

The Rhythm of Rest

Dr. Sandra Glahn

I'm a recovering workaholic. It's the one socially acceptable addiction in Christendom.

Three things led to my change:

1. Loving confrontation by my husband
2. Larry Crabb's book, *Inside Out* (addictions all have at their root the desire to cover pain)
3. Interview with Eugene Peterson (info below)

What signs of stress do *you* see around you?

What evidences do you see that we make idols of productivity and ambition?

What happens to people who spend their lives overworking?

Some stats:

- The average adult needs 7-8 hours of sleep. Notice how God has built rest into our rhythms.
- People who never take a one-day stop every week have higher rates of depression.
- Some 25 percent of Americans and 31 percent of low-wage earners take no vacation, unlike people in 138 other countries around the world.
- Although leisure and rest build resiliency and prevent depression, CNN Money reports that Americans forfeited \$34.3 billion in vacation days from 2011.
- Annual vacations cut the risk of heart attacks in men by 30 percent and by 50 percent in women.
- Performance increases after a vacation, with reaction times going up 40 percent.
- Vacations cure burnout, the last stage of chronic stress. All studies show performance increases with recharging and refueling.
- Marketwatch: Americans forfeited \$52.4b in vacation days from 2014. They forfeited 4.9 of 21 paid vacation days.

Dr. Matthew Sleeth, author of *24/6: A Prescription for a Healthier, Happier Life* and a former emergency-room physician, said, "For almost 2,000 years, Western culture stopped—primarily on Sunday—for about 24 hours. Even when I was a child, you couldn't buy gasoline, you couldn't buy milk. The drugstores weren't open. The only thing that was open was a hospital. Even in dairy farming country, we would milk cows, but we wouldn't bring in hay. And so society just had a day where they put it

in park. (That) was Sunday... until the last 30 years or so. We go 24/7 now, and I think it's having health consequences. I think more and more, there's a consensus that it leads to depression and anxiety.”

In an interview with CNN, Seeth noted that when a doctor does a primary intake with a new patient, the physician asks about smoking, exercise, and diet, but nothing about how much people work.

Sadly sometimes Christian workers are the worst. After all, we're doing holy work. How can we justify rest? Isn't that laziness?

Reflecting on his job interview experience, a seminary president recalled the kinds of questions he answered from the committee that hired him. They seemed to love his description of uber-long and productive workweeks, asked nothing about his habits of rest and rejuvenation, and seemed to applaud all his symptoms of workaholism.

But it's not just our leaders. We ourselves encourage each other to maintain impossible to-do lists. We o-h-h and a-h-h over another's accomplishments, but rarely ask about or affirm time off. We schedule everything from committee meetings to baby showers and all manner of other activities seven days every week with no thought that others might appreciate the day off, even if we ourselves don't take one.

Apparently, we take to extremes our freedom in Christ (e.g., Colossians 2:16–17). It seems that our work ethic combined with our recognition that we no longer “have” to keep the Sabbath drive us ever harder to accomplish the impossible. It's true—the New Testament grants Christians freedom when to take this rest rather than requiring it on Saturday (the Sabbath). But it's a matter of “when,” not “if.”

Some benefits of rest:

- Mindfulness
- Creativity
- Rejuvenation
- Physical healing
- Ethical reflection
- Preparation to be retired, disabled, to die
- Gain new perspective
 - Whirlyword
 - Refreshed editing
 - Communication

Rationale:

“I have no time.”

“I have no money.”

Therefore, I can't take a break. But we can take a stay-cation.

God rested. Not because he was tired.

We challenge the idols of productivity and ambition with rest.

Milton: “They also serve who only stand and wait.”

Parable of the loaves/fishes applies to time.

What did God do when he stopped working? Saw that what He made was good. See Gen. 2:2–3.

God established Sabbath for a people without a day off for 400 years.

“Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day” (Deut. 5:15).

PLUS:

Holy days: Rosh Hashanah (new year) and Yom Kippur (day of atonement).

Feasts: Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles

Year of jubilee: Every 50 years.

Rest days:

In Genesis: because God did it.

In Deuteronomy, because nobody gave them a day off for 400 years.

Jesus: Mark 11:36

NT and day of rest:

“Now on the first of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight” (Acts 20:7).

Jesus is our rest. OT Sabbath= only a shadow
Paul forbids those who observe the Sabbath to condemn those who do not (Rom. 14:5).

Every day to the believer is one of Sabbath rest, since we are resting in the salvation of the Lord (Heb. 4:9–11).

As giving is to money, rest is to time. Both require faith.

