

Creating a Culture of Rest in Your Ministry

CCEF 2024 | Jonathan D. Holmes

Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind.

Ecclesiastes 4:6

Take care of your body as if you were going to live forever;
and take care of your soul as if you were going to die tomorrow.

Augustine¹

How you spend your days in Christ is how you spend your life in Christ.

Tish Harrison Warren²

Introduction:

The Problem with Rest

Statistics:

ICD-11: Burn-out is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions:

- feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion;
- increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and
- reduced professional efficacy.³

¹ Eliza Huie and Esther Smith, *The Whole Life: 52 weeks of Biblical Self-Care* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2021), 6.

² Kelly M. Kapic, *You're Only Human: How Your Limits Reflect God's Design and Why That's Good News* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2022), 8.

³ <https://www.who.int/standards/classifications/frequently-asked-questions/burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon>.

Dr. Christina Maslach of the University of California, *Burnout: The Cost of Caring*:⁴

- *Emotional exhaustion*: a person gets overly involved emotionally, overextends himself or herself, and feels overwhelmed by the demands imposed by other people
- *Depersonalization*: detached, callous and even dehumanized response
- Maslach Burnout Inventory can be purchased [here](#).

Maslach offers some questions to help to begin to assess whether this is something you might be currently facing:

1. *Are you regularly physically and emotionally exhausted?*
2. *Are you more cynical and detached than usual?*
3. *Do you feel like you're not contributing anything meaningful like you once were?*

What's the difference between burnout and stress?

Burnout is an extended period of stress that feels as though it cannot be ameliorated. If stress is short-lived or tied to a specific goal, it is most likely not harmful. If the stress feels never-ending and comes with feelings of emptiness, apathy, and hopelessness, it may be indicative of burnout.⁵

Unaddressed stress + time = burnout

What's the difference between burnout and depression?

Aisha R. Shabazz: Depression is often defined by the internal experience of a person, sometimes occurring without a root cause. For most people, the catalyst for their depression is unclear. Burnout has a definitive root cause and arises because your external environment has a prolonged negative impact on your physical health and mental health. [It's] the result of being exposed to an unrelenting [and unwelcomed] amount of stress.⁶

⁴ Bethany Dearborn Hiser, *From Burned Out to Beloved: Soul Care for Wounded Healers* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Press, 2020), 13.

⁵ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/burnout>. Accessed 29 May 2024.

⁶ <https://psychcentral.com/depression/burnout-vs-depression#potential-causes>. Accessed 13 August 2024.

The Answer to Rest

Tim Keller: The work under our work is our need to prove ourselves to ourselves and to others – this is extremely tiring.⁷

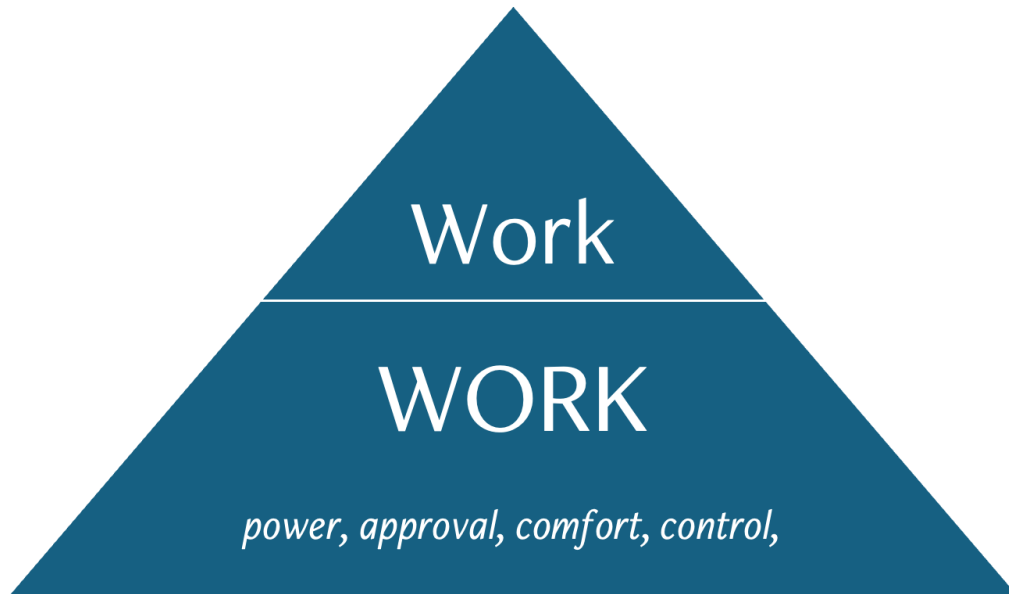


Diagram 1

⁷ Tim Keller, “The Power of Deep Rest,” November 25, 2013, *The Gospel Coalition*, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-power-of-deep-rest/>. Accessed 23 May 2024.



Diagram 2

Tim Keller: This work is finished in Jesus, the only one we would ever really need to prove ourselves to—and he looks at us and says it is good, it is finished. Through Jesus we don’t have to strive to prove ourselves, therefore we can find true rest.

