

The Father's Ten Good Words: Treasure My Face

Exodus 20: 1-21,

Mark 2: 23-28

1. God's Not-to-Do List

- a. Pull all-nighters
- b. Worry about what's left to do
- c. Do everything

2. Our Not-to-Do List

- a. Treasure leisure or retirement
- b. Serve the slavedriver of success
- c. Control everything

3. Jesus' Not-to-Do List

- a. Submit to legalism
- b. Succumb to license
- c. Stifle creativity

Introduction

Apparently the legendary Australian golfer Greg Norman just designed and opened his second golf course.

Back when he was beginning his first one, he showed a reporter the place where the course was going to be. The reporter asked him: "How do you take this place from a big forest to a beautiful, challenging golf course?" Greg Norman replied: "We're just going to remove everything that's *not* 'golf course'."

When Michaelangelo started carving *David*, all he had to do was to remove everything that was *not* David. Bono says that when U2 is writing a new rock-and-roll song, all they're trying to do is remove everything that's *not* the song.

Addition by subtraction. Discovery and creativity by subtraction.

When our Good Father says "You must NOT ...," he is calling upon us to remove everything from ourselves, and from our community life together, that is *not* shaped like his own heart, that is *not* shaped like Jesus.

Each of these *You must NOTs* is just as *creative* as any one of God's *Let there bes* when God made the universe.

Minor celebrity-entrepreneur Tim Ferriss says that our *not-to-do* lists are just as important as our to-do lists. Some say we should say "no" to almost everything, in order to say "yes" to a few true, good, and beautiful things. Saying no is good!

So, let's have our Bibles in one hand, and make a not-to-do list in the other. Let's do some addition by subtraction. Some creativity by clearing away.

Then in Part 2, for the evening service, we'll draw up our to-do list.

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In order to make our not-to-do list, we're going to first look at *God's* not-to-do list, mostly looking at the first page of our Bible. Then we'll sketch *our* not-to-do list as we hear the Fourth Good Word. Finally, we'll look at *Jesus'* not-to-do list.

1. God's Not-to-Do List

What does it mean for God to make us new creations? Well, what does his first *creative* work look like? When God makes all things, what are the things God puts on his not-to-do list?

a. *Pull all-nighters*

Andy Crouch says that we know that "the Maker of the world neither slumbers nor sleeps," but "the Creator of Genesis 1 does not pull all-nighters."

It's been two decades. But I can still remember the feeling. It's 8:30am. I drive to my university to turn in my final paper for my Geology class. I stayed up all night. I felt horrible physically. I was not proud of my work. I knew "this is not how it's supposed to work."

The first page of our Bible is a poem to God's creative *activity*. But God stops each evening after a day of work. No sleepless nights. No third shift. No caffeine pills or quadruple espressos at midnight.

God *can* work all night. God doesn't. Part of what makes God's creation, and the first page of the Bible, *poetic*, is that he stops. It's not poetry if it's just a constant, run on, breathless sentence that goes all night and all day. Poems have structure and form and rhythm and line breaks and stanzas.

How wonderful to see God stop every evening. How wonderful to read the first page of the Bible and to see the six days of creation broken into six beautiful stanzas, each of which finishes with a pause, and some white space.

Does your week sound like a poem? Does your life have white space? Or is your week one breathless sprint from Monday to Friday? Are you pulling all-nighters, literally? Are you pulling all-nighters, spiritually-speaking? "All-nighters" are on God's not-to-do list in creation itself.

b. *Worry about what's left to do*

God is not going to pull all-nighters, and, secondly, God's not going to worry about what's left to do.

When evening comes on the first day, all he's done is create light, and then separated darkness from it. The entire creation is still formless. Nothing can live yet. So much left to do!

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But there is not even a hint of anxiety about everything that's left to do. God stops. "Cool! Daytime and evening. That's enough for today."

Then, at the end of the whole week, there was *still* so much left to do. But without anxiety, God stops working. For a whole day.

"For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them. But he rested on the seventh day" (Ex 20:11).

If you or I were running a start-up, we'd tell our family and friends and our employees: "Look, we have to work crazy long days, nights, and weekends to get this start-up off the ground. We can relax later. When it's successful."

God is launching a start-up called the Universe. And after just six days of work, God says: "time for a full day of rest."

God doesn't *need* to rest. But God *definitely* doesn't need to worry about what's still left to do.

In God's work of New Creation, beginning with you and me, we can expect that God is not going to be anxious, desperate to finish the work *now*. And that's great to know.

c. *Do everything*

Maybe the most stunning thing on God's not-to-do list is this third item: God scribbles down on the not-to-do list: "do everything."

Now, it's true: Exodus 20 says God made all creatures in six days. Genesis 2 says that after the sixth day God had *finished* all the work he had been doing.

Still, instead of making all the birds that there ever would be, God makes a few birds. He says to the birds: be fruitful and increase in number, and fill the skies. God says this to *every* living thing.

God *can* do everything, but "do everything" is on God's not-to-do list.

We wouldn't have a Bible ... we wouldn't even *exist*, if God wanted to do everything alone.

If the One who *can* do everything has "do everything" on his not-to-do list, why do we so often have "do everything" on our to-do lists? How will we ever keep Sabbath with "do everything" at the top of our to-do lists, stealing peace and sleep from us every evening, every Sunday, every *Monday*?

2. Our Not-to-Do List

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That brings us to *our* not-to-list. As God's partners in the creative task, our not-to-do list is modeled after God's not-to-do list. And it's spelled out for us in the Father's Fourth Good Word.

a. Treasure leisure or retirement

What's first not to do? If we are going to treasure our Father's *rest*, we must *not* treasure leisure or retirement.

