

**BRCC Rest & Press On
2012: A Summer of Faithfulness**

INTRO

It's summer time! Time to let your hair down, feel the breeze, take a dip in the pool, hike that mountain, catch those fish, visit family, take a vacation. It's time to light the tiki-torches, fire up the barbecue, and see the sights! Chill. Out.

Well, there are lots of different attitudes about rest. If you ask 100 people what they think about rest, you may even get 200 different responses! Do you *work to rest* or *rest to work*? Is rest a *thing for the lazy* or a *hindrance for productivity*?

1. What are some of your thoughts about rest? Is it a good thing or a bad thing? 

One of the customs that Americans have preserved in our quest for utopia is the summer vacation. With no regard for how productive or effective the summer has been, it is a foregone conclusion that the summer break is a time for rest.

Many teachers and administrators argue that the very nature of the summer break leads to waste rather than rest. Supporting his thesis (that ten thousand hours of any one activity can make anyone seem to be a genius), researcher Malcolm Gladwell highlights the KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) schools. These schools are reaching otherwise *at risk* populations in the Bronx, NY; however, they are recording remarkable education levels and test results. Guess what they have discovered as part of their genius? More time in school and less time for summer break!

So what does that mean? Is rest a bad thing? Typically, the debate will rage on like this, with each side citing examples that seem to be conclusive. Some say more rest is beneficial. Others say that less is best. As followers of Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit living inside us and the Scriptures alive to us, we don't have to waffle. We don't have to let our thoughts hinge on the latest discoveries or trends from around the world. Instead, we can turn to God's Word.

There are many benefits to getting good rest. However, there are also some huge temptations associated with rest. This morning, we are going to briefly engage with the Biblical teachings about the importance of rest. After that, we'll consider God's purposes in rest and how following the Holy Spirit and pursuing God's purposes help us avoid the dangerous temptations surrounding rest.

Let's stop now and invite the Lord to speak to our lives in a way that gets our attention today and helps us to live faithfully this summer, making it restful and productive...**Let's PRAY**

Don't Waste Your Rest

In his popular book and study guide, *Don't Waste Your Life*, author and pastor, Dr. John Piper holds out the Biblical call to whole-life faithfulness. Eschewing the temptation to coast through life as if it were a redeemed holiday, Dr. Piper uses this powerful illustration:

People today are spending billions of dollars to persuade you to embrace that tragic dream [that we should pursue early retirement so we can spend the final third of our lives engaged in

hobbies]. Over against that, I put my protest: Don't buy it. Don't waste your life...I plead with you: Desire that your life count for something great! Long for your life to have eternal significance. Want this! Don't coast through life without a passion.

2. Do you have one God-given, holy passion in your life? Do you have anything that moves you out of every comfort zone and into any danger to see it accomplished? What is it? What could it be? 

In order for us to gain a right understanding of God's view of rest, we should start with a right understanding of God's view of our lives.

3. What do these verses tell us about our life on earth? 

- Job 7:7 _____
- James 4:14 _____
- Psalm 39:5 _____
- Psalm 102:3 _____
- Psalm 144:4 _____
- Proverbs 27:1 _____

Depending on your preexisting conclusions or bent, you may read those verses and decide that you need to get busy with your life! That's not such a bad idea. Scripture is full of God's call to be intentional and diligent with our lives.

4. Consider these passages and their call to diligence. Write out the word/phrase used to communicate diligence in each verse. 

- Proverbs 10:4 _____
- John 9:4 _____
- Galatians 6:10 _____

Jesus was completely faithful with his life. Full of the Spirit, He made the most of every opportunity, spoke when he should speak, healed those he came to heal and preached when he should preach. Jesus invested his life into people so thoroughly that the Church has existed and spread out from that small region in the Mid-East. Jesus' earthly ministry was approximately thirty-three years, so he had even less time than we do. Still, these verses tell us that Jesus did not obsess over his diligence. Rather, according to Matthew 8:24, Mark 4:38 and the implication of Luke 22:39, he took the appropriate time to rest.

5. What restful act does each verse record God the Father or Jesus doing? 

- Genesis 2:2 _____
- Matthew 8:24 _____
- Mark 4:38 _____
- Luke 22:39 _____

So, since our life on earth is so brief, we should view our rest as very important.

- Rest:
- Restores us so we can be fruitful in our labors
 - Demonstrates trust in the power of God to provide through our frailty
 - Is a necessity while we are in these mortal bodies
 - Follows the pattern given by God the Father and The Son

Since Rest is So Important...Do it Well

In his book, *Redeeming the Time*, Leland Ryken wrote:

At its best, leisure serves many functions. It provides rest, relaxation, enjoyment, and physical and psychic health. It allows people to recover the distinctly human values, to build relationships, to strengthen family bonds, and to put themselves in touch with the world and nature. Leisure can lead to wholeness, gratitude and a sense of achievement. It expands our horizons beyond the confines of the workaday world and liberates our spirits from the bondage of the everyday routine.

