

PASSIONATE LIVING 2

“Living in Rhythm with Life”

“It is useless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night, anxiously working for food to eat; for God gives rest to His loved ones.” Psalm 127:2

This morning we’ll continue to discover principles that will produce passionate lives. Last week we considered how choosing to learn from all of life is an attitude that we might choose; that God then, might use, to make us more like His Son Jesus. Today we’ll spend some time considering how to live in synch with the Biblical rhythm’s of life, and how choosing to do that will help produce a more passionate life.

There are some very natural rhythms that God has built into His creation, and we can either choose to live within those rhythms, or be very frustrated kicking, fighting, living against those rhythms. The shape to help us remember these lessons today will be a semi circle; upon which a pendulum might naturally swing, from one side to the other, rhythmically, gently, smoothly, naturally, spiritually. Specifically today, we are going to consider the supernatural rhythm between rest and work.

There are some in our world who consider work, a part of the curse; but it is not. In fact, the biblical model as seen in the Genesis creation account is that we are created in the image of God, (the handprint) and the first thing we note about that image is that God was working in the creation event itself. So it might be safely stated that the first thing God passed on to his ultimate creation...US, is the character of work! Nowhere is retirement mentioned in the Bible, and remember some of those characters lived to be 900 years old! We were and are created, at least partially, to work.

That being said this sermon is not going to be about the evils of laziness. The other side of the pendulum is equally as important, if we are serious about living in rhythm with God’s revealed order and priority of things.

Rest is equally important, and we who live in this 'driven to produce', more is better, laptop, pager, email, voicemail, cell phone technologically obese culture in which we WORK, are as guilty of missing this side of the spectrum as the other!

Don't believe me? Let me ask you to honestly answer these next two questions: When was the last time you scheduled a day of rest and relaxation on your calendar before anything else? On the other hand, when was the last time you canceled a day of rest and relaxation in favor of a meeting or work task – or filled a day of rest with so many activities that it was no longer the least bit restful? You see, we must find the rhythm, the Biblical rhythm of life, and if we find it, and practice it, and faithfully observe and hold to it...our lives will be more balanced, enjoyable, fulfilling, fun, peaceful...and even passionate! That's what I want (need); how about you?

There are a couple truths that will help us live in the passionate rhythm of life; #1

1. WE ARE HUMAN **BEINGS**, NOT JUST HUMAN **DOINGS**

"Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray. Later Simon and the others went out to find him. When they found him, they said, 'Everyone is looking for you.'" Mark 1: 35-37

What you don't see in this verse is the larger context. Jesus was healing people, restoring sight to the blind, feet to the lame, hope to the hopeless, and life to the walking dead. We might describe what was happening as a revival, though not that many of us have even experienced one, but we've all heard of them. In the midst of this revival, our human, natural, instinctual reaction would be to maximize the moment, strike while the iron is hot, make hay while the sun shines, yet here is Jesus, leaving the receptive, responsive, repenting crowd; to run into the hills for some personal R&R! He knew that his purpose in life was right there, even now responding to his life and ministry.

Yet he also knew a deeper lesson; one, which the crowds often crowd from our memory; that we are more than just what we do, we are more than the sum of what we can produce, we are more than just physical workers, we are spiritual worshipers! We are human beings, not just human doings.

We must learn the balancing act Jesus obviously knew, he needed time apart to **be** with his Father, before He **did** what His Father had sent Him to **DO**. DO you see that? Being and doing must be rhythmically balanced in our lives. Work is created in us by the handprint of God, but rest is breathed into the membranes of our lungs and the rest of our bodies by God's Spirit. Truth # 2

2. WE ARE TO **ABIDE, GROW**, BE **PRUNED**, THEN BE **FRUITFUL**

"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more...Remain in me, and I will remain in you." John 15: 1-2, 4

I want you to notice something in that first verse...one way or another we are going to get cut...we'll get cut off from the vine if we fail to bear fruit, and we'll get cut back (for greater fruit bearing) if we do bear fruit. The pendulum swings from abiding to fruitfulness. We cannot bear fruit if we do not spend time abiding, and we cannot forever be abiding without being pruned, and we cannot abide and be pruned without being fruitful. Fruit is a natural consequence of living, and a supernatural consequence of abiding in Christ! That's a mouthful.

