# Vocation IS Ministry

*Our abilities, whatever they may be, are God-given. Our work, no matter what we do,*

*matters to God. Our jobs, well done, show our love for others.*

**Episode 9: Rest from Work (Part 2)**

Personal refreshment from and for what we’ve been gifted to do.

Introduction \* Stories and scenarios from Church History \* Review of last week: 3 key words

(1) “finished” for contemplation, appreciation; (2) “done” 3-fold statement anticipating eternity;

(3) “rested” or ceased, 7th day gives significance to all the others

Exodus 20:8-11 Observations The longest commandment…only one not repeated in the NT…positive, not negative…unlike any other ANE’n nation…treated people as people…focus on God’s sanctification of time and its benefit for *all* creatures

Holidays had a purpose. They created memories (leaving Egypt, Leviticus 23:42-43), reminded people of their place (God is the ‘landlord’, 25:23), established repetition (for generations to come, 23:41), formed memorials (benefiting descendants, 23:33, 42), and produced anticipation (the possibility of release from debt, 25:10). The rest of Scripture heralds further ideas not already mentioned: The Sabbath was a sign between God and His people (Exodus 31:12-17); blessing resulted from keeping the day (Deuteronomy 15:1-11), treating Sabbath like any other day was grounds for chastisement (Nehemiah 13:15-22), the Sabbath was made for people (Mark 2:20-28), and external appearances were no way to judge a person’s activities on the Sabbath (John 7:21-24; cf. Colossians 2:16-23). *Mark Eckel*

Leviticus 23:1-3 Observations

(1) *Remembrance* “a day of sacred assembly” lit. a convention; “wherever you

live” a collective, community effort; “sabbath to The Lord” means contemplation, focus

\*Problem in OT—did not keep (70 years in exile gave land “sabbath”; 2 Chr 36)

\*Problem in NT—legalism (Gnostics=limit pleasure; Judaizers=impose human rules)

(2) *Rest* “six days you may work” pattern and limitation established; “you are not to do

any work” was a release not a restriction; “seventh day is a Sabbath of rest” lit. “rest, rest”; the

[Work] saves man from the solitariness that he fears…for when a man is alone he is really alone…he is then naked in the universe; he is face to face with God; and this confrontation is formidable . . . . Modern man . . . . takes refuge in anesthetics, and most of all the opiate of work, which keeps his thoughts away from contemplation by keeping his eyes fixed on the conveyor belt or the drawing board. *Arnold Toynbee, "Work, the Great Anesthetic,“ Milwaukee Journal, 6 August 1971*

Most of us spend most of our time in the workplace. But without Sabbath…the workplace is soon emptied of any sense of the presence of God and the work becomes an end in itself. It is this “end in itself” that makes an un-sabbathed workplace a breeding ground for idols. WE make idols in our workplaces when we reduce all relationship to functions that we can manage. We make idols in our workplaces when we reduce work to the dimensions of our egos and control. When we work, we are most god-like, which means that it is in our work that it is easiest to develop god-pretensions. Un-sabbathed, our work becomes the entire context in which we define our lives. We lose God-consciousness, God-awareness, sightings of resurrection. We lose the capacity to sing “This is my Father’s world” and end our chirping little self-centered ditties about what *we* are doing and feeling. Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*

word for “work” is our vocational, God-given abilities; we rest from our gifts, regular work

Questions (1) What is my vocation? (2) Do my Sabbaths include remembrance and rest? (3) Do I recall why my Sabbath is important? (4) Do I spend my Sabbath pouring myself into something else? (5) Do I allow my vocation to run my life?

Five Major Applications

(1) *Creational*—land, slaves, animals, all rested

(2) *Individual*—personal convictions are important (Rom 14; 1 Co 8)

(3) *Liberal*—broad-minded (Col 2:16-23); not NT repeated for a reason

(4) *Honorable*—respect convictions of others; liberty not legalism

(5) *Vocational*—time taken depends on work/vocation done

The Biblical Basis for Retreat

So important is rest between The Creator and His creation that God instituted a cessation of activity as a creational ordinance, giving rest as a blessing to the earth and humanity (Ge 2:2-3). Creation itself marks the importance of rest, dividing time between evening and morning for rest and activity (Ge 1:5, 8, 13, etc.).

Exodus 20:8-11 uses the same Hebrew words commanding rest for everyone and everything, including animals, once a week. Deut 5:12-15 gives the second major reason for rest: to remember redemption. God’s people were those through whom others would see the importance of God’s laws (cf. Ex 19:5, 6; Deut 4:5-8).

Those who twisted God’s laws for their own self-righteous ends were castigated by Jesus for their compassionless mindset (cf. Mark 3:1-5). So there is a planned humanitarian element in rest, a focus on other people as evidenced in the sabbatical year (Ex 23:10-12; Lev 25:1-7). One year out of seven also impacted the financial, commercial scene where those who were financially solvent were to extend monetary grace to those who had need (Deut 15:1-11).

Rest included planned celebrations outlined in calendar fashion: days of the week, month, and year were to be purposefully important to Israel (Lev 23). If times of rest for the land were not followed, God judged His people by taking them physically from the locale so the land could rest (Lev 26:34-35; cf. 2 Chr 36:20, 21).

Allegiance to God’s strict laws once a week for the farmer (Ex 34:21), salesmen (Jer 17:27), and housewife (Ex 35:2-3) was a marker of obedience in a world that thumbed its nose at God’s creation ordinance. But the cessation from work is for human benefit (Mark 2:27; cf. Luke 13:10-17; John 7:21-24). There will always be those whose greed and self-indulgence turn the beneficial restriction of rest into an irritation (Isa 58:13; Amos 8:5).

Rest from the surrounding culture was God’s intention for giving Israel land in Canaan (Deut 3:20; 12:9-10; Josh 1:13). Leading God’s people to a place of rest was used as the metaphor for eternal rest in Hebrews 4:1-11, the original intention of Genesis 2. In fact, the presence of God is considered a place of rest (Ex 33:14).

Our Lord knew the importance of “getting away.” Whether it be for the purpose of prayer (Matt 14:13, 23) or simply a separation from everyday pressures and people (Mark 6:31-32) taking leave from time to time was a good thing. But more importantly, Jesus declared Himself to be “Lord of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:28)—The Creator who established Genesis law for peoples’ benefit (Matt 12:1-8).