Rest and War: Rhythms of Well-Fought Life

As Kingdom leaders, we need to lead out of a well-anchored theology of the Christian life which includes the reality of spiritual warfare. Enter Rest and War: Rhythms of a Well-Fought Life. In this book, author and pastor Ben Stuart brings these words of insight and perspective: Take a moment and step back in wonder at what our Conquering Warrior has accomplished. He came here on a mission to fight for us, and he succeeded. We have truly been set free. But we have not been set free from the fight. We have been set free for the fight. From there, with compelling clarity he maps out how to engage (and win) the daily battles of not only being a follower of Christ, but a leader for Christ as well.

Check out these **Book Notes** to get a closer look on the well-articulated insights found in this book.

Chuck Olson
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Title: Rest and War: Rhythms of Well-Fought Life

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Book Description:

Struggle well. Fight for progress. Know the one who has fought for you.

You don't have to live in this world long before discovering that the pursuit of intimacy with God occurs within the context of adversity. It is a fight. Yet it is a fight in which our King has won the decisive victory! You have been set free…into a raging battle!

But there's good news: your struggles do not mean you're doomed, rather they're actually a sure sign that you are alive. Now you must learn to struggle well, for Jesus did not free you from the fight, he freed you for the fight.

Rest & War is a field guide for the spiritual life; a book of ancient methods of transformation transposed into a modern key. Borne out of pastor Ben Stuart's personal life-experiences and decades in ministry, Rest & War offers biblical and practical guidance for:

- Battling what's holding you back while building what will propel you forward
- Trading patterns of thinking that diminish intimacy with God for ones that encourage it
- Fighting sin and cultivating an environment that allows you to flourish
- Designing your everyday schedule based on your God-given purposes to bring more meaning into

your routines

God has called you into the good fight of life; step into it boldly, strategically. Flee evil and pursue intimacy with your Creator. Uproot what is broken and cultivate what is life-giving. Make war on what is destructive, and rest in the God who loves you.

Are you ready to walk elegantly through the battlefield of life?

Book Quotes:

God wants to equip us to ascend to heights we cannot reach on our own. However, we must realize that there are no shortcuts to a truly spiritual life, no life hacks to avoid the hard parts. There is real struggle involved. There also can be real gains—real ground covered and strength built. But to experience serenity, we must struggle. To find peace, we must train our hands for war. LOCATION: 386

Yet you do not have to live long in this world before you realize that the pursuit of intimacy with God is not easy. It is hard. It's a fight! A life of spirituality is lived in the context of adversity. LOCATION: 392

John told us Jesus came to destroy "the works of the devil." LOCATION: 463

If you find it difficult to take seriously the idea of a spiritual struggle in the background of our lives, then consider this: if you do not believe it, then you must produce a philosophy that explains how a creation as beautiful as humanity can inflict upon itself so much horror. LOCATION: 468

The selfishness we see running rampant in our own experience, the pain in our own story, the apathy in our own hearts—it transcends ethnicity, culture, time, and education. It is a human condition. And the Scriptures declare that it is orchestrated. We most certainly have an Enemy working against us. LOCATION: 473

When our first parents believed this, devastation ensued. They got the experience they wanted. But they got something they did not expect: shame. Immediately after they chose their own way instead of God's way, the lights went out. Fellowship with God was broken and fellowship between people was confused. Inner peace fled and hearts went dark. Peace with the earth was confounded. The ground was cursed. Nature would never again work the way it was intended. LOCATION: 500

Let me stop right here and say this to you: I'm not sure what struggle or addiction or failure you're caught up in that's stealing your confidence and joy, but I'm going to tell you some good news. The Stronger One is here. LOCATION: 561

When we are born of God there is a radical reorientation of our interactions with sin. The condemning power of sin is forever broken in our lives. We are no longer slaves! Our failures and shortcomings of the past no longer have the power to determine our future. Jesus has wiped away sin's penalty and will one day wipe out its very presence. This confidence in our new identity and secure destiny gives us the power to overcome the internal pull of our depravity. Take a moment and step back in wonder at what our Conquering Warrior has accomplished. He came here on a mission to fight for us, and he succeeded. We have truly been set free. But we have not been set free from the fight. We have been set free for the fight. LOCATION: 608

