

# SABBATH: REST AND WORK

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February, 2003

## Introduction:

There may be no city in the world where there is a) more pressure on, b) fewer boundaries on, and c) less stability in--our daily work. Many or most people come to New York City not primarily to live but to work (on their way to a better, more balanced life they expect sometime in the future.) People come here to 'make it'. As a result they don't so much *live* in their homes and do work--rather they *live* in their careers and find some place to sleep. As a result, New Yorkers are tired and stressed. Yet one of the key themes of the Bible is *Sabbath*. Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:27-28)--the Lord of Rest! In one of the most heart-melting invitations of history, Jesus urges us to come to him because "*I will give you rest.*" (Matt 11:28-30) and no one else will. If we are to be an 'alternate New York City' (Matt 5:14-17) we are going to have to be different than our neighbors in this. What is *Sabbath* about?

It is virtually impossible to talk about Sabbath rest without first recapping the Christian view of work since the Sabbath command is to '*rest from thy work.*'

## WORK

### A (very short) History of Work<sup>1</sup>

#### Classical.

The ancient Greek world is known for its 'dualism.' The Greeks saw the material world (and therefore manual work-for-pay) as demeaning and degrading. A work-less, contemplative life was considered the most humanizing, ennobling, and ideal. Work was simply 'un-leisure.' It was seen as an unmixed burden and curse. For example, Sparta forbade any of its citizen-soldiers to do manual labor. Think how counter-cultural it was for a tent-maker [Paul] to tell slaves (Christians) to work cheerfully, as if they were working for Jesus (a carpenter!)

#### Medieval.

As Christianity grew in the Greco-Roman world it inculcated some of the classical Greek understanding of work. (It is always easier to see this sort of mistake from the perspective of another century and another culture!) Augustine and later Aquinas adhered to the idea of the "Two Ways": a) the *via contemplativa* -- a life of contemplation away from the world and most daily interactions, and b) the *via activa* -- a life of work, usually manual work, out in the world. Drawing upon the famous Luke 10 incident, the former was identified with Mary and was called the 'higher' way, while the latter was identified with Martha and was considered the 'lower' way. The ultimate version of the *via activa* was the monastery. This view created a hierarchy for all work from the 'nobler' work of the philosopher down through the 'helping professions' and on down through the businessman or woman and finally all the way down to domestics and 'people who push brooms.' The world of work was the arena of the profane. It degraded the spirit. This view still exerts influence on us today.

The Protestant Reformers reacted to this version of the old Greek dualism with a vengeance. They insisted (with Biblical warrant) that being the humblest servingman or woman could also be a 'calling' of God, if a) the work was done well, b) bore fruit in the lives of other individuals and society, and c) was motivated by God's love and grace. One problem with the Reformers' view was it implied that our current station in society was God's calling. Luther in particular sounds as if he is saying that if you are a poor peasant it is God's will that you be so and you should not rebel against it. (Calvin taught otherwise.) On the whole, however, the Reformation

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<sup>1</sup> See R.Paul Stevens, "Doing the Lord's Work" in *The Other Six Days* (Eerdmans, 1999.)

approach to work was enormously positive. It opened the way in Western society to see 'work-in-the-world' as something good and a potential source of satisfaction. Innumerable works of history and sociology credit (or blame!) the 'Protestant spirit' for the rise of modern free enterprise economies and capitalism in general.

### Modern.

Two thinkers--Marx and Freud--had powerful influences on modern people's views of work.

- Marx believed work was meaningless to the masses because workers were alienated from the means of production. By 'taking control of their work lives' men and women could find their highest fulfillment as human beings. So Marx almost literally substituted work for salvation, and a 'worker's paradise' for paradise. Freud had a very different view of work. Since he believed human beings were fundamentally pleasure-seeking beings, he saw work as much more of a necessary evil. Its greatest good was only as a means to an end. It was the way to make money and gain power for the thing that *really* made life meaningful--pleasure.
- So Marx elevated work to a higher place than anyone ever had. (It was a 'secularized' version of the Biblical view.) By taking God out of the picture, work becomes the way you become a master of your own fate--the meaning of your life. But Freud elevated *leisure* to a higher place than anyone ever had. (It was a 'secularized' version of the Greek view.) He did not see leisure as a way to contemplation and escape from the material world. Rather, he saw it as the realm of pleasure. In sum: Marx made work the meaning of life. Freud made leisure the meaning of life.
- You would think that these two views are so anti-thetical that in a culture either a) one would win over the other, or b) two violently different parties would develop. But the legacy of both men is still with us.<sup>2</sup> (See below.)

