

**October 8, 2018**  
**By Sergio Fortes**

## *The Underappreciated Gift of Rest*

Recently I spent an entire Saturday at home doing...nothing. I had planned to go to the beautiful park of the small Brazilian town where I live, and stroll among its giant trees, lakes, and open areas where some families enjoy friendly picnics.

For some reason, I could not do any of this. Sloth - you might call it laziness, or spiritual apathy and inactivity - took hold of me. I read a little bit, watched TV for a while, ate, and slept. At the end of the day I felt badly, however, almost guilty. I could not help feeling I had wasted the day being unproductive; it seemed like a day I had lost.

Talking about this with my daughter, a psychologist, she caught my attention when she offered a different perspective: "No, Father, rest is a gift from GOD. Receive this gift without guilt and enjoy it." Inactivity - and rest. A gift from God?

This reminded me that the preceding week had been intense, with lots of hard work, along with considerable traveling. After that, I needed a break time, an opportunity to become re-energized. I also remembered that the Bible tells us that even God, "*having finished his work, he rested*" (*Genesis 2: 7*).

I do not know why God needed to rest, but it clearly says He "rested." It makes sense then, that created in His image, each week after finishing our work, we also should take time to rest.

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Room 905, Nathan Center, 580G-K, Nathan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong  
TEL.: (852) 2805 1923 Fax (852)3747 6218 ▪ E-MAIL: enquiry@CBMC.org.hk

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Once, the apostles returned to Jesus from a ministry tour He had assigned to them. In giving their report, they recounted days of hard work and emotional weariness. They had not even taken time to eat. Jesus' response to their weariness provided for them a significant lesson: *"Let us go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile" (Mark 6.31).*

A story is told that one time the priest of a small village, after years of hard work, communicated to his parishioners during his Sunday morning sermon that he intended to take a few days off. At the exit of the church, three old sisters, objected to his plan, expressing their disagreement: "How can you take a vacation? Do not you know that the devil does not take a vacation?" they argued.

The old priest replied with humility and wisdom: "That's why I need a vacation; not to do the works of the devil."

The daily business and professional challenges we face are gigantic. We cannot always achieve the goals we want. The results are sometimes trifling; sometimes we feel as if we have accomplished nothing at all. As a consequence, we are tempted to think we have no right for leisure, that we have work that must be done.

We unconsciously punish ourselves with weekend programs and frenetic activity, including everything we can imagine - except rest. No leisure. Some people even speak about "creative leisure," perhaps an unconscious reaction that makes us feel that even in rest, we should be producing something worthwhile.

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But there is no need for such self-inflicted "punishment." As my daughter reminded me, rest is a gift from God. The next time you decide to rest, there is no reason for guilt or feeling that doing something always is better than doing nothing. Instead, give yourself permission to do nothing - and do it with joy and in perfect peace, as a GOD's gift for you. *"I myself will tend my sheep and give them a place to lie down in peace, says the Sovereign Lord" (Ezekiel 34:5).*

© 2018. J. Sergio Fortes is a consultant in strategic management and a specialist in corporate leadership. He also is a member of CBMC Brazil.

## Reflection/Discussion Question

1. How do you feel when you are afforded a time to rest, with no specific activities scheduled or expected of you? Do you welcome those times, or do you feel guilty, as if you are obligated to be doing something?
2. What does a meaningful time of rest look like for you?
3. When the old priest mentioned in this "Monday Manna" said he planned to rest so that he would "not do the works of the devil," what do you think he meant?
4. As you consider taking time to rest, especially after a particularly demanding period at work or an extremely busy schedule, do you ever make an intentional effort to include God in your time for rest? Explain your answer.

## NOTE:

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

*Exodus 33:12-14; 1 Kings 19:3-9; Psalm 37:3-7,34, 46:10; Isaiah 40:31; Matthew 11:28*

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