## Principle 5: Work and Rest

## Work and rest in the Pentateuch



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## Jesus, Work and Rest

### Work

Christ like the Father, placed a high regard upon work, by labelling himself a worker (Jn 9:4, 4:34, 5:17). He called his disciples to work, to fish for men. He prayed for labourers (Matt 9:36-39). He also is very familiar with the jobs of the poor and the rich of his time. The use of these parables enabled him to teach in a way that he would be understood, but it also places a high regard upon work. If our work gives glory to God or it serves humanity then it can be seen as a Kingdom job (Ryken, 1987, pg. 87).

### New Economic Role for Humanity

One of our main economic roles is found in proclaiming the Kingdom of God, both in word and deed (Mark 16:15, Luke 10:9). Proclamation, particularly among the poor (Luke 4:18), for whom it is a message of mercy, but not neglecting others for it is to bring all people in every nation into obedience to him (Matt 28:19-20).

Battle has been engaged (Matt 10:34), many will die for siding with the King (Matt 10:39) (Barrett estimates an average of 30,000 persons per year are martyred for their faith). He has come destroying the works of Satan and calls us to be his ambassadors (II Corinthians 5:19,20). Our primary role is now to preach.

This role of proclamation as the central activity in the battle will cut across family relationships like a sword (Luke 14:26, Mark 10:34), an apparent denial of being our brothers’ keeper. It will be costly in terms of personal success (Luke 14:26; 9:23), but we have to sit down and count the cost of whether we can afford not to be involved with the King. It further requires a forsaking of possessions (Luke 12:33; 14:33), an apparent denial of the mandate to manage the earth.

As they were going along the road, a man said to him, Lord, I will follow you wherever you may go. Jesus replied, Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head (Luke 9:57,58). Jesus himself chose to have few possessions, no place to lay his head. He taught his disciples this pattern of economics. In Acts we find them discipling others in the same lifestyle (Mark 1:16ff; 10:17ff, 28ff). He promises that renunciation of possessions will find recognition with God (Mark 10: 28, 29). He tells us not to worry about daily needs (Matt 6:25-34), and refused to arbitrate a land dispute. In Acts we find their disciples selling their possessions, their own houses and lands (Acts 4:32-34).

But lest we overemphasise his poverty, let us also note that he grew up with a carpentry business, and was well supported by well-to-do women (Luke 8:2; 10:38). He tells us to use possessions to support our parents (Mark 7:9), and those in need (Mark 12:41, Matt 6:2; 25:40). He was not an ascetic. Nor a beggar. God provided his needs.

Jesus laid no universal demand for poverty on people. His concern was with our financial status in terms of our total commitments to the cause of proclaiming the Kingdom. Poverty itself has no virtue. The issue here is total commitment to the call of Jesus, and the need to proclaim the Kingdom.

Jesus chose an apostolic lifestyle.

### Rest

Rest is also a key part of life for those who are part of the Kingdom. Leisure can be defined as a time free from the constraints of work and other obligations of living. It is a time to cultivate an enriched state of being.

Jesus was the herald of the Kingdom and he taught us what resting in the Kingdom should look like. The first and foremost leisure time for Jesus was his time of prayer in a lonely place. Jesus, in order to enrich his state of being, turned to his relationship with the Father for help. He knew that this was the priority of the Kingdom when it came to rest. The other form of rest came in the form of fellowship. Jesus loved to spend time both with friends and his disciples. This for him, many times, was his way to rest and he called his disciples to rest with each other (6:31).

He had a habit of attending the synagogue on the Sabbath. But in numerous acrimonious debates, he delegalized the cultural restrictions on rest that the Jewish rabbis had developed in their detailed expansion of the essential command. The Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27).

## Work and Rest in the Epistles

Paul chose an apostolic missionary lifestyle. We find him 30 years later preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus (Acts 28:31). For the sake of this proclamation he became all things to all people (1 Corinthians 9:22, 23). He was as poor, yet making many rich (2 Corinthians 6:10). Coming from a rich family he knew how to enjoy good things. He had learned for the sake of the gospel, how to be abased and how to abound (Phil 4:12). He taught his disciples that though all other normal functions of a healthy life are good and permissible, they are no longer the priority (1 Corinthians 7:29, 30).