

# Legacy Leadership Collective / Spiritual Disciplines / *Sabbath Rest*

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- Resting, as simple and easy of an exercise as it is, seems to be such a struggle to us all. *Why does our soul struggle so violently to take a deep breath? Why don't we rest well?*
- I know that one reason is there's no lofty reputation gained when it comes to resting. No glory in resting. There is so much work to be done and it "isn't going to do itself."
- I also know we crave to be in control. Even if you aren't at work, you're still likely working in your mind because it gives you the sense of control over circumstances.
  - Even to anxiously fret gives the illusion that we are at least attempting to control a big mess, if even just to strategize in our minds.
  - To rest, truly rest and let it all go, feels too eerily similar to giving up.
- We also don't guard the calendar well. Even when we're able to rest in our hearts, we're more Labradoodle than Doberman when it comes guarding our recuperation.
  - *"We all know we need rest from work, but we don't realize we have to work hard just to rest. We have to plan for breaks. We have to schedule time to be unscheduled. That's the way life is for most of us. Scattered, frantic, boundary-less busyness comes naturally. The rhythms of work and rest require planning."*
    - In other words, we may be working poorly because we do a C- job of etching rest into our bloated calendars.

## **"So, what is a sabbath anyway?"**

- Whether it's a day, hour, or week, sabbath rest is stopping, surrendering, remembering, rejoicing, resting, and refreshment.
  - I'm risking over simplicity but this kind of rest is over thought and made unnecessarily complex.
  - *Sabbath rest is finding the tail end of work and not stepping back over the line to do more work.* It's laying a bookmark down, whether it is for a minute or a month. It's lying fallow and not plowing or producing.
- Sabbath rest isn't simply retreating to a cave to be alone for the sake of being alone, nor is it the flurry of leisure activity we do on the weekends. It's being still in the radiance of what God has done, remembering where He is taking us.

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin DeYoung: *Crazy Busy: A Mercifully Short Book About A Really Big Problem* (Crossway, Wheaton 2013) location 1097

- This place of reflection is where we surrender to God's gaze and grace. It's where we memorialize the gospel's active work for us.
- It doesn't have to be all about reading and praying either. Resting in the Lord is enjoying and celebrating His grace. I'm able to celebrate and enjoy this grace in throwing my kids around the house, making out with my wife, standing around a fire pit, thinking, dreaming, praying, singing, reading, running, sleeping, creating and anything else that refreshes and energizes in the Lord.
- My diagnostic in sabbath rest is simple: *"Am I trying to produce something right now - secretly getting work done, but dressing it in things that look restful? Is my mind at rest, or just the keyboard?"*
  - You'll know when you are experiencing a sabbath moment by how you feel when you're done. If you feel unchanged, you most likely were working or needed more time.
  - The psalmist tells us, "It is vain for you to rise up early, to retire late, to eat the bread of painful labors; for He gives to His beloved even in his sleep"<sup>2</sup>
  - Is your wick short? Are you acting like a donkey after resting in the Lord? Something might have gone wrong in your attempt at a sabbath rest.
    - If we violate the sabbath rest, something morphs in our soul. We start to get proud, edgy, anxious.
    - Sabbath rest knocks the edges off by reminding us that we are God's prized children, He has won, and we are safe. In sabbath rest we enjoy the overwhelming truth that God is excited about us and desires to engage us intimately.
- *Sabbath rest is not what we do when we are tired. It's what we do because we are cherished.*
  - We're a sabbath people because we need not work for our acceptance.
  - Our hero has worked for us, and created space for us to rest. We don't push away from the workstation and laptop because everything is finally finished, but so that we can trust and remember that God has it all under control and is working powerfully as we lean into his might and brilliance.
  - We are the sabbath people of God, created to rest in him.

