

The Father's Ten Good Words: Treasure My Face (Part 2)

Genesis 1:1-31, Exodus 20: 8-11,
Mark 2: 23-28

1. God's To-Do List

- a. Work creatively
- b. Take satisfaction
- c. Foster possibility

2. Our To-Do List

- a. Work hard
- b. Rest well
- c. Foster work and rest

3. Jesus' To-Do List

- a. Make all things new
- b. Keep the Sabbath
- c. Invite us to collaborate

Peter Leithart, in his book on the 10 Commandments, makes a really cool observation. He says: notice how commandment number 4 and commandment number 5 are the two *positively-stated* words of the 10 words. The other 8 are “Thou shalt not.” These are “thou shalt.”

And it turns out that the fourth and fifth good words of the 10 commandments are also where the commandments (1-4) that are about our relationship to God *meet* commandments 5-10, which are about our relationship to our neighbor. Jesus summarizes the law as “love God, love your neighbor.”

Leithart asks: what's left when you've eliminated the negative things of commandments 1, 2, and 3, and commandments 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10? What's left is this positive vision of the good life. A life in which (4th commandment) we work hard, rest well, and foster the work and rest of others, all under God's blessing, and (5th commandment) the relationships between the generations, and between experts and authorities and the people who submit to their wisdom is harmonious and fruitful.

This is what the world was made for! Good, hard, meaningful work. Good rest. And the energy and joy that comes from collaborating with diverse people with diverse gifts in mutual submission!

When God envisions this kind of a world, he gets to work, and he gets to rest. Before we look at what the fourth commandment wants us to put on our to-do list, let's look at God's own creative work and rest, and see what he's got on his to-do list. Then we'll draw up our to-do list from the fourth commandment. Finally, we'll look at Jesus and his to-do list, and see how he checks off every item.

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And, by the way, if you want to see the not-to-do lists, go listen to (or watch) part 1 from the morning service.

1. God's To-Do List

a. Work creatively

What's on the Lord's to-do list?

In the ancient world, it was only wealthy people who had slaves and servants—people to do the hard work of keeping everyone alive—who could afford leisure time.

By the time of the Roman empire, not much had changed. Guess who the philosophers were? They were ruling-class people who had the luxury of *reflecting* on their lives. What gave them that luxury? They had slaves and servants to do hard work. They had money, so they could *afford* leisure time.

Not that much has changed. Leisure time has simply expanded to include more of the human population.

Now: guess what the gods of the ancient world were like? They were like wealthy, leisurely consumers. In the myths, the gods actually made human beings so that they'd have someone to serve them while they sat around.

But the God we meet in Scripture is different. The true God and Father of our Lord Jesus, Peter Leithart says, is a *craftsman* and a manual laborer. The true Father God puts in an honest day's work. Sweat and thought *together* result in creative beauty. God works creatively. Our Father is a craftsman.

First on God's to-do list, it's clear from Genesis 1, is to work creatively.

b. Take satisfaction

Notice the next thing on God's to-do list. After each creative work of craftsmanship, what does God do? The LORD takes a real *Feierabend* and looks back on his work with joy and satisfaction. Genesis 1 is a poem, and the poem is actually *structured* by God's satisfaction. Each stanza comes to a close when God sees that what he's done is good.

The Lord doesn't work from paycheck-to-paycheck, from contract-to-contract, from raise-to-raise, or from vacation-to-vacation. He works from satisfaction to satisfaction. You can almost hear the three persons of the Trinity wrapping up a day's work, giving one another a high five, and toasting to their accomplishment. Even when the work is still underway, each evening: satisfaction. Celebration

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And then, notice: when they make humans, female and male in their own image, it's like there's champagne. Why? Because it was *very good*.

In the ancient myths, the creation of the world is usually an act of evil, and the creation—physical stuff—is therefore *bad*. Human bodies: bad.

Not so. Our God delights in all he makes, and *especially* humans in all their spiritually *and* physicality. And on his to-do list, in addition to creating, is *taking satisfaction* in his work.

c. Foster possibility

And that leads us to the third thing on God's to-do list as he creates. Part of the *very* goodness of the work of creating humans is that these are creatures who don't just multiply, but who become craftsmen and craftswomen themselves. God apprentices people in his creativity!

Instead of doing everything himself, God delights in the still-to-be-done, in the ongoing work of creativity and possibility that he builds into creation itself.

The Father loves to have children who enter into the family business. Who can make it grow and flourish in creative ways. No god in the ancient or modern world works side-by-side with humans, collaborating to unlock the possibilities latent in creation. Our Father and God does. He works creatively. He takes satisfaction in that work. And part of that work itself is to foster possibility for creation, and especially for humans made in his image.

2. Our to-do list

The fourth commandment puts three simple things on our to-do list:

Work hard, rest well, and foster work and rest.

a. Work hard

“Six days you shall labor and do all your work.”

If you've got a boss you admire, who has mentored you, who respects you and challenges you, and who makes you feel alive and human when you're working with and for them, what do you do?

You work hard for them! More money will not make an employee work hard and work from the heart. But if you're being challenged *and* it's safe to take risks and grow alongside your boss? You're going to work hard!

