

QuietWaters

COMPASS

October 2012, Volume 17, Number 2

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There is More to Life Than Work



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SABBATICAL

R E N E W I N G C H R I S T I A N L E A D E R S

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Repetition

from the President Jim Schlotzman



In the May 2011 issue of the *QuietWaters Compass*, we featured two articles addressing topics similar to what you will find in this issue. The thinking advanced in Jason Nelson's article "Rescued by Rest" and Colin Vander Ploeg's "From Empty to Full" continue in this issue as Jason Hanselman writes that "There is More to Life Than Work" and Dale Matthews files a report on sabbaticals. So why would I address the same topics in this issue?

I'll let a quote from well-known professional boxer Muhammad Ali answer that question: "It's the repetition of affirmations that leads to belief. And once that belief becomes a deep conviction, things begin to happen." Actually that quote was also credited to Claude M. Bristol, early 20th Century author and journalist.

It is my hope that things will *begin to happen* after you read this issue of the *QuietWaters Compass*.

Referring to the two sabbaticals he has taken, Dale Matthews writes in his article: "Sadly, most pastors never even get one sabbatical, let alone two! And we wonder why there is 'compassion fatigue.'"

According to Matthews, we *need* things to happen. Again quoting from his article: "I hope the leaders who read this will seriously consider the idea of a sabbatical fund into which pastors and churches could tap every seven years."

This issue of the *QuietWaters Compass* also provides me the opportunity to introduce you to our Vice President for Development. Many of you have met Jason Hanselman, but this may be the first time you've had the opportunity to experience his insightful and effective written word. In his article Hanselman shares with us that ". . . in a culture living under the tyranny of time, the idea of getting rest is still relevant in our world."

He makes a strong statement that we all need to listen to when he writes, "Time is holy, it is separate and distinct, and it *matters* to God what we do with it."

As I said in the introduction of the May 2011 issue, we are counseling pastors and missionaries with a growing intensity of burn out. As recent months have shown little improvement in that, I feel the importance of repeating these topics and encouraging more pastors to take sabbaticals, and more missionaries to take time during their home stays to focus on sabbatical time. For missionaries I would apply Dale's comment: "A sabbatical needs to be a change of pace; a Sabbath, a time out."

Missionary friend, you need a change of pace.

So I will end by sharing what American publisher, Robert Collier said, "Constant repetition carries conviction." It is my hope and prayer that through reading these articles you will be convicted to experience your own sabbatical soon. ■



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Plan that Overdue Sabbatical!

by Dale Matthews

The May 2012 *QuietWaters Compass* contained an article by David L. Ragsdale entitled “Compassion Fatigue.” In Ragsdale’s sixth strategy for self-protection—“create your self-care plan”—he states: “Plan that overdue sabbatical,” a recommendation I heartily endorse.

I have done it, twice! But even two sabbaticals in nearly 40 years of ministry are not enough. Many denominations now believe that pastors should be given a sabbatical every seven years. To me that feels just about right. Sadly, most pastors never get one sabbatical, let alone two. And we wonder why *compassion fatigue* prevails.

A sabbatical needs to be a change of pace, a Sabbath, a time out. Even God rested from His work of Creation on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2). As you read of God’s creation in Genesis, the Hebrew idea of what a day should be is put forth. Although it is strange to us, the Hebrew day *begins* at sundown. “Evening and morning in day one . . .” is how the Bible puts creation. This sequence should condition us to God’s rhythm of grace. We go to sleep, and God does His re-creating work in our bodies and minds. We awaken and are called out to participate in God’s creative *action*. We respond, after being renewed in faith and work.

In the two passages of scripture where the Sabbath commandment appears, the commands are the same, but the reasons behind them are different.

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Exodus says we are to keep a Sabbath because God kept it (Exodus 20:8-11). God did His work in six days then rested. If God set aside a time to rest, should we not follow His example? The idea to stop “doing” and simply “be” is divine. Sabbath-keeping is commanded, so we can be as *well* as do.

The other Sabbath commandment—given in Deuteronomy—speaks to the fact that the Jewish people in Egypt went 400 years without a break (Deuteronomy 5:15). Never a day off. The result was that they were no longer considered people, but had been reduced to “work units.” They were no longer persons created in God’s image, but equipment for manufacturing bricks and building pyramids. To prevent this, we are commanded to keep a Sabbath. It’s too bad there wasn’t a commandment issued that pastors must take a Sabbatical every seven years.

