



Do we work to relax or relax to work? (Part One) **By Dr. Gregory Wiens**

Why do we take times of restoration? We often call them vacations, but they can fall under a lot of labels such as: breaks, long weekends, time away, sabbaticals, etc. It seems to me that finding a balance in this area is difficult to achieve in our culture. Most people I know fall into one of two categories when dealing with this topic.

The first group of people doesn't really enjoy their time working, so time away is seen as a reward or a reprieve for the time they "have served". They work so they can relax. Their work or ministry is what entitles them to take time away. In a sense, they earn time away. In the second category, people are driven in their ministry or are overly driven in their work. This group only takes time away so that they can work better, or so that they can be more productive when they get back to work. They relax so they can work.

Let me suggest that neither of these two perspectives is what God has in mind for us. The book of *Genesis* (and the rest of scripture) addresses both groups when it states that we were created with a need to do eternally fulfilling work AND we were created with a need for times of restoration (which encompasses relaxing). This week I will address the first group of people and follow up with the second group next week. *Genesis 2:15* applies to the first group who see work as a necessary evil, "*The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.*" We see Adam was given work to do BEFORE the fall. Their work (our ministry?) gave them a sense of significance and fulfillment in a healthy way. We should find a healthy significance through our work.

We are inherently created with a sense that we need to be artisans. This means something entirely different for each of us. But in some sense, when we create, change, impact or do something, we have the need to make a difference. It took the automotive industry years to figure out that simply screwing a widget with no sense of ultimate accomplishment ultimately produces unhappy workers and ineffective products. That is because that is the way we are created. Nothing is more defeating in ministry than to feel that you are not making any difference. You may have a full calendar, but if your impact is minimal, no amount of "time away" can produce significance.

As we read in *Genesis 3.17-19*, the fall complicated their work and made it much more difficult, but never changed its function in our lives or the world.

To Adam He (God) said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, "You must not eat of it," Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

All of what we do is tainted by sin. There is a concept called the second law of thermodynamics, which says that every thing tends toward disorder and chaos. In other words, everything unwinds, or as the infamous Murphy says, "If it can go wrong, it will." So ministry and our work are hard; much harder than God originally intended. You can count on it, things will go wrong, they will be a challenge and will be difficult to accomplish.

This is no truer than in leadership. If leadership is influencing people to experience a future reality in the present, then you will find opposition and obstacles. The scriptures tell us that. So let's not be surprised when we experience troubles, we should expect it. However, the scriptures also tell us that God clothed and provided for Adam and Eve. He does the same for us. He will enable us to be effective in ministry through faith and perseverance.

As a result of the fall, our work or ministry will be frustrating and challenging. However, it should manifest a deep sense of fulfillment, because we are being what we were created by God to be. Just because what we do is frustrating doesn't mean it isn't what God wants for us. Maybe it is a challenge because it is exactly what God wants done.

So if you only work so that you can get time away, let me suggest you are not where God wants you in one sense or another.