a collective day of worship and rest.

One day Jesus was rebuked by some very religious Jews for violating their rules about what was acceptable and unacceptable on the Sabbath. He responded by saying in Mark 2:27, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” Jesus meant that God gave us a day of rest for our benefit. It is supposed to be a day when we slow down from the rush and

the pressure of the other six days, and give our bodies, spirits, and minds a chance to have restored what the week has taken out of us. It allows us the opportunity to get back in tune and in step with God. It is to be a time to worship and reflect, a time to relax and enjoy life. In his book, Mr. Klingaman gives us two questions we can ask ourselves that will help us evaluate what we should or should not do on the Sabbath: First, will this activity help me turn my attention and focus to God? Second, will this activity help me become more rested and refreshed?

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Keeping the third commandment is a good place to start, but learning to rest involves much more. The life of Jesus gives us a broader sense of what real rest involves. If we carefully study His life, we will see a Savior who never appeared to be hurried. Jesus had only three brief years to complete His ministry, but He never allowed Himself to be rushed. He was frequently leaving the crowds of people who followed Him to be alone, rest, and pray, and He encouraged His disciples to do the same. No one has ever had more pressure or demands on their life or time than Jesus did; yet He never got in a hurry.

Jesus understood the limitations of the human mind, body, and emotions, so He knew when it was time to say, “enough is enough” and get alone in a quiet place. Our Lord also knew the value of solitude and silence. These are not popular words, especially when we are young, but if we really are serious about living Christ-like lives, then we must be willing to slow down—our very survival depends on it. Most of us have overloaded schedules which are filled with many things—some of these are even good things. But the good things are crowding out God’s best for our lives and wearing us out to the point that we are becoming fatigued, discouraged, and

disillusioned. Many Christians are sincerely trying to live godly lives but are at the end of their physical and emotional ropes. Jesus understood the importance of being still before His Father, to reflect and relax so God could refresh and rejuvenate Him.

Jesus also knew the importance of daily prayer and meditation on God’s Word. If it was important for Jesus to maintain these spiritual disciplines, then how much more important is it for us to make these a part of our daily lives? Christians who are not able to live consistently over the long-haul are usually those who never mature spiritually because they are too busy to follow the example of Christ. When we live according to the break-neck pace of this world, we lose our perspective, our peace, and our joy. Anytime we choose to ignore God’s Word and the example of Christ, we will pay the price with broken lives.

We don’t have to look very far today to see the letters: “WWJD?” If we truly want to imitate the life of Christ, we must do the things He did and practice the activities He practiced. Dallas Willard says, “If we have faith in Christ, we must believe that He knew how to live. We can, through faith and grace, become like Christ by practicing the types of activities He engaged in, by arranging our

whole lives around the activities He Himself practiced in order to remain constantly at home in the fellowship of His Father.”

In Psalms 46:10 it says, “Be still and know that I am God.” The word “still,” means “to rest, cease from striving, be at peace.” Restlessness and a lack of peace are usually warning signs that something is not right in our relationship with God. All through the Bible, peace and rest have always been a characteristic of individuals whose relationship with God was strong and healthy. Peace and real rest will only come when we get alone and focus on our Father—when we allow ourselves to experience His presence and hear His voice. This can only happen as we are willing to

slow down and be quiet. There is noise all around us and we must be deliberate about carving out time in our daily lives to be quiet and still before God.

St. Augustine said to God long ago, “Our hearts find no peace until they rest in You.” When we know the peace of God, we will be less inclined to get caught up in the frantic, frazzled rat-race this world calls life. Bill Hybels says, “No one can become an authentic Christian on a steady diet of activity. Power comes out of stillness; strength comes out of solitude. Decisions that change the course of your life come out from the Holy of Holies, your time of stillness before God.”

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Real rest involves all we are. Physically resting is a good thing, but the full benefits of rest can only be realized when we are rested spiritually, mentally, and emotionally, as well. Jesus says in John 10:10, "The thief comes to rob and steal and destroy but I have come to bring you life and bring it to you more fully." Satan is the thief Jesus was talking about who is constantly trying to rob us of what is rightfully ours in Christ. Here are three of the most common "rest robbers" Satan uses to destroy our rest, peace, and even our lives, if we let him.

~ Rest Robbers ~

1. Worry and Anxiety

When asked about the story of Job, most people remember the suffering Job experienced as a result of his great losses. But, there are a couple of verses in this story that indicate to us that even before Job's actual trials began, he was struggling with unrest as a result of anxiety in his life. In Job 3:25-26 he says, "What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me. I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil." Job had everything any man could possibly want, but instead of enjoying it all, it seems as if worry and anxiety kept him from being at rest. What a contrast to the Psalmist

who said in Psalm 112:7: "He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord." One of the most important truths we can ever learn is that God can be trusted with whatever worries us today. If it concerns us, it concerns our heavenly Father.