Many denominations are at least encouraging churches to grant their pastors sabbatical leaves after six to seven years of service in the church. I believe sabbaticals are important enough that they should be given every seven years a pastor has served, whether in one church or several. In too many cases, though, a pastor will serve a church, five, six, seven years, then take a call. The clock starts all over again without any kind of break, resulting in some pastors *never* being eligible for a sabbatical.

If all churches were expected to put a small amount into a Classis or Synod Sabbatical Fund each year and every seven years a pastor could draw from that fund, if necessary, to facilitate a needed sabbatical, no pastor would have to feel like a “work unit” of the church. Unfortunately, I know many who’ve been in ministry as long as and longer than I, who have never had the blessing of a sabbatical. Again, no wonder *compassion fatigue* prevails.

Sabbaticals are *not* vacations. Churches and church boards must overcome that idea. A sabbatical is a time of renewal and re-creation for the pastor and the church, and it will reap benefits for years to come. Not long ago, I met with the board of a friend’s church to discuss the relative merits of him taking a sabbatical. I found it very difficult to get them past the “extended vacation” mind-set, to appreciate the significant benefits to this pastor of a sabbatical.

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Grossmünster Cathedral and the River Limmat, Zurich, Switzerland

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In fact, his sabbatical was granted, despite several board members continuing to be upset. That type of thinking must stop.

My first sabbatical—a “Prayer Sabbatical”—occurred during the summer of 1996 and lasted six weeks. This experience of focusing my time and renewal on prayer was a wonderful blessing for myself as well as for the church. I kept a journal during the six weeks to which I *still* refer for sermon ideas, thoughts for further study, programs in my ministry.

As the congregation’s focus was on learning and growing in its prayer life as well, it studied and worked during those six weeks with an author who had written several books on prayer. The only thing I regret about that sabbatical was that it was for myself alone, since I spent basically the whole time away from my family; I would not recommend that.

The first two weeks of my Prayer Sabbatical were spent at a monastery with monks in brown robes and sandals who were committed to contemplation, prayer, and vows of silence. Brother Peter was given permission to speak with me as my mentor during the time I was with them. We talked about what prayer is—how to pray—and literally spent hours in prayer. I learned so much about extended and continued prayer from these dedicated men.

While I was with them, one of the brothers died. I helped to dig his grave within the walls of the monastery. I counted it a privilege and blessing to be allowed to be a part of that experience, and will never forget the sound of the monks keeping a 24-hour vigil before the funeral. Eight monks would come into the room in two hour shifts and sing through the Psalms. I have never heard anything so beautiful and touching. I feel as though I was afforded a glimpse of heaven. The whole two weeks was a wonderful renewing experience in itself.

The second two weeks were spent in guided study at a seminary with two professor friends who read, studied and engaged in dialogue with me on four books about prayer written by C. Peter Wagner, Oswald Chambers, Paul Cho, and Walter Wangerin, Jr.

That period encouraged me to incorporate the academic with the practical experience of my two weeks in the monastery. It was a great time of learning, fellowship and “stretching” our “prayer muscles” as we spent much time in prayer together as well.

I came back after those six weeks a “new man.” Everyone saw in me a renewed focus and spirit that were blessings to me and to them. Many said that giving me a sabbatical was the best investment the church had ever made: “And, it really didn’t cost all that much.” As I said, I have been using what I learned during those six weeks in my ministry to this day, with all subsequent pastorates benefiting from that sabbatical.

The final two weeks of my “Prayer Sabbatical” were spent in personal prayer and meditation at a primitive cabin in the woods. There was no electricity, and water was supplied by a hand pump. Cooking was done on a wood stove, with supplies kept in an icebox. I was awakened each morning by an eagle flying past the cabin, following the stream that ran nearby. Bedtime came when the sun was setting. Those two weeks, totally alone, were both a wonder and a struggle. I have never prayed and journaled so much in my life, deep thoughts and ideas flooding my mind and soul. I could hardly write fast enough to keep up with them. That time also showed me how much I loved, cared for, and depended upon my wife, daughters, and church family.