In the film Master and Commander, the captain of England's HMS Surprise engages the most dreaded frigate in Napoleon's navy in battle on the open sea. After disabling the ship's sails, the captain leads an assault team onto the bridge of the enemy vessel. They hack their way to the hold of the ship, where several sailors from other English ships are held in cages. In a pivotal scene, the captain breaks the chains and opens the prison door, and a soldier stands ready to hand each exiting man a sword. The men are free . . . to step into a raging

battle. Before, they were simply captives; now they have the chance to be conquerors. This is our story. LOCATION: 615

The spiritually dead do not struggle with sin. Your struggles, far from being a sign of your spiritual death, are in fact just the opposite. Your struggle may be one of your greatest assurances that you are alive. LOCATION: 633

I talk to many people who are surprised by their struggles. They're discouraged that they still wrestle with desires and temptations they thought would go away. Some even express disappointment in the gospel, as if the mission of Jesus has failed. If he really did set me free, why do I still have this desire? they wonder. He did set you free. But he has not freed you from the struggle. He has freed you to struggle. Before, you were just a victim; now you have the possibility to be a victor. Jesus dramatically shifted your position! So now you must shift your perspective. LOCATION: 656

For those in Christ, the spiritual life is now one movement with two parts, away and toward: We persistently move away from ways of thinking and living that discourage intimacy with God. We continuously move toward ways of thinking and living that promote intimacy with God. LOCATION: 727

The Scriptures present sanctification as both a particular event and an ongoing process. We were set apart to God when we put our faith in Jesus. The old life is gone and a new life has come. But far from simply being a past event, this new dynamic has opened us up to a present, ongoing process of being more and more set apart for only him. LOCATION: 737

The devil does the same thing. He knows your hopes, dreams, longings, inclinations, and vulnerabilities. He knows you and how to influence you. LOCATION: 825

The devil understands this basic concept: What you think about, you will care about. What you care about, you will chase. LOCATION: 859

Awareness is our first and most important response to an attack. What holds my attention? Why? What is stirring my affections? Why does it entice me so? What am I being tempted to do exactly? Sometimes I say it out loud. Deception dies in the light. LOCATION: 861

The apostle Paul implored his young protégé Timothy, "Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Timothy 4:16). He told him to keep watch on his teaching, or his doctrine. Know what you believe, Timothy. LOCATION: 864

But notice he also told him to keep a close watch on himself. Know yourself, Timothy. Be a student of your own wiring and tendencies. LOCATION: 867

Are you "exactly skilled" in the knowledge of yourself? Are you deeply acquainted with your own proclivities? What thoughts come to mind when you are tired? What activities seem rational when you are angry? What are your go-to comforts when you are lonely or feel discouraged? Observe your own movements so you can know yourself better. Be a student of yourself. LOCATION: 877

Our inputs determine our outcomes. And when we soak our minds in chaos, our lives begin to reflect the same. LOCATION: 1002

It is important to note here that the solicitation of inappropriate thoughts to your mind is not your fault. You cannot always help what thoughts enter your mind, but you can choose what you entertain. When you allow a thought to linger and invite it to parlay your heart—this is where you get into trouble. The solicitation is not evil,

but entertaining the thought and acting on it is. LOCATION: 1008

I have friends who've been able to avoid their addictive behaviors by drawing the battle line at their resentments. If they coddle resentments in their hearts and hold on to all the little slights and letdowns from the day, a buildup of frustration will become an internal pressure longing for release. The next thing they know, there will be a voice of entitlement in their mind saying, You deserve a break, and the pull of temptation will get an assist from the push of their resentments. They've realized they have to keep watch of resentments and deal with them before they build up. To avoid relapse, they have to daily, prayerfully release them. LOCATION: 1079

Over the next two chapters I want to show you two strategies that can greatly reduce temptation's power and allow us to avoid its punches. Both strategies can be illustrated by picturing a river. Think of tempting thoughts as the rushing water pushing us onward in a particular directon. Our first strategy involves asking these questions: What lies downstream? If I were to follow this flow of thought, where would it ultimately lead? The second strategy involves peering upstream. If these thoughts arrive in my life with the force of raging rapids, where does that power come from? What gives this flow of thought such power in my life? LOCATION: 1135

Every trial carries with it temptation—we must be aware and expect it. Much of what will define our lives is not what happens to us but how we respond to what happens to us. LOCATION: 1159