### Post-modern

As has been much chronicled, the history of work in the West has had at least three stages, largely determined by changes in technology.

- **The agricultural era**, in which 'the masses' were farmers or agricultural workers. (Until the early 18th century.)
- **The industrial era**, in which 'the masses' were industrial workers in factories and manufacturing (Until the late 20th century.)
- **The information era**, in which 'the masses' are service-workers.
  - Recent studies<sup>3</sup> show that almost two-thirds of the workers work in 'service-jobs', while less than 15% of workers are now employed in manufacturing. The service jobs (like the old factory-jobs and the peasants before them) are the lowest paid.
  - On the other hand, in our era there has been a huge growth in the 'creative' or professional classes. In 1900 less than 5% of the population fit this category, today it stands at least at 25-30%. These workers are more well-paid by far than service workers. But these workers face great instability and stress in the work world. Some of the recent changes that are often discussed--
    - from full-time jobs to multiple part-time
    - from working for a company to working for yourself with many companies
    - from repetitive tasks to 'interventions'
    - from tenure to 'scrambling'
    - from stratified departments to evolving and interacting teams
    - from working with tangible things to working with intangibles
    - from workplace to working everywhere
    - from *hard* work to *stressful* work

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<sup>2</sup> See C. Redekop and U.A. Bender, *Who Am I? What Am I?: Searching for Meaning in your Work* (Zondervan, 1988.)

<sup>3</sup> See Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002)

### Where are we now?

- 1) There is a great increase in stress and insecurity in work. There is significantly greater competition. "Jobs for life" are going away, even in Asian societies. We live in an increasingly results-oriented society. If your position or department is not turning a profit in a very short-term it is eliminated. There is an enormous competition to get into 'top' schools in order to get the 'good jobs.' A *Time* magazine article on "Jobs in an Age of Insecurity" declared, 'What you have seen is the end of work as marriage.' (Nov 23 1993, pp.24-28.) The old dream of 'getting a position with prospects for advancement' is dissolved. Most people will have several careers in their life-time.
- 2) There is a significant lengthening of the 'work-week'--the number of work-hours. The gap between salaries at the top and the bottom of companies is widening. This is being discussed as a justice issue, and it is. But the result is also an increase in work-hours.
  - a) People at 'the top' are given huge salaries in exchange for enormous number of hours. To begin on Wall Street, to become a doctor, to take a high echelon job in a big company or in the White House--it is understood you will work 80-90 hours a week. Period. Look at the power and/or money you get. That's the price you pay. If you don't want the job there's a line behind you. b) People at 'the bottom', on the other hand, take multiple jobs in order to make ends meet. So work increases at both 'top' and 'bottom.'
- 3) There are fewer boundaries on work. This is due to the factors immediately above, but also to changes in technology. Work no longer is confined to one place and a set time. It 'spills out' to all times and all places.
- 4) There is greater pressure on work. What do we mean?
  - Marx's legacy to us is the view that we should find our personal meaning and fulfillment in work. Post-modernity's emphasis on 'self-creation' has only fueled this further. On a broad scale, contemporary people expect to find their identity and fulfillment in their work.
  - Freud's legacy to us is that work is only a means to the end of leisure--where our *real* meaning is found. This is an option for many people, who choose jobs not because they are fulfilling but simply because they make a lot of money, which eventually enables you to find fulfillment in your leisure life. A wealthy person has a far greater range of pleasure-opportunities in his or her leisure world.
  - You might even say that the average young person combines these two. The resulting view is: "I either want a highly fulfilling job or one that makes me a lot of money. It would be great to have both. But simply doing hard work well for income adequate for basic needs (the historic ideal) is not an option for me."
  - But this view puts enormous pressure on the work. That is, we expect either high fulfillment (work is the meaning of life) or high income (leisure and freedom is the meaning of life.) Either approach leads to over-work. The need to achieve success (financially or otherwise) puts great pressure on your work--and on you in it.

