

## Lesson 7: God's Purpose For Rest

### I. Introduction

After a series of lessons focused on money, and the panel discussion addressing its stewardship, we now turn our attention to yet another vital area where God has entrusted us with responsibility because our stewardship doesn't stop with money. God calls us to steward every gift He gives, and one of the greatest gifts He has entrusted to us is time. Time will be the focus of our next two lessons together, if the Lord graciously gives us the time to do so! (James 4:15, **"Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.'"**)

As with money, learning to steward our time is going to push hard against the grain of our culture. Stewardship always involves a shift in thinking, which is an uncomfortable (but freeing) realignment of the way we view our lives. Think back to our very first lesson in this series. We spoke about how Christians must break free from the common mindset that what we have is ours, and only a portion needs to be "given back" to God. That idea is deeply flawed. Scripture makes it clear that everything belongs to God: our money, our resources, our skills, our families, our future, all of it is His. We are stewards, not owners.

Psalm 24:1 reminds us, **"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein."** And if that's true of money, it's equally true of time. If we're honest, many of us still think about our time just like we think about our paycheques:

- "I'm obligated to spend some of my time working, because I need to eat."
- "I'm obligated to give some of my time to church, because I'm a Christian."
- "My leftover time? That's mine. Me time."

It's not hard to see the subtle danger in this kind of thinking. It carves life into two parts: God's part (duties and obligations) and **my part** (personal freedom and enjoyment). But that's not how the Bible calls us to view our lives. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 4:7, **"What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?"** Every single second of your life is a trust from God. There is no such thing as "me time" in the Christian worldview. There is only God's time, entrusted to us for His purposes.

### Why Focus on Rest?

This brings us to the particular focus of today's lesson: rest. You might wonder, "Why start with rest instead of work?" Because with a right understanding of rest, the ownership of time becomes the clearest, and the most difficult. It's easy to feel like our work hours are "God's time", because they're spent producing, providing, and contributing. But our rest hours? Those feel like instinctively ours. Rest feels like the time when *we* finally get to be the boss, free to do whatever *we* want. But Scripture challenges that assumption. **"Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."** (1 Corinthians 10:31) That includes our rest. Every minute of your day, including time spent sleeping, relaxing, or recharging, is still God's. The call to steward time faithfully extends across our calendars: including our weekends, our vacations, our breaks, and even our sleep.

## But Isn't Rest Just for Recharging?

Even among Christians, we can easily slip into thinking, *"Sure, rest isn't about selfish indulgence. It's about recharging so we can get back to the real work God calls us to do!"* That sounds better, but if we look closely, it still misses something important. It still divides life into "productive" time (for God) and "rest" time (for me to do God-time better). It treats rest only as a means to an end. But Scripture paints a far richer, more satisfying picture of rest. Rest isn't just for recharging our batteries so we can be more useful. Rest is part of the real work God has given us to do.

Think about creation. God Himself rested on the seventh day, not because He was tired, but because rest completed and crowned the rhythm of work. Genesis 2:2-3, **“And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.”** God models rest for us not out of necessity, but out of purpose. When we view rest biblically, we realize that rest is not "time off" from stewardship. Rest is also dimension of stewardship itself. And rest is not an interruption to life; it is a vital part of life as God designed it.

## A More Complex, Beautiful Picture

I suspect that the Bible's teaching on rest is more complex (and more beautiful) than we often imagine. It's not just:

- "Work hard, then collapse."
- "Do your duty, then finally indulge."
- "Spend yourself, then refill yourself."

Instead, biblical rest calls us into rhythms of life that are:

- God-exalting
- Soul-refreshing
- Witness-bearing to the world

Rest therefore shapes us, it humbles us, and it teaches us that we are not gods who sustain ourselves, but creatures who depend on a generous Creator for everything, including our breath, strength, and joy. Psalm 127:2 puts it beautifully, **“It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.”** Rest is not a necessary evil. It is a gracious gift and a profound act of faith.

