

GOD'S ANTIDOTE TO BUSYNESS
Stressbusters - Part 2
Rick Warren

"It is senseless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night... God wants his loved ones to get their proper rest." Psalm 127:2 (LB)

Unwind God's Way

"He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters," Ps 23:2

These images represent

_____ and _____

GOD'S WAY TO R.E.L.A.X.

REALIZE _____

"God decided to give us life through the word of truth so we might be the most important of all the things he made." James 1:18 (NCV)

"...your heavenly Father feeds the (sparrows). And you are far more valuable to him than they are." Matt. 6:26 (LB)

God says, "I have engraved you on the palms of my hands." Isa. 49:16

ENJOY _____

"All of us should...enjoy what we have worked for; it is God's gift." Eccl. 3:13 (GN)

"It is better to have only a little, with peace of mind, than be busy all the time..." Eccl. 4:6 (GN)

LIMIT _____

"Only someone too stupid to find his way home would wear himself out with work!" Eccl. 10:15 (GN)

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"You have six days in which to do your work, but the 7th day is to be a day of rest dedicated to Me." Ex. 20:9-10 (GN)

"Sabbath" means: _____

"The Sabbath was made to benefit man..." Mark 2:27

ADJUST _____

"I've learned why people work so hard to succeed; it is because they envy the things their neighbors have." Eccl. 4:4 (GN)

"What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" Mark 8:36

EXCHANGE _____

Jesus: "Come to me, all of you who are tired and have heavy loads, and I will give you rest... the load I give you to carry is light." Matt. 11:28-29 (NCV)

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Today we're continuing in our series through Psalm 23. We call this series Stressbusters because we're looking at the antidotes to the seven most common causes of stress. Today we're going to look at Busyness.

Southern California has a false image. We're known as an area that's laid back, calm, cool, collected and yet really we're a haven for workaholics. There was a recent survey in the Orange County register where they discovered that Orange County residents would rather work than plan, that we enjoy employment over enjoyment.

We're going to look at a prescription for people under pressure.

Quiz to find out if you're a workaholic:

1. Are you always in a hurry?
2. Is your "To do" list always unrealistically long?
3. Do you use days off to catch up with unfinished work?
4. Has more than one person ever told you to slow down?
5. Do you feel guilty when you relax?
6. Do you have to get sick to take time off?

You know you're a workaholic when...

- ... all your Christmas cards come from business associates.
- ... you head out for "Back to School" night and you don't know which ones your kids attend.
- ... you wear a beeper to church.
- ... your family refers to you as "occupant".
- ... you can unwind after work by watching Tom Snyder.
- ... if you take business related reading material into the bathroom.

This is not the kind of life God wants you to live. Ps. 127:2 "It is senseless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night... God wants his loved ones to get their proper rest." If you're burning the candle at both ends, you're not as bright as you think you are. Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is go home and go to bed.

Many people think, if I give my life to God, if I really sell out to Jesus Christ, He's going to give me too much to do and I'll have more to do than I already have. Psalm 23:2 "He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters." If you were a sheep you would understand this because this is a perfect picture of paradise. He's referring to rest and refreshment. God is interested in your rest and recreation. He wants you to live a whole, balanced and complete life. He wants you to not be working all the time. If you really give your life to Jesus Christ, He's probably not going to add more on, as much as He's going to take some things out of it to slow you down.

A CNN pole recently said that 59% of all Americans would like to slow down and relax more. A Harris polo said we have 8.5 hours less leisure time than we did a decade ago. We're working more and enjoying it less.

A prescription for pressured people -- God's way to RELAX.

1. R -- Realize my worth
2. E -- Enjoy what I already have
3. L -- Limit my labor
4. A -- Adjust my values
5. X -- eXchange my pressure for God's peace

REALIZE MY WORTH

The reason most people overwork is because they confuse their work and their worth. We think that if we work a whole lot, achieve a lot, we're worth a lot. We confuse what we do with who we are. In America, we get our primary identity from what we do. When we meet someone, after we find out their name, usually the second question is "What do you do?" We get our worth, we think, from our work.

The Bible doesn't teach that. It says our worth is regardless of what our work is. Many of you grew up with a little phrase in your mind that says "you're a nobody." Maybe a teacher told you that. Maybe a former friend. Maybe a brother or sister. Maybe a parent said, "You're never going to amount to much." The real reason you overwork is you say, "I'll show them. I will prove my worth by my accomplishments, my achievements." You never accomplish enough to feel satisfied. "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt." That's not true. Names do hurt. Names last far longer than broken bones. Many years later you're still hearing a little inner voice that says, "You've got to keep paddling. You've got to keep working. Somebody may catch up. Somebody may get ahead of you. You've got to prove your value, your significance, your worth, by overworking." And you never can slow down.

