

AN IMPORTANT PART OF WORK IS GETTING ENOUGH REST**By Robert J. Tamasy**

Someone described spectator sports in this way: Thousands of fans sitting in their seats – people desperately in need of exercise – watching athletes desperately in need of rest. Many of us have a great need for more physical activity. At the same time, however, rest is something we also require – especially as we negotiate the stressful, frenetic business and professional world.

Years ago, I had been in the midst of a very hectic schedule: Lots of early morning meetings, demanding daily schedules and deadlines, and a considerable amount of travel. An illness suddenly stopped me in my tracks. Forced to remain at home for several days, I would sit down and try to do some important reading but very quickly would fall asleep. I had not realized how weary I had become. A few days later I was back to work, reinvigorated, and keenly aware of my need for getting sufficient rest.

In some professions the 40-hour week is regarded as working ‘part-time.’ It is not unusual for people in some businesses to work 70, 80, even 100 hours a week! While there might be times when such schedules are unavoidable, working at that pace over long periods of time will inevitably take a toll physically, mentally, emotionally, relationally – and spiritually.

The Scriptures speak to this. While we often read calls to action and faithful service to God and His purposes, we also find instructions to rest – both body and spirit. Here are some examples:

Rest is fitting for everyone – even God. The first chapter of Genesis describes all God did in creating the heavens, the earth, and all of the universe. Then we are told once His work was done, He chose to rest. “By the seventh day God had finished the work He had been doing; so on the seventh day He rested from all His work” (Genesis 2:2).

God designed us for rest. One of the 10 Commandments is for us to set aside a day for “sabbath rest,” hitting the pause button from all our labors, regardless of what form they may take. No matter who we are, no matter what we do, we all need time to rest. “Six days you shall labor, but on the seventh day you shall rest, even during the plowing season and harvest you must rest” (Exodus 34:21).

Sabbath rest is a gift, not a burden. When God ordained the Sabbath day, He did not do so to institute new regulations. He did it for our benefit, to remind us of the importance of rest and renewal. “Then [Jesus] said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath’” (Mark 2:27).

Taking time to rest can be a form of worship. One of the worst admonitions anyone can make is, “Do as I say, not as I do.” When God instructs His people to rest, He points to Himself

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as an example of doing just that. “There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God, for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from His” (Hebrews 4:9-10).

There is a time to work – and a time to rest. Many of us are busily trying to do things for God, and that is good. But the Scriptures also tell us there is a time to slow down, rest, and focus on Him. “Trust in the Lord and do good.... Delight yourself in the Lord.... Commit your way to the Lord.... Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him...” (Psalm 37:3-7).

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Describe your typical work schedule each week. If an objective observer were to evaluate it, do you think you would be regarded as working excessively, even being a so-called ‘workaholic’? Why or why not?
2. How good are you at resting? When you take time to rest and relax, what does that look like? Do you think you give yourself sufficient time to recharge physically and mentally?
3. What role do you think that rest – taking a deliberate break from work, for a few minutes or a day or even a week – can play in our spiritual growth and development?
4. In what ways can a commitment to getting sufficient rest affect our productivity at work, as well as our sense of joy, satisfaction and fulfillment in what we do?

Challenge for This Week

Looking at the week ahead of you, do you feel rested, refreshed and renewed, or do you feel weary and beaten down even before the week gets underway?

Take some time to pray and reflect on your balance between work and rest. We are called to work diligently and faithfully, but if we are not sufficiently rested, eventually that will be reflected in the quality and quantity of our work. It might be helpful to discuss this with a mentor and small group of trusted friends.

NOTE:

For more about what the Bible says, consider the following passages: Deuteronomy 5:12-14; Psalm 23:1-4, 46:10; Isaiah 40:29-31; Matthew 11:28-30; Mark 6:30-31

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