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My second sabbatical occurred during the summer of 2002—funded by a Lilly Endowment Foundation Grant to our church through the National Clergy Renewal Program—and was entitled “Re-forming Our Faith.” My wife and I spent the majority of this eight-week sabbatical in Europe exploring the cities of the Reformation. During this time, there was also the opportunity to visit my wife’s family in The Netherlands, from where she immigrated to the United States as a child.

We set out on the Reformation portion of our trip in a rented car, anticipating an adventure filled with history, music and learning. We spent the first days in Wittenberg, Germany seeing the sights and meeting the people. We learned that establishing relationships with the locals allowed us to visit significant locations with them, gaining insights that would not have been possible on a specifically planned tour.

After Wittenberg—and day trips to Berlin and Leipzig, we journeyed to Weimar, Buchenwald, Eisenach, Wartburg and Worms. All along the way, we took pictures and sent them back to our church family via the Internet. Thus, they were not only following our adventures, but

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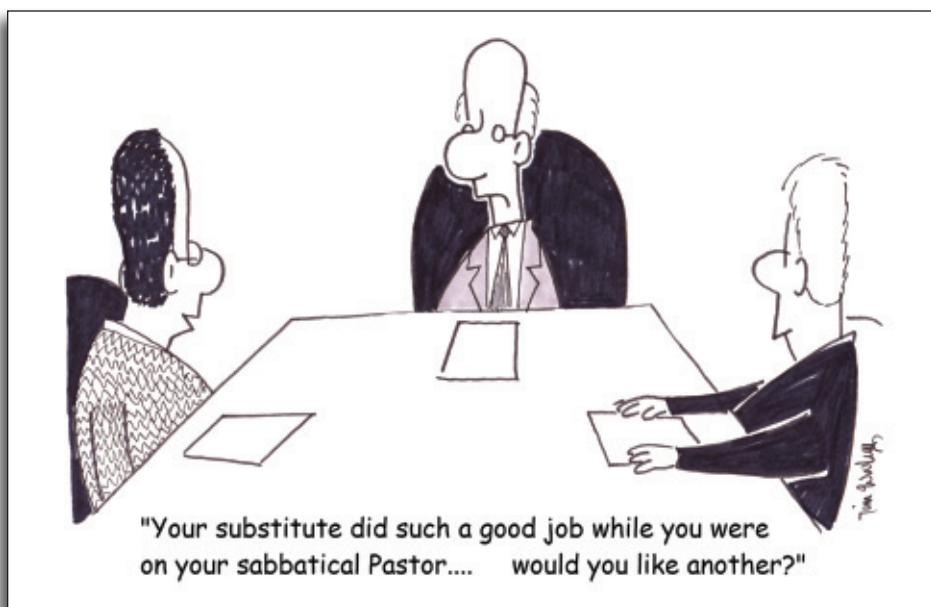
were learning about each place, its history, and what part it played in the Reformation.

In Heidelberg, along with seeing the historical sights of the city, we were interested in seeing a copy of the Heidelberg Catechism. As we talked with fellow worshippers at the church we attended on Sunday, it was suggested that we visit the library. It was here that I had the opportunity to hold in my hands an original manuscript of

the Catechism. How many can say they have had that opportunity? Our evenings in Heidelberg were filled with wonderful concerts and recitals.

From Heidelberg, we traveled to Zurich—one of my favorite places—where the famous Grossmünster dominates the skyline. On Sunday we worshipped at the International English Church, where we met many wonderful people. My wife still talks about speaking with the choir director, a baritone with the Zurich Opera. Following the worship service we were invited by a Dutch couple to their home for a potluck lunch for members of the choir, reminding us of a similar event we host at our home each summer. Our fellowship with the people from the church also led to a rare opportunity to visit Zwingli’s study in Zurich, to actually sit at his desk. These experiences re-affirmed our love for the city and for the people there.

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Then, it was on to Geneva to saturate ourselves in the history of John Calvin. Taking a tour of St. Peter's Church where Calvin preached was a highlight for me. Also, seeing first-hand the archeological dig taking place under the Cathedral, Calvin's Auditorium

where he taught, the Reformation Museum, and the Reformation Wall all were inspiring. We worshipped with the Church of Scotland at the Auditorium on Sunday and again met many wonderful people, including several from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

We traveled through France, Luxembourg and Belgium, back to The Netherlands, with stops along the way to see points of interest. Our last Reformation site was in Dordrecht, The Netherlands, to visit the historical site of the Synod of Dort. We were privileged to have my wife's cousin traveling with us that day acting as our tour guide. He was a font of information about the history of the area and of the events that took place at the Synod.

