



21

FIVE-MINUTE  
SOUL-REST  
PRACTICES

FOR WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF  
COMPARING, STRIVING,  
STRESSING OUT, OR GENERALLY  
FEELING LIKE A FAILURE

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Do you find yourself in any of these scenarios? I do!

You drive past a neighbor's perfectly manicured lawn and groan as you remember your own knee-length grass and unruly hydrangea bushes. Or you see your friend joyfully announce her promotion on Instagram and can't help but think of your own seemingly dead-end job. You find yourself comparing.

You push yourself harder, yet seem to make little progress. Even with please-the-boss-at-all-costs hours at the job, push-it-to-the-limit workouts at the gym, and can't-let-any-thing-slide task lists at home, you feel like you keep falling behind. You find yourself striving.

Toys litter every square foot of the family room. Two of your kids need help with their homework. The spaghetti sauce boils over on the stove. Your husband texts that he's stuck in traffic. You find yourself stressing out.

Your boss points out a serious flaw on the report you turned in yesterday. The cookies you bake to impress the bake sale coordinators look like black clods of dirt on the baking sheet. You don't achieve that bigger profit margin you anticipated this month. Impatient words fly out of your mouth in the direction of your children—again. You find yourself feeling like a failure.

Life is hectic. Unpredictable. Draining. Sometimes even soul-crushing. How can we find soul rest in the middle of our messy lives?

Maybe what we all need is a little more grace—in five-minute portions.

As a Bible teacher, I encourage everyone to have time with God in His Word every day. We always benefit from hiding God's Word in our hearts and spending time in prayer. But we all go through seasons where we can't spend the time we want to in the spiritual disciplines.

Perhaps you love spending time in God's Word, participating in a small-group Bible study, and writing in a prayer journal. But right now you barely have time to comb your hair in the morning and grab a piece of toast on your way out the door. Taking care of your soul feels like one more thing you're failing at.

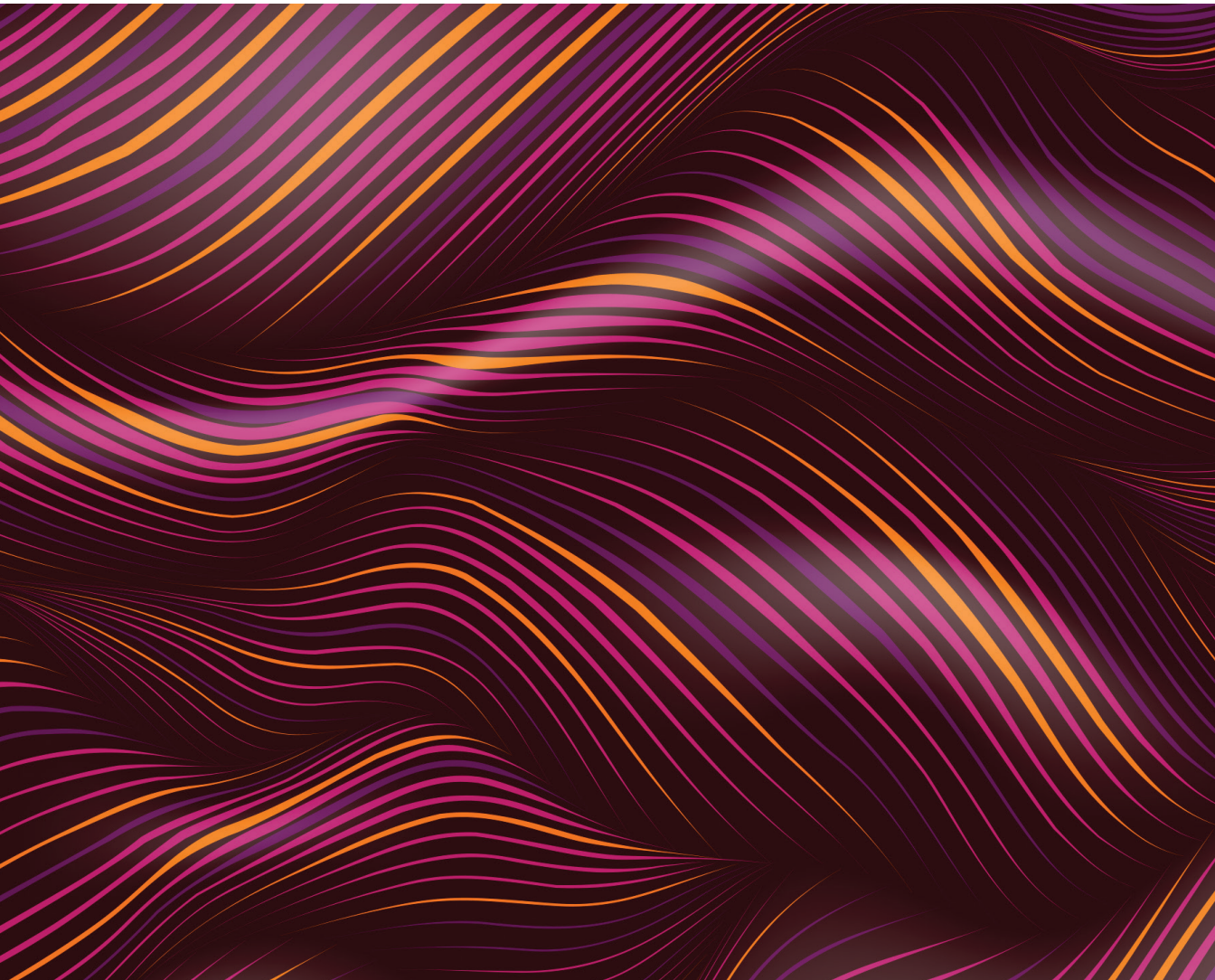
Or maybe your life does allow you to have a devotional time each day, yet right now it simply seems like another item on your to-do list instead of a life-giving practice. Even though you open your Bible in the morning, you still find yourself drenched in stress during the day.