## What This Lesson Will Cover

In this lesson, we're going to take three major steps:

1. We'll walk through what the Bible says about rest, laying the foundation from Scripture itself.
2. We'll explore the purposes God has for rest, not just practical, but spiritual and eternal purposes.

3. We'll finish with a practical exercise to examine how we're stewarding rest in our own lives, and how we can grow in faithfulness.

Stewarding time (including our rest) is part of what it means to live as God's people in a world that desperately needs a better way. .

## II. The Bible's Teaching on Rest

If we want to understand how to steward our rest rightly, we must first ask: *What does the Bible actually teach about rest?* Not just what culture says, or even what our heart tell us, but what God reveals in His Word. The Bible, from beginning to end, has much to say about rest.

### A. Rest in Creation

The very first mention of rest comes at the very beginning of Scripture, in Genesis 2:1-3, "**Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.**" This is profoundly significant. Before sin ever entered the world, rest was part of the perfect created order. God completed His magnificent work of creation over six days, and then He rested. But what does it mean that God rested?

First, it's important to clarify what it doesn't mean. It doesn't mean that God became tired. Isaiah 40:28 reminds us, "**Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary.**" God's rest wasn't about recovering strength. Nor did it mean He withdrew from involvement with creation. As Jesus Himself said in John 5:17, "**My Father is working until now, and I am working.**"

Rather, God's rest in Genesis refers to ceasing a specific kind of work, namely, His creative work. Rest here means completion. God had finished the masterpiece of creation, and He paused to delight in it, to sanctify the seventh day as a day set apart.

### The Seventh Day: A Day Without End

There's another striking detail in Genesis 2. The first six days of creation all have a clear ending. We read over and over again, "**And there was evening and there was morning...**" (Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). But the seventh day? No evening is mentioned. No morning is recorded. It suggests that God's rest is a rest that continues. A rest that is lasting and open-ended.

Hebrews 4:3-4 picks up on this idea, teaching that God's rest is ongoing, and that we, by faith, are invited into it. Rest, in God's design, is not simply about stopping motion. It is about entering into the completeness of God's work and enjoying His finished provision.

## B. Rest in the Sabbath

The next major development in the Bible's teaching on rest comes with the institution of the Sabbath in the covenant God made with Israel. The word Sabbath comes from the Hebrew word shabbat, meaning "to cease" or "to stop." But it's crucial to understand: Stopping does not mean doing nothing. When God commanded Israel to observe the Sabbath, He wasn't instituting a day of idleness. He was inviting His people into a different kind of activity, an activity centered on worship, remembrance, and joy.

### The Sabbath Commanded

The Sabbath command is first given in Exodus 20:8-11, within the Ten Commandments, "**Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God... For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.**" Here, the reason given for Sabbath-keeping is rooted in creation itself. God's pattern of work and rest is meant to be mirrored by His people. But notice that the Sabbath was not just a command to stop working, it was a call to remember and revere the Creator. Stopping normal work created space to focus fully on God.

### The Sabbath Repeated

In Deuteronomy 5:12-15, when Moses repeats the Ten Commandments to the new generation of Israelites, the Sabbath is again commanded, but this time, a different reason is emphasized, "**You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.**" Here, Sabbath rest is tied to redemption. It's not just a memorial of creation, it's a celebration of salvation! Israel was to stop their daily labors to remember the God who rescued them, who gave them freedom, identity, and a future.

### Sabbaths Beyond the Seventh Day

It's also important to recognize that the Sabbath principle extended beyond just the weekly rhythm.

- The Day of Atonement was called a "Sabbath of solemn rest" (Leviticus 16:31).
- Every seventh year was a Sabbath year, during which the land itself was to rest (Leviticus 25:4).

In each case, Sabbath was about:

- Ceasing ordinary work,
- Reorienting hearts toward God,
- Trusting in His provision,

- Celebrating His faithfulness.