“It is vain for you to rise early, come home late, and work so hard for your food. Yes, he can provide for those whom he loves even when they sleep” (Ps. 127:2, NET).

No legalism

Room for personal practice

Modeled by Father and Son

Lauren Winner, in an article she wrote long ago for *Today's Christian Woman*, (“In Today's Culture, What Does It Mean to Keep the Sabbath Holy?”) said, “Of course, Christians aren't bound by Old-Testament Sabbath directives. Twice in his epistles, the apostle Paul made it clear that Sabbath observance, like other external signs of piety, is insufficient for salvation. But Jesus never said to forget the Sabbath completely.... Through the ages Christians have seen the wisdom of devoting one full day to rest and praise....

“The key to the Sabbath isn't merely rest. Rather, it's that in our rest we turn our attention to God, whose rest our Sabbath mirrors....

“I've found it helpful to mark the beginning of the Sabbath. On Saturday evenings, I gather with friends for an unhurried time of food, fellowship, and prayer.

“The way into Christian Sabbath observance isn't so much about rules as orientation: **away from the busyness of the week and toward the Creator who rested.**”

Anatomy of a Sabbath:

Gene Peterson

- Be convinced. The world conspires against you—your pastor most of all.
- Read Abraham Heschel's *The Sabbath*.
- You can't do it by yourself.
- It's not an all-or-nothing thing. Sabbaths are gifts you give others too
- How to spend the time: Play and pray. No nothing that is necessary. It's essentially a day when you don't do anything.
- It does not get any easier—even after 30 years.
- Model boundaries. I gave my people no meetings on Sundays, asked them to avoid calling on Mondays. In 30 years, only 3 calls.

Mary DeMuth

- Made rolls the night before
- Brisket in the crock pot
- Read Jeremiah; lounged in sun
- Planted flowers
- Made cards with her kids.

Small-town pastor's wife

"We are working our way toward a day of rest—my husband is a minister at a tiny church, so Saturdays tend to be more of a Sabbath for us. No media of any kind in the afternoon, and something out of the crock pot for lunch. We read, play games, nap and revel."

Anonymous

"For many people this is probably one of those "duh" moments – but for me viewing the Sabbath as an act of worship changed my entire attitude. I wanted to do this not for me – but for God. I never realized how precious my "work" time had become to me – and how difficult it would be to let go of just 24 hours." Her big surprise: The following week she was more productive. As if God had gifted back the time to her.

For me...

- Think of myself as 1/7 disabled.
- Rest sundown to sundown.
- Use the crockpot/bread machine.
- Read a chapter in spiritual reading that I want to read.
- Spontaneously meet for coffee.
- Call family members I miss.
- Sew a quilt.
- Journal.
- Avoid scheduling meetings, attending showers.
- Read non-work magazines.
- Watch a movie with my family.
- Start the week on Sunday night.

DAILY Rest – Time with God

Have an "always" rather than a "checklist" mentality.

Seek accountability.

Mix it up.

Know that mornings are optional. “In the night watches...”

“One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon” (Acts 3:1).

How people used to have a daily quiet time: Stained Glass

1440 Changed Everything with printing press
Book-only approach

Weaknesses

Reading considered a new technology!
Tendency toward rigid book-only approach
Risk of legalism
Memorization considered less important

Strengths

Accessibility of the Word
Multiple translations

Seasons Change: Harder during years with small children. So those of us who are older can give gifts of care to make it possible for them.

Focus on love/truth, not the read/pray checklist

Deut 6 - Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You must love the Lord your God with your whole mind, your whole being, and all your strength. These words I am commanding you today must be kept in mind, and you must teach them to your children and speak of them as you sit in your house, as you walk along the road, as you lie down, and as you get up.

Make a Plan for daily rest

Ask God to help you determine what to read/listen to/ponder/meditate on/memorize for the next month.

OPTIONS:

A Bible study book.
Select music. iTunes? Files/CDs you already own?
Book or audio?
Place: Car? Bedroom? Carpool lane?
Write out prayers. Journal/pray.

Plan for reading/prayer

We are more likely to spend time reading Scripture if we have a plan.

When all else fails, use the day-of-the-month option.

Historic church has used OT, NT, and a psalm. Called "the hours." Several times/day.

Very short.

If you use a daily devotional, make sure it includes the passage. Devotionals have replaced psalms.

Aid your memorization

Use a hymnal

See back where it lists related verses.

Sing to God. Read to God.

Poets – Geo. Herbert

Spiritual Reading – most classics now available via download

Keep the main thing the main thing

Integration, not compartmentalization

Our God set rhythms of rest, reflection, beauty.

Embrace them.