The antidote is to realize what God says about you. James 1:18 "God decided to give us life through the word of truth so we might be the most important of all the things he made." God says you matter more than the rest of creation. You can relax; you don't have to prove your worth. If you were made by God, you're worth it. I am me and I'm OK because God don't make no junk. If you really understand and feel what you are worth to God -- not just know it but really feel it -- it will change your life. If God likes me, and I like me, if you don't like me, that's your problem. You don't spend your whole life trying to win the approval of other people. You don't need the approval of other people to be happy. But you do need to realize how valuable you are to God.

Jesus said in Matthew 6 "... your heavenly Father feeds the (sparrows). And you are far more valuable to him than they are." If God notices even when a bird falls to the ground and takes care of birds, don't you think He takes care of you?

- 1) You will never understand how much God loves you here on earth.
- 2) There is nothing you can ever do in life that will make God love you more than He already does.
- 3) There is nothing you can ever do that will make God love you any less. His love is not based on your performance. It's unconditional love. It's based on who He is.

You don't have to prove your worth by overworking. God says you are OK. God says "I have engraved you on the palms of my hands." Jesus died on the cross and they had put nails through His hands. He said, "I love you this much. I have engraved you on the palms of My hands." He can never forget how much He loves you. When you get to Heaven, He's going to show you those engraved hands.

ENJOY WHAT I ALREADY HAVE

Eccl. 3:13 "All of us should... enjoy what we have worked for. It is God's gift." Can you be so preoccupied in getting more that you don't enjoy what you've got? Sure. Can you so busy trying, with the desire to acquire more and more that you don't enjoy what's already in your garage? We have these beautiful homes but nobody enjoys them because nobody is at home. We're all staying late at the office.

We get into a syndrome: The desire to acquire. They've got that so we've got to get that. They've moved up so we've got to move up. We're trying to keep up with the Jones's not realizing they just refinanced or filed for bankruptcy. We buy things we don't need, with money we don't have to impress people we don't even like. We try to get more and more and we get overextended financially. Then both Mom and Dad have to work because we

have to hustle to make ends meet. We spend all of our time making payments on these things we've bought and inevitably relationships begin to deteriorate. That's not the way God wants us to live.

"It's better to have only a little, with peace of mind, than be busy all the time..." The greatest things in life aren't things. As a pastor I've been at a lot of death beds. I have never had one person say at their final breath "I wish I had spent more time at the office." Many have said "I wish I had spent more time with my kids (wife, husband, building relationships, with God)". We get all of these things but you're not going to take them with you. You don't ever see a hearse pulling a U-haul. You're not taking it with you.

In American culture it's considered a tragedy if you "die penniless". What a better time to go! When you write your last check and you're totally empty -- you die! That's timing!

Enjoy what you have while you've got it and don't be worrying about getting more all of the time.

LIMIT MY LABOR

I must make a conscious decision to make time for other things besides work. I have to decide how many hours I realistically want to spend working each week and then I need to stick to it. I need to schedule time for myself, with God alone, with my family -- those are important elements in my life as well as work. Limiting your labor is especially important for two groups:

1) Those of you who are self employed. If you're self-employed, your tendency is to never stop working. You bring work home, never take time off. You're not on a 9 to 5 job and you keep the work with you all of the time. Those of you who are entrepreneurs can fall prey to this if you don't limit your labor.

2) Those of you who are single parents. I don't know how you do it -- work and manage a family at the same time. You of all people need to learn to set some perimeter for yourself. Our best requires rest. You can get so many irons in the fire, you put out the fire.

Eccl. 10:15 "Only someone too stupid to find his way home would wear himself out with work!" If I'm always working all the time, I'm dumb. If the bow is never unstrung it loses its power.

A lady called a pastor one day upset. She said, "I called all day Monday and couldn't get through to you."
Pastor: "Monday is my day off." Lady: "The devil never takes a day off." Pastor: "Yes, and if I didn't take a day off I'd be just like the devil."

Exodus 20:9-10 "You have six days in which to do your work, but the 7th day is to be a day of rest dedicated to Me." God says that one day off every week is the rule. This is the fourth commandment; it's in the Big Ten. It's so important that God put it up there with "Don't commit adultery" and "Don't murder". That's how serious God takes this. Every seventh day, you take a day off. If you're not taking a day off it means you're breaking the ten commandments. God says do it.

Why? The Bible calls it the Sabbath. Sabbath means a day of rest. In Mark 2, Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made to benefit man." Colossians says it doesn't matter what day you choose as long as you choose one every week. Sunday is not my Sabbath, it's a work day.

