

# Sabbath rest



For those of us with a type A personality (always on the go) resting in this age is something we are not particularly good at. In Jesus' day, people also worked hard, but with no TV to watch, emails to answer and media files to stream life was relatively quite especially in the evenings after dark. For them it was a time to switch off, relax and experience communal living.

## **Bible Perspective**

On the seventh day God rested from His work (Genesis 2:2). We are commanded to keep the Sabbath (Exodus 20:10). The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). We are to make every effort to enter into rest (Hebrews 4:11).

In Jesus' day the Sabbath was a Saturday, but the principle of having one day a week of rest is biblical.

The problem many of us often face in ministry is overwork and we feel guilty for taking time out.

## **Observations**

1. Overworked and stressed people are largely ineffective in the kingdom. Jesus is not glorified through burnout. If Jesus sets us the example of taking time out why should we do any less?
2. We need to recognise that there are different seasons in life which are busier than others.
3. The reason for over work in many cases is due to a poor self worth and need for acceptance. This largely comes down to wrong teaching from Calvin's day known as 'the Protestant work ethic'. Simply put, this means 'our success and self-worth is determined by how hard we work'. This however ignores the plight of those who are unable to work as no jobs are available, or those who are sick and unable to work. When I commenced my first pastorate my wife tells me that I worked every night of the week for seven weeks in a row! Looking back I think I was trying to impress people that I was a good pastor! I was building my self-worth. In many countries children and parents alike grow up trying hard to impress others on how well they are doing in all areas of life. They are striving for community acceptance. 'Saving face' is part of the problem.

Our self-worth however should be based on who we are in '**Jesus**', not simply by what we have accomplished for Him. Working hard is good and often satisfying, but not if that's our source for building good self-worth and acceptance from others. Sometimes disasters happen outside of our control. When that happens we feel shattered if we have built on wrong foundations.

5. My challenge with keeping a sabbath rest is that sometimes I get so focused on a project that I become driven. A couple of times I got close to burnout until I realised I had to pull back from working so hard. The longer it takes to go into burnout the longer it will take to get out of it.
6. Sometimes we overwork because we are rescuers and try to be saviours of the world.

7. We need to realise that sometimes our ministry carries on better without us. We encourage others to learn to live by faith, but we need to set the example in trusting God whatever it costs.
8. Technology can be addictive and will rob you of sabbath rest. Although I am not so rigid now, for years I would not clear emails at night or use technology on a Sunday. It was a fast that benefitted me and my sense of rest.
9. It is very hard to implement sabbath rests when wrongful practices and teaching are ingrained in us through our cultural environment and needs around us. We need a revelation from God to break free from it. Pray about this and determine to break unhealthy work habits by resting well once a week.
10. How best can you have a weekly sabbath rest? A change is as good as a rest. Is it a change of environment one day a week? A good book? A meal out? Time with friends and your spouse?
11. 'We can enter into the storms of life and release love only when we have learned how to rest in God'\* Working ongoing long hours without a break is not being virtuous.
12. Especially if you are in ministry meet at least monthly with a spiritual advisor or spiritual director, for reflection. I have someone I meet with on a regular basis on Skype if not in person.

#### **Resources**

'Desiring God' by John Piper

\*'Birthing the miraculous' by Heidi Baker