### C. Rest as Inheritance: The Promised Land

Sabbath also pointed beyond itself to something greater. When God delivered Israel from slavery, He didn't just set them free, He brought them toward a place of rest: the Promised Land. Deuteronomy 12:9 says, **"For you have not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance that the Lord your God is giving you."** Canaan was described as "rest", a place where the people would no longer be oppressed, but would dwell in safety and abundance, enjoying the blessings of God's covenant. Yet even the Promised Land was not the ultimate rest. Hebrews 4 teaches that a greater rest remains for the people of God, a rest found not in land, but in Christ.

#### Rest as Worship

One crucial thing to notice in all of this is that biblical rest is not passive. It's not an excuse for laziness or self-indulgence. True Sabbath rest is filled with worship. Israel was called to:

- Assemble together (Leviticus 23:3),
- Sing praises (Psalm 92:1-4),
- Remember God's works,
- Celebrate His faithfulness.

Psalm 92, specifically designed as *"A Song for the Sabbath,"* overflows with gratitude, **"It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night."** (Psalm 92:1-2) Rest was not about retreating into personal comfort. It was about gathering together to exalt God. Isaiah 56:2 gives a beautiful promise, **"Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil."** God delights to bless those who honor Him with their rhythms of rest.

From Genesis to the Prophets, the Bible teaches us that rest is:

- Modeled by God,
- Commanded for His people,
- Tied to worship, remembrance, and trust,
- Pointing to deeper spiritual realities.

Rest isn't simply downtime, it's divinely purposed time. And it's not an interruption of our stewardship, it's a vital expression of it. In our next section, we'll look more deeply at the specific purposes God has for rest, and how they shape our daily lives. The idea that rest is not simply about cessation from labor, but about entering into the enjoyment of God Himself, continues to unfold beautifully as we move through the pages of Scripture.

Rest, in God's design, was never meant to be merely physical downtime. From the very beginning, it was about relationship. About trust. About participation in the life and goodness of the Creator. And as Scripture progresses, we see that God's plan for His people involves far more than just freedom from toil; it involves invitation into His own eternal rest.

### Hint from the Psalms

One of the earliest hints that God's rest would involve something deeper comes from Psalm 95. Reflecting on the rebellion of Israel during their desert wanderings, the psalmist concludes with these chilling words from God, **“Therefore I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest.’”** (Psalm 95:11) Notice: it’s “My rest” that God speaks of, not merely “rest in the land” or “rest from their enemies.” This phrase suggests that the Promised Land itself was only a shadow of something greater. The real goal was always fellowship with God, sharing in His own rest, His peace, His finished work.

### Hebrews: Rest and Unbelief

The New Testament book of Hebrews picks up this theme and unfolds it powerfully. In Hebrews 3 and 4, the author reflects deeply on Psalm 95. He explains that the first generation of Israelites failed to enter God's rest because of their unbelief. Even though they stood on the brink of the Promised Land, fear, disobedience, and distrust kept them from receiving the blessing God had prepared for them. Hebrews 3:19 makes it explicit, **“So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.”** Yet even more profoundly, the author argues that even Joshua, who led the second generation into Canaan, did not provide the ultimate rest God intended, **“For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.”** (Hebrews 4:8)

There remains, therefore, a greater rest, one that transcends earthly borders, one that outlasts earthly struggles. Hebrews 4:9 declares, **“So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.”** The concept of Sabbath rest, stretching back to creation, is fulfilled and realized not merely in physical territory or ritual observance, but in the very life of God Himself.

### **D. Rest in Christ: The Invitation of the Gospel**

The ultimate fulfillment of this rest is found in Jesus Christ. In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus offers one of the most beautiful invitations in all of Scripture, **“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”** Here, Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28), offers soul rest to all who would come to Him by faith.

- Rest from striving to earn God's favor.
- Rest from the burden of guilt.
- Rest from the relentless pressures of a fallen world.

This rest comes not by ceasing all activity, but by ceasing to trust in ourselves. Faith unites us to Christ. Faith brings us into the Sabbath rest God prepared before the foundation of the world.

### Rest: Already and Not Yet

## Rest in Revelation: The Final Word

As the Bible closes, the theme of rest resurfaces one final time. In Revelation 14, two kinds of destinies are described:

- Those who worship the beast and his image are said to have “**no rest, day or night**” (Revelation 14:11).
- Those who die in the Lord are promised eternal rest.

