

Unplugging: Real Rest for the 21st Century

By Beth Foreman

It's 6:30 a.m. and before brushing your teeth, you have already replied to two text messages, updated your Facebook status, skimmed a few items on your RSS feed, and retweeted an inspirational thought. As you grab your car keys and head out the door, your cell phone rings. You're always plugged in, and so you are always busy doing something — multi-tasking, the 21st Century phrase for juggling too many balls. If you happen upon a quiet moment, you feel guilty. I should be doing something.

Discuss: If every day had 25 hours, how would you spend your extra hour? Why?

Did you say you'd rest? Probably not. We just don't do it. Most of us fill our days with busy-ness and rarely find time for real rest until we fall into bed late at night. That doesn't count. That's sleep, not rest. And those five-minute power naps in your office chair while new software is downloading? Those don't count as rest either because they represent our body's response to working overtime. When you are exhausted, you have no choice but to shut down.

Let's try something. Spend one minute doing nothing. Right now. Set a timer and then do nothing. Don't think about your next project. Try not to tap your foot or plan your next vacation. You may want to close your eyes to avoid distractions. *[Leader should allow one full minute for the women to pause.]*

How did your one-minute break feel? Was it difficult to do? Why?

Take a few moments and jot down everything you need to accomplish tomorrow:

How many items are on the list?

When you look at this list, how do you feel? Be honest.

Do you find yourself repeating, "I'm so busy!" to friends and family? Do you ever hear your friends or colleagues boasting about their busy lives? Why do you think we do this?

Many of us feel proud of our busy lives as though it reflects our self-worth.

God's Busy Week: His Permission to Rest

Let's begin the Bible study by reading the prayer together:



Heavenly Father, as we open Your Word to learn what You tell us about rest, open our hearts to receive the peace that only You provide, through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Read **Exodus 20:8–10**. What does God require in this commandment? Read **Mark 2:23–28**. Does "remember the Sabbath Day" command us to rest physically or to take time from our other activities to worship God?

Even though God does not command us to set aside a day for physical rest, why is it still a good idea to plan for a day of rest? How does our society see this?

In six days, what work did God check off His To-Do List? Read **Genesis 2:1–3**.

How did He feel about His creation? (**Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25**)

What did God do on the seventh day? Why?

Declare Our Work Finished

Look back at your To-Do List and circle those items that you won't finish within the next week. Also circle those items which are on-going and that are never really finished (homework, housework, paperwork, etc.).

Do you think you deserve a day of rest even when your work isn't complete? Read **Matthew 25:34** and **Hebrews 4:1–4**. In what sense did God declare His work finished before He rested? Read **John 19:30**. In what sense was God's work not completed until later?

Is it possible for us to declare our work finished even though there is still work to be done in the future?

Learn How to Rest

Read **Matthew 14:22–24** and **Mark 6:31–32**. What do you learn from these verses that you can apply to your rest?

Now here is something you might want to highlight. In order for rest to count as real rest, it should be planned. It should be on your To-Do List for the week.

What is a good day of the week for you to rest? What do you usually do on that day?

Okay. You've read about God giving you permission and even encouragement to rest. You know that it's healthy — emotionally and physically — to do so. But you still struggle with *how* to rest.

If you are like me, you might want a list that tells you exactly what you could DO when you rest. Here's one suggested list:

Find a quiet spot near a window, get comfortable, and watch what's going on outside.

Read one of David's Psalms.

If you have several hours, plan a mini-retreat in your home or nearby park where you can pray and meditate.

Close the blinds, turn your cell phone to silent, put on quiet music and write a list of your blessings. Thank God for these blessings.

Go to your local coffee shop with a magazine and as you flip through the pages, watch the people who come and go.

Find a good place where you can watch the sunrise or the sunset. Sip a refreshing drink and enjoy it.

These are good suggestions, and you probably have some of your own. Yet, the last thing we need is another list of to-do's for our day of rest! God gives us permission to rest, but He doesn't give us specific guidelines.

Rest: Receiving God's Gifts

What gift does **Hebrews 4:9–11** say that God gives to you when you participate in worship?



Listen to verses from Psalm 141 set to music. Go to www.lwml.org, find the *Quarterly* icon, and click on the link to the song. [Permission granted for use by LWML by R.M.M. Muñoz.]

How to be Green

By Rev. Carl Gnewuch

Open with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to guide your study of the Word.

My daughter recently took second place in a German language poetry recitation competition at a heritage festival in Ann Arbor. Part of her award was a t-shirt left over from the previous year's competition. I congratulated her effort and complimented the shirt. She agreed the shirt looked "cool" but sadly said she could not wear it. Surprised, I asked why she couldn't wear a shirt she liked. She said, "Because it is hot pink, and I have red hair!" Oh. So I turned to my wife with her dark brown hair and said, "Well, maybe mom can wear it ...". My wife said she could not wear it either. "Hot pink," she explained, "usually only looks good on blondes."

What colors "work" for you? If you are working through this study in a group, take a few minutes to discuss the colors you can or cannot wear.

Read **Exodus 20:8–10** again. What does God say we should not do? What does God say we should do? What is the focus of this commandment?

Read **Hebrews 10:18–25**. What reasons are given as to why we are able to worship God together as Christians? What are the benefits of worshipping with fellow Christians?

Dr. Martin Luther said, "God's Word is the sanctuary above all sanctuaries." How might God's Word be a sanctuary? How can it give you rest?

What kind of rest is promised in **Matthew 11:28–29**?

Quite simply, He wants us to find rest in Him.

Closing Prayer

Gracious and Loving Father, thank You for the gift of eternal rest You have promised through Your Son Jesus Christ. Remind us about it, Lord, when we get so busy and stressed that we forget You. Help us to accept Your gift of rest every week, a time when You refresh us through the sanctuary of Your Word and Sacraments. Help us to carve out time in our daily lives to meditate on Your goodness and mercy and to dwell in the perfect peace that only You offer. In Jesus' most precious name. Amen.

Beth Foreman, the LWQ Features Editor, is a writer, teacher, and high-handicap golfer. She has written for Portals of Prayer as well as CPH Youth Bible studies and Vacation Bible School. Her newest adventure is learning the ropes of social media, blogging, and fan pages as she markets her family's custom cabinet business.

