

Do you have your summer vacations planned yet? Whether it's Disney or camping, your cottage or your timeshare in Hawaii, the itch really starts this time of year; that persistent voice calling, "It's time for you to get some R&R!"—rest and relaxation. So we head off on our vacations, certain that rest from the stress of work, school, and the hectic rat race of life is just a vacay away.

But do you know what I rarely feel when I get home from vacation? Well rested. Because during the vacation, we cram something fun into every minute, leaving little time to rest. And constantly fretting whether you have everything you need leaves your heart and mind restless. And when you get back home, the lawn needs to be mowed, there's a mountain of e-mails in your inbox, and all of the stressors you left behind are still there, saying, "Hey! Remember me?" So it's unsurprising to hear post-vacationers say, "I need a vacation, after that vacation."

If even the most anticipated getaways leave us feeling like we still need more R&R, what can provide the lasting rest we desire? **God's Word Works** when we're **In Need of Some R&R**, not just to give us temporary rest for our bodies, but lasting rest for our souls. God commands us to keep the Sabbath day, because through it, he gives us the "R&R" we really need: to **Rest** and **Remember**.

First, we need to understand what a "Sabbath Day" is. God's third Commandment is "**Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy.**" Mirroring the six days of creation, and God's rest on the seventh day, God commanded, "**Six days you shall labor...but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant...so that [they] may rest, as you do.**"

Clearly, God wanted to give his people the opportunity to rest. That's what Sabbath means— "rest." God commanded the Israelites to set aside every Saturday for physical rest for their bodies, but more importantly, spiritual rest for their souls—using the time to worship God and meditate on his Word.

On one particular Sabbath, Jesus and his disciples were walking through a grainfield. Hungry, some of them began picking heads of grain and eating them. Seems pretty innocent, right? But the religious group called the Pharisees accused them, "**Why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?**" "Harvesting" was outlawed on the Sabbath, and desperately trying to find Jesus doing something wrong, the Pharisees claimed that Jesus and his disciples were therefore breaking God's Sabbath.

The Pharisees were obsessed with keeping the Sabbath. So much so, that they piled a mountain of man-made Sabbath rules on top of God's command. In doing so, the Pharisees lost sight of God's purpose for the Sabbath. Instead of a day for spiritual rest, the Pharisees transformed the Sabbath into a self-righteous work.

And viewing it as a work, the Pharisees muddled who the Sabbath was really for. They thought that keeping the Sabbath laws would earn God's favor, and get them on his good side.

But as Jesus pointed out to them, the Sabbath wasn't something God needed people to do for him. The Sabbath was something God graciously gave his people so they could have spiritual rest and growth! Jesus tells the Pharisees, "**The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.**" God didn't need their worship. But they needed the rest only he could give.

So 2,000 years later, how does this apply to us? God no longer requires us to keep the "Sabbath" rules and regulations like the Israelites. As Paul encourages, "**Do not let anyone judge you about...a Sabbath Day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality...is found in Christ.**"

One reason God instituted the Sabbath was to help his people remember the Savior he promised to send. Christ came and fulfilled the Sabbath day by giving eternal spiritual rest through the forgiveness of sins. So, we don't have to follow things like Saturday work restrictions, or only worshiping on Saturdays anymore. But the third commandment still applies to us! God still wants us to devote time to worship God and be in His Word, so that through it, we can have lasting spiritual rest.

But do we ever think like the Pharisees? Like we're earning God's favor by worshiping, and studying God's Word? We probably wouldn't *say* that, but doesn't that thought subtly creep into our minds and actions? Have you ever thought, "I can skip church today, I went last weekend"? Or, "We don't have to go to Bible class or Sunday School today, because we went to church." What does that make worship and study? Some task to check off the to-do list in order to placate God? Our payment to ensure God will take care of us? We fail to see that we're the ones benefiting, not God! Like a sick patient thinking the doctor is the one benefitting from the medicine he's prescribed!

