

Work + Rest

Scripture:

Read Deuteronomy 5:12-15 and Matthew 6:25-34 as a group.

Introduction:

In a hyper-paced society where innovation and productivity are core values of nearly every industry, it's no surprise that we have an unhealthy relationship toward work. Understanding our work, why we labor, and what it means to reflect God as a "worker" saves us from manipulating our work and demanding it define us. Instead, we can explore the themes of calling and vocation with freedom, using every effort as a broken yet significant means of bringing about renewal in the world.

Tish Harrison Warren writes, *"About 1/3 of our lives are spent asleep. Through these collective years of rest, God is at work in us and in the world, redeeming, healing, and giving grace. Each night when we yield to sleep, we practice letting go of our reliance on self-effort and abiding in the good graces of our Creator. Thus embracing sleep is not only a confession of our limits; it is also a joyful confession of God's limitless care for us. For Christians, the act of ceasing and relaxing into sleep is an act of reliance on God."*

Does it ever strike you as odd that God has to command his people to rest? We all love a good nap, a walk on the beach, and an exotic vacation. Yet God knows that the human heart won't truly rest unless we consciously stop, think, reflect, and remember the rhythms of our Creator and Redeemer. The human heart is hard-wired to work, to strive, and to prove. Thus the 4th of the 10 Commandments from Deuteronomy 5 is much more than a commandment to take a rest on Sundays. It's a command to remember that life is about more than working, striving, and proving. Life is about trusting God with each and every moment of our days and our nights. It's about trusting that He's sufficient – sufficient enough for us to stop proving and to start resting and enjoying Him and the life we've been given. While work is good and God-given, life is about so much more than what we can accomplish in a day.

How we approach our work forms us. This is why Christian discipleship entails viewing our work through the lens of the gospel. Only there do we find the solution for our restless hearts – a Savior who worked to prove our worth and value on our behalf. Now amidst all the work we can truly rest.

Reflection: Take personal inventory of your life, heart, and spiritual journey. Use these prompts / questions as a way to prepare for group discussions – *or* – for personal times of prayer.

1. Take a brief inventory of both work and rest in your life. If extremes of work and rest are poles of a spectrum, where do you fall? Do you lean toward work or rest? Why do you think this is?
2. What recharges you more than anything else? What depletes you more than anything else?

Discuss:

1. What about the sermon stood out or impacted you the most? Do you have any follow up questions about the sermon?
2. What are some cultural values and stories that impact your understanding of work and rest?
3. What is the greatest source of anxiety in your life? Why is this the case? Re-read Matthew 6:25-26. If you believed those verses were true, how would your anxieties shift or change?
4. What do you mistake (or replace) as rest when it is actually distraction?
5. How is Jesus the Rest that we all need (Matthew 12:1-8)?

Apply:

Attempt to set small goals for THIS coming day and week by seeking to rest from work part of each day and week. If you live as part of a family or with roommates/housemates, have a conversation about what helps each of you be refreshed in your relationship with God and with others.

When you find yourself at work or at school, pause for 5 minutes in the middle of your work. Take an inventory of your body by closing your eyes and scanning your body from head to toe. What do you sense? Do you sense unrest? Do you sense hurry? What is your body sharing with you about work/rest? Pray to God that you would listen well to the rhythms of your body and know that God is the active One at work over the whole universe.