



Do we work to relax or relax to work? Part 2

By Dr. Gregory Wiens

Last week I discussed restoration times and specifically addressed those that see work as a necessary evil. This week will be geared towards the second group of us that rest so that we can work more effectively. We need to realize that God didn't just create us to work. He wants us to enjoy His creation with Him. According to the first few chapters of Genesis, we were not created to be God's little slaves to do His bidding here on earth (see *Genesis 1.26-2.3*). We are not human workbots (working robots) created to accomplish what He wants done on earth. He is creative and powerful enough to get His work done without us. We were created with a need to work, but also with a need to relate to Him in a relaxed and restorative manner.

We don't rest so we can work better or more, rather we rest to fulfill part of our destiny. God has called us to live our lives in a way that we relish in His creation and find restorative ways to enjoy it.

Ken Love, State Coaching Strategist for FLCOG, once schooled me in the types of restorative time needed. Too often I think we suffer from trying to combine one type of restorative time with the other types; or our spouses expect one kind of restorative time while we want another kind. Some examples of these types of vacations may be:

Intimate time with your spouse

Solitude time to be quiet and rest

Study time to read, reflect and write

Fun time to do things you normally don't do in life (fish, ski, scuba, etc.)

Challenging time to test your meddle (climb a mountain, run a marathon, etc.)

Family time to ensure relationships stay close

From scriptures, it appears these times are not only to be taken when we need to rest. My observation is that often pastors' attitudes begin to sour long before they sense a need to get some time of restoration. I know for me, I find myself getting grouchy or touchy with those closest to me. I can always find a reason to blame my poor attitude on those around me, but the root cause is that I am not meeting the needs that God created in me for restoration.

Let me suggest that we to need to restore daily, weekly and annually. Daily we should take time to relax, take one-minute vacations, go for a walk, or simply enjoy God through worship. One way this happens for me is through running. This discipline is very restorative for me. The late Gerald Marvel taught me that we should divide our day into three parts, morning, afternoon, and evening, and we should only work two of the three of each day.

God is pretty clear throughout the Old Testament of our need for Sabbath. Jesus clearly didn't dismiss the concept, only clarified it. He helped us see that the Sabbath was created for us, not the other way around (remember why we were created). There is a weekly need that each of us have to spend time simply enjoying who God created us to be. As a pastor, I fully understand the difficulty of this. There is simply no excuse for us to violate this principle. Not because we can work better, but because it is who we were created to be. By fulfilling this need we are fulfilling part of our created calling!

The scriptures are also replete with examples of the feasts and celebrations that occurred throughout the year. These were times when everything shut down and people focused on different aspects of their created calling from God. The nature of these times were varied and lasted from a day to several weeks. God clearly worked into the nation of Israel times of restoration and refocusing throughout the year.

If God thought this was critical for His order of creation in Genesis and for the nation of Israel, do you not think it is critical for you? Let me answer this for you, YES it is critical for each of us. We all go through times where we simply cannot rigidly adhere to needed restorative schedules, but eventually we must seize our time to instill these times into our lives.

This past year, with our staff reductions and other issues I have been forced to eliminate some restorative time from my calendar. However, recently my coach (Al Ells, Founder of Leaders That Last Ministries) again has forced the issue for me to develop a daily, weekly and annual calendar that applies the principles I have discussed here. Obviously, I have not won the battle of living according to each of these principles, but I am working at fulfilling this part of my created calling.