

# The Divine Ordinances of Work and Rest

By Jeff Noblit

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** Mark 6:30-32  
**Preached on:** Sunday, July 2, 2017

## **Anchored in Truth Ministries**

1915 Avalon Ave.  
Muscle Shoals, AL 35661

**Website:** [www.anchoredintruth.org](http://www.anchoredintruth.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/anchoredintruth](http://www.sermonaudio.com/anchoredintruth)

Well, grab your Bibles and go to Mark 6. I've taken an old truth that we've worked at several times and I have completely rewritten it but the truth remains the same and it's my last practical exhortation before our break and I wanted to end this way, and actually a very popular theme when I preached on it in the past and I think you'll understand why in just a moment.

Mark 6, the Lord is progressing forward in his earthly ministry and he comes to that place where he has begun to send his apostles out on their own. They would go out for short day or two excursions and preach and teach and minister and heal, and then they would come back to him and that's where we pick up in Mark 6:30, go down through verse 32.

30 The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught. 31 And He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while." (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.) 32 They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves.

I've entitled this "The Divine Ordinances of Work and Rest." The divine ordinances of work and rest. Friend, work is ordained of God. It's God's idea. Both your work in the world and your work for the Lord in the church is an ordinance of God. In fact, work was given to Adam before sin entered the picture. Some would argue, "Well, works entered there because of Adam and he sinned." No, Adam was commanded to take care of the garden before sin even entered the garden. Now the toll and burden and wearisomeness that is associated with work today is the result of sin but work itself is an ordinance of God.

The book of Proverbs which is an exhortation from an older wiser man to his son, is filled with exhortations about working hard, rising early, being diligent, doing an honest days work. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul writes to the church at Thessalonica and he reminds the church at Thessalonica that it is his standing policy that if anyone will not work, he's not to eat. Isn't that simple? That would be a great basic policy for any culture's social welfare system. If you're not willing to work, at least try, then you don't get the benefits of everyone else's work. What was it Margaret Thatcher said, she said

many good things but she said the problem with socialism is that eventually you run out of other people's money to give away. That's kind of what Paul was saying.

To the Galatian believers, the Apostle Paul reaffirms that all must participate and share in the work of God's church. In Galatians 6:5, he reminded them and reminds us, "For each one will bear his own load." Each one has a job. Not everybody does the same job but the heart attitude and the spirit of, "I want to do my part," should be in every Christian. You see, the Bible knows no such thing as a non-working or non-serving believer. It just doesn't exist. It's an oxymoron.

But let's be balanced: rest is an ordinance of God and rest like work was ordained before the fall. Exodus 20:9-11, "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you." Now why is all this? Because God has ordained this even from the beginning. Look at verse 11, "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy." God has ordained this cycle of work and then some rest.

One New Testament scholar writes that the Gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, record 11 different times where Jesus either with himself or with his immediate apostles, got away from the people in the ministry for a season to rest. In fact, the last week of our Lord's ministry, he would go into Jerusalem and teach and preach and instead of staying in a hotel or an apartment or inn there in Jerusalem, he would go some journey outside of Jerusalem to a remote little olive farm and there in that little olive farm he would find some respite or some rest time before the next days ministry.

In Romans 15:32, the Apostle Paul writes to the church at Rome and he says, "so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company." The Roman church was maybe different than the Corinthian church. It was a place where he could find some refreshing and some rest. The idea in Paul saying to the Roman church, "I'm going to come to you and find some refreshing," is that, "I want to come to you and I want to get rested up. I want to come to you and I want to get refitted for some future service."

That is a part of God's economy for all men. Work, secular work in the world, as you might call it, and then work in God's church. Now listen to me: if you're an accountant and you work in books all day or you stack boxes in a warehouse or if you're a physician or whatever your work in the world is, that is holy unto the Lord. That is God's service. That is honoring to him and of him. And then, of course, all of us have our work to do in God's church but equally so it's God's ordinance that work be followed by some rest. All of it is God's will and God's idea. Here we have in Mark 6, the Lord has already sent these apostles out, then they return back to him after that ministry, and immediately he says, "Now I led you into the work, now I'm going to lead you away into a secluded place and there we're going to rest for a while."

