



Near and Now

When My Calling Is Exhausting and Produces Burnout – Jesus

By Linnea Peterson

Warm-up Question

What is something that has made you tired in the past week?



Photo by S L on [Unsplash](#).

Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

Jesus, tired out by his journey . . .

Read [John 4:1-6](#).

Bible Story Reflection

Many of us are accustomed to thinking of Jesus as having superpowers, and it's hard to understand his miracles any other way. But a consequence of knowing Jesus as fully human is remembering that he could and did get tired. In this story, the named cause of Jesus' fatigue is his journey, but it seems that he is also tired out by the disputes and inter-factional jealousy he has encountered from the Pharisees. Work becomes more tiring when people don't agree with what you're doing.

In the Gospel of John, the placement of stories or verses temporally and in relation to one another often signals what they're meant to convey. In this case, it's significant that what follows these verses is the story of Jesus speaking with a Samaritan woman at this well. Samaritans and Jews shared part of their lineage but had a long history of disagreements and, one could argue, inter-factional jealousy. Yet Jesus and the Samaritan woman have a generally positive conversation that leads to Jesus offering the woman "living water" and the woman recognizing Jesus as a prophet. This reversal of inter-factional disputes is the antidote to Jesus' fatigue.

Discussion Questions

1. Can you think of anyone who disagrees with the work you're doing or the way you're doing it? Do you have any ideas for winning them over--or, alternatively, do they have a point that you should heed?
2. In this story, Jesus finds opposition in members of his own ethnic community (the Pharisees) and understanding from a member of a different ethnic community (the Samaritan woman). Have you ever found an ally in an unexpected place? Can you tell that story? How did it make you feel?
3. Were you surprised to read a story where Jesus got tired? What effect does it have on your faith to think of Jesus having limits?
4. Have you ever deliberately made someone else's job harder, whether by protesting their work because of your ethical commitments, being obnoxious for fun, or in any other way? What led you to do that, and do you stand by that decision?
5. On the flip side, do you ever make someone else's job easier, whether they are your coworkers, service workers in situations where you are their customer, or people you meet in some other type of interaction? Is that something you can do more often?
6. What part of your job tires you out the most? Is there any way that you can reduce the impact that part of your job has on you?
7. What was a journey you took that was tiring but worth it? This could be anything from a walk in your neighborhood with a toddler to a big vacation.

Activity Suggestions

Look up tips for how to make your own stress ball out of a balloon and something like cornstarch or play dough. Bring materials and instructions and help your group make stress balls to take home. Be conscious of allergies in the group, particularly to latex, and make sure to bring materials that are safe for everyone present.

Make a list of people in your community who work particularly difficult jobs, such as firefighters, garbage collectors, or emergency room nurses. Make cards or care packages for these people.

Purchase plain pillowcases and fabric paint or other art supplies that can be used on fabric. Encourage everyone in your group to decorate their own pillowcase with restful messages, including passages from scripture about rest.

Prayer Concerns

People whose jobs are frequently made more difficult by the actions of others, protestors who make others' jobs more difficult in order to push for a better world, and all who are weary

Closing Prayer

When I am tired out by your call, grant me rest and renewal. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

