

**April 23, 2018**  
**By Jim Mathis**

## THE WORKPLACE – AND THE SABBATH

Many of us struggle with not having enough time to get things done. Employers often expect us to be on call 24 hours a day. Self-employed people have an even greater challenge in trying to get away for a few days – or even a few hours. Studies have shown that productivity drops dramatically if we do not take time to rest to “sharpen our saw” to borrow a lumber industry term. Many of my best ideas for my business came while I was on vacation: away from work, getting a new perspective, gaining a new thought from a totally random source.

In the biblical creation story, God created the world in six days and then He rested on the seventh day. The idea of resting on the seventh day was codified when the Ten Commandments were handed down to Moses. Jesus clarified the Sabbath by teaching that honoring the Sabbath is not about following a set of rules; the seventh day is for man, He said, a time of rest, reflection, and recuperation – time to slowing down and enjoying God’s world.

After Jesus was crucified, He rose from the dead on the first day of the week. Because of that, the first Christians began to meet together on the first day of the week to celebrate His resurrection. Over the centuries, the idea of the Sabbath for Christians has shifted from the seventh day to the first day of the week. This has always been a source of conflict and confusion for me. Should we rest on the seventh day, Saturday, or the first day, Sunday? Or maybe our calendars are just labeled wrong.

Recently I have begun to realize that both days are right. We need to honor the seventh day of the week as a day of rest. My wife calls it a REAL Saturday, meaning a day to rest, reflect, restore, spend time with friends, have a relaxing

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meal, and simply enjoy being alive. Sunday then becomes the day to honor Jesus Christ and remember the resurrection. It is time to begin each week by giving the first few hours to God, sort of the first fruits of our time at the start of our week.

Saturday, the seventh day of the week, becomes the day of rest. Sunday, the first day of the week, becomes a time to worship God and get a good start on the week. People in vocational ministry, or those engaged in any kind of volunteer position at their church, understand that Sunday is often the most stressful day of the week, not at all a day for resting. Even those without official responsibilities know just getting the family ready for church and arriving there on time can be a hassle.

With this in mind, I often start my actual work week on Sunday afternoon or evening, planning my weekly schedule and getting a few things in order. This makes sense for me, realizing I have rested on Saturday and have already given the first few hours of the week to the Lord. Now it is time to work until the next Saturday, the true Sabbath – a real day for resting – knowing I am mentally, physically, and spiritually ready for a new week.

I am not suggesting this practice my wife and I follow should be normative for everyone, but it works for me. We take time for actual rest, as well as designate time for formal worship. It is how we apply what Jesus said: “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27).

The key is that we do make certain to experience the proper rest, a time for physical, mental, emotional – and spiritual – recharging. Perhaps the best-known psalm tells us about the Shepherd (our Lord) and the care He provides for His sheep (us). The first two verses of Psalm 23 tell us, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul.” God wants us fully rested,

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eager and prepared for whatever He calls us to do, and for any challenges coming our way.

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## Reflection/Discussion Question

1. When you think of “the Sabbath,” what comes to your mind?
2. The tradition of observing a formal day for Sabbath rest has been forgotten or abandoned by many. Do you consciously observe a Sabbath day of rest? If so, what does it look like for you? If not, do you have a specific reason for not doing so?
3. Some people view the command to “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy” (the fourth of the Ten Commandments) as a legalistic practice that no longer applies to us in the 21st century. How do you feel about that?
4. What are some of the consequences of not intentionally observing a day for rest? What do you think of designating one day – perhaps a Saturday – for actual rest, and then following that with a time for worshiping God to start Sunday morning, before resuming work?

## NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

*Psalm 37:7,25,34; 46:10, 116:7, 127:2; Proverbs 10:29, 14:26; Ezekiel 34:15; Hebrews 4:8-11*

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