So let me challenge you this morning, let me exhort you again: do you work? Do you work heartily as unto the Lord? As a Christian, can I just encourage you when you go to work for your company or whoever it is, never give him eight hours work for eight hours pay, give him eight hours and 15 minutes work for eight hours pay. Give him eight hours and 30 minutes for eight hours pay. That's just the way a Christian should view it. "Yeah, but you don't understand, he this and he that..." It doesn't matter, God knows what you're doing and he's the one you're working for. That ought to be our reputation.

I'm telling you, it gets under my collar when I hear about a young man in our church who is slothful and undisciplined and gets in trouble at work because he won't work hard. It ought to be a church discipline issue. I don't mean throw him out of the church but I mean the older men in the church ought to sit him down and say, "Son, look, we love you but we don't want to hear a report again that your boss says you don't work hard." I wasn't a believer but when I grew up when I was hauling hay or working at Salant & Salant, or for a construction company in nonunion heavy labor, every boss I left said, "If you want a job, you can come and get one here." I just had too much pride not to be that way.

Work is an ordinance of God. Do you work when you work in the world? Let me ask you: do you work genuinely and regularly in the Lord's work in the church? And equally so when it's time, do you rest? Do you obey the ordinance of God and find the proper rest and refreshing for your soul? It's all the will of God.

Let's examine this together this morning. Let's talk some about the truths of work and the truths of rest. I. The God of work. As we said already in our text here, the Lord Jesus Christ, God incarnate, had sent his disciples out into the world. Now, as we go through this, we're going to be primarily looking at ministerial work but the principles translate over into your work and we'll go back and forth but obviously I think you can discern how it applies to you.

We saw up in verses 7 through 13 how the Lord sent the disciples out. He told them certain things to do, certain things not to do, and how to minister. Now, let's remind ourselves as we're studying the New Testament we have to interpret it in context. You are not being sent out today as an apostle to do the things the original apostles were told to do. That was a one-time ministry for a one-time purpose. I mean, the Lord Jesus Christ was walking the earth in his Incarnate form. That's passed away, however the principles of that work still apply. We would believe that the broader commission for all Christians of all ages is in Matthew 28:18-20, therefore "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." We sometimes call that the Great Commission and it's kind of summed up this way: Jesus says, "Now, as my followers, there is a work to do. Go and make more disciples. And when you make more disciples, you are to do it globally. Go into all the world," he says, "and make disciples. And you are to do it centered in forming local New Testament churches. You are to baptize them and teach them. Go therefore everywhere as best you

can, support the work of missions, make sure we are doing the work of making disciples, baptizing them and teaching them, that is putting them in collectivities of small groups or local churches and grow them up that they might be a part of then helping others go forth further and make more disciples."

Now, let me say something about the integrity of our work for the Lord. Again, this could translate over into your work in the secular world. We ought to always work with integrity. It has the idea of genuineness or truth. In the original Greek, the word "integrity," I understand, is a word that literally means "without wax." They had clay pots in those days and if a man who sold pottery did not have integrity, he would know that he could put wax in the crack and then paint over it and sell it like it was a good pot or vase and it would be a cracked pot, which is what he was, a crack pot. But integrity means it's right, it's the genuine thing, it's true through and through, and that's the way we want our work to be. Brothers and sisters, our work for God is to be done God's way for God's purposes. We don't get the right to decide how we're going to do his church. You know I stay on this hobbyhorse all the time but it needs to be stayed on because we see so much of this today. We're to be in effect proclaiming God's message, he gave us the message. We are to be utilizing God's methods, he ordained the methods, he gives us those in Scripture. And we are to be trusting God's means, primarily the Holy Spirit's power. And we do not have the right to veer from that. That's integrity in the Lord's work.

Sometimes a person will talk about, "Well, my vision for the church or my vision for my ministry in the church or I have a burden for this in the church. Well, my convictions are this. Well, my conscience is bothered about this and that." That really doesn't matter. What matters is the word. Our hearts are desperately wicked. Now, sometimes outside of Scripture, certainly the elders and church leaders have to give a vision for where our particular church is going but that is in addition to the foundations that matter. Those other things come and go but there are foundational things that deal with the integrity of our work and in verse 30 the Bible says these apostles went out and then they reported back to him all that they had, now listen, here's the phrase, "all that they had done and taught." That's a strong word about integrity. Here's the point: they didn't just go out and scream a bunch of stuff and herald a bunch of stuff to people, they lived the truth they preached.

