

Man, Do You Need a Vacation!

And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. (Mark 6:31 ESV)

This is the time of year when many of us are spending a little leisure time and taking vacations. Often, we men are so “driven” that it is hard for us to take some time to just relax and for leisure activities. Often, our competitive natures are so pronounced that even our “leisure” activities are not relaxing or restful.

Young men are often involved in organized sports that become a consuming passion which demand rigorous training and conditioning. The “guys’ night out” and the partying that many of us chose as a favorite leisure activity frequently lead to hangovers, family problems, and ultimately often lead to addictive lifestyles, which are extremely stressful.

Tomorrow’s Independence Day celebrations are frequently packed with “leisure activities,” and as the fireworks extend late into the night, we find ourselves exhausted and dreading having to go to work in the morning.

Even the family vacation frequently becomes stressful as we hear the familiar anthem, “When are we going to get there?” and as the costs pile up. As I write this, my wife and I have just started our vacation and, yesterday, our first day on the road, we encountered a terrible hail storm that broke our windshield and left the car looking like it had been attacked by a loose jackhammer—not a recommended stress relieving leisure activity!

We need to frequently go away by ourselves to that “desolate place of rest” that Mark 6:31 talks about. When I am tired, I need God’s mercy, and I’m reminded that “His mercies are new every morning.” Personally, I need that quiet time of Bible reading, prayer, meditation, and waiting on the Spirit to minister to me every single morning.

²²*The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end;*
²³*they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:22-23 (ESV)*

But, before you commit to spending that “quiet time” every morning, like I have found beneficial, hear this! As we grow and mature spiritually, we sometimes become intensely focused on getting the Christian life “right.” This adds even more stress to our over-stressed lives. We need a deeper understanding to take the spiritual leap into creative leisure and rest. This leap takes a willingness to let go. Creative leisure activity involves trusting that every activity doesn’t need a worthy goal and doesn’t need to be planned out. Pleasure, humor, lightness, and aimless passing of time are forms of openness to the Spirit of the Lord. It is in experimenting, exploring, setting aside our ordered and planned approach to most of life, and accepting that what comes out will be all right.