

Rest and Restoration



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Gen. 2:15, Exod. 20:8–11, 23:12, Matt. 11:28–30, Mark 2:27, 6:30–32.*

Memory Text: “Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest’ ” (*Mark 6:31, NIV*).

A bright, young medical student at Loma Linda found himself burning out. Getting up at four in the morning, working until midnight, he struggled to keep up with his strenuous curriculum, but to no avail. He fell farther and farther behind.

“In desperation he went to his professor for help. Being an astute man, the professor recommended that Tom get at least seven hours of sleep each night, no matter what, and thirty minutes of vigorous exercise every day. Tom was incredulous, . . . but at last he reluctantly agreed to give this program a try. After all he was so far down he had nothing to lose. To his utter amazement his grades began to improve within just two weeks. By the end of the year he was in the upper third of his class and in due time successfully completed his medical training.”—“I’m So Tired,” *Hardinge Lifestyle Series* (Loma Linda, Calif.: Loma Linda University School of Health, 1988), pp. 3–5.

Many of us are just like Tom. We all need to have daily rest, as well as weekly rest in order to achieve optimum health physically, mentally, spiritually, and socially.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 15.*

To view and/or download a Hope Channel program on this week's lesson, visit www.lifesbeat.org.

No Time

Many of us live in a very tense and fast-paced environment filled with so many things to do and so little time to do them. Mother Teresa said, “I think today the world is upside down, and is suffering so much because there is very little love in the home, and in family life. We have no time for our children, we have no time for each other. There is no time to enjoy each other.”

In some cultures, the drive to *get ahead*, to make money, to be a *success*, dominates everything to the point where marriage, families, and even health are sacrificed.

Of course, working hard, doing one’s best, and striving to provide for oneself and one’s family are good; the Bible has little time for slackers (*Prov. 6:9, 13:4, 2 Thess. 3:10*). We can, however, take a good thing too far, and as a result we and the ones we love and care about suffer. So often we hear about a father who works all the time, arguing that he is doing it “for his family,” when, in the end, it is the family who is being hurt by the father’s continued and excessive absence.

Read Genesis 2:15. What does it say about God’s intention for humanity regarding work, even before sin?

From the beginning, even in the pre-Fall world, God’s intention was for humans to work. And to rest from work, as well. Especially now, as fallen beings thousands of years removed from the tree of life, we must remember that our bodies have limitations, and, therefore, rest is vitally important.

Read Mark 6:30–32, 45, 46. What do these texts say to us about the need for rest, regardless of what we are doing and how important our work might be?

Jesus and His disciples took time to rest. He knew that His body needed time to be refreshed. We, too, need time for daily rest. Persistent cheating on our sleep produces, in time, physical and emotional loss. No matter how young, how healthy, or how strong we are, our bodies need rest, and sooner or later an intemperate lifestyle will catch up with us.

What things drive you? What things motivate you? What things cause you to work the hardest? Whatever they are, however noble and good they might be, you need to ask yourself if they are worth ruining your health over.

The Lesson in Brief

▶ **Key Text:** *Matthew 11:28–30*

▶ **The Student Will:**

Know: Review the provisions God has provided from Creation for proper physical, mental, and spiritual rest.

Feel: Listen to and respect indications from the body, mind, and soul that call for relaxation and rest.

Do: Evaluate your lifestyle to make sure all physical, mental, and spiritual needs for rest are being met, making changes if necessary.

▶ **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: The Importance of Rest

A Every aspect of our bodies functions in a balanced cycle of work and rest in order to flourish. What provisions for rest has God provided? What are the consequences of ignoring either the need to work or the requirement for rest?

B Jesus set aside seasons of rest for Himself and His disciples. Why should you schedule proper rest?

II. Feel: The Rewards of Rest

A What signals does your body provide to indicate the need for physical, mental, and spiritual restoration? What are the rewards for responding to your body's needs as God designed?

B What do you most appreciate about the Sabbath rest?