We can trust God to guide us and give us wisdom to make right choices. There is no need for us to lie awake and worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow is already taken care of by God. We worry because we don't realize that we can control our thoughts. Most of us fail to realize that worry is not an emotional problem; it is a thinking problem. Our feelings follow our thoughts so what we choose to think about is very important to our emotional health. If we want to have real rest, we have to change our thinking.

Worry is simply refusing to live in the present by choosing to either live in the future or the past. The scripture very clearly commands us not to do either. In regard to the future, Matthew 6:34 says, "Do not worry about tomorrow." James 4:14 tells us why, "You don't know what will happen tomorrow... instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'" In other words, tomorrow is in God's hands just like today is, and God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. So,

we can count on God to be as sufficient for every need tomorrow as He is today. Lamentations 3:22-23: "...for His mercies never fail, they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness."

Worry will also keep us living in the past but in Philippians 3:13 we are commanded to "forget what is behind." Isaiah 43:18 says, "Forget the former things, do not dwell on the past." There will be no rest for us today, if we're living in the regrets of the past. We must control our thoughts if we are going to conquer worry. In Philippians 4:8-9 it says, "...whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things...And the God of peace will be with you."

God knows how weak we are and how easy it is for us to worry. So His Word is full of true, noble, right, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy, encouraging things to help us manage our thought lives. We must learn to control our thoughts and replace any worrisome thoughts we have with God's thoughts. This will involve more than just a casual reading of God's Word. Freedom from worry and anxiety will only be possible when we digest the Word of God and allow it to permeate every part of our lives. Jeremiah 15:16 says, "Thy Words were found and I did eat them, and Thy Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart..."



Just as food is taken into the mouth and then digested to become part of every cell in our bodies; the Word of God must be taken in and allowed to become a part of all that we are. Then, and only then, will we be able to control our thought lives. It is only the person who is thinking God's thoughts who can experience freedom from worry. We can choose to let go of our worry and anxiety, and we can choose to control our thoughts. We must make the choice to turn our focus from the problem to God and when we do, He will handle whatever concerns us today.

2. Materialism

Many Christians today are exhausted because they are chasing after the material things of this world with the same intensity and ruthlessness everyone else does. The world's idea of success is what we are worth in dollars and cents. Money is the measuring stick by which our value as individuals is determined. The bumper sticker that says, "Life is a game.

Whoever dies with the most toys wins," was meant as a joke; but unfortunately, too many people have come to measure success in terms of how much money they can make and how much "stuff" they can buy. What the lost world is really trying to do is fill the emptiness in their soul with "stuff." Christians who fall into this same trap are destroying themselves and sending a very confusing message to unbelievers.

Materialism bombards us from every angle, day in and day out, and "things" seem to be screaming at us for attention. Everywhere we look, the lie is being marketed that material things will bring us happiness. Sadly, even many Christians have bought into this lie and use their possessions to validate their worth as individuals. We may want material things because they bring us a certain amount of satisfaction and comfort and because they can entertain us and make us forget our real problems. But this can't last long because we were never created by God to be fulfilled by anything but Him.

Christians who run after material things don't have a money problem; they have a heart problem. They have allowed Satan to convince them that God alone is not enough to satisfy them—that it takes other "stuff" to fill the emptiness inside and meet their needs. When we do this, we have fallen into the trap of thinking like the world, and as a result, we end up giving our hearts to other gods. In 1 John 2:15-16 it says, "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If

anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world." These verses are telling us that we must choose what we are going to value in life. Money and material things can never fulfill the deepest desires of our hearts because that is a place only God is big enough to fill. When we make loving God our focus, we will know a true, lasting satisfaction and deep, abiding joy which billions of dollars can't buy.

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Is it really possible to avoid the trap of materialism and to be happy with what we have? In Philippians 4:12 the apostle Paul writes, "I know what it is to be in need and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want." It sounds like Paul knows something we need to know about being content. If we skip down to verse 19, we find his secret. It says, "My God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus." Notice Paul doesn't say God "can" meet our needs or "may" meet our needs, but God WILL meet our needs. The secret to Paul's contentment was he had learned that God could be trusted to keep His promises and meet his needs.

Being content doesn't mean we are passive, lazy, or don't care. It simply means we do our part and then we trust the sovereignty, the wisdom, and the love of God to provide what He knows we need, when we need it. We must always remember that contentment is a choice. If we choose not to trust God and be contented, then the alternative is to believe the lie which says material things bring happiness and meaning to life. If we believe this, we will waste our lives away struggling and wishing for what we don't have, while

missing what is really important and worthwhile in life. We can begin to rest when we realize that contentment is not the fulfillment of what we want, but the realization of what we already have.

