

STRENGTHENING YOUR GRIP

Strengthening Your Grip on Leisure

Genesis 2:1–2; Matthew 6:24–34; Ephesians 5:15–16



LET'S BEGIN HERE

When was the last time you took a long walk, read a good book, or just rested while watching the sunset? Many of us feel guilty when we spend more than ten minutes being “unproductive.” We have been sold a bill of goods that the committed Christian is the busy Christian — constantly involved with people, programs, and producing results.

And because many Christians relentlessly drive themselves to constant productivity, they often view those who enjoy regular leisure time as undisciplined and irresponsible. We've been programmed to believe that fatigue is next to godliness, that it's better to burn out than to rust out. But either way, we're “out,” which means we can't finish the race God has set before us.

So, if your work has become your all-consuming interest or your greatest source of identity, worth, and security, this lesson is for you. Though it may feel unnatural, sit back, put up your feet, and allow yourself to get a grip on leisure.



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1. The Place to Start: God

A scarcity of leisure in our lives reflects a lack of balance, with the scales tipped heavily toward work. Scripture, though, calls us to be imitators of God (Ephesians 5:1). This requires that, among other things, we use our time wisely. After He created the heavens and the earth, God took time for leisure (Genesis 2:1–3). God didn't rest because He needed it but to set an example for His creatures. Even Jesus, though He had many things to accomplish during His short time on earth, took time to rest, spend time with God, and sleep (Matthew 14:23; Luke 6:12). During our times of rest, God wants us to spend time with Him, building intimacy and trust in His provision.



Quotable

“You can come to church, sit, leave, and NEVER be impacted by another life. That's tragic, you know?”

— Charles R. Swindoll



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2. Four Guidelines from Genesis (Genesis 2:1–2)

The first three chapters of Genesis show us that leisure should have room for creativity, communication, rest, and relationships.

- **Creativity:** In the beginning, God created everything—from the powder blue skies, to the crystal clear seas, to the intricate beauty of the human body. If we are to mimic God, we must take time to create—to write, make music, dance, paint, bake, or solve problems.
- **Communication:** God exists as three divine Persons: the Father, Son, and Spirit. And when He created Adam and Eve, God desired relationships with them. Since we have been created in His image, we must prioritize communication with God and others.
- **Rest:** On the seventh day, God deliberately stopped working to enjoy His creation and to set an example for us. Rest doesn't mean becoming part of the couch and watching TV for hours but reflecting on God's goodness and thanking Him for His provision.
- **Relationships:** Leisure gives us time to build relationships. God spent time with Adam and Eve, paid attention to their hearts, and anticipated their needs. We must spend time with the people we love in order to understand their hopes, joys, dreams, and needs.



GETTING TO THE ROOT

Be Imitators of God

Ephesians 5:1 reminds Christians that since we are God's beloved sons and daughters, we should imitate God. But how can finite human beings mimic an infinite God? The phrase in Ephesians 5:1 "imitators" is translated from the Greek word *mimeomai*, from which we get our word mimic. This word indicates that we are to use God as our model and, with time and practice, to begin acting like Him.¹ In this verse, Paul exhorted believers to consistently mimic God by loving others and living pure lives. Part of that godly lifestyle includes following God's example of rest and wisely using our time so that we have the margin in our lives for leisure.



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LET'S LIVE IT

Leisure helps develop in us the capacity to perceive the eternal. It provides the time to get refocused on God and to recall what matters most in life. To strengthen your grip on leisure, hold on to these two pieces of advice:

1. *Deliberately stop being absorbed by worries.* We often worry about nonessential, unchangeable things. Choose not to let worry rob you of peace (Matthew 6:25–34).
2. *Consciously take time for leisure.* Change your routine, plan fun into your schedule, take a walk, or spend time with a friend. Then you will reflect some of the very qualities of God.

How often do you *really* rest? What worries or productivity-addictions are preventing you from taking leisure time to reconnect with people and with God?

ENDNOTE

1. Frederick William Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 651–52.



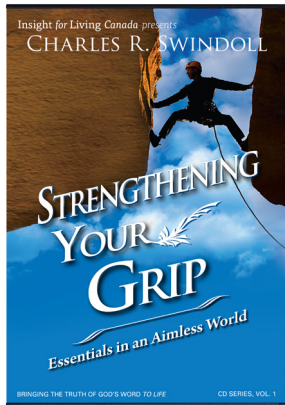
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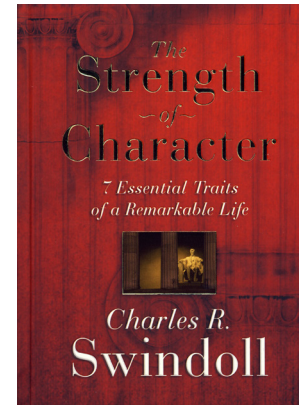
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