**Sum:** See, then, the "Sabbath Squeeze"! Trends 1 through 3 above create a weariness and (perhaps) a more desperate *need* for Sabbath-rest than any society has ever had. But trend 4 undermines the very *ability* to rest. If the very meaning of my life is to maximize success/money through work, how can I *ever* relax? Any society that increases the need for rest while undermining the ability to do so is strangling its members.

### **A (very brief) Theology of Work<sup>4</sup>**

#### Creation

- And the dignity of work. Unlike many creation stories, Genesis begins with God's hands literally in the dust. The world is created not as the result of a battle or an accident, but as the result of deliberate, planned work. Therefore work has dignity because it is something God does. "My father is working and I am working" said Jesus (John 5:17). He is a creator,

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<sup>4</sup> See Katherine Leary's outline "Work as Partnership with God" in her course *Work: Theology, Theory, and Practice*.

a maker, so to work is to be like him. The first people were gardeners (Gen.2:15). Jesus was a carpenter. Christianity respects all strata of work--from "manual" to cerebral. This undermines the Greek and medieval 'hierarchy' of work and jobs.

- And the goodness of work. Human beings were put into paradise and given work to do. This is before the Fall, before sin and before anything was wrong with the world. God is working--and we will work in the new heavens and the new earth. This means that work is not a punishment or a curse *per se*--it is not a necessary evil. Work is something we were designed to do. Without any work there is usually a sense of some significant inner loss or emptiness. Work is one of the few things we can take in very large doses without harm.
- And the limits of work. The fact that God himself rested after work (Gen 2:2) proves that work is not everything! Work is not all there is. It would be balanced to say (in light of creation) that you will not have a meaningful life without work, but that you must not make your work the meaning of your life. To make any work--even 'ministry'--your meaning in life is to create an idol. This undermines the Marxist ideology (idolatry) of work.
- And the purpose of work. What *is* work? This is a more complex question than may first appear! We must be extremely brief here:
  - In Genesis 1-2 God cultivates the world. First, he brings about more complexity where there was sameness (separating light from darkness, land from water, plants from animals.) But second, he then 'interweaves' all these new entities into a coherent *fabric*, interdependent with one another.
  - So our work--whether splicing a gene or doing brain surgery or collecting the rubbish or painting a picture--further a) develops or b) maintains or c) repairs the "fabric of the world". Our work--whether as humble as cleaning a floor--brings 'order out of chaos' and creates new entities and inter-weaves the human community.<sup>5</sup> So human work is being partners with God in *his* work. That is the obvious implication of Genesis 1-2. God cultivates the creation; he invites us to be co-cultivators. He works and rests; he invites man and woman to also work and rest.

### The Fall

And the frustration of work. When Adam and Eve fall into sin, work is immediately affected (Gen 3:17-19.) While work itself is not a curse, it participates in the curse that lies on all parts of human life now. The text's references to "*thorns and thistles*" yet "*you will eat the plants of the field*" means that while work will still bear some fruit it will always be a deeply frustrating experience as well fulfilling. We will always be able to envision far, far more than we can bring about in this world-condition. (See "Leaf by Niggle" by J.R.R. Tolkien. It is mainly for artists, but it fits everyone.)

### Redemption

And the hope of work.

- Hope for the future. *Because of Jesus, work will be fully redeemed and healed in the future.* The 'curse' of decay on all of creation will fall away (Rom 8:21) and so (by implication) it will vanish from work. This is why in the new Jerusalem "*the kings of the earth will bring their*

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<sup>5</sup> The difference between life in a [wilderness] and here is work. In the [wilderness] you must do everything for yourself. But civilization is sharing in the work of others. Look at the chair you sit in. Imagine making it yourself--even if you had the skills, you'd need the tools. Do you have the skill to make the tools? And even if you had the skills for that, could you mine the ore to get the metal? And if you had the skills to do that, how would you get the ore down from the mountain? Would you make the truck? In other words, to simply make a chair from scratch, in a sense is a lifetime of work for one person. But through the work of others, you can buy it with the fruit of a few hours labor. Civilization is sharing in work of others. Your paycheck, whatever it is, can buy you the use of far more than you could possibly make for yourself in the time it took to earn the check. Work makes us interdependent. Work is cultivating the resources of the material and human universe.... Work is the form in which we make ourselves useful to others; civilization is the form in which others make themselves useful to us. Work unifies the human race and carries out the will of God. -- Lester DeKoster, Work (Christian Library Press, 1982)

*splendor...the glory and the honor of the nations will be brought into it.*" (Rev 21:24,26) These terms are usually reserved to mean the produce, wealth, technology, and art of each particular culture. The curse falls off, and the limitations on our work fall off! We will be able to achieve what we can conceive!