Revelation 14:13 proclaims, "**And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!'**" What a glorious hope! The final destiny of the people of God is not endless striving, nor endless boredom, but perfect, joyous rest.

- A rest without sorrow.
- A rest without sin.
- A rest in the unbroken presence of God.

### E. Physical Rest (Sleep)

At this point, you might be thinking, "*This biblical vision of rest sounds wonderful, but when are we going to talk about simple, physical renewal?*" Good news: Now! The Bible also teaches the importance of physical rest, and it does so in a way that both honors God and refreshes us. When we rest physically, we:

- Imitate God's pattern of rest (Genesis 2:2-3),
- Acknowledge our dependence on God for sustenance,
- Trust that the world keeps turning because of Him, not us.

Psalm 121:4 reminds us, "**Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.**" God doesn't sleep. We sleep because we are finite creatures, not infinite gods. When we lay down to sleep, we make a profound confession, "*I am not in control. But my God is.*" Psalm 4:8 captures this beautifully, "**In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.**" We sleep not because we are lazy, but because we are trusting. Each night, when we close our eyes, we preach the gospel to ourselves:

- I am not sovereign.
- I am not self-sufficient.
- But my Father watches over me.

In review: rest, in the Bible, is a theme that stretches from Eden to eternity:

- It begins with God's delight in creation,
- It flows through the rhythms of Sabbath worship,
- It is fulfilled in Christ's invitation to soul rest,
- It will culminate in the eternal Sabbath of heaven.

And even now, as we sleep and renew our bodies, we bear witness to our weakness and God's strength. True rest is not just a break from busyness. It is participation in the life of God, by faith and in hope. As we move into the New Testament, we see that Jesus Himself not only spoke about rest in a theological sense but also modeled physical rest as a necessary and godly rhythm for human life. In Mark 6:31, after the apostles return from their first ministry journey, worn out and exhausted from pouring themselves into others, Jesus says to them, **"Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while."** The passage continues, explaining that, **"For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat."** Jesus acknowledges something vital here: His disciples' physical limitations were real and needed to be cared for. They had been so busy ministering to others that they hadn't even had time to meet their most basic human needs.

### Rest: A Good and Godly Gift

This invitation to step away and rest wasn't an act of laziness. It wasn't an abandonment of duty. It was a recognition that even the most faithful servants of God need periods of physical recovery. God, in His kindness and mercy, designed us this way.

- He knows our frame (Psalm 103:14),
- He remembers that we are dust,
- And He delights to provide the rest our bodies require.

Physical rest, far from being a guilty pleasure, is a gift of grace, a reminder that we are finite, dependent creatures who rely on the sustaining strength of our Creator. Psalm 127:2 echoes this truth, **"It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep."** God gives sleep not just because we need it, but because He loves us. Taking everything we've learned together, let me give you three key observations:

#### **1. Rest is Mainly About Reconciliation with God**

The greatest danger we face is not physical exhaustion but spiritual alienation. If we persist in unbelief, Scripture warns that God's wrath remains on us. Ezekiel 5:13 describes God's just anger, **"Thus shall my anger spend itself, and I will vent my fury upon them and satisfy myself. And they shall know that I am the Lord - that I have spoken in my jealousy - when I spend my fury upon them."** But for those who believe in Jesus Christ, something wonderful happens. God's Spirit doesn't rest on us in judgment, but in blessing. 1 Peter 4:14 says, **"If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."** The true Sabbath (the true rest) is about being united to God by faith. It's not primarily about a day of relaxation. It's about entering into peace with God through Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1 celebrates, **"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."** All earthly rest (Sabbath days, Promised Lands, temple celebrations) were shadows pointing forward to this greater reconciliation.