### **Sabbath Counterfeit #1: Leisure**

- Charles Haddon Spurgeon once said, *"Quietude, which some men cannot abide because it reveals their inward poverty, is as a palace of cedar to the wise, for along its hallowed courts the King in His beauty deigns to walk."*
  - Inward poverty is less fun to meditate on than putting a lifejacket on before we crawl on a jet ski. One of the counterfeits we buy into instead of sabbath rest is leisure activity.

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<sup>2</sup> Psalm 127:2 (ESV)

- **Leisure** is typically defined as free time spent away from necessary activities, which is also very healthy. It looks a lot like spinning through episodes of whatever is trending or tailgating with your best friends.
- Leisure however can also exhaust you. *“Leisure might be the name we give our time away from work, but it is not a synonym for rest.”*<sup>3</sup>
- Many times on a sabbath day I mess up by spending the majority of time in leisure. Exhausted, broke, and sunburned, I’ll be edgy the following day or week.
- This should also explain the vacation syndrome, which I call the need we all have for a vacation *after* our vacation. Nothing says, “I need a vacation” like a vacation at Disney World or snow skiing.
- I’m not saying that we should avoid leisure activities in our sabbath moments, days, or weeks, but we should be careful to not conflate the two.

### **Sabbath Counterfeit #2: Isolation**

- Isolation and solitude also aren’t the same thing. *Solitude is a chosen separation for the refining of the soul. Isolation is what you crave when you neglect the first.*
- Jesus shows us vividly what solitude looks like, but he never indulged in isolation.
- As an evolving introvert, I can only take so much stimulation and then I need a crib to make it all stop. At that moment, it’s not solitude I crave as much as isolation. I want to be separate for the sake of being separate. I think this is a mistake for me and others like me.
- Don’t misunderstand me. I’m not suggesting we don’t get alone ever. Jesus leads us well in being alone, *yet we ought to pursue aloneness not as much to escape people and feed our flesh, but to escape frenetic life and feed our soul.*
  - The difference here is so subtle. After Sunday 2:00 P.M., my flesh desires isolation, yet I won’t find what I’m looking for there. I can only find satisfying contentment in solitude and in sabbath rest.

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<sup>3</sup>Richard Swenson, *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives*, (NavPress, Colorado Springs, 2004) page 198

## French Resting: When the Sabbath is Biohacked

*“God gave me the gospel and a horse. I’ve killed the horse, so I can no longer preach the gospel.”*  
Robert Murray McCheyne

In the 1700’s the French developed a different calendar in a futile attempt to scrub any residue of God from how we divide time. Occurring during the French Revolution when sanitizing culture from God, they cooked up what is called the French Revolutionary Calendar. The main things we’d all notice immediately is the months have different names. The new month also had ten days in the week instead of seven. They were fascinated with the number ten, which is why this time period is also when we inherited the metric system. This only lasted around 12 years however because Napoleon thought it was dumb and quashed it, returning back to our current calendar. One of the primary aversions to the new calendar was the amount of days *off* of work. They went from no less than 52 days of recovery a year to around 35. That’s over a 40% reduction in recovery time and workers were getting burned out, overworked, over fatigued...and grumpy. They revolted and things went back to normal. Unfortunately for us all the metric system stayed.

The moral to this history lesson is that God knew best what we’d need regarding rest. When we try to biohack this, we burn out. We are tempted to operate on the French’s busted up and cobwebbed calendar. Even if you aren’t uber disciplined in reserving a day of sabbath rest every week, I hope you can at least admit working everyday with no retreat isn’t helping.