Temptation does not invite you to do things you find distasteful. It whispers sweetness. It allures with promises of good things. But again and again the writer of Proverbs warned that temptation's honeyed words would turn to poison. Her perfumed bed would become a tomb.
LOCATION: 1186

My friend posted this picture as a warning to himself. The message was, If that voice offering sweet release ever begins to sound like it is making sense, remember this moment. Think about the damage to your wife. Think about the pain it will cause your children. Think about the hurt it will lodge deep into the hearts of people who rely on you. Peer at these faces showing shame, embarrassment, and deep regret, at men who used their power to indulge illicit pleasure. Peer downstream. Sin looks far less sexy in the cold light of day. LOCATION: 1214

Every temptation ends in destruction and begins with deception. LOCATION: 1330

Let's say you decided to hate me. On your list of goals for the upcoming year you include, "Destroy Ben Stuart!" Let me tell you how to do it. I'll go ahead and reveal to you the worst possible thing you could do to me: approach one of my three elementary school–age children, strike up a conversation with them, and work to convince them that I do not care about them. Tell them they don't measure up to my standards. Look them in the eye and tell them I am endlessly disappointed in them, that I don't love them or like them, and that they're a burden, hassle, and disappointment to me. Then convince them that the best thing to do would be to run away. Find love in the arms of some other father figure. Find shelter somewhere on the streets. Tell them not to look to me to feed, clothe, house, love, teach, or guide them. Go anywhere else to find love and truth and wisdom. The most evil thing you could do to me would be driving a wedge between my precious kids and me. Do not miss this, friend: this is what the Enemy does to you. LOCATION: 1336

The Enemy's lies are aimed at your sonship. Your identity determines your activity, and if you believe you are the unloved, unlovable, discarded son, then you will wander in foreign lands looking to fill that void or numb that ache. But when Jesus makes war with the devil, it is a war to convince you of a vital truth: You are a child of God. And he is a loving Father. LOCATION: 1346

Do you want to destroy the work of the devil in your life? Do you want to overcome the pull of the world? This

is the field of battle. See and believe. Behold what manner of love the Father has given unto us, that we would be called the sons of God. And. So. We. Are. LOCATION: 1353

Patrick Carnes, one of the leading voices on sexual addiction in America, once explained that addiction stems from feeling unloved and unlovable. Addiction is an intimacy disorder. I believe this is why the Enemy works so tirelessly to unravel healthy fatherhood in the world. If he can drive a wedge between children and the love of their fathers, he can more easily drive a wedge between the children of God and their rest in the inexhaustible love of their heavenly Father. LOCATION: 1383

Addiction loses its strength when the affection of God is embraced. LOCATION: 1393

Any unhealthy thing that is holding your attention today can be overwhelmed with something better. Your addictions lose their allure in the light of God's affections. LOCATION: 1441

True spirituality is not adherence to a list of rules or activities; it is investment in the greatest of all relationships. While this cultivation involves doing activities, those activities are a means, not an end. And that makes all the difference. LOCATION: 1524

True spirituality is not simply the execution of disciplines; it is the cultivation of intimacy. LOCATION: 1533

Our target is not discipline, it is devotion. If your study of God's Word or attendance at religious services does not cultivate a deeper love for him in your heart, then you are doing it wrong. LOCATION: 1548

Our pursuit is a Person, not a set of practices. LOCATION: 1561

When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, he said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). The goal of all our endeavors is love. So let's ditch "listianity" and take up true Christianity. Let's be watchful against a soulless religion and stay centered on soul-satisfying relationship. LOCATION: 1568

However you conceive of spirituality, it is primarily a battle of the mind. What you think about is what you will care about, and what you care about, you will chase. That's why Paul told the Colossians, "Set your mind on things that are above" (3:2). If you want to change your mindset, you need to change what you set your mind upon. Our actions are chosen based on the options presented. LOCATION: 1574

A changed life begins with a changed mind. LOCATION: 1577

We load our minds with thoughts of God to stir our hearts with a passion for God, which propels us to live lives that honor and enjoy God. LOCATION: 1592

Jesus said, "Do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' . . . But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:31, 33). Notice that he contrasted dwelling in anxiety with seeking God's kingdom. Jesus identified anxiety as one of the greatest impediments to fulfilling our God-given destiny. One of the Enemy's great strategies to derail you from seeking God's kingdom is to fill you with anxiety. LOCATION: 1631

Scripture can guide us toward our twin goals of relinquishing anxiety and pursuing intimacy with God. Paul gave us three steps in the process.