This sabbatical was a wonderful, relaxing and educational trip of a lifetime. We experienced so many amazing encounters and events, we would be hard pressed to say any one of them was the best. But what *was* so very important is that my wife and I experienced it together, to me the best part of this sabbatical. The outcome was two-fold: Our marriage became even stronger; and our congregation, through its study with us, gained a new perspective on the places of the Reformation and the events surrounding it.

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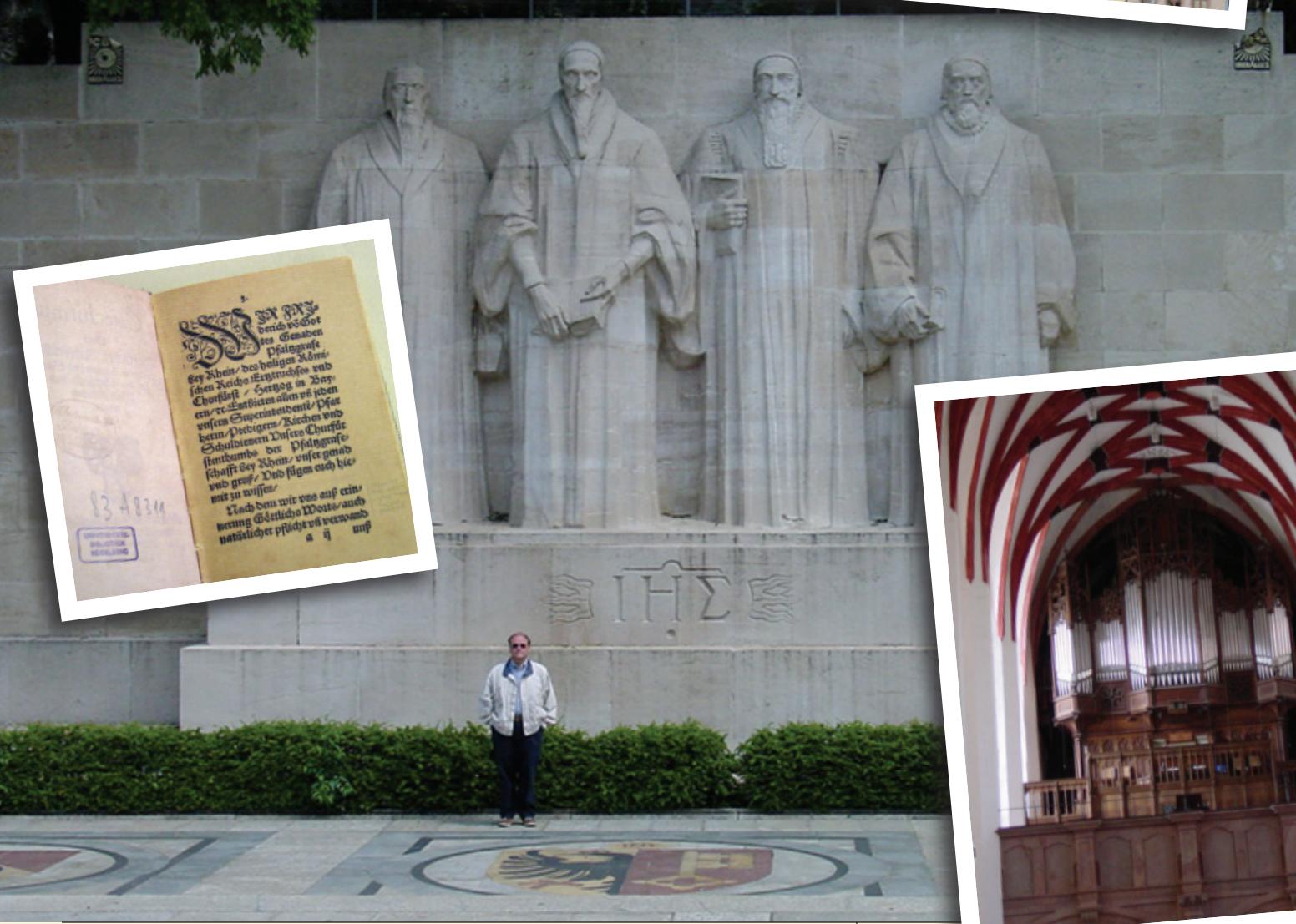
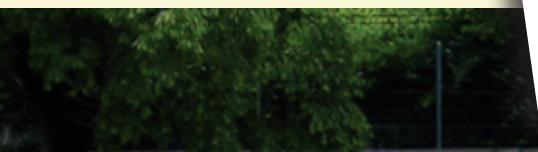
In retrospect, my two sabbaticals were very different, each with its own blessings, opportunities for learning and renewal. The cost for the first was very minimal and was funded by the church we were serving at the time; the second was funded by a generous grant. Both were wonderful experiences for my development as a pastor. I would not trade either one because of what they did for me and for my churches.