Tim Keller: All of us are haunted by the work under the work—that need to prove and save ourselves, to gain a sense of worth and identity. But if we can experience gospel-rest in our hearts, if we can be free from the need to earn our salvation through our work, we will have a deep reservoir of refreshment that continually rejuvenates us, restores our perspective, and renews our passion.⁸

⁸ Tim Keller, “The Power of Deep Rest,” November 25, 2013, *The Gospel Coalition*, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-power-of-deep-rest/>. Accessed 23 May 2024.

Kelly Kapic: Until we believe the good news that the Creator is also the Redeemer, that we are not abandoned, alone, or left to our sins; until we believe that God is near, compassionate, quick to forgive, and abounding in love—until we believe these things, we cannot and will not rest.⁹

1. *We accept our limitations.*

2. *We embrace our weaknesses.*

- *Kelly Kapic*: To be vulnerable, to have weaknesses and needs, is not just a trendy idea; it is part of how God made us.¹⁰
- *David Powlison*: My deepest hope for you is that in both your personal life and your ministry to others, you would be unafraid to be publicly weak as the doorway to the strength of God himself.¹¹

3. *We live out our dependence*

How to Rest Yourself

Be honest with yourself

Take sabbath rest

- *Walter Brueggemann*: Sabbath is not simply the pause that refreshes. It is the pause that transforms.¹²

⁹ Kelly M. Kapic, *You're Only Human: How Your Limits Reflect God's Design and Why That's Good News* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2022), 213–214.

¹⁰ Kelly M. Kapic, *You're Only Human: How Your Limits Reflect God's Design and Why That's Good News* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2022), 200.

¹¹ Justin Taylor, “David Powlison’s Commencement Address: Be Unafraid to Be Publicly Weak,” June 4, 2019, *The Gospel Coalition*, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/david-powlisons-commencement-address-unafraid-publicly-weak/>. Accessed 19 August 2024.

¹² Lore Ferguson Wilbert, “To Rest Is to Leave Unfinished”, August 1, 2017, *Sayable.net*, <https://www.sayable.net/blog/2017/8/1/to-rest-is-to-leave-unfinished>. Accessed 13 March 2024.

- *Eugene Peterson*: Sabbath is that uncluttered time and space in which we can distance ourselves from our own activities enough to see what God is doing.¹³
- *What kind of Sabbath rest am I looking for?*
 - You need some contemplative rest
 - You need some recreational rest
 - You need to include aesthetic rest¹⁴
 - *Ranjit David*: If you are energised by being with people, make time for it on your Sabbath. If you are energised by spending time alone in reflection, quietness and solitude, make time for it on your Sabbath. Everyone's Sabbath does not need to look the same.¹⁵

Engage in prayer

- *Tim Keller*: The more popular Jesus became and the more people he ministered [to], the more time he had to get away to spend in solitary prayer. The exterior ministry of strength was contingent upon an internal dependence on his father. The stronger he was out there, in a sense, the more dependent he was on his father.¹⁶

Surround yourself with godly friends

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Tim Keller, "Work and Sabbath Rest," July 13, 2021, *Redeemer City to City*, <https://redeemercitytocity.com/articles-stories/wisdom-and-sabbath-rest>. Accessed 23 May 2024.

¹⁵ Ranjit David, "How Do You Really Rest on the Sabbath?" March 31, 2022, *The Gospel Coalition*, <https://in.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/better-than-life/how-do-you-really-rest-on-the-sabbath/>. Accessed 28 April 2024.

¹⁶ Tim Keller, "Four Principles to Avoid Burnout", May 13, 2020, *Redeemer City to City*, <https://redeemercitytocity.com/articles-stories/tim-keller-resilience-and-burnout>. Accessed 13 March 2024.

How to Create a Culture of Rest

We embrace limitation, weakness, and dependence:

We encourage collaboration, camaraderie, and community

We embody confession, repentance, and humility

- *David Benner*: Careful attention to one's inner life is an indispensable prerequisite of caring for the souls of others.¹⁷

¹⁷ Bethany Dearborn Hiser, *From Burned Out to Beloved: Soul Care for Wounded Healers* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Press, 2020), 67.

Conclusion:

Courtney Reissig: Learning to praise the person who rests as much as the one who works will take some practice on our part, especially those of us who like productivity. But it's necessary for our spiritual and physical health. We want to be faithful in our work, but let us also be faithful in our rest, living as his image-bearers, depending on him to work on our behalf, and resting in him who always finishes the work he starts.¹⁸

Click [here](#) for an interview with Lighthouse Community Church Counseling Pastor Timothy St. John on how he creates a culture of rest in a local church-based counseling ministry.



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BOOKS & RESOURCES

[Grounded in Grace: Helping Kids Build Their Identity in Christ](#)

[The Company We Keep: In Search of Biblical Friendship](#)

[Counsel for Couples: A Biblical and Practical Guide for Marriage Counseling](#)

[Rescue Plan: Charting a Course for Prisoners of Pornography](#)

[Rescue Skills: Essentials Skills for Restoring the Sexually Broken](#)

New marriage counseling video-training resource from ABC: [Caring for Marriages](#)

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¹⁸ Courtney Reissig, "Let's Celebrate Those Who Rest," December 8, 2016, *The Gospel Coalition*, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/lets-celebrate-those-who-rest/>. Accessed 28 April 2024.