6. How can you take good leisure this summer? Consider these areas of leisure and how you might embrace them for the first time, or improve them this summer for God's glory and your faithfulness:

- **Sleep:** The American Heart Association recommends that we each get about seven hrs. of sleep per night. When this is quality, restful sleep, it is a big step towards heart health! It helps us avoid strokes, headaches, muscle fatigue and strengthens our ability to focus during waking hours. **Are you sleeping to God's glory? Or do you retain sleep as a pet area that is yours to rule over?**

Are you getting enough sleep? YES (~7hrs. per night) / NO (less or way more)

What habits do you retain that hinder your sleep?

Maintain inconsistent sleep schedule?

Stay awake too late?

Fall asleep in front of the TV / Computer / With music on?

Eat / Drink / Snack too close to bed time?

Make some notes for yourself so that you can make some changes and give your life more fully to Christ for His use. 

- **Conscious Rest:** Some people sleep the right amounts but they're never consciously restful. Rest involves down-time. Some rest is best embraced through consciously casting our cares on the Lord (1 Peter 5:7). Other forms of rest can only be accomplished through complete cessation of distracting or busy activities. **Do you have down time? Do you know how to entrust yourself to the Lord when your schedule is chaotic or does your schedule rule your blood pressure? What about when your schedule is open or free? Do people around you get stressed out by your constant level of intensity? That may be a sign that you are not in the habit of cultivating rest. Are you maintaining restful habits where you pursue leisure-time activities where you don't bring up stress-inducing topics for yourself or others? **CAUTION** Not all activities that are not work-related are restful. Certain addictive activities like checking Facebook, video gaming, and internet movie watching can have the opposite effect and be stress-inducing.**

What habits can you ask God to help you with (and you be diligent) to reduce or remove from your daily life that are not restful? What habits can you begin to incorporate into your life that would be restful?

What restful activities can you try or get reacquainted with that can help you rest?

-read a book on a device or (old fashioned) paper

-intentional conversation time with a friend

-cooking // painting // thinking // walking

-serving others

****N.B.** all of these can be helpful or stressful depending on many factors; use caution**

What trustworthy person in your life could you ask about whether or not you produce rest or stress for those around you? Make a plan to ask this person / persons soon.

Make some notes for yourself so that you can make some changes and give your life more fully to Christ for His use. 

Read Psalm 23:2 aloud. What implications does this verse have for our understanding of rest? 

- **Play:** It is not necessarily ungodly to play. Both Zechariah and Isaiah's vision of the new Jerusalem involves children playing (Isaiah 11:8; Zech. 8:5). These situations describe light-hearted circumstances where children have no fears and the implication is that they are fearless because of the presence and confidence in the Lord. Consider how you can incorporate *play* into your life as part of your restfulness. Do you trust the Lord enough to have occasional times of play? Or do you feel guilty when you play or see others having fun?

How can you incorporate play into your life so that you can be more rested for God's glory? Sports, many types of games, music, et al.. These can all be a part of light-hearted, intentional times of restful play.

Make some notes for yourself so that you can make some changes and give your life more fully to Christ for His use. 

- **Exercise:** Unless you are an athlete, part of a police or military force or research subject, your main work is not to exercise. So, exercise, while strenuous by design, is not part of our vocation or *work* for most of us. Rather, exercise can be a form of rest because it is often beneficial for the body, and the mind and thus, for faithfulness to Jesus.

What types of exercise can you incorporate into your life? (If out of the habit, you may want to contact a physician before starting any type of consistent exercise.) Can you give ½ hr per day to walk, run, cycle or swim? Can you take leisurely hikes or aggressive ones that will help you have consistent and enjoyable exercise? If finances are a hindrance to your exercise or other restful activities, how can you be a better steward in other areas of finances so you can have resources to get good rest?

Make some notes for yourself so that you can make some changes and give your life more

fully to Christ for His use. 

Rest, as we have seen, is very important. Like other important things, our diligence and intentionality glorify God in this area. As we work out our part, we should also look for God's leading, power and wisdom to rest well (ourselves) and facilitate righteous rest in others.

Part II - Press On

Many people, even well-meaning Christians run away from the idea that rest can be a godly discipline. Many of these people cannot imagine seeing righteous examples or rest because they have only heard teachings about the dangers of sloth or they've only seen bad examples of laziness and waste. The Bible speaks against these excesses; and quite clearly. However, it is important to see that laziness is no friend of faithful restfulness.

7. What are some differences between laziness and restfulness that you can think of?   

8. Some common words that Scripture uses to speak against laziness are listed below. What do these words imply?

- a. Sluggard: _____ 
- b. Lazy: _____
- c. Brother to the one who destroys: _____
- d. Slothful: _____
- e. Idle: _____
- f. Quiet: _____

9. What would be the opposite of these traits? Write out the opposite word/phrase for each of the answers from Question 8.