Whenever I have the opportunity, I encourage pastors to take sabbaticals. I also encourage them to apply to the Lilly Foundation (Indianapolis) for a sabbatical grant. It awards at least two per state each year, and is presently awarding grants of \$50,000 and more. Such grants pay for all expenses of a sabbatical including travel, passport,

(Continued on page 10)



All along the way, we took pictures and sent them back to our church family via the Internet. Thus, they were not only following our adventures, but were learning about each place, its history, and what part it played in the Reformation.



computers, cameras, telephone, everything one might need including resolution of any tax liability associated with the grant. Also included in the grants are monies the church will need for special programming, speakers and remuneration for those who will lead worship while the pastor is away.

Many of those I have encouraged to apply for such grants have received them. If you are interested and plan to apply, you first need to develop—along with your church—a focus or theme for the sabbatical. The Lilly Foundation wants to see involvement by the church in the planning and execution of the sabbatical. It is also interested in seeing how the church will benefit as a growing community of faith through this experience, and to see that provisions have been made for the care of the church family during the pastor's absence.

Lilly also wishes to see an element of celebration upon a pastor's return from sabbatical. When we returned from our second sabbatical the church had planned a celebratory "Love Feast," a great time of fellowship and fun which included a catered dinner and a program presentation by us. Later, my wife and I presented the church with a large shadow-box wall hanging that contains mementos of the places we visited on our tour of the Reformation cities. This is located in the hallway outside my office and, after 10 years, parishioners still stop by the office area to view it.

The Lilly Foundation understands what a sabbatical is. It looks to award grants for rest and renewal, for a time to "recharge" a pastor's life, a time to "be" instead of always "doing," a time of Sabbath where a pastor comes away to be allowed to rest, where such rest is allowed. We don't need "work units" doing ministry, we need pastors who can model what it means to be renewed and refreshed.

If you are looking simply for time to write your book, or to just take an extended vacation, or if you intend to apply for a sabbatical grant all by yourself without involving your church, you may as well not bother. The Lilly Foundation understands what a sabbatical is. It looks to award grants for rest and renewal, for a time to "recharge" a pastor's life, a time to "be" instead of always "doing," a time of Sabbath where a pastor comes away to be allowed to rest, where such rest is allowed. We don't need "work units" doing ministry, we need pastors who can model what it means to be renewed and refreshed.

I believe that having times of Sabbath and sabbaticals are very important. I wish I personally would have had more opportunities for this. A pastor friend recently said of my impending retirement: "You've had a good run." I believe my two opportunities to take sabbaticals helped to make that possible. I hope the church leaders who read this will seriously consider the idea of establishing sabbatical funds into which their pastors and churches can tap every seven years.

I have seen far too much of what David Ragsdale described in his article "*Compassion Fatigue*". I have sadly watched pastor friends fall by the wayside, leaving the race because they had become "work units," many times of their own doing. God knows better, even giving us a commandment to take a break for a time of renewal and grace:

"In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, *but He rested on the seventh day*. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." (Exodus 20:11 NIV.) I don't believe we can find a better example than that to follow, do you? Start planning your sabbatical *today*. ■



Dale Matthews

*Senior Pastor,
Christ's Community Church*

Bethesda Foundation's first Executive Director Dies

Bethesda Foundation 

Robert Hoffman Tazelaar died on August 4, 2012 and his memorial service was held on Wednesday, August 15, 2012 at Montview Boulevard Presbyterian Church in Denver, Colorado. Bob was the first Executive Director of the Bethesda Foundation, Inc. which is now called QuietWaters Ministries. He served the Foundation from 1972 to the late 1980's and he took part in the creation of the Bethesda Dutch Festival which continued until the mid 1990's. We thank Bob for the legacy he left us at the Bethesda Foundation. ■

Watch for the 2013 spring issue of the *QuietWaters Compass* to learn about what is taking place at the QuietWaters Retreat Center.