When we find ourselves overwhelmed with stress and striving, perhaps we can find grace in bite-size chunks.

This little book offers 21 five-minute soul-rest practices when you find yourself comparing, striving, stressing out, or generally feeling like a failure. Think of these suggestions as small ways to reconnect with the God who created you, gifted you, and longs to renew your soul.

I encourage you to read through the menu of ideas and mark the ones that sound intriguing. Experiment with one or two each day. Use the practices to allow God to recalibrate your spirit.

Find a little more grace—in five-minute portions.



# WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF COMPARING

○ **Meditate on Galatians 6:4.** Slowly read, “But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor.” God encourages us to look at our own work and not compare it to others. Spend five minutes writing down the big and small ways you have obeyed God’s call in your life in the last week in your job and in your home.

○ **Rethink social media.** While Facebook and Instagram can offer connection, they often provide fertile ground for unhealthy comparison! To counteract this feature, spend a few minutes in prayer and worship before you tap the app. Psalm 57:5, says “Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let Your glory be over all the earth!” When we worship the God who deserves all the glory, we won’t care so much about the attention others receive.

○ **Turn the temptation to compare into an opportunity for prayer.** In 1 Timothy 2:1, the apostle Paul instructs us, “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people.” Pray for the people in your social-media feed (even if they enjoyed a vacation you may never have). Talk to God about your neighbors (even if their cars are a lot newer than yours). When we pray for others, we become less concerned about what they have that we don’t and more concerned about their relationship with God.

○ **Look around your room or home and find three things you haven’t thanked God for in a while.** Now thank Him! Ephesians 5:20 says, “Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Maybe that old coffeemaker doesn’t impress like your friend’s new espresso machine, but the act of thanking God for it will help you appreciate how it has faithfully churned out your morning cup of caffeine for decades.

○ **Do a random act of kindness.** Often the act of comparing leads to an unhealthy fixation on self. But the Bible instructs us to think about others. Philippians 2:4 says, “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” Why not focus on others by cultivating kindness? Look for opportunities to open a door for someone, offer a sincere compliment, or give an extra-generous tip. You’ll make someone’s day *and* feel better about yourself.

# WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF STRIVING

○ **Let go as you empty out your purse (or wallet).** Read Matthew 11:28: “Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” As you unpack all the things you’ve been physically carrying around, think about what less tangible items have been weighing down your soul. Give each worry and concern to God. Trust Him to take care of them.

○ **Remember that God is in control.** The Father sees our need to push to get ahead, our struggle to find success. He whispers to our souls, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). Take five minutes to read and meditate on this verse. Focus on God’s invitation to relax in His care, and remember He has everything managed and organized in the best way possible.

○ **Change what you strive for.** Hebrews 4:11 says, “Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.” As humans, we are hard-wired to strive for recognition, wealth, and success. But God gives us a better thing to strive for—rest that comes from trust in God for our salvation and day-to-day strength. Spend a few minutes in prayer, asking God to help you stop striving for worldly goals and instead to go all out in resting in Christ’s salvation and mercy.

○ **Find five minutes of quiet.** Sit quietly for five minutes and give yourself time to relax. Slowly repeat Isaiah 30:15, “In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.” Ask God to calm and quiet your heart.

○ **Listen.** Go outside with a cup of coffee or tea and listen. Hopefully, you can do this where you hear sounds of nature. Sip your drink slowly. Breathe deeply. Listen closely. What do you hear? Perhaps you hear a bird singing, a truck roaring, or children playing. Now take a moment to contemplate this Scripture: “Let me hear in the morning of Your steadfast love, for in You I trust. Make me know the way I should go, for to You I lift up my soul” (Psalm 143:8). How do the sounds you hear remind you of God’s steadfast love for you? Maybe the birdsong reminds you that just as the Father cares for the birds, He promises to care for you. Perhaps the sound of children playing brings a smile in being a child of God. Maybe the loud roar of a truck reminds you that God provides for us through a variety of humans working and serving.

## WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF STRESSING OUT

○ **Write down every aggravation, worry, and pressure point.** The act of emptying out your overactive mind onto a piece of paper will release some of the stress. But you can do even more. God's Word invites us to bring every problem to Him: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6). Pray over each item on your list, unloading each challenge and difficulty into the Father's hands.

○ **Call a friend.** God asks us to "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2). Text or call a friend and share whatever is weighing you down and frazzling your soul. Ask her to pray with you. Just a short conversation and a time of prayer can calm your spirit.

○ **Clean clutter.** Sometimes clutter can be the source of stress. Set a timer for five minutes and use that short time to clear your desk or pick up toys. With each item, thank God for the person or work that item represents.

○ **Slow down.** Proverbs 19:2 warns against the danger of hurry, "Desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way." When we feel stressed, we often operate at the fastest speed possible in order to get everything done. But that can lead to more tension, anxiety, and even mistakes. So for your next task, slow down and practice being present for a few minutes. If you're at work, truly pay attention to the person you're talking with. If you're chopping vegetables for dinner, notice the colors and textures God created. If you're folding laundry, thank the Father for providing clothes and the person who wears each item. Staying in the moment can change your perspective and lower your stress.

○ **Make a list of small treats that you enjoy.** God has given us many wonderful gifts that improve our lives in small ways. James 1:17 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." Make a list of simple joys that uplift your heart: a caramel latte, a cup of white peach herbal tea, a piece of dark chocolate, listening to a worship song, reading a psalm, coloring in your journaling Bible. Make a point of enjoying one of these simple pleasures every day, thanking God for His good and perfect gifts.

# WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF FEELING LIKE A FAILURE

○ **Read Psalm 51.** King David wrote this penitential psalm after he made supersized mistakes. Yet when he confessed his sin, God cleansed his heart. If you've failed, read Psalm 51, confess your sin, and receive God's grace.

○ **Meditate on God's definition of success.** Success in our world looks like "big and important." So when we feel small and insignificant, we may feel like a failure. Matthew 20:26–27 says, "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave." Success in God's kingdom looks like humility and service.

○ **Focus on God's love for you.** "But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Christ died for us even though He saw our imperfections. Spend five minutes rejoicing that your sins and failures do not negate God's love for you.

○ **Remember that failure is an opportunity to see our need for grace.** Before Peter denied Jesus on the night before his Savior's death, the disciple boasted that he would never abandon Christ. Perhaps Peter didn't think he needed mercy. But afterward, Peter became a powerful witness of Jesus' grace. Peter knew he needed it as much as anyone. When we've tripped up and fallen down, we have a chance to receive grace and forgiveness with Jesus. Take a few minutes to write out a prayer thanking God for His mercy.

○ **Read the story of Hagar and remember that God sees you.** Read Genesis 16, where Hagar runs away from her mistress Sarai, wife of Abram. Certainly Hagar was not the only one who failed in this story. But if you ever wonder if God notices you, this story can reassure you that God continues to witness your struggles and heartache. Hagar "called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, 'You are a God of seeing,' for she said, 'Truly here I have seen Him who looks after me'" (Genesis 16:13). Like Hagar, you can find comfort in the almighty God who notices each one of us..

○ **Take time to grieve.** Perhaps the failure you're experiencing is not a sin or mistake. You did your very best and yet your project, your business, your relationship failed. Take time to mourn the loss. Consider reading a psalm of lament such as Psalm 6, 10, 13, 25, 31, or 42. The psalmists also experienced pain and defeat. They offer a beautiful model of pouring out one's heart to God but also remembering His comfort and presence in the middle of difficulty. "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise Him, my salvation and my God" (Psalm 42:11).

## WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT SOUL-CARE PRACTICES?

Want to discover God's definition of success?

My new book, *Measured by Grace: How God Defines Success*, will help you to do that by introducing you to eight people in the Bible who either had a massive failure or simply didn't look much like a success in the eyes of the world. Written for individuals and groups, this book offers options that fit your style and help you dig deeper, gain insight, and discover a life measured by God's grace.

As you delve into the stories of Joseph, Rahab, David, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, the Samaritan woman, Peter, and Paul, you will learn how God's definition of success is *nothing* like the world's. Instead, He longs to forgive freely and transform you by His love. You will also sense God assuring you of His grace through Scripture, historical information, contemporary stories, and thought-provoking questions.

*Measured by Grace* will help you see how the Lord redeems failure for His glory. You will discover how He doesn't give up on those the world labels also-rans, might-have-beens, and good-for-nothings.

Let go of the world's standards of success, such as wealth and fame. Live measured by God's grace.

Learn more about the book at [CPH.org](http://CPH.org) and Amazon.

