

(EDITED) MAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

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One of my first memories of flying in an airplane was when a very pretty flight attendant appeared and started instructing the passengers about safety. What stood out to me the most then, and every time I have boarded a plane since, is, “Put your oxygen mask on first before helping others.” Why is this so vital in ensuring survival? If you don’t have your oxygen mask on your own face, you won’t be alive long enough to help anyone else.

This instruction is an important physical principle, but it alludes to a spiritual principle as well. Being a natural caregiver at heart, my love for people and my desire to serve causes me to often run around taking care of everyone else to the neglect of my own self.

In Apostle Paul’s farewell address to the elders in Ephesus, he admonished them, saying, “Pay attention to yourselves, and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has appointed you overseers, to shepherd the congregation of God” (Acts 20:28).

The elders’ assignment was given to ensure that the believers in Ephesus were being aided in every way possible – their spiritual, emotional, and physical needs were to be met. Yet, Paul cautioned the elders to take care of themselves first. They needed to be well rounded in every way possible before taking care of their congregants. Just as in the airline example, we can only give to others when we are alive emotionally, spiritually, and physically. A spiritually dying man cannot throw anyone else a lifeline.

Women are the chief caregivers in our society. It is well known that caregivers have the propensity to overwork, and over extend themselves. This lack of self-care leads to exhaustion and burnout, sometimes resulting in unpleasant behaviors like moping, nagging, abrasiveness, and harshness.

The classic example of the results of not caring for oneself is that of Martha, sister to Mary and Lazarus. The family was hosting Jesus and His disciples at their home. Martha’s focus on elaborately serving her guests made her so tired, she rudely interrupted Jesus’ teaching saying “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”

And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:38-42).

Do Jesus’ words give us license not to serve others? Is He saying we shouldn’t take care of the house and the family? Absolutely not! I believe Jesus was implying for us to take

off the Super Woman capes we have been wearing and realize that we have been created to be human with human needs, we can wear out and must take time for ourselves. Just as Jesus did while He was on the Earth (Mark 6:31)

HOW DO WE MAKE TIME FOR OURSELVES WHEN TASKS SCREAM AT US?

1. **Let loose the Mary in you.** Find times in the day where you spend quality time with God as often as possible. These are to replenish, refresh, renew, and rejuvenate the spirit in order to serve better, longer, and out of a place of joy and not stress.
2. **Schedule time to do what you love to do.** I find sitting on my rocker in my back yard, not doing anything to be very refreshing for me. I also love reading, writing, and watching a healthy movie. They fill my rest tank. How about you? What do you like to do? You may prefer athletics, like swimming, biking, or hiking. You may like social activities, such as going out to eat with a friend. You may enjoy getting your hair and nails done, or getting a massage.
3. **Make sure you receive adequate sleep.** There is nothing as draining to me as a lack of sleep. Because of the many hats I wear, my mind can be so bombarded with the countless things on my plate that if I don't get control of these thoughts, I can be lying in bed while my mind is roaming the aisles of Wal-Mart picking up school materials at the same time. The next day finds me tired and stressed.
4. **Eliminate stress as much as possible.** By trusting solely on God, and taking life without being too serious, make it a point to laugh at yourself and life. Remember, your Sovereign Almighty God is in control.

Receive divine permission to make time to pamper yourself sometimes. You are a blessing, Sister, and a gift to humanity. Enjoy the gift of life.

