

NOTES FROM THE 2017 MISSIONARY CHURCH WESTERN REGION PASTOR'S CONFERENCE

TOPIC OF THE CONFERENCE – “REST”

1. **THE CHURCH AS ORGANISM IN WORSHIP** – In the preceding AD article SF – 1.14 we discuss the Spiritual Discipline of Worship – See this article through this quick link to the AD file: <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/2-spiritual-formation/Spiritual%20Disciplines/SF%201.14%20-%20The%20Discipline%20of%20Worship.pdf> Worship is at the heart of our Spiritual life because in it we commune with a relational God through the indwelling Holy Spirit through Whom we are integrated into the Organic Body of Christ. In worship faith, hope and love are ignited and sustained – 1 Corinthians 13. See also this article through the quick link to the AD file: <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/2-spiritual-formation/Spiritual%20Maturity/SF%202.3%20-%20Marriage%20and%20Transformation.pdf>
 - a. Jesus invites us to “open our eyes that we may see, open our ears that we may hear, open our hearts and minds that we may follow and serve.” Worship is intentionally opening our submission; it is our mind and heart intentionally saying “YES” to the will of the Spirit.
 - b. Worship is not merely expressed in “doing something” [works], rather it is in “being something” [Jesus’ followers and servants]. God is interested in replicating Jesus’ Nature and Character in the hearts and minds of every disciple.
 - c. Worship is consciously pressing into God that through His Spirit, we may know His heart and be increasingly conformed into His Image [Jesus].
 - d. Secular culture in its diagnosis of the individual, presumes that whatever does not conform to the secular image of truth and reality is at best misguided and at worst sick. But Christians aren’t misguided or sick, as worshipers of God we conform to a different standard and are guided by the indwelling Holy Spirit which the world does not possess.
 - e. Secular humanism’s sickness is that they worship that which brings death and decay; Christians in contrast worship that which brings life and health.
 - f. Psalm 23 – Christians have an inherent need for Sabbath Rest:
 - i. Vs 1-3:
 1. Thus, God invites us to lie down in green pastures... the place of restoration.
 2. Because the Lord is our Shepherd, we shall not know want. To want is to have critical needs that are left unfilled. The absence of needs is the absence of the worldly priorities of lust and greed and is a clear indicator of being under God’s authority in submission and contemplation.
 3. Being at peace with God is the result of Grace received, and is the necessary preparation for anything we would do in His Name.
 - ii. Vs 4: “Even though” refers to any occurrence that emerges from a season of trouble. Seasons of trouble do not emerge necessarily from presumptuous sin, but are often the result of living in a fallen world in which the prevailing world order is misaligned from God’s will and purpose.

- iii. Vs 6a: “Surely goodness and loving kindness” will follow me... this is outside the world’s guidance or purview, it is the result of the absence of anxiety that can only occur in the Presence of God.
- iv. Vs 6b: “And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever” – this is the ultimate goal, it is the best of the best, and is absolutely unshakable no matter what.
- g. Psalm 55 – This is the prayer of an exhausted saint who has come to the end of themselves in physical and emotional exhaustion. The only thing that keeps them going is the Spirit comforting us and drawing us toward God. The complaint of pain and exhaustion are real and compel the saint to cast themselves upon the mercy of God.
- h. Luke 10:38-42 – Mary is focused upon being with Jesus, and she is pictured as being in submission at His feet. Martha in contrast is busy doing something else, she is distracted by the work at hand. That Jesus says her name twice “Martha Martha” and this is not a mistake. It’s an acknowledgment of Jesus’ love and affection for Martha, and His invitation to her to join Him and Mary in something better. Some of us Christ-followers often make the same mistake as Martha. We get so caught up in loving “what we do for Jesus” that we forget to connect with Him in worship and “simply love Jesus!” This failure is the path to burnout, exhaustion, frustration, and ultimately failure in our ministry. When we work in our own strength doing stuff for Jesus, we neglect the power of the indwelling Spirit that animates the individual and corporate life of the Church – the Organism [Living Spirit Indwelled Body of Christ] we serve.