They reported all that they had done and taught. Now we have a parallel to this in Acts 1:1 where in Acts 1:1, Luke is talking about Jesus' ministry and he says, "I begin to compose or record all that Jesus," here it is, "began to do and teach." The point is Luke is saying, "You can't just talk about Jesus' teaching, you have to talk about what he was. He lived the truth and he taught the truth." Now, you and I will never perfectly or even in a high God definition of faithfulness, we will never perfectly preach or teach the truth and we will not perfectly practice the truth but in integrity in our work, there should be a continual heart desire, "Lord, let us embody this. Let this truth be incarnational in my life and in my church's life. Let us not just be proclaimers. We want to do it and teach it." Integrity. As someone said, Christianity is probably more caught than it is taught. We must strive to do the truth and to teach the truth because we are not primarily here to increase our knowledge, but to see our lives changed.

Character is so important and the qualifications for elders in the Bible in 1 Timothy 3 and in Titus 1, we have this long and lengthy list of spiritual and just general character qualifications, what a man is, never perfect by the way, but generally these things are true of this man, and then one of those things is and he must be able to teach. That's just one of the many. What's the point? What he is, the character aspect is vitally important and then also, of course, faithfully teach and preach the truth.

Thirty-five, six, seven years ago, I don't know when we first started accountability groups around here but I wrote a little discipleship program, I called it the accountability group and we built it around three things: you get with another brother or sister who wants to be, you don't push it on anybody, it's somebody who wants to be in accountability and you have quiet times together. You get in the word together. You have prayer times together so that you're actually doing it together. And then you have times where you memorize Scripture and you get together and you quote your Scriptures and talk about how you have gleaned truth for your lives from memorizing and meditating on the Scripture that week. Then you went with one another out to try to evangelize and share the Gospel with the lost and you learned it by doing it together. But the great emphasis of the accountability group is you actually do these things and you teach about these things. Integrity.

Jesus said, "All men will know that you are my disciples because you teach sound doctrine from your pulpit." No. That's essential, by the way. That's foundational in church. "All men will know that you are my disciples by the love you have one for another." Whatever else – listen – whatever else is the product of sound preaching and teaching, it ought to be that unique God love that is in us for one another. That means we have integrity in our ministry and integrity in our work.

In 1 Corinthians 8:1, the apostle is exhorting a very immature and carnal church and he says, "Now concerning things sacrificed to idols," now we don't have that in our culture today but they had that in their culture. Every day people were sacrificing animals to pagan demons and idols. It was just all over the culture and Paul says, "Okay, now we're Christians and we are in this culture so concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge but knowledge makes arrogant." If it's just knowledge, you just have an arrogant, proud people and have you ever tried to have a church full of a lot of authoritative teaching, arrogant, proud people? Do you know what you've got? You've got chaos and conflict and factions and divisions. That's what you have. He said, "So just knowledge is not what we need here," Paul is saying, "we need love."

Now here's his point: he said, "Some of you have the knowledge that all of those animals," those goats and chickens or bullocks or whatever they were that were sacrificed to those demons that morning in a pagan temple, then they are taken to the meat market, you know that God made that animal, there is nothing wrong with that meat. You can eat it as a Christian." That's knowledge but what would happen is some with knowledge with arrogance and with a caustic spirit, demeaned or denounced an immature or younger brother who wasn't quite there yet. He still felt guilty or condemned if he ate that meat

because it was sacrificed that morning. What he's saying is, "No. Yes, your knowledge is right, Barney Fife. You're right, it's in the code, it's in the manual but you don't handle everything that way. In love don't just demean and beat the brother up who doesn't have the knowledge yet, help bring him along with kindness and deference and winsomeness and sweetness." Integrity in our ministry means we preach and proclaim the truth absolutely but it means we are striving as Grace Life Church of the Shoals and as individual members to live out the truth we preach and teach.

