

Why So Many Pastors Break This Biblical Commandment

To this day, if my body and mind would allow, I would keep going seven days a week, 24 hours a day. The simple reason is because I love to work, I love to play, I love to worship and I don't want to miss anything. In all honesty, I don't like to rest.

This has caused some challenges for me. When I was in my 20s, I had constant bouts with insomnia, which I never saw as a problem. I would go two, three and sometimes even four days straight with little to no sleep, and then I would crash for about 12 hours, only to wake ready to do it again. My body was giving me warning signals.

Then came the Sunday morning that I could not get out of bed to catch the early morning flight to Little Rock, where I was to speak in a few hours. My physical strength was totally spent. I spent the next four days in the hospital, where I discovered a significant passage in the book of John. It says, "Jesus therefore, being exhausted from His journey" (John 4:6). Suddenly, I had discovered that even Jesus needed rest. I realized that I needed insight into God's nature revealed in rest.

Even though the book of Genesis is clear on this matter, I had managed to overlook it:

"Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He had rested from all His work which He had created and made" (Gen. 2:3). The pattern God left humanity from the very beginning was a model of rest. One in seven days require it. It's not that God needed rest, but that He knew that we would. I do not believe that God rested on the seventh day because He had worn Himself out; rather, I believe God rested because it

is important to rest. In order to receive strength from God to overcome situations, we must follow in His footsteps. If God made an effort to rest, we should also make an effort to rest.

That day in the hospital, I understood that If Jesus got tired, then you and I are definitely going to get tired. Our human bodies simply weren't created to be robotic machines. We are living organisms with spirits that need to be refreshed and renewed.

I had to learn the hard way that we can't do anything with your own strength, so don't even try. Jesus made this overtly clear in John 15. He tells His disciples that "without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5b). Notice it is a comprehensive statement with no wiggle room for human capacity. In other words, anything of eternal, kingdom value can only be accomplished in union with Jesus.

The Sabbath principle reminds of this reality. It is during these times of rest and renewal that we are recharged in Christ's presence for useful service.

Remember that God doesn't do anything without purpose.

Resting has a purpose. Resting assures you will have the strength to make it through the big picture to the end of the race rather than burning out after the first lap. This is the difference between a short sprint that is over in a matter of seconds and a long-distance race. Ministry is long-distance. Rest is necessary to sustain our endurance.

God would rather have 50 years of a faithful, refreshed servant than one or two years of a burnt-out, miserable servant trying to work out of their own strength.

Let's remember that we are created in the image of God:

We are created for work and worship.

We are created for play and rest.

I encourage you today to evaluate your current schedule and arrange for a balance of work, worship, play and rest.

Set yourself up for success with rest, so that you will have the strength you need to fulfill the calling of God on your life! {eoa}

Mikel French has challenged spiritual awakening all across America, where many celebrations extended into multiple weeks, and has conducted celebrations in France, Sweden, Russia, Romania, Poland, Ukraine, Moldova, Serbia, Germany, South Africa, Malawi, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Haiti, Japan, Singapore, India and Thailand. He conducted an outreach celebration in Manila, Philippines, reaching 200,000 teenagers with The book of hope. Through the generous support of partners, he has presented the message of Jesus Christ to millions of people in the nation of Russia through televised citywide soul-winning celebrations. Mikel considers it an honor to assist in conducting the annual pastor's conference, where thousands of pastors from Russia's 11 time zones come for training, teaching and equipping. Mikel and his wife, Marsha, reside in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Rebecca Moore contributed to this article.