2. REST – the following is from Zondervan’s International Dictionary of Bible Words on the meaning of the word “Rest” in Scripture (edited for clarity):

- a. **The concept of “Rest” comes** – From the introduction of God's rest after creation (Genesis 2:1-3), it follows to the New Testament promise of a rest for God's people. "Rest" has great theological significance. In this discussion, “rest” refers to the cessation of labor and striving, and enjoyment of entering into quietness with God.
- b. **REST – Old Testament Hebrew words** – Different Hebrew words express various aspects of what the Old Testament means by "rest." Three different words in particular are commonly translated "rest" and express most of these aspects. These words are *sabat*, *nuah*, and *saqat*.
 - i. The word *sabat* implies ceasing or coming to an end of activity. Thus, Moses records that God rested when his work of creation was completed (Genesis 2:2, 3). The impression of peaceful repose is present only in the thirteen instances where this verb is used in a Sabbath context (see 2, below).
 - ii. *Nuah* suggests being settled down in an absence of movement. It implies security and a sense of inner ease. In the Old Testament, *nuah* speaks of a psychological release from pressures and tensions (as in Isaiah 28:12). It is closely associated with the victorious conclusion of conflicts (Joshua 21:44; 2 Chronicles 15:15) where the victors of the conflict enjoy peace as the external threat is removed. It is very clear from the Old Testament uses

of this word that God alone is able to provide such rest (e.g., Exodus 33:14; Deuteronomy 12:10; Joshua 22:4).

- iii. The word *saqat* has the idea of one finding tranquility. It signifies the absence of external pressures and inner anxiety. This kind of rest comes only through a relationship with the Lord. As Isaiah says, "The wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest... [Thus,] there is no peace for the wicked" (Isaiah 57:20-21). This Hebrew word too is used of the aftermath of victory and of periods of time in which God's people were faithful to Him (e.g., Judges 3:11; 5:31; 8:28). The prophets looked forward to a promised time of rest, when God would deliver his people from bondage. Despite the agony of preceding judgments, God declared, "I will surely save you out of a distant place, your descendants from the land of their exile. Jacob will again have peace [*saqat*] and security, and no one will make him afraid" (Jeremiah 30:10).
 - iv. In the Old Testament, then, the words that communicate the idea of "rest" imply a wide range of benefits. There is security, an absence of danger and anxiety. There is an ease and confidence that has both outer and inner bases, each of which can be traced directly to one's relationship with the Lord. Only through a relationship with the Lord can we experience the blessing of the rest that God has for those who trust him.
- c. **Rest in terms of The Sabbath** – The "Seventh Day of the week" which divided the Hebrew month into four equal parts, was called the Sabbath. However, it is the religious significance of the Sabbath that is primarily important in the Old Testament.
- i. First, the Sabbath was a testimony to God the Creator, who rested after His six days of shaping our universe (Genesis 2:2-3). The statement about the Sabbath in the Ten Commandments goes like this: "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days [literally periods of time] the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" (Exodus 20:8-11).
 - ii. Second, the Sabbath became a symbol of Israel's Covenant relationship with the Lord. Exodus 31:12-17 identifies it as a lasting sign, celebrating the mutual commitment expressed in the Mosaic Covenant. Israel's observance of the Sabbath as a day of rest was a clear indication of her spiritual condition, for it showed obedience to the divine law (e.g., Jeremiah 17:19-27; Nehemiah 13:15-22). This relationship of the Old Testament Sabbath to the Mosaic Law is important, for when Jesus instituted the New Covenant through his death at Calvary, the Sabbath observance (like many other aspects of the Old Covenant), was reinterpreted and/or done away with.
 - iii. Third, the Sabbath is also intimately linked with deliverance from Egypt. God, in repeating the Ten Commandments, says this about the Sabbath: "Remember that you were slaves in

SF 1.17 – The Spiritual Discipline of Rest

Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day" (Deuteronomy 5:15).

- iv. The intimate association of the Sabbath with Creation, Redemption, and Law gives us insight into how the Sabbath day was to be used. Each seventh day provided a full-orbed reminder of who God was to his people. He was the source of their life. He was the provider of their freedom. He was the one who ordered their lives and gave them meaning. The Sabbath day provided a rest from the normal activities of life in the world and an opportunity for each believing Israelite to contemplate his roots and his identity.
 - v. In addition to these theological aspects of the Sabbath, there was an intensely practical aspect as well. The Sabbath was provided for the benefit of all who lived in the sphere of divine influence. Family members and servants, and even the animals of the land, were to have a time for relaxation and restoration of strength. Even the land was to be given its Sabbath, lest its nutrients be used up. In its rest, the land was to bless the poor and the animals (Exodus 23:10-11). As verse 12 goes on to say, "Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest and the slave born in your household, and the alien as well, may be refreshed."
 - vi. The humanitarian aspect of Sabbath Law was ignored in Jesus' day and gave rise to many of Jesus' conflicts with the Pharisees. These zealous men focused on "do's and don'ts" that had grown up around and over the basic Biblical principles. Again and again they challenged Jesus' right to heal on the Sabbath (e.g., Luke 6:1-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; John 5:9-18; 7:22-23; 9:14-16). In most of these instances, Jesus, who claimed lordship over the Sabbath (Luke 6:5), pointed out that it had always been right to do good on the Sabbath. Clearly God's humanitarian concern, expressed in Exodus 23:12 and other passages, demonstrates that it is not the legalities but the benefits to humankind that the Lord values in this Old Testament holy day.
 - vii. Theological and humanitarian explanations for the institution of the Sabbath underline a vital truth found often in Scripture. God's demands communicate his concern for the whole person. Both the spiritual and the physical needs of human beings were intended to be met by the Sabbath day of rest.
 - viii. After the Resurrection, the early church began to meet on the Lord's Day, The first rather than the seventh day became the day of rest. What the believers gathered weekly to remember was the Resurrection. The Lord's Day replaced the Sabbath, but the meaning of the Sabbath as a time for spiritual and physical refreshment remains significant for us today.
- d. **REST in The New Testament Greek words** – The Greek words for "rest" are used in the LXX to translate as many as sixteen different Hebrew words. As they are used in the New Testament, they often reflect the Old Testament perspective.
- i. *Anapauo* (used 12 times in the New Testament) means "to rest" in a physical sense; and, as a transitive verb, it also means "to calm," "to comfort," or "to refresh." Significantly, it is this