#### **2. Rest Is Ceasing One Activity to Engage Joyfully in Another: Delighting in God**

Second, rest in the Bible isn't simply about doing nothing. It's about ceasing one kind of labor so that we can engage joyfully in another: the worship and enjoyment of God. When we enter heaven, we will cease from the painful, cursed toil of this fallen world (Genesis 3:17-19). But we will not become idle or bored. Heaven will be bursting with meaningful, joyful activity! We will worship with our mouths, singing praises to God, as seen in Revelation 15:3, "**And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, 'Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty!'**" And we will also worship with our hands: serving, building, creating without the frustration of sin. Isaiah 65:21-22 paints this rich vision of heaven, "**They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat.**" In the renewed creation, our work will no longer be cursed. It will be an act of joyful, unbroken worship to our King. Heaven will be rest, not because it's a cessation of all activity, but because it will be perfectly satisfying, perfectly joyful activity with no pain, no sorrow, and no separation from God.

### 3. Rest Shows Us More About Who God Is, and Who We Are

Finally, biblical rest teaches us profound truths about God's nature and our own. We need physical rest. We need sleep. We need recovery. We need Sabbath. But God never sleeps. God never tires. God is utterly independent and self-sufficient. Psalm 121:4 declares, "**Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.**" We, in contrast, display our dependence on God every time we lie down and close our eyes. When we sleep, we are acknowledging, "*I am not sovereign. I am not self-sustaining. I must entrust my life to God's care while I am unconscious and vulnerable.*" Psalm 4:8 captures this beautifully, "**In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.**" Our need for rest magnifies God's endless strength and our need for His provision. Rest, rightly understood, becomes an act of humility and faith.

Rest is not merely a human need. It is a divine invitation to live reconciled to God by faith, to enjoy Him in worshipful activity both now and forever, and to remember daily that He is God and we are not. In a restless world, Christians are called to embody a different way, resting now in Christ, working now for His glory, and looking forward to the unending rest that is to come.

Questions or Comments?

### III. Purpose of Rest: How Rest Helps Us Steward Our Time

As we now seek to apply all these truths about rest to our daily lives, we need to recall a couple of foundational lessons from earlier in this stewardship series, truths that shape everything we've been talking about.

First, God owns everything. This isn't a nice Christian slogan, it's a reality that changes how we view every second of our existence. The hours you spent sleeping last night? They belonged to Him. The fifteen minutes you'll spend today scrolling on your phone or laughing at a silly meme? His. Psalm 24:1 reminds us again, "**The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.**" Every breath, every heartbeat, every moment of rest and every moment of labor is a trust from our Creator.

Second, we must remember that we are His stewards. God has entrusted His gifts to us, not to own, but to manage. And one day, we will give an account for what we did with what He placed into our hands, including our time. Paul exhorts us in Ephesians 5:15-16, "**Look carefully then how you walk, not as**

**unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil."** We are not called to drift aimlessly through life, treating rest or work as disposable. We are called to redeem the time, to live intentionally, to steward every moment for the glory of God. With that in mind, let's consider: How does rest fit into God's call for us to "make the best use of the time"?

### **A. Rest Helps Us Recover from Our Labor**

One of the clearest purposes of rest is to recharge and renew us after our work. Rest isn't a sign of weakness or laziness, it's part of God's brilliant design. While we sleep, our minds sort and consolidate the memories and information we've absorbed throughout the day. Our bodies enter critical repair phases: tissues heal, muscles rebuild, energy stores replenish. We see this built into creation itself.

God ordained a pattern of work and rest not because He needed it, but because we would. Remember again Isaiah 40:28, **"Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary..."** Unlike us, God never grows tired. He never needs to nap, recharge, or sleep. But we are dust (Psalm 103:14) finite, fragile, dependent. Our need for recovery highlights our createdness, our limits, and our dependence on God's sustaining power. Rest is not an interruption of stewardship. It is a vital part of it. Without recovery, our ability to love, serve, think clearly, and labor diligently deteriorates.