- This hope for the future has a real connection to the present. Christians agree that the future world will be *this* world renewed, not so ethereal, far-off, immaterial, disembodied paradise. But Christians differ over the exact relationship of what we do now to that future world. There is a case to be made for saying, "There is no relationship. Everything here will all burn up" but the Bible says that the 'fire' of the Last Day purifies and refines as well as destroys.
- So: *The Old Testament prophecies of shalom...are interpreted in various ways by various Christians. My own view is...one can spot lines of continuity between the work of Christ in the present and in the future....What we do now in the name of Christ--striving for healing, for justice, for intellectual light in darkness, striving simply to produce something helpful for sustaining the lives of other human beings--shall be preserved across into the next life. All of it counts, all of it lasts, none of it is wasted or lost. All of it acts like...a seed that grows one day into a tree that looks nothing like the seed at all.*<sup>6</sup> An incredible vision! Our eschatological hope for work means everything good we achieve will somehow count forever.
- Hope for the present. *Because of Jesus, our work is partially healed and redeemed now.*
  - When Jesus calls his disciples he offers them a "fishing" beyond their fishing. (Mark 1:17-18.) Though each gospel says that the disciples 'left their nets', it is quite likely they continued to work their trade. Paul left his trade as tent-maker in one sense, and yet he continued to use his trade. What forever changed was the disciples' relationship to their work. Jesus gave them the 'big picture.' He was coming to redeem and heal the world, and he invited his disciples to be part of it. Now they had an identity and significance tied not simply to their job or financial status. Their work no longer 'controlled' them in the same way. They could 'walk away from it' (if that was called for) or pick it up again or use it in a different way than before. There is a new freedom both from and in their work.<sup>7</sup>
  - To get a deeper picture of what happens to our work in Christ, we look at Matt 11:28-30. When Jesus calls all people to himself, he says that he knows we are "*weary and burdened*" and that we need "*rest*." (Matt 11:28) But counter-intuitively, Jesus offers his cure--a "*burden*" (v.30) and even a "*yoke*" (v.29)! This was of course the harness put on a beast of burden--so it was a symbol of slavery, grinding work and toil. How could a *yoke* be a solution to the problem of deep weariness? Jesus says that it is *his yoke and his burden*--and it is the only yoke and burden that is "*light*". Why? "*For I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*" (v.29) Jesus directly claims that he is the only 'boss' who will not drive you into the ground. Only when we have an identity, meaning, and significance based in Jesus--something *beyond* our work, will we get deep rest for our souls that will abide with us in our work. Only when we begin to experience Jesus' saving work do we begin to experience the deeper rest of soul which is the pre-requisite for the more practical outworkings of 'Sabbath' and rest from work in our lives.

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<sup>6</sup> Cornelius Plantinga, *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living* (Eerdmans, 2002) pp.138-139.

<sup>7</sup> A fascinating example comes from 2 Kings 5. After Naaman, the 'prime minister' (to use a modern analogy) of Syria is converted to faith in Israel's God, he does not abandon his job. Instead he takes a load of dirt from Israel to kneel on whenever he does his state-duty of accompanying the king of Syria into the temple of Rimmon, the Syrian deity. Rimmon was basically a divinized version of Syria itself. So Naaman is saying, "I will still *serve* my nation, but I will no longer *worship* my nation. Syria's national interests are important to me, but no longer my ultimate value or 'god.'" He continued his work, but the ultimate values of his vocational field had been transformed."

