

Creation Rest
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Brian R. Wipf

God made the world a certain way. What I mean is the world works a certain way by God's design. Take this screw and screwdriver as an example. If I want to drive this screw into the the board, which way do I turn? Right. Listen up kids: *righty tighty, lefty loosey*. It works that way because that's the way it was made. If you try and drive this screw in while turning to the left, counter clockwise, you won't make the progress you want because that's not the way it was made. God made the world like that. God made the world to work a certain way; and if you don't learn that way and adjust yourself to it, the world and life will kick back hard against you in very unpleasant ways. You won't live fruitfully or effectively in this world.

Maybe you've heard me read or state this slogan: *reality is your friend*. I love this slogan. It means there is truth in our world: reality. And it's good for me to know what is true or real and to become friends with it. Sometimes reality is hard and painful; sometimes it's not. But either way, I'm better off when I know and align myself with reality. I don't know if you've noticed, but reality won't align itself to you. Reality is what it is and you have to adjust to it. Young people, especially junior high, senior high students, our post-HS crowd, get this now, please, for your own good. Life will go so much better for you when you learn how it works and you align yourself to it. God gave you the book of Proverbs just for this reason. He mercifully wrote 31 chapters for you young people to see how God's world works. Study it. Live by it.

There are two realities in life that come right out of creation that I want to highlight for you in our *The Lord, Our Maker* sermon series. This Sunday we are going to examine how rest is part of God's creation. Next Sunday, we are going to talk about God's design of gender. Both rest and gender differences come straight out of God's creative design of our world. To live fruitfully and honorably in our world, these are two important realities you need to understand and align yourselves to.

We can make two mistakes with rest. The first mistake is turning rest into a goal. When rest becomes our goal, that's what we live for. When rest and recreation -- that's what recreation is: recreation is playful rest from responsibility and work -- when rest and recreation are placed at the center of our lives, everything else bows it's knees to them in humble submission. And that, of course, is a mistake we are tempted to make. Big things like retirement can become an ungodly goal where you only work, you only commit yourself to things that don't interrupt your restful and recreational aspirations in retirement. Hunting or camping become goals: instead of them being periodic breaks from the important responsibilities of life, they become the things we *live for*. Some of you are even tempted to neglect regular worship and hearing God's word on Sundays because rest and recreation have become a goal. But small opportunities to rest, too, can become our goals. Weekends and watching TV in the evening become *our reason* for working all week or getting up in the morning. Now, just to make sure you are hearing me well: I'm not saying any of those things are wrong to do; what's wrong is turning them into goals. Even

in your retirement years, rest is never meant to be a goal. Instead, all of these opportunities for rest are meant to be seen and received as gifts from God to be used so we are more fruitful for the kingdom work he has given us to do. And yes, we do that kingdom work until the day we die.

The opposite mistake we make with rest is ignoring it. I have made and still make this mistake from time to time. I made this mistake this year. With Pastor Tim on his much needed and deserved renewal leave over the summer months, I didn't plan any vacations before or during his time away. I went from January until August with nothing more than maybe a day or two off from work. And friends, I was spent. I was tired. I was cranky. Nothing came easy. I lacked desire and motivation those last few months. I could feel myself not caring. That's not a good place to be. That's why we take vacations. To get away; to take a break from responsibility so that when we come back and assume our job responsibilities, we're ready. Some of us neglect our need for daily rest, not getting a proper night's sleep. Some of us neglect our need to take weekly and monthly breaks. If you've been responsible for children at sometime in your life, you know this: sometimes, a toddler just needs a nap. You can look a toddler's behavior in disbelief and be afraid he will grow up to be the next Charles Manson, but oftentimes, they just need a nap. Honestly, friends, that's what some of you need. You need a nap. You've ignored rest, you've failed to incorporate rest into your routine and now you're paying for it (and so is everyone else around you). So, let's avoid these mistakes: ignoring rest or making it our goal.

So, you should wonder: where does this teaching on rest come from in the Bible? It starts with the creation of the world. Let's begin establishing our understanding, our theology, of rest by first turning to Genesis 2 and read vs. 1-4 (READ).

