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"Getting Lost" for Our Own Good

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"Getting Lost" for Our Own Good

Abstract

"God created rest and recreation for us to enjoy – it is part of His design."

Posting about an effective work-life balance from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/getting-lost-for-our-own-good/>

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“Getting Lost” for Our Own Good

 [all in allthings.org/getting-lost-for-our-own-good/](https://allthings.org/getting-lost-for-our-own-good/)

Sue Droog

Recently, I was walking across our campus from a meeting and met up with a colleague. I asked how he was doing, and soon found out: not so good. This individual, who is normally pretty driven and full of positive energy, seemed stressed and very frustrated. He told me about his schedule and demands on his time, how far behind he was on his summer project list, and how he felt it was impossible to get away. We talked a bit about some of the road blocks and unexpected events he had experienced that were preventing him from finding that balance and taking time off. However, I have also worked with him long enough to understand he can be his own worst enemy in regards to thinking this place might burn down without him. I told him that as much as it sounded like he didn't have time, he really needed to just “get lost” for a while and go off the grid – for the institution's sake and his own. I hate to see someone experiencing stress and frustration, but I think we can all relate, right? Life is busy. Between work commitments, church and civic commitments, and responsibilities at home, it can be very difficult to find rest and balance. However, rest and recreation are important not only for optimizing productivity and employee engagement, but also for our physical and mental health, and especially for our spiritual health and well-being.

Why is rest and recreation important?

One term that has been discussed a lot in HR circles is the term “presenteeism”, which is the opposite of absenteeism. Presenteeism is the phenomenon where employees are coming to work each day, yet they are not functioning up to their capabilities on the job. Some of the ways that “presenteeism” can manifest itself in the workplace include making mistakes, spending more time than necessary on tasks, poor quality work, impaired social functioning, burnout, anger, resentment, and low morale. As an HR professional, it is important for me to have a sense of our campus culture and be aware of those who might be struggling with this. When employees are not taking adequate time for rest and recreation, it doesn't just impact them, but decreases the level of productivity and can really have a negative impact financially and on the campus environment. According to the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans, the cost of presenteeism in the workplace adds up to nearly \$150 billion a year in lost productivity.¹

Beyond lost productivity, there are also many health-related reasons why it is important to receive adequate rest. Workers who report that they are stressed incur healthcare costs that are 46 percent higher than costs for non-stressed employees, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.²

Getting adequate rest has been known to:

- * Lower your risk of diabetes, heart attack, and stroke
- * Lower your risk of catching a cold – rest helps build up your immune system
- * Boost your memory
- * Lower your risk of suffering from depression
- * Help you make better decisions³

Another primary reason why we need to ensure we are getting enough rest and recreation is to **preserve and protect our relationship** with our Lord and family members or loved ones. It is very important for us to find balance between our work and rest. It is part of God's beautiful design for us to experience both, and I believe God does not want us to look at our work as simply our vocation, He wants us to see how our work fits into His plan for our life. Recently when I was researching this topic of rest and recreation, I came across an article by Tom Schwanda, Associate Professor of Christian Formation and Ministry at Wheaton College. While it was written some time ago regarding his perspective on the Sabbath observance, I think his reflections are applicable for us today. In his writings, Schwanda illustrates his points through the writings of Eugene Peterson. Peterson talked about a "rhythm of grace" and said this regarding the concept of rest:⁴

"We go to sleep, and God begins his work. As we sleep he develops his covenant. We wake and are called out to participate in God's creative action. We respond in faith, in work. But always grace is previous. Grace is primary. We wake into a world we didn't make, into a salvation we didn't earn. Evening: God begins, without our help, his creative day. Morning: God calls us to enjoy and share and develop the work he initiated. (Peterson, [Working the Angles](#), 48)".

Peterson's perspective really resonated with me. So often I think Christians forget that rest and recreation are a part of God's design. We get so involved in "our work" and "our plans" that we forget who gave us this work to do and that he is in control of that plan. We forget to set aside time to stop and rest and experience Him. We schedule time for meetings and dentist appointments that we do not miss, but for some reason, we struggle to schedule time to rest and experience God and His creation fully. I know from personal experience and through observing others on campus that "getting lost" for a while and being intentional about carving out some time to rest and rejuvenate ourselves reduces our stress and anxiety and brings us back to a place where emotionally and physically we are ready to attack our work again with joy and renewed energy.

How can we make rest and recreation happen?