- a. _____   
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____
- f. _____

Some people go overboard in their pursuit of rest but seldom does someone whose aim is to please the Lord in their rest go too far. Rather, when we have an unchecked personal desire for something, we pursue it and it leads to sinful behavior (James 1:13-15). This is how people get to a place where they sleep too much. So much that their pursuit of sleep leads them to reject other priorities. Or, they rest too much; and don't have a sharp mind for important goals that God has for their lives. Maybe they play too much; and turn games into a distracting, time-consuming vice. Some even exercise too much and become

addicted to the fitness or self-control that exercise dares them to take for themselves. Rest is important, but it is not more important than Spirit-led faithfulness. The flesh (aka sinful nature) bears fruit of sensual lusts and waste. The Spirit brings freedom, life and peace.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is...

We don't always know exactly what or why he is doing what he does, but there are consistent results of the presence of the Spirit of God. 2 Corinthians 3:17 tells us that one of these results or fruits of the Spirit in a life is freedom. Galatians adds to our understanding of the presence of the Spirit of God by giving this list: "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."

10. What does the Spirit's *fruit* tell us about the result of Spirit-led restfulness?   

Intentionality in a Season of Rest

When rest is fueled or strengthened by God, it is fruitful and beneficial to the individual, to the Church and - in some measure - to the world. Sometimes, the Lord accomplishes things through us, by His Spirit, that we didn't plan for or think to anticipate. Other times, the Lord moves by His Spirit by giving us the ability to read (or hear), receive and obey his Word. Both of these are Biblical patterns (Daniel 10:12; Matthew 25:37-40). Right now, let's be intentional to look at some ways that God could use our summer to advance His purposes through us.

Here are some wise and Biblical uses of restful time. Which ones will you incorporate into your summer for maximum faithfulness to Jesus?

Evaluation: (Psalm 90:12; Galatians 6:4)

Use your season of rest to evaluate past goals / values / objectives. Do they still describe your God-given direction?

11. What personal spiritual goals do you have or need to make? Do they accurately reflect who God is in your life and what He's calling you to be and do?

Use your season of rest to evaluate progress in your personal goals / values / objectives. Are you making the kind of progress you wanted to make? What was a hindrance? What was an area of strength? What needs to change in the upcoming season to improve faithfulness?

12. Over the past semester / year, have you been making the progress with the Lord that you'd hoped to make? Have you been making the progress in your goals / values / objectives that you hoped to make? What hindered you from progressing in a good way? What needs to be removed or altered in your life so you can improve?

Nurture & Develop: (1 Timothy 5:8; Galatians 6:10)

Many people bemoan lost relationships, isolation and loneliness. Use your seasons of rest

(this summer) to develop or strengthen your relationships with your church family, friends, family members, discipleship group members, co-workers, etc.

13. Prayerfully consider what relationships you need to nurture, develop or in any way improve for God's glory. What hindered you from progressing in a good way? What needs to be removed or altered in your life so you can improve?

Tidying Up: (Proverbs 14:4; Luke 1:3) 

Proverbs 14:4 and Luke 1:3 do not teach that "cleanliness is next to godliness." Rather, these verses do make a connection between the state of order in one's life and the ease with which things can proceed. In the Proverb, the first point is made; that some *filth* is a result of much labor being done. In Luke 1:3, the opposite perspective is represented: that there is benefit to order and clarity. We must be careful not to make a man-made law out of a human tradition. Still, to give zero thought to the state of one's affairs is to court disaster.

14. Take some time this summer to consider your possessions. What needs to be given away, thrown away, donated, deleted, or otherwise cared for? Use your rest to intentionally prepare for a future season of busyness.

Blue Ridge
Community Church

Conclusion: In the US, we take for granted that summer is for rest. On a personal level, that's not necessarily a bad or good thing. Rest is what we make of it. If our commitment is to our own lusts and careless excesses, our lives will be chaotic and frustrating. But if we are committed to Christ and yielded to His Spirit and His Word and in fellowship with His People, God can and will use our rest to accomplish awesome things. His freedom will erupt in our lives and peace, joy and all the fruit of the Spirit will be free to bloom in our lives for our enjoyment and the benefit of others. Let's use our summer well, resting as God would have us do it.

Notes:

<http://books.google.com/books?id=gZDvrfIgg9IC&lpg=PA169&vq=rest&dq=Work%20%26%20Leisure%20in%20Christian%20Perspective&pg=PA32#v=snippet&q=rest&f=false>

http://www.holidays-info.com/School-Holidays-Germany/2012/school-holidays_2012.html

<http://www.nea.org/tools/17057.htm>

<http://books.google.com/books?id=3NSImqnxnkc&lpg=PT146&vq=summer%20long&dq=outliers&pg=PT151#v=snippet&q=summer%20long&f=false>

http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/More/MyHeartandStrokeNews/5-Simple-Heart-Healthy-Energy-Boosters_UCM_434961_Article.jsp

<http://debates.juggle.com/are-year-round-schools-a-good-idea-that-should-be-adopted-by-private-and-public-schools>

<http://www.fi.edu/learn/brain/exercise.html/>