Work doesn't give rest. Work makes rest that much more needed! If we try cramming self-righteous work into every moment we have, we leave no time for real spiritual rest. And the constant worrying whether you've done enough to please God leaves your mind and soul restless. Even when you've checked a bunch of things off the list, the guilt for all of your other sins are still waiting, saying, "Hey! Remember me?"

Making worship a work loses sight of God's purpose for the Sabbath, and ultimately fails to supply what God intends— lasting spiritual rest. And let's face it. We desperately need that rest! After another stressful week at home, at school, or at work; after another week of sin and failure, we need to have our faith restored, and our rest re-supplied by God's Word.

Look at it this way. When your company gives you paid vacation, do you go on that vacation just to keep your boss happy? Do you go just so you can cross another task off your to-do list? Of course not! You don't take the vacation to benefit your boss. It's something that's been given to you for your benefit! And thus, vacations aren't viewed as tasks to be completed, but as gifts to be enjoyed!

Likewise, we don't worship God or study his Word to placate God, or check it off our to-do list. We worship and meditate on God's Word because it's the gracious, powerful gift God's given us, so we can have the lasting spiritual rest we need!

Certainly, just because you come to worship, or hear and study God's Word, doesn't mean your problems all magically disappear. No one leaves church with a perfect life. So how exactly does God give us this "spiritual rest" he promises?

Largely, our culture seeks rest by trying to forget; by trying to escape from the trouble and stress of life. We go on vacations to get away from it all. We go to sleep for a brief respite from our worries. People get drunk or high to dull the pain or forget the bad. But none of those give lasting rest. Eventually, you return to reality— work, school, pain, problems, and the hectic nature of life are still there.

But God's method for giving spiritual rest is counter-cultural. Not rest by forgetting...but rest by remembering. As Moses relays God's command to the Israelites, ***"Remember that you were slaves...and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand."***

Remember! True spiritual rest is found in remembering the promises God makes us. Being in worship or studying God's Word won't magically take our problems away, but when we're reminded of God's promises, we're equipped to deal with the problems, stress, or weariness that don't disappear. How do we remember? By being reminded of God's promises in his Word.

Maybe you're feeling unloved, or dealing with a broken heart today. Remember, ***"I have loved you with an everlasting love."*** Maybe you're mourning the death of someone you love today. Remember, ***"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."*** Maybe you're stressed over a family problem today. Remember, ***"My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him... he is my fortress, I will never be shaken."*** Maybe you're worried about your future today. Remember, ***"In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps."*** Maybe you're worried about your health, or a loved one's health today. Remember, ***"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him."*** God gives us spiritual rest by helping us remember his goodness and mercy, his power and love, his promises and faithfulness.

God also wanted the Israelites to remember their slavery. Because that helped them remember how God had set them free by his power and grace. And that's ultimately what gives us lasting spiritual rest too.

Like we talked about last weekend, remember that you were once slaves too—slaves to sin, death, and Satan. Sinners unworthy to stand before our Holy God. But also remember how the Lord brought you out of your slavery. With hands that weren't mighty, but pierced with nails on the cross. But those hands would later rise triumphant from the grave!

That was God's purpose in commanding his people to remember the Sabbath Day. He wanted them to focus their faith and attention on the one who would be the ultimate fulfillment of it. The one who would come and give true, lasting, eternal rest and peace. That's why Jesus can say, ***"The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."*** That's why we can remember his words, ***"Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."***

We're all in need of some R&R, aren't we? We need to rest. We need to remember. Practically, that means we need to schedule it into our summer. Even more than you build your summer around your vacations, build your summer around the opportunities God graciously provides to be filled with spiritual rest. Prioritize being in worship. Prioritize studying God's Word with your family, and individually. Make use of Saturday and Monday services if you're gone. Watch the sermons online if you miss a weekend. Yes, enjoy your vacations, but don't forget the only R&R that gives you true and lasting rest. God gives you the opportunity to take that vacation every minute of every day, because God's Word works.