What should you do on your day off, your Sabbath? You don't use it to catch up on work you haven't finished. What do you do on the Sabbath?

1) Rest my body. If you don't take time to rest your body, your body will make time to rest itself -- either in the hospital or with a cold or flu. Our best requires rest. During the French Revolution they outlawed Sunday as a day of rest. Within a few years they had to reinstate it. Not for religious reasons but because the health of the nation had collapsed. They were all burnt out.

Do you feel guilty when you relax? Jesus didn't. He took time off. Are you busier than Jesus? Is what you're doing more important than what Jesus did?

2) Recharge your emotions. What things recharge you emotionally? You need quietness. You need recreation -- something that turns you on not necessarily that's popular. You need time for relationships. We were made for relationships. There was an article in Time magazine "Twentieth Century Blues" that talked about stress, anxiety and depression that was prevalent in our society. It basically said we weren't living the way we were supposed to be living. We are designed to seek trusting relationships and the problem is that too little of our contacts are in the natural intimate sense of the world. It says, you need time for relationships.

3) You need to refocus your spirit. The Bible calls this worship. Worship brings things into perspective. When you come into church with a big problem, worship puts things into perspective. You have more energy to deal with the problem and more understanding. You need time alone with God every day. If you're too busy for God you're too busy. You're missing out on one of the very things you were made for.

Cliff and Joyce Penner: Practical insights on how married couples and singles can enjoy life more with less stress:

Joyce:

The importance of realizing my worth became most evident to me when I became a mother and Cliff was a full-time graduate student. I had to work and began my job as a professor of nursing. Our relationship, my giving myself to my daughter and the importance to prove myself professionally, demanded that I learn to relax if I was going to be able to listen to God's guidance for me in those roles. That was a time when I first began my habit of taking a daily nap -- 20 to 30 minutes to lay down and collapse. To this day I believe that this is not a selfish thing to do, but my gift to my husband and children. I also learned to really relax my body when I was with my children. My time with them and Cliff was a time when I would just let go of all the pressure and let down and be deliberate in how I used my energy -- how to plan for it and organize my time.

Cliff:

Women are trained to be givers. Unless they also learn to take for themselves they run dry and end up having little to give. This is especially true in the area of the sexual relationship. The woman who loves sex is usually the one who has learned how to take. This is something we're regularly trying to experience ourselves and teach others.

Joyce:

The E in relax -- enjoying what we have -- was something we had to learn early. Living the student life for years we had to find creative ways of building romance and spark into our relationship.

Cliff:

We had to do that with very little money. One of the things we learned to do early on was head to Palm Springs during the off season when it was 118 degrees. We would get there at 7 or 8 in the morning, check in at the off season rates, spend that whole day and the whole next day all for the \$35 price of the room. It was a great way to go.

Joyce:

Cherishing each other in whatever circumstance we find ourselves has been the key that we've had to learn. Whether it's in our own lives or the couples' lives we see, when we're struggling we find it's because we're focusing on what we don't have rather than what we do have. Rather than delighting on what each of us can give to each other, we're focusing on what he/she isn't doing for me rather than what is there.

Cliff:

In the area of limiting our labor... It's been a struggle for us. We both get up early in the morning and work until late at night. We recognize how important it is to replenish ourselves physically and sexually as we

work together. When we wrote The Gift of Sex we took Thursdays off to write. We didn't get much done in the morning as we worked in the "lab". Sex has always been an important part of our life together.

Joyce:

I've found I need to get space and time for myself to sometimes pamper myself. My time with God I worked out in a creative way while the children were little. I would spend the time outside their bedroom door reading my Bible and praying while they were falling asleep. This accomplished several purposes: It kept them in their room, because Mom was guarding the door. And I told them it was important that I had this time to be quiet so they wouldn't keep asking for the glass of water and potty, etc. That made them be quiet and fall asleep a little more quickly. And it modeled to them this priority in my life. It gave me that time to get away and be peaceful with God.

Cliff:

A lot of us as men feel that we are replenished through the physical and sexual contact that we have with women. Many times we go after that without recognizing where the woman is coming from. We do well as men to rest from our labor to connect with our wives, whether it's in walking together, talking, bringing them pleasure. The Song of Solomon is a great example of this. Solomon didn't go after his wife for his sexual needs. He came to her adoring her, cherishing her, flooding her with compliments and delighting in her body.

Joyce:

And she responded by inviting the sexual activity. That's the way we believe it works best when the husband learns to cherish his wife and she can invite him into the physical realm. The way we have taken time and learned to replenish ourselves has varied throughout the different stages of life. Before children and now that we have an empty nest the whole house is ours. When the children were in preschool years, we exchanged times with other couples who also had children. We would often get young children in from the neighborhood to play with our children, while we would have a picnic in the bedroom. During the school years, we would have the children go with friends on Friday afternoons after school and then that was our time. Then Saturday became family day.