III. Do: Taking Proper Rest

How are your rest quotients: For instance, how well do you sleep? How well do you respond to stress? Is the Sabbath the blessing God designed it to be? What adjustments in your lifestyle might improve your ability to rest?

▶ **Summary:** God designed our bodies to function in balanced cycles of work and rest. We need to cooperate with our bodies' requirements in order to achieve a healthy balance.

The Need for Rest

All of us are aware of the need to rest. We need food, we need water, and we need rest. So often our bodies themselves give us the signal that it is time to rest, and so often the signals are loud and clear. Much of the time, if we would listen to what our bodies tell us, we would get enough rest. Unfortunately, we so often are caught up in the hustle and bustle of life, of earning money, of running here and there, that we don't listen to our own flesh. How many folk—struck down by sickness—finally have been forced to rest, and for a long time, too, who otherwise would have been fine had they listened to what their own bodies were telling them?

Sooner or later, we will rest—one way or another. The question is, Why not do it the best way possible?

What signals does your body send to you, telling you it's time to slow down and rest? How well do you listen?

Every living creature needs time for rest to restore that which has been used. Consider the word *restoration*, which means “the act of returning to an original state or condition.” In adjective form, it means a “reinvigorating medicine” or “anything that reinvigorates.”

“Sleep, nature’s sweet restorer, invigorates the tired body and prepares it for the next day’s duties.”—Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance*, p. 342.

We need to realize our limitations. We cannot do our work in our own strength. God promises grace to cope with our work. In regular rest, we permit the Lord to restore our bodies so we will awaken refreshed, ready to do His will.

Read Exodus 23:12. What reason is given there for rest?

The verb translated “refreshed” occurs as a verb only a few times in the Old Testament, yet it is based on a very common noun, often translated “soul” (*Gen. 2:7*), which has the meaning of “life” or “that which breathes.” In other words, it’s as if the word *soul* were made into a verb, and so the idea is that, through resting, we are getting more life, more breath, more “soul,” as it were. Rest is therefore basic, even fundamental, to us as living humans, and by denying ourselves that needed rest, we are denying our basic humanity.

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1—Motivate**

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: God offers us physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional rest.

It would be tempting to limit our discussion of rest to the cessation of physical activity. Certainly this component has its place. However, rest never should be defined solely by what we do not do. Rest, as distinguished from mere inactivity, has purpose, meaning, design, and objective. It is not idleness. Rest is a necessary complement to work. Both are ordained by God for His purposes. One without the other ceases to have meaning. Our goal this week is to discover the role of rest and work—spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically. In God’s design, rest offers the modern person a divine answer to problems of fatigue, restlessness, stress, depression, burnout, frustration, loneliness, and a multitude of excesses that we moderns pursue in an attempt to mask an absence of purpose.

Activity: Make a list of the obstacles modern culture places in the way of getting sufficient rest. After a list has been compiled, ask the class to distinguish which kind of rest—physical, mental, spiritual, or emotional—the obstacle most clearly affects. If most of the list centers on physical rest, ask the class to then consider obstacles to the other three.

► **STEP 2—Explore**

Just for Teachers: The concepts of work and rest can be traced back to the creation of the earth. So, from the beginning God established the rhythms of life and the balance between activity and rest. In our study remember that rest is not merely inactivity; otherwise laziness might become a crowning virtue! Rest is a meaningful counterbalance to purposeful work. God rested on the seventh day not because He was worn out or fatigued from creating. Rather, He introduced a weekly 24-hour period, focused on love and appreciation.

Bible Commentary

I. No Time for Rest (*Review Mark 6:30–32, 45, 46 with the class.*)

An oft-told tale speaks of an entrepreneur who visited a developing nation.

CONTINUED ►

The Rest in God's Presence

What is Jesus' invitation to all of us? *Matt. 11:28–30*. **What is your understanding of what Jesus is saying here? More important, how have you experienced this promise in your own life?**

The rest that Jesus offers here is more than physical rest. It is rest for the soul. We need to experience the complete rest that Christ offers us. A deep sleep will suffice for physical rest. A vacation may give us emotional rest. But where can we find spiritual rest, relief from the deepest issues of the heart?