## SABBATH

### What is the Sabbath?

#### Creation

The Sabbath is first mentioned in the context of creation. God rests on the seventh day, after creating the universe. (Gen 2:1-3.) Here we learn:

- Sabbath means to cease from ordinary work, from your normal activity. God stopped something he was doing, even though Jesus says that his father continues to work. So Sabbath means a real change, the cessation of normal activity for either a different activity or for (relative) inactivity.
- Sabbath means to enjoy the results of work. God did not only cease work, but the text tells us he *finished* his work. This means not simply ceasing work to pick it up again, but a) being satisfied with what you've done as sufficient, and b) considering some things complete and 'moving on.' So Sabbath is not simply inactivity. Instead of 'producing' it is a time to consume and enjoy what you've produced. There is a "psychological" aspect of rest--an ability to sit back and be satisfied with one's life. There is also an "aesthetic" aspect of rest--an ability to 'play' and admire and use the fruits of one's labor.  
Almost certainly, we are to use rest to enjoy the fruit of God's labor too. And this means: **a)** Enjoying God's work of creation by experiencing his material world ("nature") and what human beings have done with it (art, architecture, music) **b)** Enjoying God's work of redemption in worship. (In this sense, then we do not divide "worship" from "rest" as if they are two different things we do on the Sabbath. Worship is enjoying the finished work of God.)
- Sabbath means rhythm of work and rest. God did not just rest on the seventh day, but he 'hallowed' it and instituted a rhythm of work and rest. Notice that there (of course) more work than rest. This means that rest must be seasonal, rhythmic, not 'all at once.' Long stretches of leisure and rest can be debilitating.

#### Law and Community

The model of God's rest from work became a requirement for the human race in the Ten Commandments. It was the fourth commandment. In Deut 5:12-15 God ties the Sabbath to freedom from slavery. v.15 says-*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.* This is remarkable. God sees the Sabbath day as a regular re-enactment of emancipation from slavery. It is a reminder that he delivered them from a condition in which they were not human beings, but simply 'means to an end' of the brick quota system of Pharaoh. Anyone who is not disciplined in 'Sabbath' is a slave, even if this is self-imposed. Your own heart, or our materialistic culture, or an exploitative company, or all of the above--will be using you and abusing you if you don't have the ability to be disciplined in your practice of Sabbath. Sabbath is therefore a declaration of freedom. It means you are not a cog in a machine.

The Sabbath day and Sabbath year legislation in Israel was unique at that time among world cultures. It *limited* work, profit-taking, income- and economic production. Every seventh *day* no work in the fields could be done, and every seventh *year* the field was to remain fallow and not be cultivated at all. This surely meant that in the short run Israel was less economically productive and prosperous than its neighbors. But it was a land of free people. In the long run, of course, a deeply 'rested' people are far more productive.

#### Exile

*"It is commonly agreed that Sabbath...becomes decisive for Israel's faith in the exile. The imperial pressure of Babylon was endlessly demanding of productivity but this counter-provision for regular rest was a visible, public assertion that people of faith would not have their lives defined by [economic] expectation. Thus Sabbath is an act of refusal and resistance, a vigorous assertion*

*of a different identity grounded in God's freedom and enacted as socio economic freedom from every production system and every commodity ideology."* (Walter Brueggemann, "Sabbath as Active Faith *Sunday Magazine* Summer 2002.) When the Jews were dispersed and living in pagan societies, the practice of Sabbath was profoundly 'counter-cultural' and a witness to their neighbors as to the nature of their God.

### The New Testament

The Jewish Sabbath was a day a) of worship, b) of extremely strict rest from exertion of any kind, and c) no recreation. While there have always been a very small number of churches that do not think there have been any changes, most Christians believe that the coming of Christ changed our practice of the Sabbath from that of the Old Testament.

