

A South American tribe went on a long march, day after day, when all of a sudden, they would stop walking, sit down to rest for a while, and then make camp for a couple of days before going any farther. They explained that they needed the time of rest so that their souls could catch up with them.

How many of us often feel so busy that we could use a little time for our souls to catch up with us?

Maybe that's why God had to make it a *command*—in the 10 commandments – for all people to take time to rest. Every. Week. It's as important a command as “You shall have no other God's but me,” and “You shall do no murder.”

And here's how it came about:

Back when the Hebrews were back in Egypt, Pharaoh had built up a thirst for wealth and power. He liked building big things—big palaces, big monuments, big pyramids.

They were big signs that he was a big man.

And the labor he used? Immigrants, for much of it. Slaves from Ethiopia and other parts of Africa—and the people called the Hebrews—immigrants from the next peninsula over. And as big men often did—he worked his slaves and immigrant labor hard. These men and women worked every day of the week doing backbreaking labor. Their life expectancies were short, but they had no choice but to work.

This continued until Moses saw the oppression of his people, and had an encounter with God at a burning bush, which ended with God liberating his people from the grasp of Pharaoh.

After they had crossed the Red Sea and gotten away from their oppressors, Moses communed with God again, and delivered to God's people what we now call the 10 Commandments.

And the commandment with the longest explanation: remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.

Let's break that down.

Remember the sabbath day

Sabbath means REST, not WORSHIP. So a sabbath day would be a rest day, not a worship day—translated from the Hebrew.

Remember the day of rest, and keep it holy.

Holy means SET APART, as in all things that are considered sacred are *set apart* from the norm.

So let's hear that commandment again, with words we actually use now..

Remember the day of rest and keep it set apart.

These are important words, but they didn't end there. This is the longest commandment, because God evidently wanted to make sure we got it.

For six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a day of rest you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns.

And “the alien” in this passage does not mean ET—it means people from other countries, that live among us.

For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the day of rest and set it apart.

And God isn't done yet!

For six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest, so that your ox and your donkey may have relief, and your home-born slave and the resident alien may be refreshed.

This commandment to us---yes COMMANDMENT-- to rest comes because the people slaving for Pharaoh weren't allowed a day off—ever—and because God knows all beings on earth—humans and animals—need time

to recover, to recharge, and to relax. After all—even God did, after he created everything that is.

God liberated the Hebrew people and gave them this glorious command: REST a least one day out of 7!

And how do we pay God back? We work ourselves to death, give people bonuses and promotions if they work long hours, and are available 24/7. We generally kill ourselves with work.

Don't believe me? How many people in our country are now on anti-depressants, anti-anxiety medications, and suffer needless heart attacks and strokes—and how much of it is from defining our lives by how much we work?

Well, we have to stop this. It's unhealthy. It's making us angry, tired and sick.

But, if it makes you feel better it didn't start with this generation. There are lots stories of people in this country emigrating west, from our pioneer period.

One famous example tells of how one group thought it was most important to travel straight through to their destination, and a second group, who was traveling with them, felt it was just as important to observe a day of rest one day each week. So they split up. They both left on the same day to test the theory. Which group got there first?

The group that rested.

So today we finish our journey with the *Way of Love: Practices of a Jesus-Centered life*. And it's no accident that this Way of Life is set up as a circle. After we turn, learn, pray, worship, bless and go--- we rest. And then we do it all again. And then we rest.

Give yourself permission to rest. Work is our default setting. You know it is. Confess it.

We default to working at home, at work, on vacation.... We have to be doing, doing doing. So we need to be as intentional about resting.

Focus on working. Then put as much focus on resting.

Or as Barbara Brown Taylor writes: “At least one day in every seven, pull off the road and park the car in the garage. Close the door to the toolshed and turn off the computer. Stay home, not because you are sick but because you are well... Test the premise that you are worth more than you can produce – that even if you spent one whole day of being good for nothing you would still be precious in God’s sight.

And when you get anxious because you are convinced that this is not so – remember that your own conviction is not required. This is a commandment. Your worth has already been established, even when you are not working. The purpose of the commandment is to woo you to the same truth.”