There is More to Life than Work

by Jason Hanselman

Remember when *Red Bull* was the only energy drink available? Not anymore: The energy-drink market is booming. Overcaffinated.org reports that 500 energy products are now on the market. It's become a \$3.4 billion dollar industry!

Could it be the energy drink business is doing so well is because . . . we're tired? Empirical as well as medical evidence suggests that our need for sleep is both real and profound:

- The record for the longest period without sleep is 18 days, 21 hours and 40 minutes during a rocking chair marathon. The record holder reported hallucinations, paranoia, blurred vision and slurred speech, along with memory and concentration lapses.
- It's impossible to tell if someone is *really* awake without intentional medical observation. People can take cat naps with their eyes open, without themselves even being aware of it.
- If you fall asleep at night in less than five minutes, you're thought to be sleep deprived. (The ideal time is between 10 and 15 minutes, meaning you're still tired enough to sleep deeply, but not so exhausted you feel sleepy during the day, according to abc.net.au/science/sleep/facts.htm).

Think you can get by with *less* sleep?

"The percentage of the population who needs less than five hours of

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sleep per night, rounded to a whole number, is zero," according to Thomas Roth of the Henry Ford Sleep Disorders and Research Center (as reported by Tony Schwartz of the *Energy Project*).

Sleep deprivation is *not* spiritual. In other words, working long hours with no sleep or time off does *not* make us more pleasing to the Lord. God gave us rest . . . to rest. You can accomplish far more after a good night's sleep than you can by habitually "burning the midnight oil." According to sleep experts, a good night's rest requires between seven and eight hours. Many leaders—especially those in ministry—claim they don't need as much sleep as other people; some even claim they need only *four* hours of sleep per night.

Why do we find it so difficult to rest?

Struggling with rest is nothing new. The appropriateness of rest dates back to the beginning of time. From *The Book of Genesis*:

Chapter 1 (28) God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish

of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (29) Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. (30) And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so. (31) God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

Chapter 2 (1) Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. (2) By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. (3) And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done (Genesis 1:27-2:3)

One phrase is repeated in the first two verses of chapter two: *the seventh day*. As none of the other days in the story are mentioned twice, Jewish literature suggests that elements such as repeating words or phrases help the reader understand what was most important. So, apparently, the *seventh* day is very important.

After God finishes His work, He takes a rest on the seventh day. Make no mistake, though: When the Bible says God rested, it does *not* mean He was

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God gave us rest . . . to rest.**

**When was the last time you slowed
down long enough just to rest and
focus on what God wants to tell you?**



exhausted, worn out, looking for a way to take some time off. The word rest here means to *cease*. It is a rest of completion, a rest of accomplishment. It is God is saying: “Yes, this is good, and nothing more needs to be added.”

And then God takes note of His handiwork and blesses what He has done. He calls the seventh day—the *rest* day—*holy*. And isn’t it interesting that this day of rest is the first thing God calls “holy,” giving such significance to an increment of *time* rather than a person or place?

Thousands of years later, in our culture enslaved by the tyranny of time, the idea of getting rest is still relevant. Most people are governed by clock, schedule or calendar. Time is considered one of, if not our *most* valuable commodity. My time is often worth more to me than my money. Why? Because I can neither invent, create nor purchase more time, and I certainly can’t get back any I’ve lost.

It may sound crazy for somebody who’s only in their 30s to be thinking about how much time is left, but I feel like time is flying by quickly. My children are growing up before my eyes; in fact, my oldest is 13 and nearly as tall as I am. The things in my life are flying right past me. Where does the time go? Somewhere, way back at the beginning of time, God knew many of us would struggle with time issues—and fatigue issues—so the implications of getting rest are significant.

The point is that time is holy, it is separate and distinct, and it *matters* to God what we do with it.

Let me add one more observation about the cited text from Genesis. Notice God invites us into a paradox.

Despite His “day of rest,” God is unquestionably pro-work. But note well: He is *not* in favor of his children becoming workaholics. Why? Because too many of us—pastors, in particular—find more of our identity in the work we do than in our God. For the workaholic, come to worship the false gods of *activity*, and *productivity*—resting is a weakness, a sin. So how can we align these two seemingly disparate impulses toward work and rest?