- The Christian church through the centuries has debated endlessly the appropriate practice of the Sabbath. I want to be extremely brief here, making no effort to 'back up' my position.
- The book of Hebrews speaks extensively of how Christ fulfilled the Old Testament worship regulations. We no longer offer animal sacrifices because in him we are all priests, offering sacrifices. We no longer observe all the 'cleanliness laws' because in him we are all 'clean' and fit for God's presence. And it is in him, through justification by faith, we find that deeper spiritual rest--*'we rest from our work, just as God did from his.'* (Hebrews 4:9).
- The great debate, of course, is this--if Christ so fulfilled the *rest* of the Old Testament worship regulations--so much so that we completely cease their observance--has he so fulfilled the Sabbath that we no longer observe it as well? The answers have ranged from those who say: "yes" to those, noted above, who believe his coming has not changed it at all. Presbyterians have fallen (as usual) somewhere in the middle. Why?
  - The Sabbath regulations of the Old Testament were very much part of the myriad of worship regulations and clean-laws. But the basic mandate to practice Sabbath was given in creation and is in the 10 commandments. Sabbath is more than worship--it is rest. And therefore, even if the Old Testament worship regulations are gone, the Sabbath itself is not.
  - Jesus practiced the Sabbath and yet did not follow many of the strict regulations on the Sabbath that were customary at the time. The early church moved its weekly gathered worship from the traditional seventh day to the first day of the week in observance of the resurrection of Jesus.
  - This evidence seems to indicate that some aspects of Sabbath observance are to be maintained and other aspects are transformed and fulfilled in Christ.
- Even within the Reformed churches, however, some 'lean' one way or the other.
  - The British Westminster Confession leans much more toward a stricter adherence of the Old Testament regulations (often called 'Sabbatarian'.) It recognizes Sunday as the Biblical Sabbath day. It forbids recreation on Sunday as well as most commercial transactions.
  - The Continental Reformed churches, following Calvin, believed more in Christ's fulfilling of the Old Testament law. Many of them believe that the Sabbath principle is binding--rhythmic cycles of rest and work--but that the day of rest (and/or of worship) might be some other day than Sunday. Many also believe recreation to be part of and therefore allowable on Sunday.
  - Redeemer's ministers have generally declared 'exceptions' to the Westminster Confession when joining the PCA and have opted for a more Continental view. (This exception is not universally but widely and routinely granted within the denomination.) (See the helpful NYMetro Presbytery paper on Sabbath.)
  - However, while there is a danger of legalism that goes with strict Sabbatarianism there is just as great a danger with the 'flexible' position that we simply fail to practice Sabbath at all. For the principles of Sabbath--regardless of your view of exactly what you may or may not do on Sunday--are powerful and take great discipline. It is possible that if you are not a Sabbatarian that it may take more discipline to be faithful to the creation mandate of Sabbath.

## **The Discipline(!) of Sabbath** To practice Sabbath you need:

### **Foundation-** A new spiritual understanding of your whole life

- As noted, Hebrews 4:1-10 draws a remarkable analogy between the gospel of free grace and the Sabbath. The writer says, "*there remains, then, a rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work just as God rested from his.*" (v.9) When we find salvation through Christ and grace, we 'rest' from the most debilitating 'work' of all - the work of establishing our own worth through our efforts, the work of earning our own salvation.
- This is the deep spiritual 'work' under all the rest of our work in the world that creates a weariness that will not go away. Vacations won't cure it! If you don't have the "REM of the soul"--deep rest from your good works--all other work will be crushing. You won't be able to relax, even when you are supposed to be resting. You won't ever be able to 'walk away from your nets' even for an evening.
- This is why Jesus could say that he alone could give you 'rest.' (See Matt 11:28-30.) All other yokes and burdens make you 'heavy laden.' The gospel is a 'yoke' of course--you must commit yourself to him. You cannot go your own way. You are no longer your own. But (Jesus implies) you are going to belong to *someone* or *something*. There is no "yoke-less" life. Something will be driving you--someone or something will be your 'boss.' But only Jesus will not crush you.
- Why? Only Jesus offers you a 'finished work' to rest in. In fact, the very definition of a Christian is not just someone who admires Jesus, emulates Jesus, or obeys Jesus. A Christian is someone who "rests in his finished work" instead of your own. Remember, God was only able to rest in Gen 2:1-3 because his work was finished. A Christian is someone who knows that if would be quite all right if he or she died tonight. You've already finished your work--everything that actually *has* to happen within your life-time has happened. The rest is gravy, icing. Gravy and icing is quite tasty, of course--but not absolutely necessary.
- Without the deep rest of Christ's finished work, you simply can't ever rest. The classic example of this is in *Chariots of Fire* in which one man runs literally "to justify my existence", while another man has such a deep rest in Christ that he takes off Sundays, even if it means missing a gold medal. The former *has* to have the gold medal. It is the deep work of worth and significance that is unfinished in his life. (The problem is, as we know, that the gold medal won't be enough to finish it.) The latter can take time off.
- Minor note: Both the Marx legacy (work is the way I get power and fulfillment) and the Freud legacy (work is the way I make the money so I can get pleasure), along with the post-modern culture (you have to invent your own identity)--means modern people put enormous pressure on work to be satisfying, profitable, fulfilling. Only if we get the deep rest of the gospel will we be able to have live a life happily in the 99% of the jobs in the world that are neither very fulfilling nor very lucrative.