Those of you who were here the first couple decades of my pastoral ministry will remember that we would be preaching through a book of the Bible and we'd come across a truth and we would realize we were not doing that and we'd have a church business meeting and we'd discuss the thing and we would change our church policy based on the truth we had just learned. That's what God wants you to do. I remember when we used to bring in guests, it may not have bothered you a little bit but in the early early days we would have some men that would bring their wife and children along. Well, that's two hotel rooms. That's lots of food etc. etc. and I thought, "Is that right?" Then I remember reading in the New Testament where Paul says, "I have the right to bring along a believing wife." He was talking about his...and I thought, "That's all I need to know." From then on we made a carte blanche policy any time and every time anybody ministers for us, the entire family is welcome and we'll take good care of them, amen? You learn from the Scriptures and then you apply it out in policy. Integrity in our work.

Whatever else it means, integrity in the Lord's work means we maintain that Gospel humbled repentant spirit to put into practice the things we learn from Scripture. You come into the worship service looking for application. "Lord, what can I repent of in my life, in my thinking, in my behavior, in my motives and I will replace it with what the word says is right." That's integrity. Do you have integrity in the way you sit under the preaching of the word? That humble, Gospel humbled repentant spirit to put off the old sinful things and continue to put on the new spiritual things.

Now, integrity in our work, let's go secondly, accountability in our work. These men came back to Jesus and the Bible says they did it and they taught it. That speaks of integrity, but also it says they came back and reported to him. Accountability. You know, everything that matters in life has accountability. Any institution, any group, any club, any organization, any arrangement where men, people are working together, there are elements of accountability. It has always been true.

Accountability has two parts to it, I think. First of all, it's there for encouragement. These men reported back because it is encouraging to come back and be accountable to an older wiser one who can say, "Man, you did well in your own track. Thank you for what you did. Keep on keeping on." It's just encouraging. Ecclesiastes 4:9 reminds us, "Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor." Jesus sent his disciples out always two by two. Why? There was accountability but beyond accountability it's encouraging. We need each other. God has ordained it that way and that's why sometimes you might be in a small group that you don't like a whole lot, it doesn't fit you just right and you'd rather be with Sally or with Joe or wherever, but you've got to discipline

yourself to say, "Yeah, but I need them and they need me." God has just ordained it that way.

Well, accountability is needful for encouragement but it's also needful for edification. Edification. Proverbs 27:17 says, "Iron sharpens iron and one man sharpens another." When you're accountable to somebody, you are open and if you're a Christian and mature at all, you love reproof, as the Bible says. You are welcome to be sharpened. "Help me here. Help me there. Is my thinking right here? Is my approach to this, do you think that is sound and good?" And brothers helping brothers. And of course in a church setting and in church work, the primary accountability is your spiritual authorities or for whatever it is in life. Accountability for edification is a part of our process of living. Wives are accountable to husbands. Husbands are certainly accountable to wives too but the husband has the responsibility, the awesome responsibility, has headship in the relationship. Children are to be accountable to their parents. And in church, church members are to be accountable to their church elders. It's just the way God has ordained life to function.

So we see here the God of work. We ought to work with integrity. We ought to work with faithfulness. We ought to work with discipline. We ought to work with a cheerful heart. It's the ordinance of God. Let's go to the balance. He is equally so the God of rest. The God of rest. This too is a perpetual ordinance of God. He clearly says here in verse 31, "And He said to them, 'Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.'" Dr. Vance Havner used to say that I think the King James says "come apart," and he said if you don't come apart, you'll come apart and there is some truth to that. Sir, you obsessive compulsive task oriented monster, ma'am, you obsessive compulsive task oriented monstrosity, do you obey God's ordinance of rest? Now, there's a balance here. Us obsessive compulsive task oriented monsters do get a lot done but we need to be balanced and we need to be humbled and rest does both of those.

This is a perpetual concern that God has for his children. In Mark 6 first he led the disciples into battle and now in Mark 6:31, he leads them into rest. Jesus leads into both. Both of them. We need both. You know, one of the reasons why I think God has ordained rest, the reason why we have to have rest is because he doesn't. Every time you get weary and every time you go to sleep, it ought to be another clear reminder to you that you are not God. You are weak, he is not. The Bible says in Psalm 121:4, "The one who keeps Israel will neither sleep nor slumber." He doesn't get tired. So weary one, you are weary because you're not God. He is infinite, you are finite. He is strong, you are weak. And we need that reminder, amen? There are a whole lot of mighty men out there in the graveyard. We all run out, in this life anyway. We grow weary and we must sleep because it is a perpetual reminder to humble ourselves under God.

