

## Sabbath

BProp4 – 2024

Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Psalm 81:1-10; 2 Corinthians 4:5-12; Mark 2:23-3:6

June 2, 2024

A cousin and I are going to walk part of the Camino de Santiago in Portugal this coming October.

So, I've gotten in touch with a personal trainer who is going to set up a plan with me to get ready to walk many miles a day. She reminds me of one of my no-nonsense middle-school phys-ed teachers so I think she's gonna be very effective. She talked to me about the prevalence of "toxic productivity" in our society today as part of why self-care is so elusive.

What is toxic productivity?

Productivity becomes toxic when you feel pressure to be productive at all times and prioritize your perpetual to-do list at the expense of your own well-being. This mindset can take its toll on your physical and mental health, and in some cases, lead to anxiety, depression, burnout, insomnia, or self-esteem issues.

Here are four signs you've fallen into the toxic productivity trap.

### 1. You are on the go all the time

You feel like there's never enough time and there is always a sense of urgency to get to the next thing. You can only slow down or relax once everything's done. And everything is never ever done. This reminds me of the I Love Lucy scene in which Lucy and Ethel are put to work on the assembly line in a chocolate factory. They are supposed to wrap each piece of candy that comes along on the conveyor belt. They can't keep up the pace so they start trying to stuff the chocolate bonbons into their mouths, in their caps, in their uniforms. As things get out of hand, Lucy says, "I think we're fighting a losing game." The constant stream of to-do's never lets up.

### 2. You feel guilty or ashamed about not getting enough done or not getting more done than others and so, to feel better about yourself, you either compete with yourself, trying to improve your productivity, or you compete with others.

Brad lives in a suburban neighborhood and takes pride in his yard.

He does it all himself, but chides himself  
because he thinks he could get it all done more efficiently.  
How do the Jones's keep the lawn so healthy and all the beds free of weeds?  
And, he's beginning to notice  
that they have more native plants in their yard than he does.  
Maybe he should get rid of the grass  
and plant a natural habitat that would attract butterflies.  
In the meantime, he's bought a mower with a wider blade  
to see if he can shave some minutes off his mowing time.  
And he peers over quizzically as neighbor Harriet waves at him from her unkempt yard  
as she sits in a lawn chair and reads a magazine.

### 3. You find it difficult to relax or to have down time

Maisie has the house all to herself for the weekend.  
She thinks about how relaxing it will be.  
On her first solo morning, she gets her coffee,  
her Ipad with favorite news sources,  
and a book she's been wanting to crack open.  
The minute she sits down, she thinks about starting a load of laundry  
so it will be running while she relaxes.  
She does that and then heads back to the sofa.  
Her coffee is cold, so she bounces back up to go nuke it  
– and then notices the thirsty plant in the kitchen window.  
ALL the plants need to be watered.  
When was the last time she used Miracle Grow?  
She should keep a calendar.  
The microwave dings when the coffee is reheated  
but she doesn't hear it because she's gone out to get the Miracle Grow.  
After the plants are all watered AND fertilized,  
she hits the microwave again to heat the coffee cup a second time  
... and she wonders if she should check her emails...  
For many of us, our brains get trained  
to release the “feel-good” chemicals like dopamine  
when we're in the rush of busyness  
– rather than when we settle into a leisurely morning.  
We may even feel agitated or on edge when we face into unscheduled time.

### 4. You neglect self-care. It seems like a waste of time.

Randy is retired. Time to live the good life!  
He is asked to chair the HOA in his neighborhood. Why not?  
He's got the time now.  
And, he has wanted to check out volunteering at a new community garden

located in an urban food desert.

Someone from his church called and has just the ministry for him now that he has plenty of discretionary time.

By the way, they ask, what are his gifts and talents?

And, it's finally time to get his tennis game back in shape.

Six months later, Randy is cramming down a quickburger in the car as he rushes from one appointment to the next.

He needs to eat better and his wife mentioned them getting in some brisk walks each week – but who has the time?

Who has the time? Where is the time?

Sabbath time - is when we trust that it is God who holds the time and it is God to whom we go to, to find it.

Sabbath – the fourth commandment in the set of ten.

A day set apart from other days/other time that belongs especially to God.

Sabbath is at the center of the Decalogue/10 commandments

It falls between the first 3 laws that relate to God:

Have no other gods before me

Make no idols

Make no wrongful use of God's name –

(Back then, if you used God's name in an oath, it was legally binding.)

and the 6 that pertain to human relationships

honor your parents

do not murder

do not commit adultery

do not steal

do not bear false witness your neighbor

do not desire what your neighbor has

The sabbath embodies two defining concepts:

One – The invitation to rest is built into creative work.

Exodus 20:8-11 – The Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested on the seventh day. The Lord blessed that day.

Two – Deuteronomy 5:12-15 – Sabbath time was to remind the Israelites that they were no longer slaves in Egypt. They could depend on God to provide.

Walter Brueggeman writes a lot about this.

The conduct of God and God's people is in sharp contrast to the world of Pharaoh in which there is no rest but only feverish productivity.

God's community is peaceably engaged in neighbor-respecting life; not madly engaged in production and consumption.

So, being a Sabbath people is an alternative way of being in the world contrasted to the exploitative ways of the world that begin in self-serving idolatry and end in destructive covetousness.

Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy.

You were a slave in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

One Sabbath day, Saturday, the Pharisees see Jesus and his disciples pluck grain from the fields and are mortified that this "work" is being done on the day of rest.

Like the Southern Baptist home in which my mother was raised, In middle Georgia, it was Sunday that was set apart as sabbath; a day to worship God and to rest.

As much as possible, the Sunday dinner was prepped on Saturday, ready to go in the oven after church on Sunday; and the funnies from the Sunday paper were pulled out and put away, to be read on Monday.

Go figure! Pharisee-ism continues into every age!

Jesus seeks to free the Sabbath from such rigid nonsensical enforcement as he enters the synagogue and heals a man's withered hand on the sabbath.

His question: Is it lawful to do good or do harm on the sabbath?

Paul reminds the Corinthian church about the glory of God that Moses met on the mountain when he received the commandments.

Moses had to veil his face from its brilliance.

Paul explains how God's glory and power come to followers of Christ.

Paul uses this image:

God gives us an inner light and God gives us a mirror in order to be able to realize God's glory in the person of Jesus Christ. And as we look into the mirror we can see the face of Jesus

And it is through that face that God's glory,  
God's primordial power, reflects upon us.  
And as the face of Jesus in that mirror reflects on to us  
We are being transformed into the same image.  
But Paul makes it clear that what we see is not our own original power  
reflected back to us in that mirror.  
But it comes through Jesus to us from the Spirit of God.  
(There's that Trinitarian thing again!)

But this treasure, we house in clay jars, that are breakable.  
We need to be reminded that this enduring extraordinary transformative power  
belongs to God and does not come from us.  
Rather it comes to us as an extraordinary gift from God.

And that brings us back to Sabbath.  
We need sabbath time in our lives to recalibrate us.  
A central part of creative work is rest in the midst of it.  
We are to be not slaves - upon which Pharoah's empire makes its demands.  
We are to be people / persons of God –  
whose power and glory are a reflection of God  
from whom all life and blessings flow and in whom we can find rest.

Is sabbath one in seven days?  
Is it one hour in 24?  
Is it a few moments in an hour?  
I think Jesus would say,  
“Using your freedom and good sense and neighborly care,  
go for it. Find your sabbath to rest and recreate and claim it  
so that your work is a product of, and not a hindrance to,  
your well-being and the well-being of those around you.