### **Inner Rest** - A new emotional attitude toward your work

Ceasing from exertion is of course directly beneficial simply as a respite and time of rejuvenation. But to practice Sabbath clearly means to get some *internal* peace and freedom from stress and work as well. The only way to do that is to understand the actual *meaning* of the Sabbath--understand what it is a sign of, what it points to. The Biblical narrative shows us:

- *It is a act of liberation.* God appointed the Sabbath to remind the Israelites they were no longer slaves. Slaves can't take a day off! But this is quite relevant to us today. Take your Sabbath with a note of triumph. Say, "I am not a slave--not to my culture's expectations, my family's hopes, my company's exploitations, or my own insecurities. I will not be defined by my job" This is very important 'self-talk'--otherwise you can feel guilty for taking time off, or you can simply keep your mind on your work during your supposed 'rest.'
- *It is an act of trust.* God appointed the Sabbath to remind us that *he* is working and resting. To practice Sabbath is a disciplined way to remember that it is not you who is keeping the world running! It is not really you who has provided for your needs or your family. It is not you keeping your work going. Entrepreneurs especially find it difficult to believe this. But

Jesus' famous discourse against worry is tied up with work (Matt 6:25-34.) He chides us that the plants of the field are cared for though "*they do not labor or spin*" (v.28.) He says that are obviously of more value to God than plants--so don't '*run after*' material things through work (v.32.) In short, you are not practicing Sabbath (nor practicing the doctrine that you are not God!) if you worry during your 'time off.' Sabbath is a time to meditate on passages like Matthew 6 until Sabbath rest begins to grip you.

- *It is a declaration of satisfaction.* As we mentioned above, God rested when his work was *finished*. This seems extremely difficult for us. The work 'never seems to be done.' Above we mentioned how we must get a deep rest from work in the sense that through the gospel we don't feel that we have to accomplish anything else in life to prove ourselves. But at another level, it is important to the actual practice of Sabbath to not think of the future (un-done) work but to remind yourself of the past (things you have accomplished.) It has gotten easier to rest the older I get because on a given day-off I look back and consider the many things that are done and 'finished.' It makes it easier to shake my mind free and relax. Why? 1) Looking at the past accomplishments reminds me that things do get done, and so will the 'works-in-process' now, and 2) looking at the past reminds me of how little I have rested in the past and how I don't want to keep sinning like that!
- In light of the above we can see that to be 'under-Sabbathed' and burned out is the result of serious sin. You are not finding your salvation in Christ but other things. You are not trusting God. You are not willing to see what he has already done through you.

**Note:** If you are effective in the Foundation and the Inner Rest disciplines, you will probably be able to find creative ways to take time off that really restores you. People's lives vary so much today that practical examples only have limited usefulness. Still--here are some things to keep in mind.

#### **Outer Rest** - A varied 'portfolio' of Sabbath practices

- DETERMINING HOW MUCH TIME. What is the ideal amount of time off from work? My guess is--
  - A full weekly day off in which no more than ½ of the day is given to ministry/church and
  - The equivalent of a second full day off (3 evenings free after 6pm count as a full day.)
  - For example--if your work-day/commute takes up every weekday almost completely, but you have a full Saturday and Sunday off, with normal Sunday commitments, then that is sufficient Sabbath. If you are a church staff member who cannot count Sundays at all, then you need to take off one full day a week and be sure to be off at least three weeknights. This still allows quite a lot of hours for work during the week.
- DETERMINING WHAT TO DO WITH THE TIME
  - Take some sheer inactivity time. Almost everyone needs some time every week that is so un-planned and unstructured that you do whatever you spontaneously feel like doing. If your Sabbath time is simply a very busy time filled with scheduled activities of recreation and ministry, it will not suffice. There must be some "cessation" from exertion. (This is analogous to Israel's Sabbath year practice of letting a field lie fallow to produce whatever happens to 'come up'.)
  - Take some 'avocational' activity time. An avocation is something that is sheer pleasure to you but that takes some exertion and time and usually is something that others do 'for a living.' (This is analogous to occasionally planting a different crop in the field in order to replenish the nutrients and make the soil more fertile for its normal crop.)

Variations:

  - You need some *contemplative* rest. Prayer and worship is a critical part of Sabbath, from any perspective. It is not only the basis for the 'Inner Rest', but it also takes time away from the more exhausting exertions of life.