Now, conclusions for practical application about rest. Conclusions for practical application. Don't you like these kind of sermons? Usually people just love this sermon. They really do. Conclusions for practical application on rest. 1. Are you weary because you are worldly? Are you weary because you're worldly? Why do you get busy and just automatically conclude that the Lord's work can be the first to go? Who told you that?

Who told you that when you have overfilled your life that you can drop off on the Lord's work? Who told you that?

Now, I'm 37 years in this thing counting when I just first started attending here and all of my service here, and I don't remember one time where anybody set anybody in this church down and rebuked them or disciplined them because they had too much busy stuff in their lives. So we don't do that and I'm not about to start doing that but I'm challenging you to go with God and ask God, "God, am I weary because I'm worldly?" Maybe you've made wrong choices and maybe you have spread yourself too thin. Maybe you have violated Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you." In the allotted amount of energy and time God has given you, what do you put first? You keep putting God second or fourth or twelfth and you wonder why your life is not working, you wonder why you are filled with anxiety and trouble. The first thing I always tell if I'm counseling somebody who is distressed or anxiety ridden or depressed is fill your life with serving others. Get busy doing something for others because those maladies – I'm giving a witness here from Jeff today – those maladies stem primarily from thinking about yourself. Get busy serving others.

Well, I'm back to "are you weary because your worldly?" Maybe you've made the wrong choices. Maybe you've spread yourself too thin. Maybe you need to drop Kiwanis or Rotarian or the pilot club or Gideons or the cancer society or the heart society or maybe band boosters or athletic boosters. Have you considered one of those? Maybe you need to drop something. Maybe Johnny needs to drop football or basketball or baseball or soccer or wrestling or cross-country. I don't know. Maybe Susie needs to decide between cheerleading, band, piano, voice, tennis, softball, gymnastics and the swim team.

I don't think my record is a perfect one but I did try to practice this. I did say no to a number of things that a lot of people would have said, "Yeah, but your kid is good there or good there." I said yes to some things but I said no to a lot of things because though I do not think I am the best example – let me say that again – I did strive to put first the kingdom of God.

Ladies, maybe you need to quit your job and stay home. I don't know. Men, maybe you need to drop some hunting trips or some fishing trips or some of those long football weekends in the fall. Am I telling you any specific thing to do? No, I'm asking you to put it all before God. Are you weary because you are worldly? Are you worn out because you are spread too thin on things that the world has thrown at you that are not really required by God at all?

I'm really burdened for the ladies of our day. I'm really burdened for our ladies because the world much more than the men, the world crashes in and attacks women with all these things you've got to do and all these things you've got to be. And can I remind you again: open the book, get under your husband's leadership and say, "What are my assignments from God? Now I'm going to do those and I'm going to learn the great, powerful magic to get stress out of my life, and that great powerful magic is in the word

no." Can you help with? No. Would you help us on this charity event? No. I've got my assignments.

Now, don't miss understand your pastor. I've been with you a long time. I'm not trying to beat you up, I'm just saying put first what God has put first. You can do other stuff but be willing to say no. And if I might just creep a little too close to some people here, just creep a little too close, just a little too close here. I don't want these little meetings in little houses after I leave about the pastor. If you do, we'll be having church discipline meetings the moment I get back in town. You've got a problem with me, you come to me and I'll repent if it's biblical, amen? But we don't have little meetings. My former pastor used to call it the little group gatherers. I'm just teasing because y'all don't do that and you've matured beyond that and I thank God for that. But anyway, I was getting real close.

Number 2 under practical conclusions. Practical applications on rest. Secondly, get away with Jesus. Get away with Jesus. Now, boy, you've got to be real careful here, especially if you're a teacher and especially if you're a pastor but that doesn't affect most of us, but when you take your down time, when you take your vacation or whatever it is, we've found we can have some wonderful family devotions in that time but make sure it's light. You guys, doggone it, get your John MacArthur cap off. Open the Bible, read a half a Psalm, talk about the goodness of God, pray with your family. Keep it light. I have to constantly remind myself during my study break and I've done some heavy studying during my study break and then I come back to preach to you and I'm not refreshed and I've had better men than me remind me, "Pastor, you take your house shoes and study lightly during that time. Don't take your work boot study." That's what you do the other weeks of the year. And when you go on your vacation, you take your break, take a devotional book. The guys in my household, we did a book on manhood and it was light, it wasn't heavy, and we read some and talked about some things. We don't do it every time but take Jesus with you.

