

Rediscovering Leisure



Antonio sat on the bench during a break in the retreat and talked out loud to whoever would listen. A floor trader on Wall Street, the quiet of the Christian retreat center was obviously an anomaly in his life. "I could stay here for months!" he said with an enthusiasm more wistful than jubilant. "No cell phones, no computers, no shouting and jostling. This is the life!"

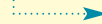
A pastor from a rural church sat near him and echoed his comments. "I know what you mean. This is the most relaxed I've been in months."

That was obviously too much for Robert, who was working two jobs to make ends meet. "What are you

talking about?" he said to the pastor. "I would kill to have a job like yours. No bosses. You get to set your own hours. Somebody pays you to read the Bible. You have no idea what it's like in the real world."

All three men were burning out, and at least two of the three thought a change was the only way to relieve the stress in their worlds. Maybe the pastor did, as well, but at this point he was embarrassed enough he wasn't talking any more.

If you were sitting there that day, how would you have responded to this exchange?



Scripture Passages

Genesis 3:8-9

Luke 5:16

John 21:10-14

Acts 1:3-8

Luke 10:38-42

In Depth

"I'm just so tired." This certainly ranks among the more common phrases we at Marketplace Network hear when we meet with workplace Christians. In fact, it's a

common theme when we meet with any group of workers, whether they are Christians or not. But Christians are often surprised and discouraged by the fact they're tired.

In a world where the pace is constantly quickening, what role do leisure and Sabbath play for workplace followers of Christ?

G.K. Chesterton describes the concept of leisure as having three possibilities: Freedom to do something, freedom to do anything, and the freedom to do nothing. List some examples of the freedom to do something.

List some examples of the freedom to do anything.

List some examples of the freedom to do nothing.

Now describe some of the reasons you or others don't engage in leisure activities.

In an exceptional article on leisure, R. Paul Stevens says: "Sabbath is a divine requirement, leisure is a divine permission." What do you think he means by that, and why is that distinction be useful in your life?

In Lesson One of this series, we learned the reason we exist is to be in relationship with God. Sabbath exists to serve this relationship in at least three ways identified in the following passages. Discuss your reactions to these statements:

The Sabbath has been made holy by God, and must be treated as holy by us. (Exodus 20: 8-11)

When we rest on the Sabbath, it often has a chain reaction, enabling others to rest because we rest. (Exodus 23:12)

The Sabbath exists to provide physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual rest of human beings. (Mark 2:27)

These passages (and many like them) describe the importance of Sabbath, and even begin to hint at the importance of rest. But what about leisure? What are some of the ways leisure can inhibit our relationship with God?

In each of the following passages, try to discover clues that demonstrate ways leisure can be used to encourage our relationship with God, and to strengthen the value of our labor. Write down or discuss what you find.

Luke 5:16; Luke 10:38-42. If leisure is the freedom to do nothing, how does what Jesus did here fit in that definition? What ideas does it offer you for the use of leisure in your own career?

John 21:10-14. What is the advantage the disciples have over everyone else in their relationship with Jesus, and how might that be classified as leisure? Are there parallels in our own lives of the bonding and camaraderie that must have been present on the shores of the lake? Why are they useful parts of our journey?

Acts 1:3-8. Remembering leisure is also freedom to do something, what is the “something” the disciples did during the forty days after Jesus’ resurrection?

How did this equip them to do what they needed to do when they assumed their new roles? What does this suggest as a possible “something” for you to do in your leisure time?

Examine Genesis 13:8-18. What does this passage teach us about the mixture of God’s control of all things and the freedom to do anything as a definition of leisure? How can this free us from the myth of the idea only one path will work for us if we want to be useful to God?

Finally, examine Genesis 3:8-9. How did God intend our days to end when He created us? How might we recover some of this in our daily lives this week?

Common Sense and Eternal Principles

- There is a difference between leisure and Sabbath. While God commands the second one, he permits (and even endorses) the first one.
- Leisure is anything that gives us a break from our primary career. As such, leisure may be as simple as weekend naps, or as complex as organizing mission trips overseas.
- Leisure should restore us, not drain us.
- Leisure enhances the value of our workplace contributions to God’s kingdom by helping us to have a broader picture than the narrow tunnel visible from only our jobs.
- Leisure looks different in every Christian’s life.