



Dear Friends,

Early in our marriage, Kathryn and I would usually go away to a beachside town for a fortnight's break. I loved holidaying with Kathryn. But it was mostly a new experience for me. My family rarely took holidays. I only ever went away twice, and that was just with my mum and younger sister. We spent most school holidays at home.

So, while I enjoyed going away with Kathryn, I often found it hard to fully relax. I wasn't used to doing "nothing" other than eat, walk, swim, read, and play boardgames. I also realized that all those 'staycations' while growing up meant that I was a homebody. It was no surprise, then, that by the middle of the second week of our holiday, I would begin to pack to prepare to return home.

Kathryn would walk in on me while I was packing and ask, "What are you doing?" I would reply, "I'm getting ready to go home." Understandably, Kathryn was upset. She thought I was bored and couldn't wait to get home. That was untrue. But I acknowledge that is what my actions communicated to her.

I then realized 'rest' in the form of annual holidays away from home had not been part of my family of origin's culture. I had to learn to 'rest.' So, for the next decade, I worked hard to rest on family holidays. I came to love going away, initially with Kathryn, and then with kids. These days, I find it difficult to pack up at the end of a holiday because I don't want to leave.

When God created the world, he gifted us with Sabbath, a day of rest. God commanded Israel:

*Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy...For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth ... but he rested on the Sabbath. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.
(Ex 20:8,11)*

Tragically, we humans try to defy our creaturely limitations by working non-stop and being productive, and so refuse to rest. Or we insist others work for our benefit. That is what the Egyptians subjected the Israelites to by making them slaves and working them till they dropped. So, when God rescued Israel from Egypt, he commanded them to keep the Sabbath because:

Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out with an outstretched arm. (Dt 5:15)

Learning to rest is to admit we are not God. Instead, we are creatures with limits. Practising rest is also an exercise of faith because we recognise that God ultimately provides for our needs, not you or me.

Rest is also what we are created for. That's not to say, we don't work. Rather, it's to say that we don't work for our salvation. God saves. He does it all for us in Christ Jesus. So, Jesus invites us to come to him for rest:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (Mt 11:28-30)

God rescues us so that we can rest in Christ, confident we belong to him. Christian rest finds joy in serving God because we are already his, and our work simply expresses our love for him. Christian rest also takes time out from our regular work and ministry on a weekly basis to simply enjoy God and his church, relationships and God's world.

How will you practise keeping a Sabbath?

God Bless,
Mark Adams