Jesus is ready to give spiritual rest to all who come to Him. What does that rest include?

It includes freedom from the pain and guilt that accompany the human struggle for acceptance through good works. We can rest in the promise that we are accepted by God because of Jesus' perfect works and certainly not our own imperfect ones. By His grace and the transforming power of the Spirit, Christians can yield themselves to Jesus, and He will give them rest. The just shall live by faith (*Hab. 2:4, Rom. 1:17, Gal. 3:11*). Human effort falls far short from the high standard that God requires of us. It is so comforting to know that Jesus paid the penalty for sin and that His righteousness covering us—a righteousness that exists outside of us but is credited to us by faith—contains our assurance of eternal life. His perfect life and sacrifice are our only hope. In Him our soul can find rest.

Jesus speaks not only to those who are encumbered by sin but also to those who stagger under the burdens of life, whatever they are. God knows what our struggles are, He knows what our burdens are, and He offers us to lay them at His feet, trusting in His loving-kindness and care for us, regardless of our situation. What a rest for our weary souls when we learn to trust in Him!

All of us need a time and place where we can direct our minds to God. Prayer, Bible reading, and Christ-centered meditation bring with them a sense of peace and restoration.

It is in this place of personal worship that one will hear the still, small Voice of encouragement and hope. This coming apart from the strains and stresses of life allows time for the Holy Spirit to restore our soul.

How can you better avail yourself of this wonderful promise offered us in Jesus?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

He was irritated when he passed a national who was resting in a tree, enjoying the sun and an ocean breeze. He accosted the national, accusing him of laziness. When the national politely inquired about what the entrepreneur wanted him to do, the man responded, “Get a job and save your money. Then invest in a business. Work hard, and you’ll make enough to expand it. You could then hire people to do the work for you. Then you’d be wealthy like me—taking vacations, visiting exotic places, sitting back, and enjoying an ocean breeze.” The national replied, “But isn’t that what I am doing now?”

True Story: Neighbors owned side by side two-acre homesteads. The older man bought a push mower for less than \$200 to mow. He enjoyed the exercise. The neighbor bought a \$3,000 riding mower because he needed to mow quickly so that he could have enough time to enjoy his \$500 per year health club, where he walked the treadmill!

Consider This: How do the main characters in these stories differ in their perception of time? In Luke 10:38–42, how did Mary and Martha differ in their understanding of time, work, and rest? What is the prevailing view of time and busyness in your culture? Is our main complaint a lack of time or that time is filled with meaningless, redundant activity? Discuss the reasons for your answer. What does Mary’s example teach us about how we can free up more time for spiritual activities?

II. The Weekly Rest (Review Genesis 2:1–3 with the class.)

Often overlooked is the fact that the fourth commandment commands two things—rest, yes, but also work. It does not recommend work. It commands it! Paul (*2 Thess. 3:12*), Solomon (*Prov. 6:6–11; 10:4, 5*), and others join Moses’ call to work. The notion of rest means little apart from the concept of work. The modern frenzy for leisure and entertainment apart from God is a distortion of the biblical concept of rest.

The Christian’s call to rest is rooted in a Creator-God (*Exod. 20:8–11*) and a Liberator-God (*Deut. 5:12–15*). Through idolatry, worshiping created images in place of the Creator, ancient Israel failed to enter the Sabbath rest. When we trust our material world and wealth for security, we simply modernize their mistake. The Pharisees recognized the Creator but failed to see the Liberator. So, they complained when Jesus healed on the Sabbath and suffocated His rest under a web of human regulations. When we set aside a

CONTINUED ►

The Daily Rest

Read Genesis 1. During the days of creation, the evening and the morning defined each day. God was creating a natural rhythm that would permit the cycle of work and rest to rejuvenate and restore the body in a regular fashion.