### **B. Rest Displays Our Dependence on God**

Perhaps even more powerfully, rest proclaims the truth that we are not necessary for the universe to keep functioning. When we stop working (when we sleep, when we step away) we are confessing, *"God runs the world. I don't."* As humans, we like to imagine that everything depends on us. We feel that if we don't stay up a few more hours, solve one more problem, check one more email, everything might collapse. But rest humbles us. It reminds us that God accomplishes His purposes without our frantic striving. Isaiah 40:29-31 declares, **"He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength."** The pattern is clear: We grow weary. **He** renews. We collapse. **He** sustains. Rest, rightly understood, is an act of worship. It is a tangible expression of trust in the God who never sleeps, never forgets, and never fails.

### Cultural Misunderstandings About Rest

In our culture today, we see two major distortions of rest:

1. Some people rest too easily, slipping into laziness and indulgence.
2. Others reject rest altogether, idolizing productivity and achievement.

In many modern societies, particularly in the West, the second problem is far more prevalent. We live in a culture obsessed with busyness: Burning the candle at both ends, wearing exhaustion like a badge of honor, and acting as if constant activity is the same as faithfulness. But Scripture paints a very different picture. The opposite of biblical rest isn't work. The opposite of rest is restlessness, anxious toil, ceaseless striving, endless self-reliance. Jeremiah 6:16 offers a powerful corrective, **"Thus says the Lord: 'Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and**

**find rest for your souls."** But tragically, many today echo Israel's response, "**But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'**" Refusing to rest, in the end, is refusing to trust.

### How Joyful Rest Glorifies God

When we joyfully embrace the God-given rhythms of rest, we are declaring, *"I am not infinite. I am not all-powerful. I am not indispensable, But God is!"* Each night, as we collapse into bed, weary and unfinished, we are offered a chance to rehearse the gospel, *"I can't do it all. I am not enough. Jesus is enough!"* And when we do good work, by the strength God provides, and then rest in His care, He gets the glory. Psalm 127:1-2 puts it beautifully, **"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain... for he gives to his beloved sleep."** We work as stewards. We rest as stewards. In both, God is glorified.

### God's Pattern: Using the Weak to Show His Strength

Throughout Scripture, God intentionally magnifies His power through human weakness. Think about:

- The walls of Jericho falling with a mere blast of trumpets (Joshua 6:20),
- Gideon defeating 135,000 Midianites with just 300 men (Judges 7:7),
- Jesus feeding 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish (John 6:9–13).

Over and over again, God showcases His sovereignty by using the inadequate, the insufficient, and the exhausted. Rest allows us to take our place in this same story when we do what we can, by the Spirit's power. Biblical rest renews our strength, testifies to our dependence, corrects our cultural idolatries, and glorifies God's sufficiency. It is not weakness, it is wisdom. It is not selfishness, it is stewardship. So when you close your eyes at night, or take a needed break from your labor, do so with this thought, *"I am resting, because my God reigns."*

### **C. Rest Encourages Us to Enjoy God**

Rest is not only about recovering our strength or ceasing from labor; it is a powerful opportunity to delight in the goodness of God being God. In fact, you're participating in that right now! Every Sunday, when we step away from the busyness of our regular routines to gather for corporate worship, we are engaging in God-centered rest. We are deliberately pausing our week to:

- Remember God's truths,
- Encourage one another in fellowship,
- Rejoice in the grace that sustains us.

Hebrews 10:24-25 exhorts us, **"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another..."** Sunday worship is not an interruption to life, it is the heartbeat of our rest. It reorients our hearts toward God, reminding us that we are not defined by our work, but by His grace.

## Rest as Worship Through Enjoying Creation

But our enjoyment of God doesn't have to be confined to formal worship gatherings. Just as we saw earlier that our money can be used to enjoy God's creation, the same is true of our leisure time. Going back to a familiar and powerful truth in 1 Timothy 4:4-5, "**For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.**" Every good and beautiful thing in creation is meant to be received with thanksgiving, not hoarded selfishly or idolized. And 1 Timothy 6:17-18 further teaches, "**As for the rich in this present age... they are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future.**" Enjoying creation rightly directs our hearts upward toward the Creator. Thus, when we engage in leisure, whether a quiet walk in the woods, a joyful afternoon at an art museum, a lively conversation over coffee, or even cheering on the Yankees, the Wolverines, or the Pistons (I give you freedom to choose one or all), it can be an act of worship.