Among the characteristics Jesus informed his disciples that they must produce in their lives, if they wished to follow after Him; was that they must reproduce themselves, they must share the good news with others, they must make more disciples. It's like mentoring; we are always, or should be always being mentored by someone whom we'd like to emulate; and be mentoring someone else who needs to learn what we already know.

Do you understand that? We are always to be following (disciples) Jesus; and we are to always be making more disciples for Jesus.

We cannot claim to be a Christian, if we are not producing fruit! If the Christian life has become for you just another sermon, just another Bible Study, just another committee meeting, just another youth gathering, just another worship service dutifully attended, but mentally, emotionally, and intellectually ignored, then you have missed the boat. Being a Christian means that you must produce fruit. If you have no fruit to show for your life, you may well have been already cut off, and not even know it. It's time to find out!

Please see the rhythm. Our fruitfulness does not grow out of our natural wisdom or even personal winsomeness; our fruit grows because we spend time with the Gardener. Our fruit does not grow out of our intellect or influence, or professional stature, but out of our abiding with Jesus, and being pruned by God's well-weathered and yet loving hands. And now the 3rd truth to learning the rhythm's of life:

3. WE ARE TO **WORK** FROM OUR **REST**, NOT **REST** FROM OUR **WORK**

"So God created human beings in His own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them...On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so He rested from all his work...The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to work and watch over it." Genesis 1:27, 2:2, 2:15

Here is what I want you to see. In our culture (if we rest at all), we rest from our work. We labor 5 or 6 (or 7) days a week, most of us, 8-10 hours a day, then take laptops home, or return calls when we get home, or get up in the middle of the night because we can't sleep, and do some work. In our culture, if we rest at all, we rest from our work.

But the Biblical picture painted brightly in Genesis; is that we are to work from our rest. Notice. God created for 5 straight days, then on the 6th day he created Adam and Eve. Then the 7th day they rested together. Before they are sent to the garden to tend the plants and avoid the forbidden tree, God tells them (and us) to rest. First they rest, then they work. Work from your rest, not rest from your work.

Why do you think this distinction so important? It's because even though work is created to be part of our character, and natural human responsibility, rest is what connects us more intimately and most personally to God! You see, rest is not just a cessation of work, but intentional connection with God. And your rest might look different than mine. Rest is often dictated by personality. Extroverts like people, and find refreshment and rest being with friends, enjoying fellowship etc. Introverts like solitude, and find refreshment being alone, or with a favored loved one. You see the difference. What's rest for one might be work for another.

To work from our rest means that we are centered primarily, in our relationship with God, and whatever we do flows out of that relationship with God. First, we relate to God, then we work for God. We work as a result of our rest. We work because we have found rest in God. We work because we love God.

We are to work from our rest, not rest from our work. We Americans pride ourselves on a strong work ethic, even using it as a sign of godliness. The true sign of godliness – imitating God – is to pattern our life after him. And for God, rest is vital. As a matter of fact, rest from our activities is listed in God's Top Ten. The Lord makes this perfectly clear. God says, 'Don't kill.' We say, 'Okay, that's fair enough.' He says, 'Don't steal.' We say, 'All right, fine.' He says, 'don't commit adultery with your neighbors wife.' We say, 'that makes sense.'

He says, 'Have a day off.' We say, 'What? You mean it's in there with all that big stuff?' In other words, being a workaholic is, to God, just as bad as being a murderer or adulterer. We sometimes laugh as we describe ourselves as workaholics...I don't think God laughs! Rest is not optional if we are to walk in the lifestyle of a disciple.

Living in Rhythm with life is a process that helps us identify, and practice the patterns of work, rest, fruitfulness and abiding, doing and being. Recognizing these patterns, and choosing to find that balanced approach will prevent us from becoming overstretched, and allow us to live more passionate lives. Get it? Got it! GOOD!

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