### Weekly Rest

- It’s not really the goal of this class to lay down a lengthy apologetic on what and where the sabbath ought to be in our lives, but I will submit that it’s a Biblical imperative that ought to be honored.
- I hear too often that we’re liberated from the bondage of a sabbath rule in our life, but the cross and vacant grave doesn’t nullify the gift of the sabbath to us, *it focuses and recalibrates it*.
- I’m totally convinced that people don’t take a day of rest because the work isn’t done yet. But can we all be honest for a minute? The work will never be done. Not if you’re doing it right.
  - If you finally get to the bottom of your To Do list, then you have missed the mark somewhere. Our lists will always be flush.
  - *We don’t rest because we run out of things to do and get bored, but because we’ll never run out of things to do.*
  - We need God to replenish, remind, and recalibrate our hearts as we employ our effort for his glory.
- Consider the context of the sabbath when the Jewish nation received it as a gift. Not only did they work six days and rest on the seventh, but they even rested the land.
  - There was certainly work that could have been done, but a picture was being illustrated of God’s people resting in the arms of a sufficiently active God. Later this would come into full focus as Jesus worked and plowed for us so that we’d enjoy an eternal sabbath in him. Jesus is our sabbath rest.

- Kevin DeYoung relates it similarly, “*The observance of this mandate is a day of commemoration of God’s creative rest, a celebration that Christ has entered that rest, that believers have begun to enter such rest, and a pointing forward to believers completely entering that rest.*”<sup>4</sup>
- Simply, we’re a sabbath people who have a gift of sabbath rest we get to celebrate.
- I’m not going to get into a slap fight over whether this ought to be on Sunday or Saturday, but I hope you see that the Creational mandate of the sabbath agrees with what the French found out the hard way - we need rest and we need it *often*.
  - He made the sabbath for man, not man for the sabbath. He did this because man needs it.
- Additionally, consider that your “day off” is not always a very good sabbath. Sometimes a day off is just another day of work in a different garden.
  - Trading staff meetings for broken toilet plumbing. Replacing the mouse and keyboard for the water pump on the family van. Even off days spent on the lake may be more tiring than the workday you left the day before.
  - Recall how leisure isn’t work, but it also isn’t always rest. I personally long for the off days where I can sit and rest and watch at least one half of a good college football game, run a trail where I won’t see anyone, pray, catch up on some reading, destroy my kids in whatever game still works on the Wii, etc...
    - Those days are full of rest mingled with a bit of leisure. I’m not fixing, solving, or being taxed. I’m simply day off-ing.
    - I’ve also had off days where I’ve hiked in the sun for over six or seven miles with grumpy girls or spent the day at Dollywood.
    - Those days have me coming home more wiped out than any workday. That was a day off, *but not a suitable rest day*.
  - I’m drawing a distinction between resting and day off-ing because too many will take a day off that exhausts and consider it a sabbath rest day. Wrong. If you enter the next day still emotionally wonky from the day off, it may have been a day off, but it most certainly wasn’t a restful day.
  - On weeks like that, you’d be wise to take an *extra* day, or a couple half days. Predictably, I get push back here due to the reduction in scheduled work time that leaves people, but remember, *rest is more than not working*.
- Be especially discerning on heavy weeks where the day off is also abnormally intense. On those weeks, be diligent to create space to rest in God.

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<sup>4</sup> Kevin DeYoung: *Crazy Busy: A Mercifully Short Book About A Really Big Problem* (Crossway, Wheaton 2013) location 1005

- For example, my rest day is Monday and my day off is typically Saturday. If my Saturday is very restful and I have a lot of flex where I can steer it, then I may choose to work a bit on Monday afternoon.
- Right now however we're in a home remodel, so Saturdays are full of flooring, demolition, installation, and a billion trips to Lowe's because I got the wrong thing. Those days aren't restful at all, but wear me down. I'll be needing that Monday after all.
- Too many people self congratulate themselves on working six days and checking the "rest" box because they take Saturday off. Maybe, maybe not. It depends on how taxing that Saturday is.
- When we act French and try to hack the work/rest rhythm, we are recruiting damage and sickness and spiritual burnout.
  - No one burns out for skipping a rest day, but everyone burns out if they skip a big bucket of rest days. If you're not building these wisely into your calendar and guarding them, you'll see health that's deteriorating.