Without getting too much into the details, notice the big idea: God rested on the 7th day. God's creative work is on display in Genesis 1. But after it was done, on that 7th day, he rested. He stopped his creative work. And this rest that God took from his work is the foundation, it's the ground for our rest, too. By his rest he's teaching us his pattern in creation.

Now, I have to quickly mention this: God didn't need to rest like we need the rest. We need rest primarily because we get tired; if we don't rest, our fatigue, our weariness will keep us from being effective and fruitful. WebMD has an article of the 10 surprising effects of sleep deprivation. Without sleep serious health conditions increase, our intelligence declines, depression becomes more likely, among many other health risks. But God didn't rest on the 7th day because he was wore out. He doesn't get tired. God rested to give us an example to follow; he rested to show us his established pattern for all of creation.

Jump ahead with me to Ex. 20; this important chapter highlights what we call the 10 commandments; the 10 commands that summarize all of God's law. God called his people to live in faithful obedience to what he said was good for them. Notice how rest is a part of what God said was good and should be followed. Read with me starting in vs. 8 (READ vs. 8-11).

Look how the command of rest sits on the foundation of God's creative example in vs. 11; obey the command to rest on the Sabbath "*because/for* in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day." God's people are commanded to rest because of the way God created the world. I'm also struck how this rest is to be universally applied. Everyone and everything was to rest on the Sabbath. You, your wife, your kids, your servants, even your livestock. Everyone needs rest and must take it on the Sabbath. Jump ahead to 23:10 (READ vs. 10-12). So get what God is saying: you need rest, so does your family and your workers. But your livestock needs rest, too, and even the land needs rest. Give the land a break. Work it for 6 years and then let it rest on the seventh. Everything in creation needs refreshment.

Can you imagine a farmer giving his land a year off every 7th year? That's countercultural, isn't it? But what if, just what if, it's actually good for the land to rest, too? A woman named Gemma Harwood did her dissertation in geography on the soil quality in Israel and what she learned in her research is that when the land lay fallow on a 7th year, the soil quality increased. There were more nutrients in the soils where the land was given it's 7th year of rest than land that was not given rest. And there have been research all over the world that corroborates that; there's not something magical about ground in Israel. Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks comments based on the teaching found in the OT "the Israelites were therefore commanded to conserve the soil by giving it periodic fallow years and not pursue short-term gain at the cost of long-term desolation." Rest benefits all of God's creation.

Let me show you one more passage of scripture before we get into the *so what*. If you're wondering, "Well, is this a big deal to God?" Consider this: In 586 BC, the nation of Judah finally experienced the consequences of their rebellion to God. The capital of Jerusalem was sacked by Babylon and most of the nation was taken into exile leaving the land desolate. Listen to how 2 Chronicles 36:20-21 explains this (READ).

Do you see how part of God's judgment in sending the nation into captivity was to give the land the rest it needed? For centuries, the people lived in rebellion to God including refusing to give the land it's rest. Year in and year out, work the land without any chance for refreshment. And God finally said, "No more!" As it lay fallow, the land finally got to enjoy it's Sabbath rest.

God has built rest into the way this world works. It's a part of his order; it's a part of the structure of God's creation. For the last 10 minutes or so, I've tried to support that contention straight from the scriptures. I've been trying change the way you think and hopefully, ultimately, the way you behave in this world. God made this world to take rest; nothing in creation will be fruitful unless it gets the rest it needs. Just like you need to turn a screw clockwise to drive it in, you need to incorporate rest in your life to be the fruitful people God is calling you to be, FBC.

Here's what I want to do with the remainder of our time. I want to get into the *so what* with you. How do we implement this into our lives? So, let's get practical for a minute.

First, let's talk about how incorporating a regular routine of rest into your daily life is an expression of faith in God. I don't know about you, but resting doesn't feel like faith; it feels like a waste of time. There is all kinds of work that needs to be done and only so many hours in a day; what are we doing sitting around? I feel great, I don't need rest. We can rest when we're dead.