Cliff:

Adjusting our values: It is very important that set the priorities for our relationship. Another recent article from Time magazine pointed out the fact that this particular generation has had a radical decrease of physical and sexual contact that goes on between married couples. It has been reported as a giant lack of sexual desire. The dilemma is that so much of a couple's energy today goes to affording their possessions rather than nurturing their passions. When that's the case the relationship suffers.

Joyce:

That leads to the E which is Exchanging our pressure for God's peace. It is the sexual relationship in marriage that is used throughout Scripture to teach us about how God is pictured for us, how God wants to relate to us. We can learn from the sexual relationship how to find God's peace. We have found that in the sexual relationship when we put pressure on, the contentment won't be there. But when we learn to delight in one another and enjoy each other, we find the deep peace. When we learn that with God, to be in His presence and delight in Him and experience His joy then we find that peace. Certainly David had learned that as a shepherd boy.

Cliff:

Our formula is really quite simple for learning to take time with each other. We've written about this in both Getting Your Sex Life Off to a Great Start which is for engaged and newly married couples as well as in Restoring the Pleasure which is for all couples. We spend 15 minutes a day with each other, one evening a week with each other, one full day per month with each other, one week end per quarter that is devoted to just the two of us. A lot of men want to know what is going to make the woman happy. I guarantee that this will.

In order to do the things Cliff and Joyce were talking about -- to make time for people who are important in your life -- you need to do these last two points.

ADJUST MY VALUES

In order to reduce busyness in my life I must change my thinking about what is important. Eccl. 4:4 says, "I've learned why people work so hard to succeed; it is because they envy the things their neighbors have." You have to stop and say you're not going to get caught up in the rat race of always getting more. There are some things more important than getting more.

Mark 8:36 "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" Is it worth it? Ask yourself this question about every area in your life. We may be making great money right now, but are the kids getting any parenting? They're going to be gone in a few more years. Will I regret that? No matter how much you make you can lose it all anyway.

EXCHANGE MY PRESSURE FOR GOD'S PEACE

This gets at the very root of your stress. There are three kinds of fatigue:

There is physical fatigue -- tired muscles. That can be replenished pretty quickly.

There is emotional fatigue -- tired emotions, feelings.

There is spiritual fatigue -- a dry spirit. This is the deepest.

You may need a vacation. But a vacation will not help these last two. You need more than just time off to recharge your emotions and focus your spirit. You need a relationship to God. You can take a two week vacation in Tahiti but when you come back you're still going to have the same problems. The pressures are still going to be there. It means more than just taking time off; it means readjusting my values and exchanging my pressure for God's peace.

A little child does not like to lie down, to rest. Resistance to rest is a mark of immaturity. If you're always working and never taking any time to rest it not only says you're breaking the Ten Commandments but it says you're immature. Sheep don't like to rest, to lie down. In Psalm 23:2 "He makes me lie down." That's a forcing. Has God ever had to make you lie down? If you don't slow down, sometimes God will just make you lie down. He cares about you. You matter to Him.

You need a relationship to Christ who will help you set the pace of your life.

Paraphrase of Psalm 23:

The Lord is my pacesetter, I shall not rush. He makes me stop and rest at intervals. He provides me with images of stillness to restore my serenity. He leads me in the way of efficiency to calmness of mind and this guidance is peace. Even though I have a great many things to accomplish this day, I will not fret for His presence is here. His timeliness, His all importance will keep me in balance. He prepares refreshment and renewal in the midst of my activity, anointing my head with the oils of tranquility. My cup of joyous energy overflows. Surely harmony and effectiveness shall be the fruits of my hours, for I shall walk in the pace of my Lord and dwell in His heaven forever.

You need a pacesetter to set the pace of your life so you don't go too slow or too fast. The only person wise enough to do that who knows you inside and out better than you even know yourself is Jesus Christ. You need a

relationship to Him where you exchange His peace for your pressure. When you live for God, it's not only the right way, it's the healthy way, the whole way, the balanced way, and the most relaxing way.

Jesus says, "Come to me, all of you who are tired and have heavy loads, and I will give you rest... the load I give you to carry is light." Matt. 11:28-29. Are you stressed out, tired, weary? Jesus says come to Me. I'm not going to load more on you.

Message paraphrase:

Are you tired? Are you worn out? Are you burned out on religion? Come to Me. Get away with Me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with Me and work with Me. Watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill fitting on your. Keep company with Me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.