I remember the brief period of time after I was converted before I went into the ministry, how going to the church and going to do the Lord's work was a refreshing for me. I remember Brother David back when he worked at Texas Eastern back when he could work and we didn't have to pay him and he had the kind of shift where he'd be on, you know, these long hours, but then he'd have a break and he'd come into church and he said, "Man, it's just refreshing. It's invigorating." Now he's right the opposite. Now he's saying, "Man, I have to get away from this every now and then. I have to have some down time."

So for many of you, getting kind of tied into some things spiritually can really be refreshing. I remember those days. Now you've ruined it for me by calling me to be your pastor. I love you and I love being here but there's a responsibility to this that you have to get out from under and you've got to get up from under yours too but consider taking Jesus with you.

Number 3, conclusion for practical application. Number 1 was: are you weary because you're worldly? Number 2 is: get away with Jesus. Number 3 is: get away long enough to restore yourself. Get away long enough to restore yourself. I can literally mark the day

and usually the hour when I relax when I start taking off and usually it's on day five or seven because up until day five or seven, sometimes day ten, if you're responsible for this and that and you're trying to get away from the stuff you're responsible for, that's what rest is about, you'll find yourself, an adrenaline rush will come on you and you'll think, "I've got to...." And you'll think, "No, no, no, I don't have to do that. I'm resting." And you have to keep talking to yourselves and you've got to stay until the refreshing comes. The Apostle Paul told the church at Rome, "I'm worn out," and basically what he's saying is, "I need some down time and I can't wait to get to Rome because I think I can get refreshed there."

Do you rest enough to get refreshed? It's God's will that you do that. Now, some people, you just are geared in a certain way that it's just not that big a deal for you. I mean, half a day off and it's just like, "I don't care if the place burns down. I just left. I'll go back to work if it's there Monday." You know, you can really separate yourself off and there's a gift in that, by the way.

Rest in the right proportion is a stimulant but always remember that too much rest is slothfulness. I don't know many people like this. As a matter of fact, off the top of my head I don't know anyone that has to be just pushed all the time to get with it. But rest until you get restored but don't do too much. That's slothful.

Number 4: take off the harness. And I don't know what that means for you. You've got to find out. When you rest, you've got to learn to take off the harness.

I mention Brother David Young again when he worked at Texas Eastern, he said, "You know, if I'm off or if it's in the middle of the night and they call me about, 'What if the pressure gauges are doing this?'" And he said, "If I have to engage and talk to them, talk back and forth, it may only take 20 minutes but they'll give me half a day's pay." Overtime pay because they say, "We put the harness back on you. You were trying to have down time and we put you right back in the throes of, I mean, if that pumping station blows up, it blows up all of Cherokee." So there is responsibility there. And I thought, "I've never heard of that."

It's funny, I was asking him about this before I prepared the sermon and he said, "Brother, you know, if they paid us half a day overtime every time the church calls us when we have an off day or down time, church would go broke." And there is some truth to that. And we have to learn, ministers have to learn and you've got to learn, what does it take to get the harness off?

I worked a little bit around work horses and I've seen them work in the logging woods but talking to some men who grew up working around them, they'll tell you that when a horse is mature and thoroughly trained, when you get up in the morning and you put that harness on, he knows it. Immediately he's aware, "I've got to listen. I've got to be ready or I'm gonna get the whip." And he's in that mode all day long. Then you bring him in in the evening and he knows when that comes off his shoulders, phew. Do you know what that

horse will do when you pull that harness off in the evening? He'll run and kick and buck and even wallow in the dirt. He's just unwinding.

I asked them, "What would happen to that horse if you brought him in to rest but you never took the harness off so psychologically he's thinking it's work?" He said, "You'd probably kill him if he's well trained and he knows what the harness means." You must know for you how to take the harness off. You've just got to find out how to do it, how to get the harness off.