- A hike can stir awe at God's artistry.
- Music can awaken gratitude for His creativity.
- A meal with friends can echo the joy of His fellowship.

The key is this: Creation must always be a conduit to the Creator, not the final destination. Romans 1:25 warns against those who, "**...exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator.**" Our enjoyment of creation should lead to thanksgiving, not idolatry.

### **D. Rest Helps Build Relationships With Others**

Good stewardship of rest also means recognizing that rest isn't meant to be purely individual. Rest often serves a relational purpose. Money is inherently relational, how we spend it affects others (Luke 16:9). Health impacts our ability to serve others (Philippians 1:24). And time (especially restful time) is no different. The Sabbath in the Old Testament was not a private, isolated affair. It was a community event:

- Families and tribes gathering together,
- A nation resting as one,
- Fellowship in worship and gratitude.

And this communal aspect points forward to the eternal rest of Heaven, where perfect relationships with one another and with God will be fully realized. Hebrews 10:24-25 reminds us again of the centrality of relationships, "**And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another...**" Rest is not merely a chance to recover, it is an opportunity to build, deepen, and nourish relationships.

## Rethinking Leisure: How to Evaluate Our Rest

Perhaps you've never thought about leisure this way before: That it can have a God-honoring purpose. Yes, leisure can be selfish. Yes, it can become idolatrous. But not all leisure is inherently sinful. Rather, any leisure activity that does not involve sin can be leveraged for the glory of God. That said, not all leisure activities are equally wise. As stewards, we must evaluate our activities carefully, asking two crucial questions:

## 1. Does This Activity Lead Me Toward Sin?

An activity may not be sinful in itself, but could it be pulling my heart away from God? For example:

- Watching a TV show that cultivates discontentment, bitterness, or lust, or the Blue Jays.
- Spending so much time hiking or gaming that it isolates you from needed family or church responsibilities.
- Browsing social media for hours when you should be seeking employment or discipling your children.

1 Corinthians 6:12 reminds us, "**All things are lawful for me,**" but not all things are helpful. "**All things are lawful for me,**" but I will not be dominated by anything." Freedom must be governed by wisdom.

## 2. Is This the Most God-Glorifying Use of My Time?

Even if an activity isn't leading me into sin, is it the best way to steward the opportunities God has given me right now? As Jesus taught in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30), we are called to invest wisely, not just avoid doing wrong, but pursue doing the most good. Paul exhorts in 1 Corinthians 10:31 "**So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**" Every decision about rest and leisure should be filtered through this lens:

- Am I maximizing the gifts of time, money, energy, and opportunity that God has entrusted to me?
- Is this activity helping me love God more, love others better, and reflect Christ more clearly?

### A Word on Freedom and Discernment

God gives us tremendous freedom in how we rest and enjoy His world. There is no "one-size-fits-all" answer to what leisure must look like. For one person, a \$10,000 skiing trip in the Himalayas might be a perfectly God-honoring use of time and money:

- A chance to marvel at God's creation,
- A sabbath-like rejuvenation for future ministry,
- An opportunity to build friendships that lead to gospel conversations.

For another person, that same trip could be self-indulgent, irresponsible, or neglectful. The key metric for evaluating any leisure activity is not "*Did I enjoy it?*", but rather, "*Did it showcase God's faithfulness, goodness, and love?*" True biblical rest points us to God, not away from Him, it strengthens our relationships, not isolates us, it encourages worship, not selfishness, and it always reflects wise stewardship, not wastefulness. When we rest rightly, we magnify the beauty and sufficiency of our God.

## IV. Conclusion: Stewarding Rest with Intentionality

### A Practical Scenario

Imagine this: You find yourself with a rare free Saturday afternoon. No urgent appointments. No looming deadlines. Just open time. Now the question becomes: What will you do with it? You have a few options:

- You could volunteer your time, visiting with and caring for the elderly at a nearby retirement home.
- Or you could settle into your backyard deck, turn on the Yankees game, grab a hot dog and a bowl of peanuts, and simply enjoy a few restful hours.