3. "Performance-itis"

Being a hard worker is a virtue and a character quality God's Word says is important. However, if we are addicted to "doing" because we're convinced we must validate our worth by performing and accomplishing, we will never be able to rest. If we are afflicted with the deadly disease, "performance-itis," we believe we can earn God's approval and the approval of others by working ourselves to death or by never saying "no." Not allowing ourselves to rest is a form of self-punishment for being less than what we think we should be or not "measuring up" in our own eyes.

The performance lie has been with us since the Garden of Eden and is at the core of the curse. It tries to make us believe that every relationship in life is based on performance—on what we do. This lie tells us:

- That our relationship to God and our salvation are based on our performance.
- That how we feel about our self is based on our own assessment of our performance.

- That our relationship with others, our sense of security, and our sense of belonging depends on how well we perform.
- That our relationship with society around us is totally dependent on our achievement and success.

Performance-oriented Christians are hard on themselves and on other people. These Christians tend to have emotional and spiritual problems, as well as dysfunction in their relationships. This is because they have failed to receive and live out God's unconditional grace, and as a result, have failed to offer that same grace to others. A person who has not received grace or doesn't understand what grace is, has no grace to give, and will be graceless toward others.

When we come to Christ, many of us start out on the road of undeserved grace saying, "Of course God accepts me just as I am. I know I am totally undeserving and have nothing to offer Him but my sins and failures. But from this point on, God certainly expects me to live up to certain standards of performance to stay in His good graces." WRONG! Grace is "unearnable" at the point of our new birth and

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will remain so throughout eternity. Some people try to turn the gift of grace into salvation by promissory note. We bargain with God, "Lord, if You will forgive me and save me, I promise I'll pay You back

someday." David Semans says, "The last thing that humans want to surrender to God is an admission of our helplessness to save ourselves. We will give up our sins, ambitions, money, fame, and comfort. But the most difficult and the last thing we will give up is our confidence that there is something we can do which will earn us a right relationship with God."

Of course we should respond to God's grace with obedience, service, and sacrifice. But, we do not do these things in order to repay God's grace, earn His approval, or "even-up" the balance sheet. We do not do these things in order to win God's love, but out of gratitude for His love. Not in order to repay His grace, but out of thankfulness for His grace. Satan is still whispering to us today, "There is something you can do to become like God, to be in control, to be your own God. Eat this fruit from the performance tree."

Once we do eat that fruit, we never get away from the need to perform. We become performers and judges of the performance of others, thereby putting incredible pressure, and unfair expectations on other people. Over and over, we believe the lie that says we have to perform—to do something—to be accepted and to meet certain standards in order to have worth and value as a person.

Although the first Adam infected the human race with “performance-itis,” “the last Adam”— Jesus Christ, modeled with His life the unconditional love, acceptance and approval of God. For 30 years Jesus never performed a miracle or preached a sermon, but at His baptism His Father said, “This is My Beloved Son in Whom I am (already) pleased.” Love, acceptance, and approval all in one statement. God was pleased with His Son without a performance of any kind! This is the truth we must come to believe if we are going to find rest.

All of us were created by God with the need to have a personal relationship with Him. We each have a yearning deep in our souls to be united with God. He is the only

One who can ultimately meet our need for unconditional love and acceptance. Few things in life matter more than knowing that we have a purpose and that our existence has counted for something. When life is meaningless and purposeless, there is a great emptiness inside of us that will prevent us from ever knowing real peace and rest.

Many people will try to replace the emptiness inside and validate their own worth with performance and possessions. As a result they are worried, stressed, and anxious. These people cram their lives full of activities, accomplishments, relationships, and material things hoping to fill the emptiness inside. But no matter how busy they are or how much “stuff” they have acquired, the emptiness still remains. Many times a hurried lifestyle is a way of avoiding things they don’t want to think about. Activity can be an anesthetic for the things that cause them emotional pain. The emptiness they have is caused by unmet spiritual needs, and the rest they are seeking is really spiritual rest. The psalmist, David, understood this truth when he said in Psalm 62:1, “My soul finds rest in God alone.”

We have all kinds of options in life as to how to spend our time. We have insignificant things, routine things, important things, and urgent things to consider. Those decisions will either be made by our priorities or by pressure. Charles Hummel said, “The key is not to prioritize the activities on your schedule, but to schedule your predetermined priorities.” So, for Christians, the questions should be: “What are God’s priorities?” It is clear from Scripture that the things God values are going to be different from the things the world values.

If we try to do what both God and the world values, we will find ourselves with an

impossible job on our hands. Many of us are on the verge of burnout because we are trying to do everything the world tells us to do, in addition to what we think God is requiring of us, without having a clue as to what is really important to God. The world values activity and noise—God values stillness and quietness. The world values fame and fortune—God is more concerned with who we are, then with what we do. God says use things and value people—the world says value things and use people. It is only when what God says is important becomes our priority, that we will find the rest we need.

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