The Fourth Good Word says "six days you shall labor and do all your work." What it *doesn't* say is that work is bad, something to be avoided, something to be rushed through on your way to the weekend, on your way to your seventies.

The Ten Commandments are God's heart. They're built into creation. God worked before we were ever around. *We* worked before we fell into sin—before work became so *hard*. Work is not bad. Heaven is not a long weekend or an early retirement where we loaf around for eternity.

And Sabbath is not leisure. It is rest, rejuvenation, fellowship, and worship. It's a feast to celebrate God's work. To celebrate the gift of collaboration with God in God's work.

The best elders in the best churches I've belonged to have been elders who worked hard and rested well, whether they were in the middle of their careers or in their so-called retirement. They had "treasure *leisure*" on their not-to-do lists.

b. Serve the slavedriver of success

Maybe leisure is not your false god. Maybe it's success instead. But serving the slavedriver of success is *also* on our not-to-do list.

"The sixth day is a Sabbath— a *shabbat*, a ceasing— to the LORD your God."

Why can't we fall asleep at night? Because our minds can't stop working out what we're going to try to do tomorrow to please the success gods. Why can't we even imagine taking a full 24-hour Sabbath each week? Because we can see the success gods frowning at us. "You can't serve me *and* Sabbath! I won't give you what I've promised unless you promise me your nights and weekends."

Friends, like every idol, the slavedriver of success, which promises so much in return for our loyalty, ends up demanding everything from us and delivering nothing.

Andy Crouch makes a stunning observation: every false god will eventually demand the ultimate sacrifice. *Child* sacrifice. That was true of the idols of the ancient world. And that's still true today. So often we think we're providing our children with a better life by serving

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the slavemaster of success. I'll be a slave so my kids can be free! It's a lie. The slavemaster wants your kids, too.

No one ever says, on their deathbed: "I wish I had spent more nights and weekends at the office, and less time with my children."

c. Control everything

And the third thing on our not-to-do list is *control everything*.

We weren't meant to harvest every last grape, to pluck and gather every last bit of grain. To maximize and optimize every bit of our potential productivity.

There's a famous electronics store in Manhattan, B&H photo, run by orthodox Jews. Their physical store closes on Friday before sunset, and opens again on Sunday mid-morning. They just let their automated website handle all the orders during the Jewish Sabbath.

Actually, no. They shut their online store down for Sabbath, too! Chick-Fil-A keeps its restaurants closed on Sundays. These folks don't have to control everything. How do you know they don't have to be in control of everything? Because they can take their hands and their minds and hearts off the cash register for more than 24 hours every week!

And, after all, God, who *does* control everything, doesn't insist on doing everything! But *we*, who *don't* control *anything* — why do we try to control everything!?

When God says "on the Seventh Day you shall not work," he's insisting that control is impossible, idolatrous, and idiotic. We stop working to remind us we're not in control.

3. Jesus' Not-to-Do List

Everything on God's not-to-do list, and everything on our not-to-do list, ends up on Jesus' list, too. And get this: he's checked off every item. Let's take a look at Jesus' not-to-do list.

a. Submit to legalism

Jesus has no interest in rule-keeping for rule-keeping sake. First on his not-to-do list is submitting to legalism.

The hypocritical religious leaders try to use the Sabbath laws to trap Jesus. "Oh, he doesn't follow the rules that we've made up on *top* of the actual rules. Obviously this Jesus fellow doesn't submit to God, because he doesn't submit to the Sabbath with the strictness with which *we* submit to the Sabbath."

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What's Jesus say in response? "My Father's law is an expression of his heart. I will not allow your cold hearts to freeze my heart, which beats in rhythm with my Father's heart, expressed in his Good Words."

Jesus refuses to hear anything but love in his Father's law. So he will not submit to legalism. Legalism is not submission to God's law. Legalism is the cold-hearted insistence that everyone be as miserable as I am while trying to impress God with my submission to man-made additions to God's law.

Jesus will have none of it. He hasn't come to fulfill the expectations of religious leaders.

b. Succumb to license

On the other hand, Jesus says clearly that succumbing to license is also on his not-to-do list.

He has not come to abolish the law! If you think Jesus is some revolutionary who frees us from ethics, you're wrong. The *last* thing Jesus has is a heart that is prone to wander from his Father's heart. He came to *be* the beating heart of his Father for the sake of the world. We look to the heart of Jesus to see what freedom *really* looks like. Because Jesus knows that true freedom comes when we live and love like his Father, and the Good Father's Son.

c. Stifle creativity

And last on Jesus' not-to-do list is stifling creativity.

Jesus spends 30 years apprenticing as his heavenly Father's disciple. He spends his young adulthood apprenticing as his father Joseph's carpenter-in-training.

Then he apprentices 12 disciples and many other followers in his Rabbinic way of life. Instead of a wearying duty, his yoke is easy and his burden is light. There's rest for your soul even when you're working with and for Jesus.

And there's rest for your body and soul and spirit when you follow the Lord of the Sabbath into his Sabbath rest. One day in seven. And, spiritually, *all the time*.

And out of the overflow of this rhythm of rest and work, the Lord of the Sabbath calls forth neverending creativity from his well-rested followers.

Conclusion

Thanks be to God that Jesus came not to abolish the law, or to be more strict than his Father, but to love his Father's heart, expressed in his Father's Good Words.

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Thank God that Jesus cleared away every aspect of our fallen humanity, until all that was left was his true, good, and beautiful life, lived in our flesh, and for our sake, and then offered to his God and Father and ours for our sake!

Let's make ourselves the kind of not-to-do list that looks like God's, that looks like his Son's. And let's follow Jesus into the freedom he has won for us by his own life, death, and resurrection. Amen?