The human body requires daily rest. Studies on sleep deprivation show a variety of negative effects. These may include increased risks of diabetes, obesity, poor school performance, traffic accidents, injuries, and fatalities—even psychotic behavior. The workday of airline pilots, air traffic controllers, and resident physicians is strictly regulated, laying out precisely the length of time for work and the time set aside for rest. Traditionally, before the convenience of electrical lighting, people naturally would sleep during the hours of darkness and work in the light.

In today’s modern world, we have to guard against the temptation to work more than is healthful.

Science’s discovery of the circadian rhythm, in which the body works on a daily 24-hour cycle, with specific release of hormones at certain times of the day, supports the statement made by Mrs. White, “Sleep is worth far more before than after midnight. Two hours’ good sleep before twelve o’clock is worth more than four hours after twelve o’clock.”—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 7, p. 224.

Studies performed in sleep laboratories show a need for different kinds of sleep. Adult sleep requirements range from six to nine hours. Sleep requirements are met when sleepiness and drowsiness are absent during the day and there is a sense of well-being and alertness.

Without adequate sleep, people will perform at a level comparable to those who are intoxicated.

List some of the factors you think affect your ability to get a good night’s sleep.

Some suggestions to help you have better sleep:

- Exercise daily.
- Keep your room at a comfortable temperature.
- Avoid eating for two to three hours before sleeping.
- Avoid tension and excitement before sleep.
- Do not take alcohol, sleeping pills, or caffeine.

How well do you sleep? What practices are you engaged in that could be hindering your sleep? What changes need you make in order to better take advantage of this important aspect of human health?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

day with arbitrary dos and don'ts, failing to share in the transforming nature of the rest, we modernize the Pharisees' mistake.

Consider This: How can we avoid the ditch of idolizing work, success, and human accomplishments on the one hand and avoid the ditch of legalistic Sabbath keeping on the other? What might we say to the person who attempts to live a life of "total rest," not supporting his or her family or himself or herself through work? How can we distinguish the difference between work and "workaholic," between rest and laziness?

► STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: Christ suggested that sometimes the children of this age are wiser than the children of light. With this in mind, consider an excerpt from contemporary culture. How can the wisdom here expressed help us to enjoy the rest that God offers to us in many different ways?

"Boredom is often closely linked to resentment. When we are busy, yet wondering if our busyness means anything to anyone, we easily feel used, manipulated, and exploited. We begin to see ourselves as victims pushed around and made to do all sorts of things by people who do not take us seriously as human beings. . . .

"Sometimes, indeed, we have to say that the only thing we remember of our recent past is that we were very busy, that everything seemed very urgent, and that we could hardly get it all done. What we were doing we have forgotten. This shows how isolated we have become. The past no longer carries us to the future; it simply leaves us worried, without any promise that things will be different."—Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Making All Things New* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981), pp. 30–34.

Thought Questions:

What happens when our busyness has no apparent connection to our purpose in life? What happens when our busyness *is* our apparent purpose in life? How is boredom different from rest? How can purposeful work rescue the modern person from rage and resentment? If we reject the modern dictum that busyness determines importance, how do we decide what is important? How can Sabbath observance and spiritual

CONTINUED ►

The Weekly Rest

Read Genesis 2:1–3 and Exodus 20:8–11. What do these verses tell us about just how fundamental the whole idea of rest is?

God rested on the seventh day, after completing the work of Creation. The Hebrew verb for “rested” there comes from the same word designated “Sabbath” (*Shabbat*). This fact shows just how ingrained into the fabric of Creation itself the seventh-day Shabbat and the rest it offers really are. However hard for us to fully grasp, the text makes it clear that God Himself rested on the Sabbath day.

Jesus said, “ ‘The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath’ ” (*Mark 2:27, NKJV*). What was the context of the statement, and what did He mean?

Though it is so easy to get caught up in rules and regulations, we never must forget that the Sabbath is a day for our benefit. It is for reflection and enjoyment of the wonderful gifts our God has given us. It is a time to contemplate God’s goodness. The Sabbath is a perpetual sign of our recognition of His love. The good news of the Sabbath is that, through keeping it, we do not just talk about “resting in Christ,” but we—in a very real and tangible way—express that rest, showing that we trust in Christ’s works for us, and not our own, as the way of salvation.

