

SILENCIO

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REST

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“Busyness makes us stop caring about the things we care about.”
— Mark Buchanan

The 24/7 pressure to drive and strive rules every part of life, even weekends and vacations. Saturday and Sunday aren't for rest. It's time to catch up on more work! Work in the garden, wash the car, do the books, take the kids to games and go shopping. On vacation we stay plugged into laptops and keep earning our identity while we play. It's how we sustain the myth that we are indispensable. Overwork is our badge of honor. Christians reward overworking as much as anyone. And church leaders struggle to model alternatives to the work addictions that ruin families, damage souls and sometimes kill us.

We are all devotees of the Protestant work ethic. We like adages such as: “The early bird catches the worm,” “No pain, no gain,” “Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise,” “A penny saved is a penny earned,” “Time is money,” “There's no such thing as a free lunch,” “Work won't kill you,” “Do your best,” “Never give up,” and “The one with the most toys wins.”

These bits of advice make us a productive nation, but they also make us a restless, driven and exhausted people. Just because you choose your work doesn't mean you aren't a slave to it. I talk to a lot of slaves these days. Slaves have no Sabbath, no rest, no time off, no six-day workweek and no reprieve. Slaves have to be productive even if it means working themselves sick or working themselves to death. If you cannot stop working, you aren't free. You are a slave with an income.

Rest is not laziness or a sign of lack of ambition. Rest is fundamental to God (Genesis 2: 2–3) and the well-being of all creation. Rest is a transcendent anchor in the midst of doing. God wants us to rest because a society that encourages overwork is no different from a society that encourages lying, murder, stealing and promiscuity. God also wants us to rest, because if we don't we will not have

time to care about the people we love, the neighbors we know, the strangers we meet and the gifts that come to us while we rest.

The one who holds the universe together by the power of his pinkie has a restful identity — an identity that is not derived from work alone. When our identity is derived only from producing, we push the envelope and deny our human limits. Jesus invites us to live unforced rhythms that honor both our talents and our vulnerabilities.

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.” Matthew 11: 28–30 The Message

We need to lay our deadly doing down and taste the unforced rhythms of grace for ourselves. Receive the gift that keeps us from running on empty. Jesus knew when to say no to need so he could stay connected with God. He could resist the constant temptation to do something to prove who he was because he was deeply at rest in who he was.

Stopping touches the whole world with limits and it “bears witness to whether or not we have brought our habits and priorities in line with the ways and intentions of God.”

— Norman Wirzba, *Living the Sabbath*

Then, because so many people were coming and going that they didn't even have time to eat Jesus said, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

— Mark 6:31 NIV

HOW SWEET IS MY REST

A HYMN BY BARNEY E. WARREN, 1893

How sweet is the comfort and rest of my soul,
Where peace doth so tranquilly flow;
Though storm-cloud and tempest and dark billows roll,
All my heart with His sunlight doth glow.

How sweet is my rest! And how richly I'm blest!
Oh, how sweet is the rest of my soul!

No fears shall alarm me though Satan be nigh,
He's subject to Jesus' control;
Though tempted and tried, Christ regardeth my cry,
Truly He is the joy of my soul.

How sweet is my rest! And how richly I'm blest!
Oh, how sweet is the rest of my soul!

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

- We may feel we can't take time for rest. Look for a few hours in the next week to honor your need to rest. Design a perfect day, or several hours, of rest and recreation for yourself. What did you include? What did you exclude? Who can help you schedule it?
- Make a list of things you delight in — things like a nap, exercise, coffee with a friend or listening to music. As you do these things, be intentional about receiving the rest and renewal they can bring you. Thank God for the gift of rest.
- Choose something to rest your body, something to rest your mind and something to rest your soul this week.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How do you spend most of your time off? When and where do you most deeply rest?
- Take a body inventory. What do your shoulders feel like? Your neck? Where do you hold tension in your body? What exhausts you? What is your body saying to you about your need for rest?
- Listen deeply to what your body feels: headaches, passions, stiff neck, sweaty palms, likes and dislikes. Notice the butterflies in the stomach, the soft addictions and the memories that play back in tapes we can't turn off. Bodies store memories that shape us. What memories keep you in slavery to earning an identity? Were you rewarded for not being who you are? Did you feel unwanted? Unworthy? Like you didn't belong?

A Prayer of Illumination:

Lord, you are the God who works and rests. I am made in your image. Help me live into your unforced rhythms of grace. Give me courage to lay my deadly doing down and lean back into your arms and rest. Amen.

SUGGESTED SPIRITUAL FORMATION RESOURCES

24/6: A Prescription for a Happier Healthier Life, by Matthew Sleeth
Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now, by Walter Brueggemann
Invitations from God, by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun (specifically the chapter on rest)



Additional spiritual formation resources are available online at www.spiritualformationstore.com.