

# Give It a Rest! The Perfect Gift

By Beth Foreman

You're a busy person. Your calendar is filled with appointments, meetings, classes, and lists with deadlines. Your friends are busy, your family is busy, your world is busy. So what would be the perfect gift for you?

One more hour in every day...

A book on organization ...

A cleaning lady...

A job closer to home...



*Editor's Note: Third in a series on the Ten Commandments, this study contains references to the Third Commandment. See Fall and Winter 2005 issues of the Lutheran Woman's Quarterly for past studies.*

Discuss: If you were given one more hour every day, how would you spend it? Why?

Did you say you'd rest? Probably not. Women of all ages fill their days with busy-ness and rarely find time for rest. Now I'm not talking here about the five-minute power nap in your car while you wait for the preschool door to open or the 30 seconds when you close your eyes at the red traffic light.

Let's try an experiment. Spend one minute doing nothing. Right now. Set a timer and then do nothing. Don't think about your to-do list or even chew gum. Try not to tap your foot or plan tonight's dinner. You may want to close your eyes to shut out distractions.

*Leader should allow one full minute for the pause.*

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

Take a few moments and jot down your current to-do list for this week:

How many items are on the list?

When you look at this list, how do you feel?

Do you ever boast to friends or family about your busy schedule? Do you hear your friends 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 To-Do List: 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 2:24-28**. 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 take a day off? 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?

## Unfinished Work

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?

## How Do We 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?

What is a good day 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:

1. Find a quiet place and put your feet up for 35 minutes.
2. Read one chapter in your Bible.
3. Pray for 20 minutes after you have listed all those for whom you will pray.
4. Write in your spiritual journal for 45 minutes.
5. Sip tea.
6. Take a brisk walk.
7. Enjoy a long soak in a hot bubble bath.
8. Listen to relaxing music.

Yet, the last thing we need is a list of to-do's for our rest! God gives us permission to rest, but He doesn't give us specific guidelines.

### **Rest: Focus on God's Gifts**

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

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 11:28-30**?

### **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 started writing as a kindergartner when her mom would ask her to write the Thanksgiving table prayer every year. She continues her writing in Ogden, UT where she lives with husband, Bruce, and their two children, Ian, 18 and Margaret, 16. She teaches high school English and writes for Concordia Publishing House. She serves as the Features Editor of the Quarterly.*