

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens."

- Ecclesiastes 3:1



Just the mention of its name invokes a grand sigh of relief in all of us, regardless of how fully booked our summers may be. There is just something about warm weather and sunshine that makes daily chores and responsibilities seem not only doable, but also bearable. Whatever plans you have for the summer, keep in mind that God expects you to take a break from all of the work you have done BEFORE you take on whatever you plan to do next with your life. By reviewing excerpts from the age-old self-help book, the Bible, it is obvious that rest and relaxation are important to God, and therefore should be important to us as well.

God reveals just how important it is to rest in the very first book of the Bible. The book of *Genesis* declares, "By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done." Later on, throughout the *Gospels* of the New Testament, the Bible reveals how Jesus, following in the footsteps of his father, encourages his disciples to take breaks from the stress of their work in order to get some much needed rest and refreshment.

Although the Bible is probably one of the most revered and respected collection of tips on how to live one's life successfully, it is not the only book that expresses the importance of rest and relaxation. The sixteenth-century Spanish scholar and author, Miguel de Cervantes, included a reflection on the importance of taking a break once and a while in his novel, *Don Quixote*. Cervantes described Don Quixote as a man who "became so absorbed in his books that he spent his nights from sunset to sunrise, and his days from dawn to dark, poring over them; and what with little sleep and much reading his brains got so dry that he lost his wits." * If you are familiar with this story, then you already know how Quixote's lack of rest resulted in a complete mental breakdown, which initiated delusions of knighthood, and caused Quixote to believe

windmills were actually evil giants that must be defeated. The story goes on to reveal how Quixote attacked a windmill with his lance; but as fate would have it, the wind picked up just as Quixote was charging in on his horse toward the "giant," full speed ahead. The result of the encounter, as you may have guessed, was neither pretty nor productive.

In today's society, productivity is associated not only with working hard, but also with multitasking. With performance expectations that seem to be at an all time high, clinical psychologist, Mary McKinney, Ph.D., understands how important it is for one to take breaks and recreate him or herself. In a recent web article, she suggests that students and faculty members often get themselves into a cycle of burnout. She explains "the more you work, the more tired you get, the fuzzier your mind gets, the less you accomplish, the further behind you fall, and then you think you have no time for play. . ." Ironically, the first recommendation McKinney offers for burnout is to "craft a Sabbath every seventh day [to] 'catch-up-with-the-rest-of-your-life-and-play...'" ** Sound familiar?

So, before you dive into your next round of work, take the time to renew and refresh yourself. Recreation is not only healthy for our bodies, minds, and spirits, but it is also a ritual initiated by God and practiced by his son, Jesus Christ. The purpose of recreation is not to be idle for the sake of lethargy, but to become rested so we can maximize the fruits of our labors. When you think about it, it is so much like God to help us do more by advising us to take some time to do less. As the text in the book of Isaiah reveals, there may be no rest for the wicked; but perhaps if the wicked decided to practice the tips in God's self-help manual, things might be different for them. Take care, get some rest, and have a blessed summer.

* *"Don Quixote" by Miguel de Cervantes. English translation by John Ormsby.*
http://www.online-literature.com/cervantes/don_quixote/

** *"Taking Time Out Will Improve Productivity" by Mary McKinney, Ph.D. of Successful Academic Coaching. Please visit Mary's web site at <http://www.successfulacademic.com> for additional tenure track tips and dissertation writing strategies.*