1. RELEASE OUR WORRIES
2. EMBRACE GOD'S WORD

3. LIVE OUT WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED LOCATION: 1689-1807

I believe if we can answer this question, a cloud of despair could lift off an entire generation. Viktor Frankl, the Auschwitz survivor and author of Man's Search for Meaning, said, "People today have the means to live, but no meaning to live for." I talk to so many people who struggle with a sense of meaninglessness in their day-to-day lives. Get up, get dressed, go to work, buy things, watch a screen, sleep, repeat. Meaninglessness stalks the modern man and woman. We need a compelling why to inform and shape all the various whats we engage in throughout the day. Philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche said, "He who has a Why to live for can bear almost any How." We need to know our why. LOCATION: 1882

You are not meant to just "do you" or try to eke out a modicum of happiness before you disappear. You are meant to exert your God-given gifts on the God-given raw materials at your disposal for the good of others and the glory of God. The living creatures around you are to flourish because of your cultivation, because you exist. You are meant to do this for yourself too—to exercise dominion over your schedule and allocate your resources so that your gifts, passions, and energies reach their full potential under God. LOCATION: 1979

Jesus was not wandering around spouting quotable lines and randomly hanging with people. He was methodically, strategically implementing a plan for the global spread of his message. And he executed his plan brilliantly. He set his agenda by priority, not proximity, and we are meant to do the same. LOCATION: 2011

So to begin, we start with our titles. We begin with who we are. Our activity is meant to flow from our identity. Boxers box. Dancers dance. Students study (theoretically). Whatever identity you believe is most fundamental to who you are will determine how you conduct yourself in this world. LOCATION: 2029

Your full human potential cannot be achieved in isolation. True spirituality is always worked out in the context of community. We will never be complete in Christ without unity in the body of Christ. We can be focused. But we must also have unity. LOCATION: 2153

Let me tell you something disturbing about yourself: when your marriage or your ministry or your career or your friends cease to be fun, you will seek pleasure somewhere else. We are pleasure-seeking machines. And if you do not actively observe what your positive releases are and prioritize them, you'll be more vulnerable to the Enemy's suggestions. Your self-discipline may keep you from certain sins for a time, but when you are tired, frustrated, or feel a sense of entitlement, the Enemy will solicit your mind with illicit alternatives, and you will be primed for a fall. Or, he will encourage you to keep your foot on the gas (like I did), and then you will break something either in your body or in your soul. LOCATION: 2413

You see this rhythm throughout Jesus' ministry. Even a casual observer will see that Christ adopted a rhythm of rest and war. He would enter a city for intense ministry, then exit to the wilderness for solitude and rest. LOCATION: 2426

If you do not prioritize a redemptive release, the Enemy will always be there to offer a destructive one. You must consciously choose redemptive fun or you will slouch toward destructive fun. It is a guarantee. There is no middle ground. For the sake of our souls, we must rediscover the ancient path of having fun! LOCATION: 2447

I will close this chapter by challenging you the same way my mentor challenged me. Draw a bull's-eye with three rings. In the inner ring write out the ways of thinking and living that you must never do again. They cost too much of your soul. In the middle ring write out the activities that always lead you to those integrity-compromising activities in the inner ring. In the outer ring write out what brings you soul-restoring rest. What do you do for fun? What makes your soul come alive? What brings you legitimate pleasure without compromising your integrity? Make a list. LOCATION: 2551

Life is very hard, and it is not fair. Trials from without and temptations from within threaten to sink us all the time. Some crash on the rocks of moral compromise. Some are torn apart by the waves of opposition. Some slowly sink from taking on the water of disappointment and sadness. These are hard seas to navigate. LOCATION: 2955

The writer of Hebrews called us to keep moving forward no matter what: “Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Hebrews 12:1 NIV). That passage encapsulates this book so well. We disentangle ourselves from every destructive pattern of thinking or behaving that might encumber us. Then we commit ourselves to run the course that our God has set out for us!
LOCATION: 2966

Character is forged in the crucible of chaos. LOCATION: 3004

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. True spirituality looks like constant dependence. LOCATION: 3054

Remember the words of your Hero: “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33 NIV). LOCATION: 3084

Note: should you wish to find any quote in its original context, the Kindle “location” is provided after each entry.