God works. We work. Under his smile. Under the banner of his salvation from slavery to sin. We work in and from and for freedom— all given to us by God, ultimately in Jesus.

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Under these working conditions—if I'm truly aware of them!—Jesus is going to get my best energy and creativity! And Jesus is ultimately the lord of your work, even if you have an awful boss.

To do: work hard for your good boss who sets you free: the Lord Jesus.

b. Rest well

Next on the to-do list: rest well.

"... on the seventh you shall do no work."

The Psalmist says "in vain you rise up early and stay up late, toiling. ... for He gives rest to his loved ones" (127). So we rest each evening. And we rest one day in seven.

Zack Eswine says: "Work, rest. Work, rest. Work, rest. Work, rest. Work, rest. Work, rest. Rest. Rest. ... Work, rest. See? Do you hear the rhythm of Genesis 1? That's what you and I were created for. To surrender to that God-given rhythm is what we need to succeed as God defines success."

In graduate school and seminary, I was overwhelmed by very difficult reading assignments and research papers.

Sunday was my favorite day of the week. I got up, went to church and worshipped. Came home, read *anything I wanted to read*. Fell asleep on the couch. Woke up. Went to evening service. Ate dinner with church folks. Those 4 years, I did some of the hardest work of my life. And I enjoyed some of the best *rest* and *worship* and *fellowship* of my life. Best yet: I felt the smile of God on both my work *and* my rest.

c. Foster work and rest

And last thing on our to-do list: notice what it says at the end of verse 10. It's not just you who gets rest: it's your sons and daughters. Your servants. Your animals! Foreign laborers. The land.

Remember: Israel was the adopted son of God. The family business of God was to show the nations, and the whole creation, what the Father is like. How *good* the good Father is. The donkeys and oxen and foreigners and fields are going to experience God's goodness because God's people work hard, rest well, and *foster rest* for all creatures.

And we foster work, too. God's people don't harvest all the way to the edges of their fields, or pick up the grapes that fell off the vines. Why? Because by leaving those things, they foster work for those who have less power. God has done the same for us! And provides us work and sustenance in his field and vineyard. So we do the same for others.

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How are you fostering both work and rest for the people in your sphere of influence?

As Andy Crouch says: "If we are not helping to create and sustain systems that allow for sabbath, our own rest will be nothing more than an expression of privilege and power." Sabbath keeping is not meant to be selfish, so don't let it be.

Work hard. Rest well. Foster work and rest. Just like God in creation. Like the free people we are. That's the fourth commandment.

3. Jesus' to-do list

So, what's on Jesus' to-do list?

a. Make all things new

First, he's come to make all things new. How's that for an item on a to-do list?! "Make all things new."

I think one of the things that keeps me from being discouraged about my own slow, slow progress in Christian maturity is this: Jesus is making *all things new*. If he's determined to make *all things new*, he's more than capable of renewing my heart. And your heart. And your life. He's more than capable of making me into someone who works hard, rests well, and fosters work and rest. Thanks be to God!

b. Keep the Sabbath

Second, Jesus' to-do list has "keep the Sabbath" on it. He says that the Sabbath is a gift, and not a burden. We weren't made in order that the Sabbath might be kept, he says. The Sabbath was made in order for us to enter into its gift of rest and rejuvenation and worship.

"I haven't come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it." So he doesn't just pull tired, stuck work animals out of the ditch on the Sabbath. He heals people. He doesn't just rest, but restores life.

And one of the ways he does it, weird as it sounds, is by lying in the tomb that long Sabbath Saturday. We rest, trusting that God is alive and at work even while we take our Sabbath rest. Jesus trusts that his Father is alive and at work — so he trusts his Father, and enters into death and lies in the tomb, leaving his very life in his Father's hands.

And on the first day of the week, he gets up, comes out of the tomb, and with all his Father's energy, gets to work making all things new.

c. Invite us to collaborate

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And the final thing on Jesus' to-do list, as he comes from his Father's heart in heaven to ours, is this: he invites us to collaborate.

As good Protestants, we rightly emphasize the things that God does all alone, in Jesus Christ, completely without us. God made all things without us. God says to Job: "Where were you when I made the world?"

Jesus alone lives a perfect life, offers himself as the one perfect and final sacrifice, and rises triumphantly in God's power. Jesus says, on the cross, as he takes his last breath: It is finished. A perfect life lived. A perfect sacrifice offered. All by himself.

Just about the worst thing we can do for our souls, and for the world, is to act like God *needs* us.

The only worse thing we can do for our souls, and for the world, is to act like we have not been invited to collaborate with the one who made all things, and who is making all things new.

Paul rejoices to proclaim: we are co-workers with God, in his service. God loves to work in a team. And not just the team of Father, Son, and Spirit. But with women and men, girls and boys, made in God's image to bring all things under the loving rule of God.

Conclusion

Friends, your Father loves what he's made. Especially his workmanship in *you*. And he wants to see you work hard, rest well, and foster work and rest like he does. In a team. With his Son. And his Spirit.

Find me a god in the ancient or modern world more wonderful than our God! There is none! Enter into his finished work. Enter into his ongoing work. Enter into his rest. And spread the goodness of his work and rest everywhere you go, in his name!