On one hand, He seems to say, “I’ve got some important work for you to do, and *you* are absolutely important. In fact, let us work together and be partners and you will even have a say in how things are governed.” The other side of this paradox is simply that God does not *need* our help to govern anything.

We have infinite value to God and He invites us to work *with* Him. At the same time, we’re also expendable because we’re not adding anything to creation God couldn’t add Himself. Remember that, after all is said and done, God indicates that He is going to rest on the seventh day because what He has done is so good *nothing* else need be added.

The seventh day, the day of rest, reminds us to stop working. When God got finished working on that day, it served as a statement to us that nothing was lacking. God had and *has* everything under control. The sun will rise tomorrow (whether or not *you* do), rain will still fall (whether *you* work at it or not), everything will go on as it’s supposed to because God is in control and we’re not.

I need to be reminded of these things, don’t you? There are days I get out of bed and begin thinking about things I must do, and I sometimes wonder, “Does what I do really matter? Does it really have much value in the grand scheme of things?”

God reminds me: “Yes! What you do matters, and I have created something important for your life; you are valuable to me.” *And*, at the same time, I need to be reminded that He is God and I am not!

How about another paradox? I’m infinitely valuable, and absolutely disposable.

What can we take from this ancient wisdom? And how can we apply it to our lives today? It is obvious to me that work and rest are closely tied.

Here are a few things we can learn. Some people hate work, and can never find anything good about it. Ever work alongside *that guy*? He hates the product, the industry, the boss: the unholy trinity of work-hater guy. (How do those guys get hired in the first place?)

Nowhere does God say work is a bad thing. Nowhere does He exclaim, “TMIF! Thank *Me* it’s Friday! I need some time off from this lousy job!”

Clearly, God teaches that work is good—even if we don’t happen to like our jobs—and we should spend six of seven days doing it. God’s primary command is for us is to work, to create, and to govern (Genesis 1:28).

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God helps us find a balance between too much work and too much time off with one day of rest out of seven.

Despite appearances to the contrary, the point of *rest*—vacations, time off and so forth—is not to represent the holy grail for work haters. A day of rest was *not* some kind of a holiday for the Jewish people during which to pamper themselves. It was special because the focus wasn’t on themselves, not on what they did; the focus was all about God. It was a special day to honor God. We can learn to honor God in our times of rest just as much as we can in our times of working for Him.

Some of us need to be reminded that there is more to life than work. A period of rest allows us the freedom to do something with our time *besides* the work we do, a time where we are not *defined* by what we do. It becomes a day when we remember that the only identity that matters is being a child of God . . . and that is more than enough.

If you find time to rest, I believe God has something crucial to tell you. What we really need to hear is the same thing Jesus heard the day of His baptism when His Father proclaimed: “This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.”

In American culture, busy-ness is seen as a virtue. Consequently, many of us are running in so many directions and preoccupied with so many worldly details that we can’t hear what God really wants to tell us. Here are the things I believe God does *not* want to tell us. (Again, I am presuming on God a bit here; please indulge me):

- “Great job at the gym! You’ll have that six-pack in no time.”
- “That PowerPoint presentation was the best in the history of the world. Atta boy, Tiger!”
- “You got an ‘A’ in history? That will solve *all* of your problems!”
- “Your children are so well behaved! You’ll be Parent of the Year before you know it.”

Staying healthy, doing well in your career, school and family life are all very important, but we let our careers, our appearance, our friends and our families define us. Why? Because we wear ourselves out spending every last second dealing with matters which

may strike us as important, but which are truly temporary. It’s time to slow down and rest. God has something important to tell us, but we may not hear Him if we don’t pause for a day of rest and listening.

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Those are the words we need to hear most: “I love you and I am pleased with you.”

When was the last time you slowed down long enough just to rest and focus on what God wants to tell you? Do you know if you are well rested? Can you discern the signs of fatigue? Take a few minutes to complete a simple “energy audit” on the Energy Project website: www.theenergyproject.com/tools/the-energy-audit#step1.

How did you score? We can help you find rest if you need it. For more suggestions about rest, call **866-5-WATERS**, or email us at info@QWaters.org. ■



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“He leads me beside quiet waters.” Psalm 23:2



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