Now, tomorrow morning at daylight, I'm going to be working in a barn and I'm going to have old clothes on and I'm going to be nasty but that's part of what helps me get the harness off. There ought to be six or eight of you men in here that need that same thing in the morning about daylight and I could use your help. But that work, now you've got to be careful. Too much of that is too much but that's what I do, that's how I get my down time started. What do you need to do?

Do you know what some of you need to do is throw that doggone smart pad/phone in the lake. About the time you just start to take the harness off and start to recover, bing. You read an email from the office and boom, your harness is back on and you haven't relaxed at all. Here's what you've got to understand: friend, that can be sin too. It can rob you of your effectiveness as a husband, as a wife, as a good parent, as a good employee, as a good pastor. Do you take the harness off?

When I have my time away, Christie does such a good job, they make sure that nothing comes through to me on a smartphone that can throw me back into, "Oh, we're doing that this fall. I've got to call So-and-so." The harness is back on. Take the harness off.

Early in my ministry, I'm much better now I think, but early in my ministry when we'd go on vacation, Pam would say, "Jeff, I want you to consider not attending a church on vacation Sunday." She said, "Because if you go in there, for the next three days you're right back in church work. You're wound up. You're thinking about this and that. You're not enjoying the kids." And do you know what? She was right and it took me years to be able to enjoy church without getting back into the church work mode.

Find out what you need to do to take the harness off. Can I just get a little bit personal? Stirring the smoldering coals of romance during those times helps a lot. Are you okay? Work at it. Get with it. That helps. "Pastor, you're 57. You've been married 33 years."

What does it take to get the harness off? Just because you took off work a week, two weeks, a month or whatever, it doesn't mean you got refreshed. Take the harness off.

1, 2, 3, 4, is this 5? Learn to take mini-breaks. Take these long, scatter them out along. You need some more extended breaks, week vacation, whatever it is, but take some mini-breaks. Some people like to walk. I remember through a difficult time of my pastorate walking and listening to sermons refreshed my soul. I mean, I walk hard too. I mean, we're working up a sweat. Maybe that works for you.

I like shooting my bow. I like reading books. I remember J. Vernon McGree. You know, J. Vernon McGee, the commentary guy? The guy on the radio? He likes murder mysteries. He said, "I read murder mysteries and it just kind of gives me a little mini-break during the day," or whatever it is. And Dr. Gray Allison. Do you remember Dr. Gray Allison, president of a seminary, good friend of ours? I never would have thought this but he reads murder mysteries. I don't know what it is about murder mysteries and preachers but he said it just – was that funny? But he reads, I don't know. What do you need for a mini-break? My wife likes sewing. She's really a good seamstress and she can get out and work on something for a grandkid and she said, "Man, it just gets me away for a little while." That's a good thing.

And I don't know, you know, again, these tablets and phones and I'm not saying I'm exempt from temptation here but, ladies, sometimes the social media stuff just keeps you in turmoil. Just keeps you about half stirred up and about half upset, and I'm not so sure you don't need to turn off Fox News and open this book more. If I'm going to watch it, that's the one I'm going to watch but I've caught myself watching too much of it and needing to get restoring back to my soul. And ladies, sometimes that doggone social media stuff, all it is is gossip on steroids. It's not good for your soul.

A, B, C, D, E, F, number 6: expect it to be difficult. Expect it to be difficult. Now, you may be one of those gifted souls, and I mean that, that you can get away, you can have a rest, no guilt, no burden, doesn't trouble you. Bless God, bottle that up and I'll give you \$1,000 for it. That's great stuff but you may have to view this as a sin issue and when you're thinking starts going into in my position there are a million and one definitions of what a faithful pastor is and I have to get out of that and just go with what the book says one is, and that takes some work. It is difficult and you're going to have to do that too. You're going to have to find out in your vocation, in your occupation, your responsibilities, "Do I need to talk to myself and say I'm not feeling that. I'm not carrying that burden. Rest is ordained of God and I need some for now."

The Lord has assigned you the duty to rest when necessary so you must conclude, "I will not submit to my emotions or my thinking. I will not allow false guilt to rob me of this." Now false guilt, what I mean by that is what you're guilty about is not sound. But whenever you're feeling guilty when you shouldn't about rest, you're making an idol about stuff you think you ought to be doing. You're thinking too much about other stuff and that is a sin.