Besides all the spiritual benefits, the Sabbath provides us a time to step aside from the toil and struggles and stress and fatigue of the week. Sabbath is God’s way of allowing us, without guilt, to truly relax, to rest, to take it easy and unwind. Sabbath provides a way for our bodies and souls to get the rest they so often need.

What is your Sabbath experience? Is it truly a delight, a blessing, a rest? Or, as in the time of Christ, has it become just another burden? How can you learn to derive all the benefits possible from this divinely given day of rest?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

rest contribute to our personal peace and fulfillment?

Application Questions:

What can I do to remove the barriers in my life that keep me from fully receiving the rest that God so freely has offered me? What can I do or say to help my family members accept the rest-filled life that God has provided so generously? When work puts me on the “boredom treadmill,” how can I convince my employer that rest not only benefits the employee but often results in performance benefits for the employer? What can I do to incorporate more physical rest into my daily routine, knowing that this may enhance significantly my experience of spiritual and emotional rest?

► STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: A most divisive issue among “Sabbath keepers” is *how to keep it*. Many who have abandoned its observance have said that it was because of the way that their families approached Sabbath keeping in their youth. Perhaps, reacting to overly zealous Sabbath *policing*, some limit Sabbath keeping to swinging by church long enough to hear the sermon but otherwise treating Sabbath very much like any other day. Keep in mind your friends who have abandoned Sabbath keeping as you work on the following activity. Think of the activity as a way to reach out to your former Sabbath keeping friends with an approach that attracts them to an enjoyable, biblical, Sabbath keeping experience.

Activity: Create a fresh Sabbath experience by planning activities that restore its original meaning in the spiritual life of God’s people. The principles on which you build this experience should reflect these simple truths: Sabbath is a day of spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical rest, not merely a day of idleness; that rest is rooted in God’s creative nature *and* in His liberating or redemptive action. Keep in mind that the purpose of this activity is *not* to create a new legislation for how Sabbath should be kept in your church but, rather, to restore understanding of why and how we observe the day of rest. For example, if one of the contributing activities is going to church (and one hopes that it is), express why it is important to attend church. Your reasons may *not* include “Because we’ve always done it that way.” Dig deep for meaningful and original insights into tried and tested truths.

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, “Temperance in Labor,” p. 99, in *Counsels on Health*.

“Those who make great exertions to accomplish just so much work in a given time, and continue to labor when their judgment tells them they should rest, are never gainers. They are living on borrowed capital. They are expending the vital force which they will need at a future time. And when the energy they have so recklessly used is demanded, they fail for want of it. The physical strength is gone, the mental powers fail. They realize that they have met with a loss, but do not know what it is. Their time of need has come, but their physical resources are exhausted. Everyone who violates the laws of health must sometime be a sufferer to a greater or less degree. God has provided us with constitutional force, which will be needed at different periods of our lives. If we recklessly exhaust this force by continual over-taxation, we shall sometime be the losers.”—Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance*, pp. 397, 398.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ What about your local society and culture? Is it one that pushes and drives people to work, work, and work? Or is it one that is more relaxed? How can you learn to find the right balance in regard to rest in whatever culture you live?
- ❷ Some folk might have a hard time sleeping because of one thing: a guilty conscience. If that is you, what has Jesus done at the Cross that could help you there? At the same time, what might you need to do to make things right and ease your conscience?
- ❸ Bring to class some reputable scientific research on the need and the benefits of rest and discuss how you can benefit from this knowledge.
- ❹ How has the Sabbath rest been a blessing to you? Share some of these blessings with others in class. Focus not just on the spiritual benefits but on the physical ones, as well.
- ❺ Dwell more on the amazing fact of God Himself resting on the seventh day of Creation. What message is there for us? How are we to understand this? How does it help us better understand how important Sabbath rest really is?