rest that Jesus promised those who are willing to take his yoke (Matthew 11:28-30). The image is of one person in harness with another, the two tied in tandem as two draft animals were tied, in order that they might work together. In the context of Scripture, human beings always find themselves yoked to something. Most commonly the yoke involves slavery. In Matthew 11, as well as Acts 15 and Galatians 5:1, the yoke is the law; which humanity experiences as an unbearable burden. Jesus' invitation was for people to commit themselves to Him. Paradoxically, when we are bound to Jesus, we can experience rest.

- ii. *Anesis* indicates a rest that comes from freedom or from the relaxation of a burden. It is found only five times in the New Testament (Acts 24:23; 2 Corinthians 2:13; 7:5; 8:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:7). The removal of a burden is a picture of rest.
- iii. *Katapausis* (used 9 times in the New Testament) is the rest of repose and is found only in Acts 7:49 and Hebrews. As used in Hebrews 3-4 it has special theological significance. Just as the Old Testament shared the conviction that human beings can find rest only through a living relationship with the Lord, so the New Testament expresses the conviction that we can find our rest only in Jesus.

- e. **Rest in Hebrews 3-4** – The third and fourth chapters of Hebrews explore the significance of God's voice in the believer's experience. The writer argues that only by hearing and responding to the Lord as he speaks to us in our "today" can we find rest. *Such rest is not merely cessation of activity, but repose in action.* God's Sabbath rest is defined: God has ceased creating (4:9-11). But the God of the Old Testament is *active*. How then is he at rest? He is at rest from bringing into existence and organizing the basic plan and contents of the universe. He knows the end from the beginning, and his purpose will stand (Isaiah 46:8-10). Thus, God's voice is able to guide us into the paths he intends for us, and contemplative repose is a means of listening to hear God's voice.
- f. **In Conclusion** – Rest is not passive cessation of effort; it is active engagement with God that renews and restores us so we can better fulfill God's many invitations [callings] upon our lives. The struggle Christians are engaged in is not that of finding their way through life, but of entering God's rest (4:11). That is, they are to be responsive to the Lord and let His Word and Spirit guide them to the solutions He has already provided for their problems. In knowing God and responding to Him, we find true repose.

- 3. **THE CHURCH AS ORGANIZATION** – According to our MCWR Director Mike Livingston, "No organization has a right to exist if it is not solving a problem." In other words, if the organization is merely a corporate meeting without specific purpose, identity and action... it should be dispensed with. The Church as Organization exists to forward Jesus' Redemptive Mission:
 - a. To know and defend the Gospel – Biblical Literacy.
 - b. To cultivate personal purity of heart – Spiritual Formation.
 - c. To develop people of character who exhibit a vital Christian witness – Leadership Development.Too often church leaders place a greater importance on the "Organization" rather than the "Organism."