God created rest and recreation for us to enjoy – it is part of His design. It helps us be more productive, improves our health, and enriches and enhances our relationship with God and our loved ones. Sounds good, right? So, how do we make that happen? I wish I had an easy answer for myself and for you to follow. The truth is, I am still a work in progress in this regard. We all have different responsibilities and different people or situations demanding our attention. It is often a judgment call about how we choose to spend our time. I have found that taking time to "get lost" once in a while and experience true rest and recreation is not only important for my own well-being, but it definitely impacts how well I can serve others in my work each day. When I am more rested and have enjoyed time with family and with God, I feel I am more creative, more patient, more open to new ideas, and a better servant in so many areas.

Given the vast number of articles, books, and other resources on this topic, I would say that most people struggle with this at one time or another. There is no "quick fix" or "one size fits all" solution to achieving more balance. The important thing is to try to be aware of your limits and very intentional about creating that space in your life to enjoy the rest and recreation God wants us to have. Here are some tips I have picked up along the way that have helped me experience more room for rest and recreation in my life:

Learning to say "no" and not feeling guilty. It is good to be involved in church or school, for example, but sometimes you have a greater responsibility to yourself and your family to not over-commit. When you say "no", you might realize the group quickly moves on to the next name on the list and someone else was

more available and excited to serve.

Put away the technology. My smartphone has been a blessing and a curse. It allows me flexibility in how I work, but also makes it difficult to ever completely escape work. I find that I can't truly experience God's creation and relax if I stay engaged in my work at the same time. There will always be a text to respond to, a call to take or an email to send. Sometimes we just need to put the phone or laptop away!

Scheduling time for R & R and protecting it. Everyone tries to block out time for their family vacation, but it is more difficult to schedule some "me" time. Our Calvinistic work ethic can get in the way and we tend to feel a lot of "guilt" if we are not always looking busy and productive. Sometimes I will block out one random afternoon to go home and clean the house so I don't have to do it on a Saturday, and then go for a long afternoon walk. I know that might not be everyone's choice for an afternoon off, but cleaning is something I enjoy and is kind of "therapeutic" for me. The point is to do something you enjoy and "get lost" for a while and away from your work routine. A couple of hours away and a change of scenery is all it takes sometimes to feel refreshed and ready to get back to work with more joy and energy the next day.

Consistent time in the Word. Beginning and ending your day with the Lord has a way of enabling you to focus on what is important and how to best prioritize the demands on your day.

Set a schedule or some boundaries on your work and family time. This can be hard to do, but establishing a consistent routine can help you achieve better balance. This does not have to look the same from one person to the next. I know some colleagues who do not handle any work after 7 p.m. and will not respond to work-related phone calls after 9 p.m. Others might go home every Wednesday night a little early. It doesn't matter what it looks like, the key is finding a rhythm that works for you to find time for rest and recreation.

Get lost! It can truly refresh a person to just "get lost" and completely step away from regular responsibilities. Go for a bike ride, spend a day reading by the lake or fishing, go out to lunch and shopping with a good friend, or take a nap. Make the time, plan for it, commit to it, and enjoy it! God created rest and recreation for you, too!

I appreciated reading the following words this week from Eugene Peterson in The Message. Peterson says, "Perhaps within our own frenetic society we need to re-claim not only these Sabbath principles of praying and playing but also to foster a '**Sabbath spirit**' in all we do. That is to say, as we and our people fulfill our vocations we can seek to follow Jesus' pace rather than our own compulsive treadmill." Peterson's illustration of Jesus' words in Matthew 11:28-30 reflects a Sabbath spirit and provides a great summary and challenge to all of us for the rest and worship that is waiting for us:

Are you tired? Worn out?... 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 you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.⁵

I encourage all of us to be intentional this summer and find a few days to just "get lost" and experience the rest and recreation that God designed for us.

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2. White paper. "Stress in the Workplace: Meeting the Challenge." *Health Advocate*. Co-sponsored by the National Women's Health Resource Center. Web. 21 June 2015. ↵
3. Klein, Sarah. "10 Health Benefits of Relaxation." *The Huffington Post*. N.p., 14 Aug. 2014. Web. 1 July 2015. ↵
4. Schwanda, Tom. "The Unforced Rhythms of Grace: A Reformed Perspective on Sabbath." *Reformed Spirituality Network*. Perspectives, Mar. 1993. Web. 25 June 2015. ↵
5. Peterson, Eugene H. *The Message* NavPress, 1993. ↵