

# RESTORATION:

## a guide to stepping away



*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures.  
He leads me beside still waters.  
He restores my soul.  
He leads me in paths of righteousness  
for his name's sake.  
Psalm 23:1-3*

*“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28*

Prior to the current pandemic, there was already a discussion of the effects of technology on the mental health crisis. We have seen an increase in the levels of anxiety, depression, addiction, and insomnia, just to name a few. We were very clearly seeing the smoke rising from the fires that were beginning to appear as we became more aware of the negative effects of technology in our communities.

Since the rise of this pandemic, we at Collegiate Abbey have been asking God to show us what are the needs that are arising as we walk through this time, and as He has done so many times before, God showed us some of the needs by making us aware of them in our own lives.

I struggled with technology before this, and now, I have added seemingly justifiable fuel to the aforementioned fires. “I need to stay informed, I need to research (although is Facebook really research?), I need to see how people are doing”.....All of these have led to me being on social media and technology way more than I previously was. I see the effects developing in sleepless nights, increased anxiety, and feelings of incapacity.

Social media and technology use is skyrocketing during this time. Due to panic/anxiety and many other reasons, we find ourselves almost thoughtlessly engaging and embracing its use. Yet at what expense? Is it helping? Is it restorative? Or while seemingly providing help, is it actually, subtly, adding fuel to the spiritual, emotional and mental fires?

Several times in scripture, God speaks to us of “restoration”. If we stop and ask ourselves, “What kind of things need to be restored?”, we begin to picture weathered buildings after a storm or hard use, photos of places after a natural disaster, and so much more. Yet many times there is a disconnect in viewing our souls this same way. As we weather the storms and trials of life our souls are in need of restoration. Yet, what I find myself doing is turning to technology seeking restoration, instead of to God. The reality is that technology does not offer restoration, it can't. Instead, it offers information, and more often, distraction. It does not offer a resolution or a way forward. It is designed to engage your emotions, yet not restore them.

I have found myself needing to step away. We are a bit over three weeks into the quarantine and my soul feels like it is smoldering fire, consuming fuel but not having much effect. As I speak with so many others, I find this feeling to be a bit more pervasive.

But where do we begin? How do we do this in a healthy way? Many of us have tried before, so how will this be different?

I believe that God is giving us some physical pictures of what He is longing to do for our hearts during this time. In Wuhan, a city full of factories, the smog has greatly diminished and blue skies have been seen for the first time in years. One person who lives on the 23rd floor of a building has reported hearing birds for the first

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time in seven years. In Italy, due to the quarantine, the canals of Venice are running clear and wildlife such as swans, ducks, and fish have returned. If you pause and reflect on this for a bit, it is rather insightful and heart-breaking. While someone is hearing birds once again after seven years is encouraging, it is also heartbreaking to think that there may be a six-year-old that never has heard a bird sing. Or a child that has never seen the clean waters of Venice. So many times our man-made efforts at success and significance cloud out the beauty of God, and although inadvertently, hide God's beauty from others. I believe the physical pictures we are seeing in the natural world are a parable from God of what He is longing to do in our hearts and in the lives of those around the world.

“Cease striving and know that I am God”.

What also impacts me from this is that the natural world didn't hold a grudge. The birds returned. The water ran clean. Yet, so many times I think that God will withhold life from me as a punishment, when instead, He longs for it to return, and is calling me to cultivate my world so that it can.

In the following packet, we have put together a guide for stepping away from technology and cultivating restoration from God. We would invite you to consider taking time to step away daily (an hour), weekly (one day) and monthly (a few days or a week). Our hope and prayer is that by stepping away and ceasing from striving, we will be able to see God once more. The Author, Finisher and Defender of our faith.

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### **Cultivation Tips:**

#### **Find your person/people:**

One of God's biggest gifts to use is that of community or the body of Christ. We cannot do this alone and God does not call us to, rather, He urges us to bear one another's burdens. So one of the first steps in cultivating restoration in your life is to ask, "Who can I ask to help me in this?". "Who is God providing?" This should be someone that you can be honest with, that will pray for you and intervene for you. As you step away you will need someone who can be a contact person for you in case there is a need. This person can act as a filter to dismiss the trivial, but bring the important to your attention if it is necessary during your time stepping away.

#### **Set your time:**

Although some people cannonball into a pool, others take the steps. It helps to set a realistic period of time (initially it may be a few hours) and then gradually increase it. It may help for this time to fall on a weekend due to work. It could also be your observance of the Sabbath. However with most churches being online now, you may want to end your Sabbath with watching your church service, it could be the way you step back into technology.

#### **Know yourself:**

Before you start, how are you feeling about this? What may be some things you know you need from the outset, and pray about these specifically while asking those supporting you to pray for these as well?

Some of you may have tried taking a break from technology before. Did it work? If not, how can you be aware of this and proactively prepare for it? During this time you will most likely increase your awareness of self. This can get uncomfortable, yet, it is the soil that needs to be tilled and worked so that life can return. Have a notebook/journal where you can just jot down things you become aware of during this time. Do you find yourself growing anxious? What about? Does this reveal an area God is wanting to address? Does it reveal something your soul has been trying to trust in apart from God?

You can use the space below to jot down some of your thoughts.

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### **Cultivation Tips:**

#### **Prepare:**

Most of the time we spend on technology is done with our hands and on our phones. It will greatly help to have something you can do with your hands during this time. Think through some things you would like to pick back up (cooking, an instrument) or that you would like to learn. Also, it would greatly help to have paper copies of everything you would like to read during this time, so you may need to get those ahead of time or print them out to have literally “on hand”. Buy a puzzle, get some nice paper to write people letters, buy some plants, all of these things can help to occupy your hands and then also give tangible things that you accomplish at the end.

#### **Resources:**

Gather and print out resources of anything you think God may want you to process. However, leave room for new things as well. So, since this prayerfully will become a frequent thing, just go into it with one topic and allow room for God to reveal one more. Here are some helpful questions in seeing what God may be revealing to you and longing to restore.

What are some themes I am seeing in my life, what are the topics that keep coming up?

What do I think God wants me to learn?

What do I need to learn?

What is God asking me to do?

What am I asking God to do?

What is on my heart?

What is on God's heart?

#### **Re-Entry:**

Have a plan. If you took the steps into this pool, don't cannonball out. I once did a diet and celebrated the end by eating a massive piece of chocolate cake...don't do that. Set some boundaries in coming back. Physically separate yourself from your devices. Think through how you need to enforce it and share it with your people mentioned earlier. Make notes from your time and plan out your next one. Planning will help with motivation, while also prepping your soul. If you need more resources for a topic that came up, reach out to a mentor/friend and see what they may have. Have a time of thanksgiving for your time, and then also pray for your next time.

#### **Closing prayer:**

O God, may you help us to cease striving in the midst of a world that gets so much of its identity and self-worth from striving. Help us to be honest about our addictions and struggles, but also about Your provisions and the strengths you have given. Help the smog of our man-made efforts to clear and may the streams of our heart run clean with the love of Your Son and the power of Your Spirit. May You do above and beyond what we ask or imagine.