- You need some *recreational* rest. The Puritans and others were rightly skeptical of recreations that forced you or others to spend a great deal of money and time and exertion. Be careful that recreation really refreshes.
- You need to include *aesthetic* rest. You need to expose yourselves to works of God's creation that refresh and energize you, that you find beautiful. This may mean out-of-doors things. This may also mean art--music, drama, visual art.
- When planning avocational time, consider whether you are an introvert or an extrovert. Introverts are people who tend to spend energy when out with people and recharge their batteries by being alone. Extroverts are people who tend to spend energy in personal work and recharge their batteries by getting out with people. Don't try to imitate an introvert's Sabbath rhythms if you are an extrovert! For example, some avocational activities take you into solitude and some take you out into society.
- Do a realistic self-assessment of just how 'family time' affects you. When families are young and children are very 'high-maintenance', it may not be realistic to count all family time as Sabbath-restoration. Parents of young families have to be sure that they don't let all of their regular Sabbath time be taken up with parental responsibilities. (Introverts especially will need time away from the kids.) Unfortunately, when family relationships are strained, family time is important but it also may not count as Sabbath time.
- Honor both macro and micro-rhythms and *seasons* in your rest. Israel's Sabbath cycles of rest-and-work did not only Sabbath days but Sabbath years and even a Jubilee (the seventh Sabbath year.) This is a crucial insight for workers in today's world. It is possible to voluntarily take on a very high energy, long hours, insufficient-weekly-Sabbath-time season of work. If you want to be a doctor, you are going to have to be a resident. Many other careers in finance, government, and law simply demand the same sort of initial time of heavy work week. Also, some times 'going into business for yourself' or doing some major project (like making a movie) require something similar. Christians can, I think, enter a season like this if:
  - It is not longer than 2 or 3 years at the most. Be accountable to someone for this or you will get locked in to an under-Sabbathed life-style and you will burn out.
  - During the under-Sabbathed time you do not let rhythms of prayer, Bible study, and worship die. Be very creative, but get it in.
- 'INJECTING' SABBATH INTO THE REST OF THE WORK WEEK
  - I have come to see that if you develop the 'Foundation' and 'Inner Rest' of Sabbath it will not simply make you more disciplined about taking time off. It will also lead you to be less frantic and driven in the rest of your work.
  - Associated with the Sabbath laws were the 'gleaning laws', in which the owner's of fields were not allowed to harvest 'out to the edges' of their fields. They had to leave a percentage of grain in the field for the poor to come and take. Sabbath, then, is the deliberate limitation of productivity, as a way to trust God, be a good steward of your self, and declare freedom from slavery.
  - In my case this has meant deliberately setting fewer goals for myself in a given week and day, not 'harvesting out to the edges.'
  - Some of our work-worlds are institutionally structured toward over-work. Rather than opt out of them totally, we might 'pay our dues' in the early years (see above under "seasons") but at some point we will have to trust God by practicing Sabbath and risking 'falling behind' in our careers. It may happen that you will fall behind and yet retain your sanity. But it may be that God will work keep raising you up the ladder despite your practice of the 'gleaning' principle. It is up to him.
- BRAINSTORMING ABOUT YOUR SABBATH
  - Find at least four other people in your work-field and ask them how they handle the need for rest, leisure, and restoration. Ask them about their weekly or seasonal rhythms. Almost always you will discover one or two ideas that are really helpful.

- If you can, get the people together to actually brainstorm about it.

**Conclusion:** The purpose of Sabbath is not simply to rejuvenate yourself in order to do more production. Nor is it the pursuit of pleasure. The purpose of Sabbath is to enjoy a) your God, b) life in general, c) what you have accomplished in the world through his help, and d) the freedom you have in the gospel--the freedom from slavery to any material object or human expectation. The Sabbath is a 'sign' of the whole future salvation that is coming.

**Weariness not healed by normal Sabbath** (A check list):

- Are you making work too important--an idol?
- Are you making money (as a means to freedom, leisure/pleasure, or just significance) too important--an idol?
- Are you doing work that you are not gifted/able to do?
- Is this a job that is 'more cursed' than the average work? Is sin (in various ways) making the work environment crushing and probably not fixable?
- Are you rather new to the work world and not yet accustomed to it?