Making time for rest, taking breaks as God designed them requires you to have faith in God. If I'm remembering the story correctly, my father-in-law struggled in the 80's like a lot of farmers did. Interest rates were high; exports and prices were historically low. A lot of farmers had to get out or start over; Jerry started over. It was a hard and humbling time. But God used that hardship in his life as sort of a reboot not only on the farm, but also with his faith. He made changes about how he'd spend money; God gets 10% no matter what. And God gets the Lord's Day, too - no work. Do you know how hard it is for a farmer to let hay sit in the field on a warm Sunday afternoon with rain in the forecast for Monday? And my father-in-law is known around town as the man who gets more done before breakfast than most people get done all day. Korby and I were blessed: there's a picture of her father and my father in the dictionary next to the phrase *hard work*. It took faith. He has a slogan: It's the Lord's hay. And Jerry will say when the thunderclouds are forming, "If the Lord wants to rain on his hay he can rain on his hay."

That requires faith, my friends. Committing yourself to a routine of rest requires you to say, "God will provide for me when I'm tempted to provide for myself." Imagine the Israelites on the 7th year just watching their fields run fallow. Sitting on their hands, twiddling their thumbs. Itching to plant and harvest, but God saying, "No, it's a year of rest." Will we have enough food this year? What if there's a drought next year? The Jones' are working; if we don't we're going to get behind." Faith. This is what the Lord God has said.

It may not feel like it, my good friends, but sticking to your weekly routine of rest, going to bed on time, taking that vacation you've been planning even though the work is piling up is actually an act of faith. God told you to take a break; you need rest and refreshment. And here's how it's an act of faith: 1) You're doing what God has told you; you're including rest into your life. 2) You're trusting God with the results and outcomes. It may feel like you need to harvest, like there's no time to wait; it might feel like you have to do more, but faith says, "God will produce the results that he wants."

Next, I also want to talk about proportion; how much rest do we need? I think the model found in God's word is a helpful place to start. Work 6 days, rest 1. Notice there are more workdays than rest days. That's the routine: Work is the norm; rest is the break from the norm. You shouldn't be resting more than working unless there are extenuating circumstances. The periodic, but regular, gift of rest mobilizes me for further fruitful work. It's important to remember Eph. 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Along with the pattern of 6 & 1, God also mandated holidays in the OT, other times to stop working. Every 7th year they were to let the land have rest, which would significantly

reduce their workload. Every 50th year, the Year of Jubilee, was another year of rest along with other observances. I read that stuff and this is what I see: we need other times of rest than our weekly break. We need monthly breaks, yearly and seasonal breaks. We need them. We all might need them differently based on our life stage. Young children need more rest than most; when we get into our 70's and 80's we might need more rest then, too. Maybe that's one of your discouragements as you're firmly in your retirement years. You don't have the energy that you once had. I understand and I'm sorry; that's a loss to be mourned. But all it means is you need to incorporate more rest into your life so that you can still do the good works God is calling you to do. "What good works?" you might think. Maybe some of you dear senior saints are discouraged that you're not able to do what you used to do. You might think, "I'm an old man, and old woman; I can't do much anymore." You can pray, can't you? And you can encourage the younger generation. We need your advice, your prayers, your encouragement. Sometimes, we just need someone who will listen to us; you can do that, right? You can be a father to us; a mother to us. Some of us need someone to tell us, "Things are going to be alright. Don't give up." There's a lot of work that you can do. Find the right proportion, FBC.

Finally, some of you need to repent this morning. Repenting means turning; changing your mind and changing your direction. What would repentance look like? First, it would look like you changing your mind about rest. It would mean you see your need for it. But it would also include changing your patterns. Some of you need to stop bringing work home; you need to stop going in early and coming home late. Others of you might need to be more faithful about getting vacations on the calendar and sticking to them. Men, how about this: make sure your wives are getting their rest. If you've got young kids, when does your wife get a break from the daily, hourly, moment by moment responsibilities of being a mom? How does a mom look at an infant, a toddler, and say, "I'm taking a vacation from you now!" They can't. Brothers, you need to do that for her. You need to say, "Hey, why don't you take a friend to Wausau on Saturday and make a day of it; I'll watch the kids. I want to give you a break." Let's commit ourselves to rest for ourselves and all of creation.

This is the way our world works, friends, by God's design. Let's align ourselves with God's way and live.

Key vs. Genesis 2:1-4

Questions for the week

- What are your daily, weekly, monthly and yearly patterns of rest? Are they working for you?
- What was most helpful to see from God's word this morning?
- What are some changes you need to make to incorporate rest into your routine? Tell someone those changes.