You know, we love Charles Haddon Spurgeon and he's a great model in many ways. I think he was a bad example in some ways and one of those was in work and rest. But as he entered midway through his ministry, he had a lot of illness and he just had to work at getting the kind of care and the respite that he needed and one day he was at a train station and another Baptist pastor was there and before they got on the train, the other Baptist pastor said to Spurgeon very piously, "I'm going to third class and save God's money." Spurgeon said, "I'm going to first class and save God's servant. God's got plenty of money but his servants are few." Well, there's something to that. I think what

Spurgeon was saying behind relating that story, he related that to his ministers when he was teaching was, "I had to work at this. It wasn't always easy to give myself the rest I needed to be effective for God." It's not going to be easy for you sometimes.

Seven. Are we there? I've got mine numbered as letters here and that's why I can't count this up. Get counsel from the older and wiser in your vocation. I cannot tell you how valuable this is. If you're a homemaker, talk to godly older homemakers. "How did you make it through this? How did you rest from this? How did you get over this anxiety?" That is such a valuable thing.

If you're a businessman, you're overseeing a company, talk to older wiser businessmen, and I'm talking about particularly in this area. I can't tell you the help that I have had when I've talked to older wiser pastors and they said, "Don't worry about that, that and that. Here, do this." And it's so helpful. Look for somebody in your area of responsibilities older and who is wiser and get their advice.

I got great help from Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was a preacher in London after Spurgeon but I don't know how many years ago it was but very effective in his ministry and he has a book called "Preachers and Preaching" where he's actually giving preachers guidance on how to handle themselves and he set me free on a number of things I was feeling guilty about. Get counsel from older and wiser people.

Now, there may be an exception to this work and rest thing a little bit and that would be a young man. There are seasons when a young man's got to get it. I understand that but you've got to be careful that that doesn't go too long.

Bishop J. C. Ryle has an excellent little paragraph here and I want you to listen to this and talking about this verse and these admonitions from Jesus about getting apart for a rest. He said, "There are few unhappily in the church of Christ, who need these admonitions." He's talking particularly about, "You're not wearing yourself out in church work. There are few who are doing that." He said, "But there are but few in danger of overworking themselves, and injuring their own bodies and souls by excessive attention to others. The vast majority of professing Christians are indolent and slothful, and do nothing for the world around them. There are few comparatively who need the bridle nearly so much as the whip. Yet these few ought to lay to heart the lessons of this passage. They should economize their health as a talent, and not squander it away like gamblers." Listen to that: economize your health as a talent and not squander it away like gamblers. "They should be content with spending their daily income of strength, and should not draw recklessly on their principal. They should remember that to do a little, and do it well, is often the way to do most in the long run. The prosperity of a man's ministry and public work is intimately bound up with the prosperity of his own soul. Occasional retirement is one of the most useful ordinances."

There must be in our lives in this age a continual cycle of work and then some rest. This down time, this taking off the harness to rest our body, our soul, our minds and our emotions, is essential and it is God ordained but this rest even in itself is a parable of a

greater truth and that is spiritually speaking we are weary and spiritually speaking we are troubled and spiritually speaking we need rest and that is only found in Jesus Christ. So every time you need rest, may the Spirit prompt in your mind and say, "Yes, and you need rest for your sinful souls too." And only Jesus can give that.

In Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus says, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." He's not talking about emotional physical rest there, that's the spiritual rest of knowing forgiveness of sin. Verse 29, "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." What an easy and light burden it is to put the yoke of Jesus on because he gives everything and requires nothing as far as your righteousness before God.

Nine times in the book of Hebrews, you know, the book of Hebrews is Paul exhorting believers who are from a legalistic Jewish background and he keeps trying to yank them out of all those rites and rituals and ordinances and sacrifices, all those works they put their faith in, he's trying to get them out of that and just onto Jesus and nine times in the book of Hebrews he writes, "Enter his rest." So spiritually speaking, as we close, have you? Have you entered his rest for your sin-stained soul? That's the great rest but all of it, work, rest and ultimately spiritual rest, are the ordinances of God.