- 4. THE GIFT OF SABBATH – “He restores my soul...” – Psalm 23:3. Being still and dwelling in God’s house secure in His love... is the still water of Psalm 23.**
- a. Note the active work of the Spirit in Psalm 23:**
 - i. Anointing – Is the Spirit at work when we reflect upon God’s Light.**
 - ii. Character – Is the Spirit at work when we reflect upon God’s Nature.**
 - iii. Ministry – Is the Spirit at work when we reflect upon God’s Purpose.**
 - b. John 15:3-10 – To remain [abide] in Jesus [the vine] is to be with Him. To depart [being sent] is to exercise your calling [accepting the invitation] God has placed upon your heart.**
 - c. Jesus “High Priestly Prayer” of John 17:1-26 begins with Jesus praying for first Himself, second for His disciples, and third for all that would come to faith through His follower’s testimony. Then Jesus went to the Cross to purchase our redemption [atonement], which was validated by the tearing of the curtain and the Resurrection, and empowered by the indwelling Spirit released at Pentecost.**
 - d. Matthew 12 – Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath... abiding in Him we find perfect peace and purpose.**
 - e. God’s promise to Israel in Egypt:**
 - i. You are no longer a slave – you are free! Jesus redefined freedom as release from bondage to sin and death because of the cross.**
 - ii. I Am the Lord your God – a declaration of intimate relationship protected by the Ten Commandments... this should be seen more as a wedding vow rather than a legalistic decree.**
 - iii. Note the relational context in the Ten Commandments:**
 - 1. The first three deal with our relationship with God.**
 - 2. The last five deal with the relationships between men and women in the faith community.**
 - 3. The fourth deals with the Sabbath – where the others are short statements and to the point, the fourth is comprised of 133 words and is given with disproportionate details. It is clear from God’s perspective that the relational intimacy that would result through the Sabbath was critical for humanity in relational connection with God and one another.**
- 5. THE PRACTICE OF SABBATH – How do we receive the Gift of Sabbath? There are two key thoughts:**
- a. There is no such thing as wasting time with God. Spending time is an investment especially when His Character begins to emerge in us and gratitude and serenity flow out through our life.**
 - i. Take My yoke... learn from Me – Matthew 11:27-30**

“All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

This is a picture of becoming like Jesus... generally the practice of yoking a pair of oxen involved a mature ox familiar with the work and its pace paired with a younger inexperienced ox that would learn by following the example of the mature ox.

- ii. Note the development of the Lazarus Story – John 11:1-12:11
 1. Martha serves Jesus – Luke 10:40; John 12:2
 2. Mary Listens/responds to Jesus – Luke 10:39; John 12:3
 3. Lazarus was resting in the Tomb – John 11:34-39
 4. Jesus calls and Lazarus listens/responds – John 11:43-44
 5. Lazarus is pictured resting with Jesus. Actually “reclining” is the word used which is same term used of John at The Last Supper – John 12:1-2.
 - a. The passive rest in the tomb is replaced by active rest at the table.
 - b. This is a picture of Spiritual Formation “Soul Rest” and it is the opposite of “Soul Weariness.”
 - c. My condition of rest is out of whack when my worries become oppressive. It means my sense of grace is too shallow and it is out of proportion with the issues I’m facing.
 - d. When I forget to care about what I know to most important because I’m tied up with the minutia, my priorities are obviously out of whack.
- iii. Developing a Sabbath heart – is a deliberate effort when I purposefully remind myself that God is in charge and I’m not.
 1. When I’m acting in my strength I tire out. When I’m acting in God’s strength, I soar on the wings of eagles.
 - a. By taking Jesus’ invitation to enter His rest, I am entering God’s rest.
 - b. Sabbath means to “pause” to “stop” or “cease” – it means I’m not in charge, God is. It’s a conscious effort on my part, a decision.
 2. Before the Holy Spirit comes on Pentecost in Acts 2, the Apostles are seen in prayer and supplication – Acts 1:12-14.
 3. When the Holy Spirit comes – the Apostles are immediately sent into action preaching and teaching in power and authority.
 4. This action results in two things – first, is the fellowship of believers in community – 2:42-47. Second, is opposition with the authorities in conflict with God where they are thrown into prison – 4:1-3.
 5. When they are released, they go to prayer and dependence upon the Scriptures – 4:23-32; followed by a counter-cultural approach to community – 4:32-37.

The result of this story is a process of focusing on God’s Sovereignty and prayerfully resting and trusting God. This is not a cessation of work, but rather an affirmation of Who is in charge and relaxing in Him. What makes this so stunning is that it is the opposite of religion; it is joyful relational dependence.

6. CONCLUSION – My dear friend Pastor Bryan Bode in critiquing this article offered the following insight:

When I think about the Sabbath, I see that there is completion. In God's economy, God never lacks anything. In Christ, the God-man who lives forever, we lack nothing. It has been a challenge for me to know that in the "already" [our present spiritual reality because of the Indwelling Spirit] we experience parts of this reality, but the fullness of this reality will not be experienced until Jesus fully consummates His Kingdom in the New Heaven and Earth... this is the "Not Yet." These are beautiful revelations about what God is like and what he is about, and yet here we are often lacking this and that and thinking, "What am I going to do about this or that very real need?"

God's answer is to rest in Me.