

A DAY OF REST—GOD’S GREAT IDEA

Observing a day of rest in our 24/7 world is God’s way of saving us from ourselves. “For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.” For many of us, the dusty self never really takes a break. We are always at work and the old frame is creaking and groaning under the weight. Not that our schedules results in a big blowout. It’s more a slow leak. But we are slowly losing control, and soon we are running on the rims and almost out of gas.

But God, the master workman whose resume includes creation of the Earth, planets, sun, moon, stars, sea, living things, man himself and the universe, rested after His 6-day work week. Resting was God’s final act in the creative process. What a grand idea.

Why, was He tired?

No, the Word tells us He is never tired and never needs to rest. God gave us the sabbath as a gift for us, a break from the work-load. Indeed, as Jesus said, “The sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath.” It is not an onerous burden imposed on us—it is a delightful respite given to us.

So here I am, working at my desk on Tuesday, my day off—why? Because I don’t value the sabbath? No, but because I fell into the same trap we all do. The urgency of the work cries out from my desk and visions of disappointing someone or of trashing some deadline loom large in my mind. There is the work waiting to be done . . . what more reasonable thing than to do the work. Fine, but I was supposed to be taking one day off out of seven. Far from being a role model, I myself am an offender.

The problem as I see it is that we are losing our cutting edge and dulling our ability to respond to our children, our spouses, our friends, our churches and ourselves in the process. We should know by now that to stay sharp, focused, balanced and cheerful, we need one day off out of seven.



The story is told of two woodsmen who were cutting wood in the forest. One sat down for 10 minutes each hour and rested. The other worked continuously for 12 hours until the day ended. At the end of the day, the woodsman who rested for 10 minutes each hour had cut far more wood than his partner.

“How did you do that?” said the slavish drudge, “I worked two hours more than you did because of your breaks.”

“That’s easy,” responded the cheerful and rested woodcutter, “while I took my breaks I also sharpened my axe.”

But what constitutes a Sabbath day? It really doesn’t matter which day. Just make sure the day is not “just a little work,” but distinctly away from the normal work schedule. Keeping the sabbath means taking a substantial, 24-hour break from the work pattern and

doing anything else. Talk with people, eat, sleep, work in the garden, go to the lake, exercise, revive your old hobby; just don't go back to work. For most of us this means you cannot check the work e-mail account.

Since we live in the PDA/cell-phone world, the e-mail follows us wherever we are—even on vacations. Our fathers might have called in to work during a two-week vacation just to say how much fun they were having, but our co-workers might never know we were gone. We will keep on answering the mail and making decisions even while trying to call it a vacation.

This might seem counterintuitive, but taking a Sabbath rest once a week will actually increase your productivity. Taking a real vacation once a year will probably give you a more realistic outlook about work too.

You might even get a life.