At first glance, these options might seem vastly different in "spiritual" value. But Scripture teaches us that both could be faithful stewardship, depending on how we approach them. Why might watching the baseball game be an example of good stewardship of your rest? There are several reasons:

- **Recharging:**  
It could help to recharge your mind and body after a tiring, diligent week of labor, reminding you that your limits are a gift from God. As Psalm 127:2 reminds us, "**...for he gives to his beloved sleep.**"
- **Relationships:**  
It could help to build relationships if you invite a friend, a family member, or even a neighbor to join you on the deck. (The scenario is a little personal to me) Fellowship (simple, joyful time together) is no small thing in God's kingdom (Hebrews 10:24–25).
- **Worshipful Enjoyment:**  
It could foster a heart of worship as you enjoy God's good creation: the food, the sunshine, the fresh air, the simple joy of hearing birds chirp (bird nerd). All of these are gifts to be received with thanksgiving (1 Timothy 4:4–5).

Even something as ordinary as baseball, hot dogs, and sunshine can become a conduit of worship when our hearts are oriented properly toward the Giver of all good things (James 1:17). If, while enjoying these gifts, you are actively acknowledging God's kindness, giving thanks, and delighting in His provision, then your leisure becomes a form of worship.

### The Heart Difference: Stewardship vs. Self-Indulgence

But here's the harder, more searching question: *How might a Christian's enjoyment of that baseball game differ from an unbeliever's enjoyment of the exact same game?* The outward activities might look identical:

- Same stadium or backyard,
- Cheering for the team,
- Same food and drinks.

But inwardly, there should be a world of difference. The difference is the heart. Colossians 3:17 says, "**And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.**" The believer watches, eats, laughs, and relaxes with a posture of gratitude:

- Seeing the Creator behind the creation,
- Enjoying the gifts without idolizing them,
- Letting leisure refresh him for future service to God and others.

Meanwhile, the unbeliever, though they may enjoy the same activities, ultimately does so without reference to the Giver.

### A Final Word of Caution: Charity in Judgment

This is why we must be very careful not to judge others hastily by external appearances. Someone sitting on their deck enjoying a baseball game may, in God's eyes, be worshipping with deep gratitude and humility. Someone else, doing the very same thing, might be wasting their time in selfish escapism. We don't always know. Only God sees the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). What matters most is why we do what we do, and whether our hearts are surrendered to Christ.

Stewardship of rest isn't about rigid rules. It's about living intentionally, receiving God's gifts with thanksgiving, using our free time for His glory, and finding refreshment in Him. Whether we're serving others or savoring a baseball game, the call is the same, "**So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**" (1 Corinthians 10:31) Let's rest (and live) in a way that reflects the goodness of our God.

Gracious Father,

We come before You now in awe of Your wisdom, Your goodness, and Your mercy. Thank You for teaching us today, not just about work and labor, but about rest, and how even in our stillness You are glorified. Lord, help us to remember that every breath, every moment, every hour belongs to You. Forgive us for when we have wasted time, sought rest selfishly, or trusted more in our own efforts than in Your faithful provision. Teach us to steward our time wisely, to work diligently, and to rest joyfully in You, knowing that You never sleep and never grow weary.

Father, help us to view our rest not as an escape from responsibility, but as a beautiful part of Your design, to refresh our souls, to deepen our relationships, and to delight in Your goodness. Help us to receive the gifts of leisure, fellowship, and quiet with thanksgiving, always remembering that they are meant to point our hearts back to You, the Giver of every good gift.

As we labor here on earth, help us keep our eyes on the greater rest that is still to come, when we will be forever with You, free from sin, sorrow, and striving, rejoicing eternally in Your presence. Until that day, strengthen our hands for the work You have called us to, and calm our hearts with the peace that only You can give. We love You, Lord. We thank You for Your patience with us. Teach us to walk wisely, to rest faithfully, and to live every moment for Your glory.

In Jesus' name we pray,  
Amen.